

House committee questions Secretary Zinke about DOI FY2018 budget

June 8, 2017

On June 8, Department of Interior (DOI) Secretary Ryan Zinke testified before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies at a hearing on the DOI Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget. Overall, the President's proposed FY2018 budget for DOI would cut 13% from the FY2017 enacted level, which Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN-4) noted is comparable to the FY2010 enacted level after adjustment for inflation. The FY2018 budget decreases funds for multiple federal science agencies including the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Among many other cuts, the proposed DOI budget calls for the elimination of the USGS Earthquake Early Warning System and decreases USGS climate change-related programs by about 80% compared to FY2017. The Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service would also experience cuts of 14% and 10%, respectively, in FY2018 compared to their FY2017 enacted levels.

During the hearing, Sec. Zinke defended many of the budget cuts, particularly to climate change research programs, stating that the cuts reflect program consolidation between agencies into National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers, rather than complete reduction or elimination. Subcommittee Chairman Ken Calvert (R-CA-42) stated that the cuts to USGS, especially for the Earthquake Early Warning System, pose a threat to U.S. public health.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) budget would be cut by 46% in FY2018 under the President's proposal. The majority of the cuts to the OSMRE budget come from the elimination of DOI grants for OSMRE's Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Development program, which Zinke cited as an example of reducing overlapping program funding between OSMRE and other agencies.

Sources: House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, U.S. Department of the Interior
