

**STATEMENT OF  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
ON THE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR'S REORGANIZATION EFFORT**

**APRIL 30, 2019**

Chairman Cox, Ranking Member Gohmert, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the Department of the Interior's reorganization.

President Trump's Executive Order 13781, *Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch*, challenged all Departments and Agencies to reorganize to better meet the needs of the American people.

The Department welcomed the opportunity to thoughtfully reorganize, as our structure and functions have not fundamentally changed in half a century. Our goal was to increase inter-bureau collaboration and improve interoperability across the Department.

We therefore responded to the White House direction by crafting a transformational vision that more effectively delivers citizen service and enables us to perform our work more efficiently. The Department's reorganization is driven by an imperative to improve inter-bureau coordination, shift resources to front line activities that interact with the public, bring decision-makers closer to those who are affected by our decisions, and leverage technology to drive management improvements across a wide variety of administrative services for the benefit of our employees and the people they serve. The first and very significant step to realizing this vision was the designation of 12 unified regions that align most of our bureaus to shared geographic boundaries and, more importantly, shared geographic perspectives.

The Department of the Interior was established 170 years ago. Like other government agencies, we must evolve to capitalize on new opportunities, address modern threats, and meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century citizenry.

Over many decades, new bureaus were established on an ad hoc basis, each with unique geographic boundaries. This resulted in a complicated map of 49 regional boundaries among eight bureaus. Bureau regional leadership quite naturally, but not optimally, focused inwardly within their own regional boundaries. This limited perspective inhibited a shared understanding of perspectives of regional stakeholders whose needs span multiple bureaus. Opportunities to share administrative capacity across bureaus were difficult to recognize and implement. Members of the public were frustrated at the pace of decision making by bureaus that were not working together. In more recent times, physical and cybersecurity challenges have increasingly

become threats to our employees and visitors, and the facilities, data, lands, and water resources we manage.

The Department's reorganization will improve coordination and collaboration among our bureaus, and increase our efficiency by making it easier and more natural to consider the sharing of administrative services across bureaus at the regional, multiregional, and even the national levels. We will find creative ways to streamline and standardize administrative processes and conduct the business of the Department in the smartest ways possible, particularly in the areas of information technology, acquisition/procurement and human resources. We owe it to our employees to provide them with the modern tools and resources they deserve in their professional lives, and quite frankly have come to expect as routine in their personal lives.

The establishment of shared regional geographic boundaries simplifies how people interact with the Department, for our own employees, for state, local, and tribal governments, and for the public. Establishment of the unified regional boundaries across bureaus is the cornerstone for reforming the Department's service delivery to the public. Within each unified region, bureaus will focus their work on the same resources and constituents, and this common view will naturally lead to improved coordination across the bureaus. For the public, fewer regions makes it easier to do business with the Department, particularly for projects or issues requiring *interactions* across several bureaus. For our diverse mission, the move promotes inter-bureau collaboration, joint problem-solving, and mutual assistance.

Perhaps most importantly, operating under common Department regional boundaries provides certainty for our external customers. By putting more emphasis on shared geography and inter-bureau coordination we are making it more realistic for our 70,000 employees to pursue cross-training outside their home bureau. Closer ties to sister bureaus at a regional level also makes it more realistic for our employees to consider career advancement opportunities in a sister bureau. Our goals are both aggressive and attainable. We will increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of how the Department serves our internal and external stakeholders while reducing confusion, risk, and duplication.

The Department's unified regions are rooted in science and focused on watersheds and ecosystems. To get to the final boundaries, the Department held discussions with senior leaders in the Department and the bureaus, and we engaged our field employees, tribes, states, environmental groups, and our many other partners and stakeholders. We hosted 8 listening sessions for our employees to provide forums for them to hear from, and talk directly to, Departmental officials about the reorganization and proposed regional boundaries.

