

## Zinke defends DOI budget proposal to Senate ENR Committee

**June 20, 2017**

On June 20, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke met with the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to defend the President's proposed fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget for the Department of the Interior (DOI). Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) told Secretary Zinke that she does not expect all of the proposed cuts to pass into law, but she is optimistic that the final budget for FY 2018 will reflect a compromise between the President's request and a budget that Congress deems justifiable.

Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) echoed Chairman Murkowski's sentiments about the proposed cuts to successful programs being unlikely to pass. Ranking Member Cantwell expressed her disagreement with several of the proposed cuts to agencies within DOI, particularly highlighting the work done by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on natural hazard mitigation, climate research, and other mission areas which serve the public interest. The proposed budget for DOI also calls for cuts to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Abandoned Mine Lands (OSMRE/AML) program funding. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) pointed out that the funds from AML are crucial to providing pensions to miners through the Miners Protection Act.

Regarding the scale of personnel cuts within the various DOI agencies, Secretary Zinke explained that the hiring freeze on operations in Washington, DC, and Denver was implemented to increase employment at the "front lines" of DOI agencies, which includes USGS regional scientists, by shifting the workforce away from headquarters-based projects and back into the field.

*Source: Senate Committee on Natural Resources*

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