

STATEMENT OF DEB HAALAND
SECRETARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Murkowski, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Interior Department's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request.

It is an honor and privilege for me to be here with you today to speak on behalf of the President's 2025 Budget for the Department of the Interior. I value and appreciate the tradition Interior has had working together with this Subcommittee to accomplish great things for the American people. Interior Appropriations plays a vital role in the success of our agency. I look forward to working with the Members of this Subcommittee this year in continued collaboration to address some of our country's most pressing challenges.

As the steward of 20 percent of America's lands, the DOI serves critical roles for the Nation. Interior's programs are important to the Nation's economy: generating jobs, supporting local economic growth, building resilience to the changing climate, and managing important natural and cultural resources. Interior is also charged with unique responsibilities to fulfill the Nation's Trust and other obligations to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and the Insular Areas. In addition, Interior's scientists and technical experts provide actionable science and monitoring data people depend on to prepare for and respond to natural hazards, drought, and wildland fires.

The Department's 2025 budget totals \$18.0 billion in current authority (\$17.8 billion in net discretionary authority)—an increase of \$575.9 million, or 3 percent, from the 2024 continuing resolution (CR) level. An additional \$360.0 million is accessible through a budget cap adjustment for wildfire suppression to ensure funds are available in the event the regular annual appropriation is inadequate to meet suppression needs. The budget also includes an estimated \$14.8 billion in permanent funding available in 2025.

Within the requested increase for 2025, \$206.0 million is needed to cover fixed-cost increases, such as rent and Federal salary adjustments, to maintain Interior's core operations carried out by more than 68,000 people living and working in every corner of the country. The 2025 request also includes \$412.2 million needed to keep pace with 2024 fixed costs that are not included in the 2024 CR base.

The 2025 President's Budget also allocates important mandatory funding available in 2025 through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). This includes \$1.6 billion for deferred maintenance projects through the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and \$681.9 million in mandatory funding for Interior’s Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs. Interior’s 2025 allocation for LWCF includes \$313.0 million for voluntary Federal land acquisition projects and programs, \$8.0 million for a new Tribal LWCF land acquisition program, and \$360.8 million for grant programs. An additional \$117.9 million is estimated to be available for State LWCF grants in FY 2025 from offshore oil and gas revenue in the Gulf of Mexico.

2025 Legislative Proposals

The 2025 budget request includes the following legislative proposals and technical budgetary adjustments.

Wildland Firefighting Workforce—The 2025 President’s Budget provides funding increases to advance wildland firefighter workforce reform initiatives first proposed in the 2024 budget. The cornerstone of these long-term reforms is a permanent increase in pay, as provided for in the pay reform legislation transmitted to Congress in March 2023. This legislation will establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters, create a new premium pay category that provides additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and establish a streamlined pay cap that includes waiver authority to the Secretary on the basis of specific criteria. The budget includes funding for these Federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for Tribal personnel. These proposals build upon the historic reforms in the BIL to ensure wildland fire personnel receive the enhanced support they need to meet evolving mission demands from the increasing frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfires, which are expected to continue due to climate change.

Indian Water Rights Settlements—The budget proposes \$2.8 billion in mandatory funding over 10 years to expand the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund to cover the costs of enacted and future water rights settlements and provide for ongoing operations and maintenance costs associated with enacted water settlements managed by the Bureau of Reclamation. Providing a stable, dedicated funding source for Indian water rights settlements helps to ensure these commitments are honored and Tribal communities have safe, reliable water supplies to support public and environmental health and economic opportunity.

Transfer Authority for Implementation of BIL Projects—The 2025 budget continues to propose appropriations language to expand authority for Federal agencies to transfer funds provided under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to FWS to accelerate and improve Endangered Species Act consultations in support of responsible development of priority infrastructure projects and energy solutions.

Tribal Contract Support Costs—Contract Support Costs funding is a critical Tribal sovereignty payment enabling Tribes to assume responsibility for operating Federal programs by covering the costs to administer the programs. The budget proposes to reclassify Tribal Contract Support Costs from discretionary to mandatory funding beginning in 2026 and requests discretionary funding in 2025 to fully cover estimated requirements.

Payments for Tribal Leases—Section 105(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act provides that Tribes and Tribal organizations carrying out Federal functions under a self-determination contract or self-governance compact may enter into a lease agreement with the Department of the Interior for the tribally owned or rented facility used to carry out

those functions. This critical Tribal sovereignty payment is allowing Indian Affairs to get Tribes closer to meeting the full cost of program implementation and improve their facilities. The 2025 budget proposes to reclassify funding for 105(l) lease agreement requirements from discretionary to mandatory funding beginning in 2026 and requests discretionary funding in 2025 to fully cover estimated requirements.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Program for Tribes—The budget proposes language that will allocate \$8.0 million of mandatory LWCF funding to establish a Tribal LWCF program in the Office of the Secretary account. The program will be managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to award funding for Tribal land acquisition proposals that meet the criteria of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to advance conservation and recreation opportunities. This program will, for the first time, provide Tribes direct access to participate in LWCF without relying on partners—an important advancement supporting Tribal Self-Determination.

Strengthening Tribal Nations

This Administration has made a steadfast commitment to honor our Nation’s Tribal trust responsibilities and strengthen government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations. This budget maintains that commitment to support and expand this work with a total request of \$4.6 billion for Indian Affairs programs. Through initiatives addressing complex and difficult challenges, such as addressing the legacy of the Federal Indian Boarding Schools, meeting the need for native language revitalization, and coordinating Federal efforts to address Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, this Administration’s commitment to respect the sovereignty of Tribal Nations and address long-standing disparities is unprecedented.