We conducted extensive tribal consultation, both formal and informal. These conversations included 11 formal consultation sessions and an additional 7 listening sessions at tribal offices and facilities, large gatherings, and other venues. We posted transcripts of all 18 sessions we conducted. In addition, 32 individuals or groups submitted comments in response to the tribal listening sessions. The feedback gathered from the tribal consultations revealed a preference for the bureaus serving Indian country to retain their current structure rather than becoming part of the unified regions. We respected that feedback, and as a result, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the

Bureau of Indian Education, and the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians have not realigned their regional field structure to the new unified regions.

Over a period of almost two years, Department of the Interior officials also met repeatedly with a wide variety of constituents, including state, local and tribal government elected and appointed officials; Congress; organizations such as the Western Governors' Association and the Missouri River Basin Interagency Roundtable; nonprofit groups; and bureau-specific cooperating organizations such as the National Parks Conservation Association.

On May 16, 2018, then-Secretary Zinke hosted a Conservation Roundtable the purpose of which was to engage in robust conversation about reorganization, among other shared priorities, with non-government conservation organizations. Participants at the roundtable represented such organizations as the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the National Audubon Society, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Delta Waterfowl, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, and the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

We also established a Reorganization Website and posted the unified region maps, answers to "frequently asked questions," and status updates of the reorganization effort. This website is still active and provides two ways of submitting a question, comment or suggestion to the Department about the reorganization. We respond individually to all questions and comments received. We listened to everyone who provided input, and that input helped to shape the Department's ultimate reorganization decisions on the unified regions in the summer of 2018.

Accomplishments to date include the following: after working closely with stakeholders and Congress, the unified regions map was finalized on August 22, 2018. Based on feedback from state governors, state boundaries were generally followed for the unified region boundaries with three exceptions where there were over-riding water resource issues that justified a deviation from the norm (along the Arizona-Nevada-California borders; the California-Oregon border; and the Montana-Idaho border). We also made a commitment to governors that the roles of the Bureau of Land Management State Directors would continue. This month we revised our Departmental Manual for each of the affected bureaus to reflect the existence of the unified regions. Those revisions have been approved and are undergoing the final codification process.

After finalizing the unified regional map, we identified the current bureau career executive leaders in the twelve regions, asked them to form an executive committee in each unified region, and to select one of their peers as a Regional Facilitator. The Regional Facilitator temporarily serves as a central point of contact in the unified regions. The members of the twelve regional executive committees are responsible for sharing information and exploring how to work with each other more closely on programmatic and administrative support teams within their unified regions. The Regional Facilitators participate on regular calls among their group and their various regional teams; and weekly calls are scheduled to communicate with the Department.

We are currently exploring what the permanent role might be for an individual designated as an Interior Regional Director within a unified region. This person would have a role in convening his or her colleagues on the regional executive committee and managing issues of mutual concern. It is worth pointing out that the role of Interior Regional Director would be established

in such a way as to not disrupt existing bureau statutory authorities or impede communications between a regional bureau executive and the headquarters leadership of that bureau. In addition, we are currently examining how a provision in the Departmental Manual that dates back to the Carter Administration and provides for the role of a Field Special Assistant might relate to what we have more recently envisioned as an Interior Regional Director.

With the unified regions in place, and Congress having appropriated \$17.5 million in Fiscal Year 2019 for the reorganization, we are now focused on how best to advance the management of the Department's vast and diverse responsibilities within the new regional structure. A wide variety of administrative tasks are necessary to fully operationalize the new regional boundaries, such as modifications to our financial management and property systems, and appropriately coding employee position descriptions to reflect their association with the new unified regions. These changes will take time, but will enable us to better plan, organize, manage, and report on activities on a multi-bureau basis for each unified region.

To better capitalize on shared administrative services, we will leverage three independent external assessments that examine the operating practices, especially the effectiveness and efficiencies, of three administrative functions: human resources management, acquisition of goods and services, and information technology management. We believe that the resulting administrative reforms will improve and make our internal administrative operations more cost-efficient, enabling us to better invest in the Department's citizen-facing services. By resolving duplicative and unnecessarily cumbersome administrative processes, our employees and the Department's customers will save precious time in completing routine administrative actions. We received final reports on the assessments of information technology and acquisitions, and are now beginning to implement priority recommendations. The human resources assessment will be complete in September.

