

A Report on
Possible Instances of Corruption at Ryan Zinke's Interior Department



This document contains research on possible instances of corruption that could be happening at the Interior Department in the first year of Ryan Zinke's time as Interior Secretary.

It was just one year ago when then-Congressman Ryan Zinke sat before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources explaining how he would manage the nation's public lands and resources under his leadership if confirmed as the Secretary of the Interior. He made a lot of [promises](#) to be balanced and transparent.

After Zinke's confirmation, Western Values Project began documenting some of the decisions made at the Department of Interior (DOI) and unraveling the connections to the administration and new political appointees through the Department of Influence [website](#). Under Zinke's leadership, the tangled web of revolving-door political appointees has led to an extraordinary level of corruption and insider deals. From filing political posts with former lobbyists and swamp creatures to giving industry trade groups preferential access and treatment, it seems no special favor will go unanswered.

Several articles have already covered Zinke's ethical lapses and poor judgement as Secretary. He's [billed taxpayers](#) for flying on an oil executive's private jet, his [wife](#), who has accompanied him on taxpayer-funded travel and meetings, was using Interior staff as her own personal assistants, and Zinke's former Political Action Committee is under [investigation](#) for potential campaign finance violations. The list could go on; indeed it does on his Department of Influence profile [page](#). This new report highlights some less reported decisions made at Interior that seem to be more than just a coincidence.

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Ryan Zinke and Xtreme Concepts

Ryan Zinke, in March 2017, met with Landon Ash, the CEO of a defense contractor called Xtreme Concepts. Ash was an early financial supporter of Zinke's congressional campaign and hosted a campaign fundraiser for him in Alabama in 2014. Xtreme Concepts is a government contractor with business before Department of the Interior. In June 2017, the company sold ammunition to the National Park Service.

Ryan Zinke, in March 2017, had a 1-hour meeting with Landon Ash. Zinke's official schedule gives no description of the meeting. [["Secretarial Schedule,"](#) Department of the Interior, March 2017]

Landon Ash is the CEO of the Alabama-based defense contractor Xtreme Concepts. In 2014, he hosted a fundraiser for Zinke's 2014 Congressional campaign in Birmingham, Alabama. When Zinke won his seat in Congress, Ash said, "several SEALs who now work for Xtreme served under Ryan Zinke, so we're especially pleased to be able to call him 'Congressman' now." [Cliff Sims, "[Alabama played little-known role in electing SEAL Team Six Commander to Congress,](#)" YellowHammer, 01/09/15]

In 2014, Landon Ash donated \$2,600 to Ryan Zinke's campaign in the primary and general elections. [Search Results for "Ash, Landon," CQ Political MoneyLine, accessed 12/22/17]

A federal government purchase order signed June 15, 2017 shows that Xtreme Concepts sold small arms ammunition to the National Park Service for \$3,625.60. The ammunition is to be used for training in Acadia National Park. [["National Park Service Purchase Order for Xtreme Concepts,"](#) National Procurement Data System, accessed 12/22/17]

A federal government purchase order signed February 16, 2016 shows that Xtreme Concepts sold utility vehicles to the National Park Service for \$13,390. [["National Park Service Purchase Order for Xtreme Concepts,"](#) National Procurement Data System, accessed 12/22/17]

Ivanka Trump/ Jared Kushner and Twin Metals

Principal Deputy Solicitor of the Interior Department Daniel Jorjani issued a legal decision allowing Twin Metals Minnesota to renew mining leases for their copper and nickel mining operation near Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Twin Metals is a subsidiary of Antofagasta PLC, a Chilean mining company that coincidentally is owned by the family of Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump's landlord.

In December 2016, the Obama administration decided not to renew leases "for a copper and nickel mining operation on the border of Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness," "while federal officials launched a formal review of the operation's environmental

impact." Obama administration "Interior officials expressed concern that any potential spill from nearby mining could cause 'serious and irreplaceable harm'" to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which is "the only large lake-land wilderness in the National Wilderness Preservation System." [Juliet Eilperin, "[Trump administration renews mining leases near Minnesota wilderness, reversing Obama](#)," *Washington Post*, 12/23/17]

The company applying to renew the leases was Twin Metals Minnesota, a "a subsidiary of the Chilean mining giant Antofagasta PLC." Antofagasta belongs "to the family of billionaire Andrónico Luksic, who rents a home to Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, in Washington." [Juliet Eilperin, "[Trump administration renews mining leases near Minnesota wilderness, reversing Obama](#)," *Washington Post*, 12/23/17]

Daniel Jorjani, on December 22, 2017, issued a legal decision allowing Twin Metals Minnesota to renew the leases. "Jorjani's decision came after a concerted lobbying effort by Twin Metals and its parent company." In 2017, Jorjani met with Antofagasta and the lobbying firm that represents Twin Metals. [Jimmy Tobias, "[Meet the Former Koch Adviser Slashing Conservation Safeguards at the Department of the Interior](#)," *Pacific Standard*, 01/10/18]

David Bernhardt and Cadiz

In October 2017, the Bureau of the Land Management announced a change of administrative opinion that could make millions for Cadiz Inc., a recent client of former lobbyist and current Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt.