Honoring Tribal Sovereignty

The 2025 budget makes significant investments in Tribal sovereignty and revitalization, providing new and expanded funding opportunities and resources for Tribes to manage their lands and waters. Interior’s efforts to strengthen Tribal sovereignty extend across the Department and with other Federal partners. For example, the Department held Tribal consultation sessions with the USDA, with the participation of NOAA, in which participants consistently pointed to the adverse impacts the changing climate is having on Alaska Native communities and subsistence practices, and they emphasized the need to expand Tribal co-management partnerships and incorporate Indigenous knowledge into subsistence management. Subsistence practices are vital to the lifeways of Alaska Native communities and people. Alaska Native people depend heavily on subsistence practices for their nutritional, social, economic, and traditional cultural needs. The budget includes increases in FWS and NPS to support resource management associated with Alaska Native subsistence. The Department is working to implement the FY 2024 Congressional direction transferring the Office of Subsistence Management from FWS to the Office of the Secretary.

In late 2023, I hosted the 12th and final session of the “The Road to Healing” tour, a year-long commitment to travel across the country to allow survivors of the Federal Indian boarding school system the opportunity to share their stories and help connect communities with trauma-informed support. During the “Road to Healing” Listening Sessions, one of the most significant Tribal concerns expressed was the devastating impact boarding school policies have had on the retention of Native languages in their communities. To address those concerns, the 2025 budget includes \$18.0 million, an increase of \$11.5 million from the 2024 CR amount, to expand BIA

grant awards for Tribal Native language revitalization programs that are imperative to restore generational continuity and Tribal culture and strengthen Tribal sovereignty.

The 2025 budget maintains the Administration's strong commitment to fully fund Tribal Contract Support Costs and Tribal 105 (l) lease costs, which compensate Tribes for the cost of administering programs on behalf of the Federal Government, and for the use of tribally owned space for the operation of Government-owned services. The budget continues to propose to reclassify these required costs as mandatory funding starting in FY 2026 and, for FY 2025, proposes discretionary funding to fully fund requirements in the budget year: an estimated \$426.2 million for Contract Support Costs and \$120.0 million for Tribal 105(l) Lease Costs.

Investing in Tribal Communities

The budget includes \$2.9 billion for Bureau of Indian Affairs programs, \$344.8 million above the 2024 CR level. The 2025 BIA budget contains significant investments in Tribal communities, including \$73.1 million for the Tiwahe Initiative, \$28.6 million above the 2024 CR level. Under Tiwahe, funding assists Tribes at selected sites to implement a tribally driven approach to deliver essential services more effectively and efficiently. The initiative facilitates collaboration within Tribal communities—which can help to leverage resources, share expertise, reduce duplication, and exchange information about families' needs—to formulate the most responsive approach to provide service. Since 2015, the Tiwahe Initiative has focused primarily on promoting family stability through several Human Services programs. The Department's 2025 budget further expands Tiwahe in Social Services, Indian Child Welfare Act, Housing, and Tribal Justice Support programs.

The budget includes \$50.1 million, \$10.9 million above the 2024 CR level, to address another long-standing Tribal priority to improve road maintenance. Poor road conditions directly affect the quality of life in many Tribal communities, limiting transportation for public safety and emergency response, travel to school, and travel to work. This additional investment increases maintenance for an additional 5,000 miles of BIA roads. Funding will also increase bridge maintenance and safety reviews of 250 bridges to inform prioritization, project selection, and planning to better implement construction funding available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The estimated deferred maintenance backlog for BIA roads and bridges is nearly \$400 million. BIA's budget includes additional investments in Tribal communities in areas such as Tribal climate resilience, social services, housing, and land consolidation.

Public safety continues to be a top priority for Tribal leaders across the country. The elevated level of concern is coupled with emerging needs to expand services to address the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision and the needs of 31 Tribes that are eligible for but do not receive BIA public safety and justice funding. The budget includes \$651.2 million in Tribal Public Safety and Justice funding, a net total change of \$71.5 million above the 2024 CR level, to support critical public safety needs in Indian Country. The request provides additional resources to help meet Tribal needs in policing, detention, and Tribal courts. A \$41.9 million program increase is included for Criminal Investigations and Police Services; of that amount, \$33.5 million is specifically targeted to increase the number of officers and investigators on the ground in Indian Country. The budget also includes a \$20.1 million increase for Detention and Corrections programs and maintains public safety and justice construction funding at the FY 2024 CR level of \$51.6 million.

Advancing Indian Education

Indian Education programs are funded in the 2025 budget at \$1.5 billion, \$119.5 million above the 2024 CR level, to provide a strong educational foundation for Native children to succeed. Native students face stark inequities in access to education, many of which were highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic. To help address the gap, the budget invests in the day-to-day operations of BIE-funded elementary and secondary schools. The budget includes \$518.1 million, an increase of \$36.5 million above the 2024 CR level, for Indian Student Equalization Program formula funds, which provide the primary support for academic activities in the classroom, instructional services, and teacher training, recruitment, and retention. The budget includes resources to operate and maintain BIE-funded schools and fully funds the estimated \$100.7 million required for Tribal Grant Support costs, which cover the administration costs for Tribes that choose to operate BIE-funded schools. The 2025 budget also features \$7.5 million for Native language immersion programs at BIE schools.

The budget includes \$191.1 million for postsecondary schools and programs—including Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Tribal colleges, universities, and technical colleges—and expanded Tribal scholarships and adult education programs.

At \$310.2 million in the 2025 budget, annual funding for Education Construction is \$42.3 million above the 2024 CR level. The 2025 budget also continues efforts to address BIE-funded school facilities in poor condition and the deferred maintenance backlog in the BIE school system, which totals more than 180 schools. The budget includes \$162.6 million, \$8.1 million above the 2024 CR level, for facilities operations and maintenance. An additional \$95.0 million in mandatory funding for BIE school construction through the GAOA Legacy Restoration Fund is available in 2025 to support projects at two school campuses. Together, this funding will allow BIE to replace four schools in 2025 and address cost increases at schools funded in prior years.

