

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources, we are writing in support of the U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) efforts at reorganization. We are encouraged to see that DOI leadership shares our desire to improve department efficiency, and we applaud the proposed reorganization plans as a first step in transforming the Department for the 21st century.

One aspect of DOI's reorganization proposal includes the establishment of common regions using science-based boundaries to improve management of federal lands and resources. We are hopeful that creating common regions will reduce administrative redundancy, promote resource sharing and decision-making, and increase DOI's focus on the field. To complement these new regions, we understand DOI is also considering the establishment of Department-level managers for each region, whose responsibilities would include resolving conflicts caused by overlapping bureau jurisdictions.

Further, consolidating common functions across DOI bureaus will improve much needed efficiency and effectiveness. Currently, many functions within DOI overlap multiple bureaus, which results in significant bureaucratic hurdles for carrying out the Department's missions for both the public and agency employees. For instance, the permitting process for energy development at the Bureau of Land Management potentially requires consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the National Park Service. Consolidating common functions, such as permitting, will help expedite these lengthy processes, better integrate and enhance quality of work and improve environmental protections.

Finally, as DOI aims to improve the quality of its services to the public, it must consider relocations of staff or bureau management to areas closer to the ground where its policies and work impact communities the most—the western United States. Federal lands consume a substantial portion of western states. In Nevada alone, DOI is responsible for overseeing more than 50 million acres of federal land. Moving some of the decision-making and managerial responsibilities to western areas will not only improve the Department's quality of work, but also, bring more responsive and common sense interactions in its relationship with the communities it interacts with and impacts the most.

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While we understand that your proposed plans are not finalized, thus far they include bold and innovative ideas for reforming a department with diverse and important missions. The Committee is prepared to work with DOI to finalize reorganization plans through Congress' oversight and legislative functions.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with you to achieve a reorganization that truly transforms the Department to better serve the American public.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Rob Bishop
Chairman



Doug Lamborn
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Water, Power and Oceans



Tom McClintock
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Federal Lands



Paul Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Energy and Mineral Resources



Doug LaMalfa
Chairman
Subcommittee on Indian,
Insular and Alaska Native Affairs



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Oversight and Investigations