In addition to improving internal and external communication and decision making through the unified regions, and reforming administrative operations to better serve the American public, there is a third dimension to our reorganization initiative. In order to better serve our customers and partners, we will move headquarters elements of two of our bureaus closer to the people affected by their decisions. Citizens always benefit when decisions are made by those who are most familiar with the issue at hand. This is why a key component of reorganization is moving elements of headquarters operations of two bureaus - the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Geological Survey - to the western United States, where the preponderance of these bureau assets are located and bureau dollars expended, to better serve our customers.

In 2019, we plan to relocate a very few headquarters elements of BLM and USGS to the West. Currently, we are actively exploring possible locations for a future headquarters location for BLM. We hope to make a decision on a city later this fiscal year. BLM plans to fill certain vacant headquarters positions and move a small number of employees to the West – approximately 40 vacant BLM positions or employees are likely to be relocated in FY 2019. This number represents approximately 10 percent of the BLM headquarters workforce. BLM intends to ask employees to volunteer, rather than forcing people to move.



For its part, USGS' relocation is focused on the Denver, Colorado metropolitan area, where the bureau already has a significant presence and significant scientific partners in nearby universities. As a practical matter, the USGS FY 2019 funding for reorganization would not enable them to move many employees this year. In neither case have we made decisions that have committed ourselves legally or financially. As required by the Appropriations Committee, we will report on our plans prior to obligating the FY 2019 reorganization funding provided by Congress.

We are proceeding with reorganization deliberately and intentionally. It is important to note that improved citizen service is the driver behind our reorganization. While we have reasonable expectations that a number of our reorganization actions will demonstrate savings in dollars and cents, we hope the Committee will agree with us that faster and smarter decision-making by the Department, and decisions that are more fully informed by local conditions on the ground represent very real value for the American people, even if it is difficult to quantify these benefits in a traditional cost-benefit analysis.

Bureaus and offices have already begun to work across organizational lines to identify ways to maximize the benefits of the new regions. The Regional Facilitators and their executive committees continue to identify best-practices for collaborative efforts, and specific needs for improving inter-operability across shared services and in the functional areas of collaborative conservation, recreation, and permitting. These groups have found their collaborative meetings to be highly productive and informative.

As a result of these ongoing efforts, we are re-examining some of the Department's common business operations to leverage consistent best practices across Interior. In 2020, the budget requests \$27.6 million to continue implementing the reorganization with three areas of focus: Implementation of the Unified Regions (\$12.1 million), Relocation and Regional Stand Up (\$10.5 million), and Modernizing Interior's Business (\$5.0 million).

Through reorganization, the Department will be better positioned to serve our mission and address the needs of the American public. Regional bureau executives will be empowered to work directly with each other to proactively address common issues. Fewer decisions will be referred to Washington DC, and those that are referred to the Secretary will be more narrowly and clearly defined because of the prior inter-bureau coordination at the regional level. This joint approach to problem solving and increased coordination at lower levels of the organizational structure, grounded in common regions, will reduce timelines for decisions, allow senior executives to better focus their attention where it is most needed, and facilitate increased collaboration and information sharing across DOI bureaus.

Each unified region is unique, with varying levels of Interior staff, public interest, and types of resources to be managed. The unified regions will not be administered with a one-size-fits all approach. Through increased shared servicing of information management and technology, procurement, and human resources functions across the Department, we will enhance the foundation for increased inter-bureau collaboration and coordination and better invest in our citizen-facing missions.

Increased standardization in our administrative business processes will allow the Department to work more efficiently and effectively. We will be better positioned to take advantage of economies of scale, our staff will have increased capacity to share knowledge and resources across bureaus, and we will reduce risks to the organization that are introduced through inconsistent policies for cybersecurity, purchasing, and human resource management.

The Department looks forward to working with this Committee to collectively enhance services to the American people. I am happy to take your questions at this time.