Meeting Financial Tribal Trust Responsibilities

The 2025 budget includes \$111.3 million, level with the 2024 CR amount, to support Tribal and Individual Indian Money financial functions managed by the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA). BTFA was established within the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs in 2020 to house the ongoing financial trust management functions established through trust reforms carried out by the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians. BTFA currently serves as the financial manager for more than \$8 billion of Indian Trust Funds and provides services for 4,200 Tribal accounts and roughly 411,000 Individual Indian Money accounts. Thank you for providing full recognition of BTFA as a bureau in the FY 2024 Enacted Appropriation which will allow the organization to focus on its mission of serving Indian Country.

Addressing Climate Challenges and Building Resilience

Across America, communities are enduring historic and catastrophic flooding, wildfires, extreme heat, drought, and more, and longer-term changes in temperature are affecting ecosystems and the economies that depend on them. The impacts of climate change are intensifying, disrupting lives and livelihoods, and causing billions of dollars in damages. Together with agencies across the Federal Government, States, Tribes, and other partners, Interior is working to address the

immediate and long-term needs driven by the changing climate. Catastrophic fire, flood, and drought events are increasingly top-of-mind considerations for Interior's resource managers. These events demand immediate attention and resources, but long-term success requires work to build climate resilience. The 2025 budget reflects Interior's important role in the all-of-government approach to tackling climate change and building long-term resilience. The budget invests \$5.5 billion in climate adaptation and resilience efforts to address these important challenges.

Wildland Fire Management

The devastating consequences of severe wildfires continue to affect communities and wildland firefighters across the country. The National Interagency Coordination Center reports that more than 56,000 wildfires occurred across the United States in 2023, burning nearly 2.7 million acres. Climate change-driven, long-term trends continue, with increasing wildfire occurrence, burned area, and high-severity incidents expected in 2025 and beyond, with impacts ranging from direct loss of life and property to health, economic, and ecosystem impacts. For 2025, the President's Budget expands the Nation's response to wildfire impacts beyond the near term, investing in longer-term actions to restore wildfire resilience, rehabilitate burned areas, and increase the workforce capacity and capability to manage wildland fires.

The 2025 budget request for the Department's Wildland Fire Management (WFM) programs is \$1.6 billion, including \$1.3 billion for WFM annual appropriations and \$360.0 million for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. The request for the WFM account includes \$831.8 million in emergency designated appropriations (also referred to as shifted base). The total request is an increase of \$206.7 million, and an estimated 61 Federal full-time equivalents (FTEs) and 7 Tribal FTE, a funding increase of 14.4 percent above the 2024 CR level. The request includes \$75.0 million to support permanent pay increases for Federal and Tribal wildland firefighters and an increase of \$39.8 million above the 2024 CR level.

The 2025 budget continues to press for implementation of permanent, comprehensive pay reform for Federal wildland firefighters at Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Enacting pay reform is essential to meet the challenges posed by longer and more intense wildfire seasons to ensure stable firefighter recruitment and retention. The long-term reforms are supported by funding requested to implement a permanent pay increase to replace the temporary pay increases provided in the BIL and continued in the 2024 Enacted Appropriation. Complementing these pay reforms are investments to enhance health services, hire additional permanent and temporary wildland firefighters to increase capacity, and improve government housing. These investments will help address long-standing recruitment and retention challenges, attend to firefighter mental health and well-being, increase the Department's capacity to complete critical risk mitigation and post-fire recovery work, and further the Administration's commitment to build a more resilient wildland firefighting workforce as the frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfires continue to increase due to climate change.

The 2025 budget continues to reflect the important role proactive fuels management plays in wildland fire management to reduce the intensity, severity, and negative effects of wildfire and improve the resiliency of public and Tribal lands. The budget includes \$287.6 million for Fuels Management, which maintains program capacity at the 2024 CR level and includes a program increase of \$25.0 million to cover the program's share of the increased cost of the permanent

firefighter pay reform. Combined with funding provided in the BIL for fuels management, the Department expects to treat 1.8 million acres in 2025.

The 2025 budget also proposes appropriations language to increase Interior's flexibility to engage in cross-boundary fuels management and burned area rehabilitation work, including on non-Federal lands if the work benefits resources on Federal lands. These changes will address gaps and uncertainties in current authority and support implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. Among other benefits, these changes will support underserved communities that may be unable to share the costs for work that also benefits Federal jurisdictions.

The budget for Wildland Fire includes \$15.0 million for Facilities Construction and Maintenance, \$5.0 million above the 2024 CR level, which includes \$10.0 million to repair, renovate, and construct housing for wildland fire personnel. These funds will significantly help address the problem of inadequate or unaffordable housing facing many wildland firefighters working in certain geographic locations. The budget will further improve wildland fire management by establishing a Joint Office for Wildfire Science and Technology with the U.S. Forest Service. The budget includes \$2.5 million in Interior's Preparedness program and \$2.5 million in the U.S. Forest Service budget to support joint efforts leading to the development, deployment, and sustainment of technology, science, and data to be used to improve safety, effectiveness, and cost efficiency across the Wildland Fire Management program.

Drought and Ongoing Water Challenges

Severe and sustained drought conditions across the West are forcing difficult challenges and choices to manage available water supplies. Limited water availability and increased wildland fire risk pose significant threats and challenges for communities, agriculture, Tribes, and ecosystems. Interior is bringing every resource to bear to help mitigate the impacts of drought and bolster long-term solutions supporting continued conservation and economic growth, so no community is left behind.

