

Legislative Proposals



The 2020 budget request includes the following legislative proposals to request new authorities and reauthorize expiring legislation.

Forest Management—Dense undergrowth has amassed across much of the public lands, providing fuel for catastrophic wildfires and worsening insect infestation, invasive species, and disease. These conditions adversely impact the Nation’s forests, rangelands and watersheds, and contribute to increased wildfire risk to surrounding communities. Active management of timber and vegetation is necessary to combat these threats, save lives, and protect property. The Administration proposes a package of forest management legislative reforms coupled with a strong 2020 budget to kick start a solution to this serious risk. The proposed legislation would provide categorical exclusions on Interior lands for active forest management, including the ability to harvest dead, dying, or damaged trees and proactive fuels management including the use of fuel breaks. These changes are much needed to help reduce fire risk, improve forest health, minimize after fire impacts, prevent re-burn of fire impacted areas, and improve safety for wildland firefighters.

Public Lands Infrastructure Fund—Interior and Agriculture manage an infrastructure asset portfolio with over \$18 billion in deferred maintenance, which includes structures, trails, roads, utility systems, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. To address these needs, the budget includes \$6.5 billion over 5 years for a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund. The Fund will support infrastructure improvements through an allocation of 70 percent for national parks, 10 percent for national forests, 10 percent for wildlife refuges, five percent for BIE schools, and five percent for lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The Fund will be supported by the deposit of 50 percent of all fed-

eral energy development revenue that would otherwise be credited or deposited as miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury over the 2020–2024 period, subject to an annual limit of \$1.3 billion. Interior and Agriculture would prioritize projects, monitor implementation, and measure results. This investment will significantly improve many of America’s most visible, visited, and treasured places.

Recreation Fee Program—The budget proposes to reauthorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which expires in September 2020. As a precaution, the budget also proposes appropriations language to provide a 2-year extension of FLREA through September 2022. The revenues collected by the Department of the Interior from these recreation fees—\$406 million in 2018—are an important source of funding to enhance the visitor experience through maintenance, operations, and improvements to recreation facilities on public lands.

Bureau of Reclamation Title Transfer—The Administration proposes legislation to better facilitate title transfer of Reclamation facilities to non-Federal entities when the transfers are beneficial to all parties. This proposal will allow local water managers to make their own decisions to improve water management at the local level, while allowing Reclamation to focus management efforts on projects with a greater Federal nexus.

Cancel Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act Account Balances—The budget proposes to cancel \$230.0 million in unobligated balances from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) program over a 3-year period. SNPLMA, enacted in 1998, authorizes the Bureau of Land Management to sell specified public lands around Las Vegas, NV, and retain the proceeds for capital improvements and various conservation, restoration, and recreational purposes in the State. The SNPLMA program is not proposed for elimination; the proposal will only reduce a portion of the more than \$536 million in remaining balances and will not affect any projects currently identified for support.

EPAct Geothermal Payments to Counties—The budget proposes to restore the disposition of Federal geothermal leasing revenues to the historical formula of 50 percent to the States and 50 percent to the U.S. Treasury by repealing Section 224(b) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. That section changed the distribution to direct 50 percent to States, 25 percent to counties, and 25 percent to the Federal government. The 25 percent share for county payments is inconsistent with long-standing revenue sharing practices and reduces the return to Federal taxpayers from geothermal leases on Federal lands. The proposal is estimated to result in savings of \$40 million over 10 years.