



FACT SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR: STEWARD OF AMERICA'S NATURAL HERITAGE

The United States Department of the Interior (DOI) is one of the key federal agencies responsible for the protecting our environment and the health of the American public. Interior manages over 500 million acres of land owned by the American people which includes national parks, wildlife refuges, monuments, and recreation areas. It's responsible for ensuring that Americans can enjoy their natural heritage—wildlife, wild lands, oceans, and natural resources—for generations to come.

The Interior Department also oversees a vast array of activities that take place on our public lands. That includes building clean energy projects as well as drilling for oil and gas, both onshore and offshore. DOI's decision-making greatly shapes the energy landscape, both in the U.S. and globally.

The Trump administration and its allies in Congress are looking to abandon longstanding principles of responsible stewardship. They're launching an unprecedented assault on our public lands and oceans. They would allow these priceless resources we all own to be sold and exploited for the benefit of private companies. It's our duty to protect them for future generations. Here's a look at how Interior safeguards our lands and waters and what's at stake if its budget is cut.

PRESERVING WILD LANDS

Wild spaces are central to America's identity. The National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collectively manage hundreds of millions of acres of wild landscapes and sensitive ecological habitat. Millions of acres enjoy some level of protection as permanent wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and national monuments, or other protective designations. These are some of the most iconic landscapes anywhere on the planet.

PUBLIC LANDS FOR THE PUBLIC

Americans and international tourists visit our national parks, wildlife refuges, and DOI campgrounds to hike, climb, hunt, fish, and marvel at majestic landscapes. Recreation on Interior lands generated an estimated \$46 billion in economic output and supported nearly 400,000 jobs in 2015. Each year, 443 million people visit DOI lands including 331 million recreational visits to parks managed by the NPS in 2016, a record for the century-old agency. DOI's agencies maintain facilities, monitor flora and fauna, educate the public, and protect fragile areas. But DOI has had to do so under an extremely tight budget. The Park Service alone faces a \$12 billion maintenance backlog after a decade-long cut in funding. Further cuts are not sustainable and would threaten the agency's ability to function.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Endangered Species: The DOI is one of the principal agencies charged with the execution of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), designed to prevent human activity from driving other species to extinction. It evaluates the degree to which plant and animal species' survival is threatened, maintains a list of species requiring protection to survive, develops plans

to recover species, and takes enforcement action against violations of the ESA. Interior also issues permits for “takes” of threatened and endangered species that are incidental to otherwise lawful activity and won’t jeopardize the species’ existence or damage critical habitat.

Wildlife Trade: The DOI works to prevent the unsustainable trade of wildlife across international borders in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. The agency’s responsibilities include monitoring points of entry, spreading consumer awareness, permitting US exports of protected species, training foreign law enforcement, and funding conservation efforts abroad.

Migratory Birds: The DOI executes international treaties signed with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia to protect migratory birds. It does this by implementing and enforcing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which ensures the protection, restoration, and management of migratory bird populations and habitats. It also issues “take” permits for eagles under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Invasive Species: The DOI runs programs to eradicate, control, and prevent the introduction of invasive species. These programs include border detection and monitoring, public education, and grantmaking with third parties to do the same.

PRODUCTION

Renewable Energy Leasing: Lands managed by DOI are home to some of the world’s richest renewable resources. And the agency has been a leader in permitting projects that tap into this resource. In the last decade, DOI has permitted 15,000 MW of energy in the West derived from solar, wind, and geothermal. Interior places emphasis on identifying potential environmental issues early in the project siting process while focusing development in areas with high renewable resources. The approach has greatly accelerated the permitting of projects in an environmentally responsible manner while reducing costs for developers. In fact, one permitted solar project in Nevada has guaranteed the production of power at 3.87 cents per kilowatt-hour, the cheapest electricity in the nation. Interior is also responsible for leasing offshore areas in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) for wind projects, the first of which recently came online.

Oil, Gas, and Mineral Leasing: The DOI manages the mineral rights for the entire federal estate, including the OCS. It’s responsible for leasing, collecting production royalties, and overseeing the safety of drilling and mining on public lands and in public waters. Supported by billions of dollars of taxpayer handouts annually, the oil, gas, coal, and hardrock mining industries have together leased (or “patented,” in the case of hardrock mining) around 36 million acres of Americans’ land. This represents decades’ worth of oil, gas, and coal—more than we can use if we are going to meet national climate and clean energy goals. Expanded drilling, fracking, and mining scar the land, lay waste to our waters, overheat the planet, pollute local communities, and undercut our investment in clean, domestic renewable energy like wind and solar. This holds true offshore as well where DOI’s oil and gas leasing programs impact our coastal communities, economies, and marine wildlife.

Grazing: The DOI administers livestock grazing permits for more than 150 million acres of public land making the activity the single most pervasive permitted use of BLM lands. The agency has been unable to monitor the majority of permitted grazing in recent years because of appropriation cuts and anti-environmental measures. That has had a serious impact, as the wildlife habitat needed by critical species such as the greater sage-grouse has been severely degraded. The water quality of streams and rivers has also been diminished.

“EVERYTHING ELSE”

Science: The DOI is committed to making land management decisions based on the best available science. Beyond that, however, it also houses the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), one of the world’s premier scientific institutions. Among its many responsibilities, USGS monitors seismic and volcanic activity and observes the impacts of climate change. It provides crucial information about the state of our world.

Western Water: The DOI built and operates dams, hydroelectric power plants, and canals that provide water and power to people and farms across the West.

Indian Affairs: The DOI serves as the federal government’s primary conduit to the American Indian and Alaska Native tribes residing within the United States’ borders. It provides law enforcement and social, services, economic development assistance, and runs other programs that assist our country’s indigenous peoples.