The 2025 President's Budget for the Bureau of Reclamation, funded through the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, complements the transformative investments in water infrastructure, drought mitigation, and domestic water supply projects now underway through funding from the BIL and the IRA. The 2025 budget includes \$1.5 billion for Reclamation's water programs and projects, sustaining a strong commitment to drought mitigation in the Bureau's annual appropriations. Funding in the request will help to ensure communities across the West have access to a resilient and reliable water supply by investing in rural water projects, water conservation, desalination technology development, and water recycling and reuse projects. The budget provides funding to address the ongoing drought affecting water systems across the West, including along the Colorado River System, which is near historically low levels.

In the past 3 years, Interior has allocated \$2.43 billion available through the BIL to address Indian water rights settlements enacted by Congress as of November 15, 2021. Indian reserved water rights are vested property rights for which the United States has a trust responsibility. Settlement of Indian water rights disputes helps create conditions that improve water resource management and provides certainty as to the rights of all water users who are parties to the

disputes. Honoring those commitments promptly is especially important to the health, safety, and empowerment of Tribal communities.

In addition to these previous investments, the budget provides \$181.0 million in the Bureau of Reclamation to support the White Mountain Apache Tribe's water settlement agreement within the settlement's statutory completion deadline. The budget also includes \$45.0 million in the Bureau of Indian Affairs to support payments authorized in the Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2022.

The Administration proposes legislation to expand the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund. This proposal will provide \$2.8 billion in mandatory funding over 10 years to help ensure commitments are honored on existing, newly enacted, and anticipated Indian Water Rights Settlements. Included in this total is \$340.0 million in mandatory funding for operations and maintenance costs associated with currently enacted Bureau of Reclamation funded settlement projects.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) also works with partners to deliver water predictions and drought risk assessment tools that support the mitigation of and response to prolonged drought. USGS has supported extensive partner engagement throughout the Colorado River Basin with science to identify and begin to understand the cascading effects of drought on ecosystems and socioeconomic factors; improve partners' access to science, data, and tools; and improve the understanding of gains and losses of water as it moves from one Colorado River reservoir to another. Predictions and assessments—along with other fundamental information on how drought drives physical, biological, and chemical landscape change—are used to evaluate watershed conditions on multiple-use public lands, the status of fish and wildlife species, drought impacts on rangeland management, and plans and investments for infrastructure, conservation, and restoration projects. In FY 2025, USGS will invest an additional \$7.0 million to support these efforts to address the critical issues facing our Nation due to drought.

Building Resilient Communities

The impacts of climate change on communities across the Nation have focused more attention on the need to strengthen resilience to these changes through short-term disaster preparedness and long-term planning and infrastructure investments. Interior programs advance these efforts in many ways through proactive investments leveraging science and critical monitoring networks.

USGS manages the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, which maintains a nationwide network of streamflow and water level information collected from more than 31,000 sites. The budget includes \$121.4 million for this program, \$6.8 million above the 2024 CR level. Network information is available online to help States, Tribes, natural resource managers, scientists, and emergency managers across the country to monitor for floods and drought and forecast water availability for crops and natural resource management.

The USGS Ecosystem Change Research Program analyzes and synthesizes the effects of environment, land use, and climate changes on ecosystems to inform natural resource management policy and decisions—including those concerning wildfires and drought—and collaborates with Tribal partners to assess climate impacts on Tribal lands and waters.

As part of the USGS Coastal and Marine Hazards programs, researchers use on-the-ground field work, high-resolution data, and modeling to help communities understand and respond to changes in coastal landscapes. Federal, Tribal, State, and local entities around the country use USGS data to inform coastal management and strategic planning. Some organizations use this science to plan evacuation notices, inform city planning, and construct storm-resistant infrastructure. Others use USGS habitat assessments and decision-support tools to restore coastal ecosystems and develop infrastructure that can help buffer future storm damage and coastal erosion. The budget includes \$49.2 million for the Coastal and Marine Hazards program, \$6.0 million above the 2024 CR level.

The 2025 budget includes \$48.8 million, \$13.8 million above the 2024 CR level, in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for Interior's Tribal Climate Resilience program to support Tribes in climate resilience planning, assessment, and adaptation activities. The program also funds planning and design work for Tribal communities evaluating the need for or pursuing climate-related relocation. This annually funded program complements the Voluntary Community-Driven Relocation program, led by Interior, and made possible with investments from the BIL and the IRA, with additional support for relocation from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Denali Commission. This initiative is helping Tribal communities severely affected by climate-related environmental threats take the next step in the process of relocating crucial community infrastructure away from imminent threats.

The Office of Insular Affairs budget includes \$118.3 million for Assistance to Territories to support basic services in the Insular Areas and targeted investments related to climate change. These investments include \$15.5 million to promote renewable energy and strengthen grid infrastructure in the Insular Areas and \$2.8 million for work related to coral reef ecosystems and other natural resource needs. Funding in 2025 for Assistance to Territories includes total increases of \$4.0 million for important investments needed to maintain ongoing support for conservation and climate resilience in the Insular Areas. These increases are offset by a reduction of \$6.0 million reflecting the discontinuation of support for the discretionary funded Compact Impact program. Compact Impact is addressed in the recently enacted COFA legislation.

Healthy Public Lands, Waters, and Wildlife

Interior manages more than 480 million acres of lands across the United States and is responsible for the protection and recovery of 2,367 endangered and threatened species. Interior leads as an active partner in ongoing efforts to understand and mitigate climate impacts on natural resources, promote biodiversity, and ensure these valuable assets remain available for the public to experience and enjoy. Natural resource conservation, restoration, recovery, and adaptive management are a fundamental part of Interior's mission across the agency. Interior's conservation and adaptive management work relies heavily on partnerships and interagency collaboration to leverage information and resources. The 2025 budget includes roughly \$2.8 billion in annual funding for conservation efforts, including critical work for restoration and improvements supporting healthier lands, waters, ecosystems, and their resident species.

The 2025 budget includes targeted investments aimed at protecting biodiversity; restoring fish, wildlife, and their habitats; and halting nature loss. The request includes \$2.0 billion for natural resource programs in NPS, BLM, and FWS. This funding supports Interior's core mission activities and at the same time supports the objectives of the America the Beautiful initiative to

advance conservation efforts that are locally led, collaborative and inclusive, honor Tribal sovereignty, and follow science.

The FWS budget invests \$602.3 million in the National Wildlife Refuge System to maintain and operate 571 national refuge areas across the country. Each unit of the refuge system is established to target conservation of native species dependent on its lands and water, and all activities on those lands are reviewed for compatibility with this purpose. The budget includes \$280.4 million for Wildlife and Habitat Management activities in the national refuge areas, an increase of \$19.9 million above the 2024 CR amount.

The budget also includes \$942.5 million, an increase of \$37.9 million from the 2024 CR level, for FWS species and habitat conservation; restoration and recovery of species; migratory bird programs; fish and aquatic conservation; and international conservation programs. Many of these programs support collaborative partnerships leveraging the support of a wide range of partners, including sportspeople, local communities, private landowners, and Tribes. The budget includes \$68.1 million for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, \$7.8 million above the 2024 CR level, to further support voluntary conservation on private lands—a key focus of the America the Beautiful initiative. The FWS budget also includes \$17.6 million for the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures program, \$0.8 million above the 2024 CR amount, to continue collaborations with a multitude of partners to ensure the migratory pathways of our Nation’s birds remain connected and support sustainable populations.

A primary responsibility of the National Park Service is to conserve and protect the natural and cultural resources and values at 429 park units, 25 trails, and 66 wild and scenic rivers. NPS natural resource stewardship activities support active management, research, and projects to conserve, protect, and better understand park natural resources. NPS is managing invasive plants and animals, restoring disturbed ecosystems, and addressing the resiliency of park resources to climate changes to conserve iconic natural resources and enhance the visitor experience. NPS develops best management practices and applies science to understand the risks to park resources from environmental hazards, identifies specific factors that affect park resources and park investments. National Park lands are also venues to collaborate with partners and the public on this important work. The budget includes \$431.0 million for natural and cultural resource stewardship activities across the national parks, \$11.3 million above the 2024 CR level.

The Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) National Conservation Lands (NCL) system of national monuments and national conservation areas comprise nearly 37 million acres. The NCL system was created to recognize and help protect the outstanding value of these unique places, which are some of BLM’s most popular and heavily visited sites. The 2025 budget includes \$54.6 million, \$4.0 million above the 2024 CR level, to maintain and operate these areas on behalf of the public. The funds support the management and operation of the NCL sites to protect and conserve these special places and address the impacts of stressors, such as high recreational use, invasive species, and climate change. BLM and its volunteers provide key visitor services and interpretive programs at areas with the highest visitation to offer the American people exceptional areas for recreation. The budget includes \$61.5 million, \$5.9 million above the 2024 CR level, for recreation management activities across BLM. That amount includes increased funding to implement the MAPLand Act (Modernizing Access to Our Public Land Act) to improve geospatial data about and facilitate access to BLM-managed public lands.

Interior bureaus often work collaboratively to address cross-cutting resource stewardship challenges. A long-standing example of this approach is Interior’s ongoing support to enhance wildlife migration corridors and habitat connectivity to help ensure fish and wildlife have the freedom to move and migrate, as areas are increasingly fragmented by roads, fences, and other barriers. Since 2018, Interior has worked in partnership with 11 Western States, a wide diversity of nongovernmental organizations, and Western Tribes to support projects to better understand migration routes, remove barriers to migrating wildlife, and improve habitat conditions on public and private lands. The budget includes \$12.0 million for migration corridor activities in the FWS, BLM, NPS, and the USGS to help leverage public-private partnership efforts to protect pronghorn, elk, mule deer, and other iconic species across the West. As part of this work, USGS has led development of the coproduced science needed to manage migration corridors. Because of the widely acknowledged value of this work and the recognition of increasing threats to Western landscapes, the 2025 USGS budget includes \$3.9 million to support this work, a program increase of \$3.5 million above the 2024 CR level.

Interior plays a leadership role in implementing the National Seed Strategy (NSS) to support ecosystem restoration by addressing the increasing demand for native seed that outpaces the supply. The NSS provides a framework for coordination across Federal agencies and other partners and cooperators to build an adequate supply of native seeds. The 2025 budget includes \$27.2 million, \$4.3 million above the 2024 CR level, across BLM, FWS, and BIA to implement the NSS as part of Interior’s core operations. This investment is consistent with congressional direction to “supply native plant materials for emergency stabilization and longer-term rehabilitation” and will strengthen broader restoration efforts by helping to reduce suppliers’ uncertainty of demand for seed, increase the availability of stock seeds, and increase knowledge sharing.

Creating Jobs and Meeting Energy and Environmental Challenges

Interior’s programs create jobs and spur economic growth in a variety of areas—energy and minerals, recreation and tourism, irrigation and other water-related activities, grants and payments, and infrastructure investment. Enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act, the BIL, and the IRA have and will continue to significantly expand Interior’s contributions to America’s economic and job growth. A DOI analysis completed in 2023 found that investments from three BIL-funded programs alone—Abandoned Mine Lands; Orphaned Well Plugging, Remediation, and Reclamation; and Water Resources—support on average 17,669 jobs and generate \$2.0 billion for the U.S. economy each year. The 2025 budget maintains a consistent strategy to emphasize investments that create jobs and better position the country to be more competitive worldwide.

Developing a Robust Clean Energy Economy

The 2025 budget continues to advance the Administration’s clean energy goals. Interior has made significant progress to stand up clean energy projects on public lands and establish a strong offshore wind energy program, which will create good-paying union jobs and help the transition to a decarbonized economy.

At the start of 2024, two U.S. offshore wind energy sites announced the first delivery of electricity to the grid from projects off New England and Montauk, NY. This event came on the heels of Interior’s announcement at the end of 2023 that the Nation’s sixth commercial offshore

wind energy project had been approved and a new offshore wind lease sale was proposed in the Central Atlantic. Four offshore wind-lease auctions have taken place during this Administration, which have brought in almost \$5.5 billion in high bids. BOEM has also advanced the process to explore additional opportunities for offshore wind energy development, including in the Gulf of Maine and Gulf of Mexico and offshore the U.S. Central Atlantic and Oregon coasts. Also this year, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) stood up a regulatory and enforcement program for this new offshore industry. BSEE is also preparing a regulatory update to ensure safe development and operation of offshore wind facilities.

In 2023, the Bureau of Land Management approved 10 wind, solar, and geothermal projects that, when built, will power millions of homes across the West. The Administration also made significant progress clearing the way for key transmission lines crossing federally managed lands and celebrated the groundbreaking of the TransWest Express Transmission Project (Wyoming), the Ten West Link (Arizona and California), and the SunZia Transmission Project (New Mexico, Arizona, and California).

BLM is processing more than three dozen utility-scale onshore clean energy projects proposed on public lands—including solar, wind, and geothermal projects—and the interconnected generation tie lines vital for connecting clean energy projects on non-Federal land to transmission lines. These projects have the combined potential to add more than 22 gigawatts of renewable energy to the Western electric grid.

Overall, the budget includes \$189.3 million, \$35.3 million above the 2024 CR level, to continue the Administration's progress in deploying clean energy, spurring economic development, and creating thousands of good-paying jobs. Funding supports the leasing, planning, and permitting of solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects and associated transmission infrastructure that will help mitigate the impacts of climate change and support the Administration's goal of deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030 and 25 gigawatts of clean energy capacity on public lands by 2025.

The 2025 budget includes \$53.1 million for BLM's onshore renewable energy program, \$12.1 million above the 2024 CR level. The request will help build staffing capacity at BLM's Renewable Energy Coordination Offices and accelerate planning and permitting to accommodate increased demand and workload. BLM also plans to undertake market and technology trend analysis; enhance engagement with States, counties, and Tribes; and work to adopt a regional approach to permitting and environmental reviews.

The 2025 budget includes \$52.0 million for BOEM's Renewable Energy program, a \$9.2 million increase above the 2024 CR level. This request includes funding to continue to support permitting for projects proposed on existing leases and activities associated with Interior's current Offshore Wind Leasing Path Forward 2021–2025. The budget includes \$21.7 million within BOEM's Environmental Programs for studies that inform clean energy decisions, an increase of \$1.7 million, which includes additional funding for environmental reviews associated with offshore renewable energy projects.

The budget for BSEE includes \$12.6 million to continue work in support of offshore renewable energy deployment. BSEE anticipates receiving more than 40,000 wind engineering, construction, and other technical reports for review through the end of FY 2025. The bureau is

working closely with BOEM to implement the framework needed to ensure offshore renewable energy projects are constructed and operated safely and responsibly.

Conventional Energy

The budget for BOEM provides \$67.5 million for conventional energy programs, approximately \$6.0 million above the 2024 CR level, to support Outer Continental Shelf planning, leasing, and oversight. This work includes inventorying oil and gas reserves, overseeing ongoing activities, ensuring adequate financial assurances for decommissioning liability and risk management, implementing the 2024–2029 National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program, reviewing and administering oil and gas exploration and development plans and geological and geophysical permits, and conducting economic analyses, environmental studies, and resource evaluation. Decisions pertaining to conventional energy activities also receive support from the Environmental Programs funding.

The 2025 budget for BSEE includes \$213.0 million that supports conventional energy program work. This funding supports OCS permit application reviews, regulation and standard development for offshore activities, verification and enforcement of operator compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations, technical reviews of planned operations and emerging technologies to properly identify and mitigate risks, an annual inspection program that includes risk-based inspections, and incident investigations. Within this funding, BSEE will continue to strengthen its technical workforce to keep pace with an evolving industry with increasingly complex deepwater operations. BSEE's budget also includes \$12.0 million to fund the decommissioning of orphaned offshore oil and gas infrastructure. This funding, along with funding from other sources, will be used to address the most immediate and urgent well, pipeline, and platform decommissioning needs to help reduce the risk of pollution.

Included in the 2025 budget is \$115.8 million for BLM's Oil and Gas Management program, an increase of \$3.0 million from the 2024 CR level. The BLM budget also includes \$51.0 million for Oil and Gas Inspection Activities and proposes to offset the cost of this program through onshore inspection fees.

The 2025 budget continues to support onshore and offshore carbon sequestration activities. The BIL provides authority to the Secretary of the Interior to grant a lease, easement, or right-of-way on the Outer Continental Shelf for activities that “provide for, support, or are directly related to the injection of a carbon dioxide stream into sub-seabed geologic formations for the purpose of long-term carbon sequestration.” Carbon sequestration permanently stores carbon dioxide (CO₂) in secure subsurface geologic reservoirs to reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere and mitigate its impact on global climate change. BOEM and BSEE are working to develop and publish draft offshore carbon sequestration regulations for public comment. The proposed rule will address aspects of carbon sequestration on the OCS, including the transportation and geologic sequestration of CO₂, leasing of OCS areas for that purpose, storage site characterization (i.e., delineation of potential storage reservoirs), environmental plans and mitigation measures, facility and infrastructure design and installation, injection operations, monitoring, incident response, financial assurance, and safety, among other issues.

While the rule is under development, BOEM and BSEE will continue to develop their carbon sequestration programs to facilitate program implementation upon final rule publication. The 2025 BOEM budget includes \$1.0 million to establish a dedicated carbon sequestration team and

fund environmental studies, scientific research, data collection, and other activities critical to implement the new program. The 2025 BSEE budget includes \$1.5 million to prepare to regulate and oversee safe and effective offshore carbon sequestration activities.

Reclamation Jobs

The 2025 budget continues to provide annual ongoing support for related reclamation activities targeting State and Tribal reclamation needs associated with abandoned hardrock mines, legacy pollution on Interior's lands, and innovative coal mine reclamation projects directly supporting local economic growth. The Administration is committed to remediating the physical and environmental hazards to repair those lands, improve air and water quality, and, at the same time, create jobs in rural communities. The budget includes \$7.0 million, \$2.0 million above the 2024 CR level, for the Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program to support State, Tribal, and Federal efforts to inventory and address legacy sites on their lands. Abandoned hardrock mine sites often pose significant health and safety risks to surrounding areas and are found across the country. Many States, Tribes, and Federal land programs do not have good inventories or strong programs to manage those sites. This program targets the need to build capacity and begin to address this long-standing problem.

On Interior lands, the Department has identified thousands of mines and features that pose safety risks and generate environmental contaminants. USGS, in partnership with BLM, has developed the first national database of current and historical mine features. Tens of thousands of legacy pollution sites are on BLM lands alone, including roughly 56,600 abandoned hardrock mine sites, many of which pose serious threats to the public and the environment. Rural and Tribal communities proximate to historic mining sites feel the physical and environmental impacts of those sites most keenly, but the growing popularity of BLM lands for recreation has placed even more people in harm's way. The budget includes \$58.4 million for BLM's Abandoned Mine Lands and Hazardous Materials Management program, \$1.3 million above the 2024 CR level, which will work in tandem with national Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program efforts to inventory and remediate those sites more broadly on State, private, Tribal, and other Federal agency lands.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) works with States and Tribes to regulate active coal mines to ensure environmental problems do not occur and remediate abandoned coal mines to address health and safety hazards. High-priority abandoned coal mine problems can include clogged streams, acid mine drainage, dangerous highwalls, waste piles or embankments, subsidence, underground mine fires, and polluted water—all of which can pose immediate threats to the public health and safety of communities. OSMRE manages the State and Tribal abandoned mine reclamation grant programs authorized by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act and the BIL. In 2023, OSMRE invested nearly \$1 billion in coal communities, including \$724.8 million made available to 22 States and the Navajo Nation for reclamation as part of the BIL and \$126.5 million available through the traditional, fee-funded, mandatory Abandoned Mine Land (AML) grant program.

OSMRE also manages the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) program, which administers grants to six States and three Tribal Nations to return legacy coal mining sites to productive uses and foster economic and community development. Since 2016, the AMLER program has provided more than \$900 million to America's current and former coal communities

to deliver economic and community development and achieve reclamation of historic abandoned mine sites. The 2025 budget includes \$135.0 million to continue support for AMLER.

In 2025, the OSMRE budget includes \$2.5 million to provide grants to nongovernmental organizations and local and State government agencies to help construct, operate, maintain, and rehabilitate abandoned mine land passive-treatment systems that were previously constructed to address water pollution from mine drainage. This funding helps local communities protect the investments made in passive-treatment systems installed to address water pollution discharges from abandoned mine lands.

Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion of Underserved Communities

Interior is taking steps across the Department to expand equity, diversity, and inclusion beyond day-to-day management policies to incorporate this concept into the delivery of DOI's missions. This commitment is consistent with the Administration's all-of-government approach to advance equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity. Interior's 2025 budget request supports the actions needed to recognize and redress inequities and to proactively advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the Department's workforce and program implementation. The Department seeks to ensure that everyone—no matter their background or ZIP Code—can enjoy the benefits of Interior's mission programs.

The Department of the Interior is committed to maintaining a diverse workforce that reflects the public we serve and sustaining an equitable and inclusive workplace environment. In 2022, the Department published its first Equity Action Plan, which was then updated in 2024. It outlines efforts to advance equity through all DOI operations, remove barriers to equal opportunity, and deliver resources and benefits equitably to the public.

Ongoing Commitment to Diversity and Equity

In support of the Equity Action Plan, the 2025 budget includes program increases of \$2.8 million for the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights; Office of Human Capital; and Office of Collaborative Alternative Dispute Resolution to strengthen Equal Employment Opportunity compliance and advance antidiscrimination protections provided to DOI employees and job applicants.

Increasing Representation and Tribal Co-Stewardship

Reflecting the Administration's commitment to accessibility and inclusion, the budget includes targeted investments to increase representation in the delivery of Interior's core missions. An example is \$3.1 million requested in the NPS budget to support recent or potential new designations that preserve important places and tell the stories of those historically underrepresented. Through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, NPS recently designated three new local parks in urban areas to increase residents' opportunities to connect with the outdoors. The designations include a park in Anchorage, AK, in an area with a high concentration of low-income youth; an aging park in Moorhead, MN, in a community with a high poverty rate; and Roosevelt Park in Buffalo, NY, to address a severely deteriorated multiuse athletics field built in the 1950s in a community with a high poverty rate.

The responsibility for meeting Tribal trust responsibilities and promoting Tribal sovereignty stretches across Interior. The 2025 budget includes targeted increases to expand Tribal co-

stewardship across the Department. The NPS budget includes a \$3.0 million increase to directly support Tribal participation in management of Federal lands and waters with cultural and natural resources of significance and value to Indian Tribes and their citizens, including sacred religious sites, burial sites, wildlife, and sources of Indigenous foods and medicines.

The budget for FWS includes increases totaling \$5.5 million to advance co-stewardship and engagement with Tribes on Indigenous knowledge research, conservation planning, and marine mammal management. Implicit in the Marine Mammal Protection Act is the realization that cooperative management of subsistence harvests between FWS and Alaska Native organizations is more likely to achieve the goals of the act than management by a Federal agency alone. The budget provides strong support to continue to build these relationships with partners such as the Eskimo Walrus Commission and the Alaska Nannut Co-management Council, which is the FWS co-management partner for polar bears.

The NPS 2025 budget proposes \$2.5 million in dedicated funding for Tribal Heritage Grants within the Historic Preservation Fund to support Indian Tribes, Alaska Native villages and corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organizations for the preservation and protection of their cultural heritage in addition to other important ongoing Tribal programs.

The Bureau of Reclamation budget includes \$29.5 million for its Native American Affairs Program, \$9.5 million above the 2024 CR level. The program supports a variety of Reclamation activities with Tribes, including technical assistance, drought assistance, the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Settlements Program, and outreach.

Building Agency Capacity

Interior is strengthening the Department's delivery of core programs and services for the American people. Efforts related to improving Interior's workforce and operations and better leveraging technology and information are underway across the Department.

Interior's Workforce and Infrastructure

Interior is building its capacity for next generation hiring through promotion and expansion of existing and emerging hiring authorities, working closely with the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget. Recently, the Department received approval for use of term appointments excepted beyond general time limits for work in support of the Great American Outdoors Act and direct-hire authority for permitting positions. The Department continues to use direct-hire authority for wildland firefighting, information technology, and STEM positions. Interior also recently increased the hiring of former Public Lands Corps participants, Resource Assistant interns, Knauss Fellows, and military spouses. These programs—when combined with Schedule A hiring for persons with disabilities, Pathways internships, hiring of recent graduates, and the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF) program—will greatly affect the Department's ability to acquire the talent needed to achieve its mission for the next several decades.

The budget includes \$206.0 million to fully support anticipated fixed-cost increases in 2025, assuming a 2.0-percent increase in Federal salaries in FY 2025. The budget also includes \$412.2 million in program baseline capacity funding to reflect increased 2024 fixed-cost requirements

over the 2-year budget comparison. Without full funding for these costs, Interior bureaus and offices will absorb these must-pay costs by cutting funding for program work or staffing.

Another key operational priority for Interior is infrastructure. Interior manages a real property portfolio valued at more than \$400 billion, consisting of more than 130,000 buildings and structures, 65,000 miles of public roads, and a wide variety of other constructed assets. Those facilities serve millions of visitors each year, provide schooling for tens of thousands of Native American children, and are places of work for more than 68,000 DOI employees. Many of Interior's infrastructure assets are priceless for their historical significance. As the steward of those assets, DOI is committed to sustaining and making the lifecycle investments in facilities that are critical to its mission.

The Department continues its evolution toward a lifecycle investment approach to help slow the growth of the maintenance backlog and sustain assets in the long term. This approach includes focusing efforts on preventive and recurring maintenance and selectively targeting assets for modernization and renewal investments, which will enable bureaus to move away from practices that result in an unmanageable backlog. The 2025 budget includes more than \$2.7 billion for lifecycle management of real property.

The Department continues to support the Administration's goals to transition the Federal motor vehicle fleet to clean and zero-emission vehicles. The 2025 budget includes \$13.0 million across bureaus to support the Department's transition of light-duty fleet acquisitions to ZEVs. This funding will be used to conduct fleet planning (including ZEV integration), electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) site evaluations, and EVSE installation. The funding will also support Interior's efforts to right-size its fleet to ensure the Department has efficient, mission-capable vehicles at the right locations and with the right vehicle mix to deliver Interior's missions. Fleet planning will ensure ZEVs are integrated into the overall fleet plan, prioritizing locations and appropriate missions for deployment of those vehicles.

Investing in Technology and Information Management

The 2025 budget includes \$57.8 million, \$3.5 million above the 2024 CR level, for the operation and maintenance of the Financial and Business Management System (FBMS), which supports the Department's core financial and business management requirements. The request provides for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the Department's integrated FBMS system of record, mandatory technology upgrades, improved end-user training, and implementation of zero trust architecture to strengthen FBMS' IT security. Modernizing Interior's core business system helps to ensure a strong administrative backbone and is critical to the continued execution of Interior's mission activities.

Cybersecurity remains a top priority for the Department. Malicious actors continue to present risks to Federal systems and the Nation's critical infrastructure. Interior continues to work to support a consistent level of assurance and risk reduction for the Department at the enterprise level. This effort will provide a solid foundation for an operationally focused enterprise cybersecurity architecture that is resilient and scalable and will allow the Department to respond rapidly to sophisticated and advanced threats.

The 2025 budget includes \$67.8 million for Departmentwide cybersecurity, \$23.5 million above the 2024 CR level. This investment funds high-priority recurring operations and maintenance

costs for incident remediation, provides resources to fight emerging threats, and supports the development of an enterprise cybersecurity architecture. The increase in the 2025 budget enables foundational enterprise capability to implement zero trust principles, which require all devices and users—regardless of whether they are inside or outside an organization’s network—to be authenticated, authorized, and regularly validated before being granted access. Within the increase is \$5.0 million to implement a secure access service edge (SASE) solution to secure access points to meet the required zero trust security and performance standards.

Conclusion

The 2025 President’s Budget for Interior invests in programs which will strengthen our country for all Americans, protect our environment, and ensure future generations continue to not only enjoy, but improve their way of life.

I look forward to doing this work together. Thank you again for having me, and I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.