In October 2017, the Bureau of Land Management "removed a major obstacle that had long stalled a project designed to pump groundwater from the Mojave Desert to communities in Southern California." Reversing guidance issued by the Obama administration's Bureau of Land Management in 2015, the Trump administration's BLM sent a letter "to Cadiz Inc., the company behind the pipeline, stating that the company did not need federal permission to begin construction." [Elizabeth Shogren, "[Trump's BLM removes a hurdle for controversial Cadiz project](#)," *High Country News*, 10/17/17]

Since 1992, Cadiz, Inc. has been trying to pump desert groundwater from Cadiz Valley in the Mojave Desert to Los Angeles. While at the Washington, D.C. firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Shreck LLP, Bernhardt lobbied directly for Cadiz as they attempted to clear the way for the controversial project to go through. Bernhardt's former firm stands to gain 200,000 shares in Cadiz, Inc. stock should the project be completed, estimated to be worth over \$2.5 million. [Jayson O'Neill, "[Is the Deputy Secretary at Interior doing favors for former clients?](#)" *Western Values Project*, 10/18/17]

David Bernhardt and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (GDCD) is "spearheading" a project to "diver[t] Missouri River water to supplement water supplies in the Red River Valley." Proponents say the project is necessary "to meet the demands of residents and businesses," but environmental and fiscal concerns have long plagued the project.

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (GDCD) is "spearheading" a project to "diver[t] Missouri River water to supplement water supplies in the Red River Valley," in North Dakota. [["Plan to pipe Missouri River water to Red River Valley gains momentum," Pioneer Press, 01/29/14\]](#)]

Proponents say the project is necessary to provide a "steady source of water... to meet the demands of residents and businesses" of the "growing population in the Red River Valley." [Nick Smith, "Water for the Red River Valley," *Bismarck Tribune*, 03/23/14]

The project "has faced many obstacles over the decades, including environmental opposition and the federal budget crunch." Critics have described the Red River Valley Water Supply Project as "costly and unneeded" and at one point in 1990 it was described as "possibly the most criticized water project in the nation." [Stan Stelter: "[Letter: Nix the Red River Valley Water Supply Project](#)," *Grand Forks Herald*, 11/25/16, Philip Brasher, "Lujan To Look For Alternatives On North Dakota's Garrison Project," Associated Press, 03/28/90, and Patrick Springer, "[Red River Water Supply Project funding faces new hurdle](#)," *Bismarck Tribune*, 03/28/16]

There has been "stiff resistance" to the idea of "carrying Missouri River water to the Red River," in particular from "Canada and Minnesota over concerns about impacts to water quality." "Shifting water into the Red River Valley has sparked fears of invasive species and added pollution in Manitoba" and concerns that the transfer could "bring major risks to Manitoba waterways." A Canadian water expert said that "'the water heading north would contain sulfate, chloride and possible invasive species, as well as additional phosphorous and nitrogen, two nutrients that fuel algae growth on Lake Winnipeg.'" [Patrick Springer, "[Red River Valley water supply project may stall](#)," *Inforum*, 03/21/15, and Joyanne Pursaga, "[Manitoba experts fear N.D. water plan harmful here](#)," *Winnipeg Sun*, 08/11/17]

Opposition also comes from Missouri and other states downstream on the Missouri River opposed to removing water from the Missouri, who are concerned about the quantity of water that would be transferred. [Patrick Springer, "[Red River Valley water supply project may stall](#)," *Inforum*, 03/21/15]

There are two options being considered to deliver water from the Missouri River to the Red River Valley. The first plan limits "as much contact with the federal government as possible," and would place water pipes in such a way that they could be "grandfathered into existing

federal standards for water pipelines." However, an alternate plan, estimated to be \$170 million cheaper, is to use the McClusky Canal to draw Missouri River water. This second plan had been "discarded" until Donald Trump took office, but now "project supporters are cautiously optimistic of reopening" talks about the McClusky Canal with the Trump administration. As of July 2017, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District had "requested permission from the U.S. Department of the Interior to use the McClusky Canal."

In 2007, the Bureau of Reclamation, "after approximately eight years of study," released an environmental impact statement that concluded that "a pipeline" would "be the best way to address the growing water needs in the Red River Valley." Since then, the project was "under consideration for more than a decade" but "a final decision from the federal Interior Department on the project was never issued. In fall 2012, state officials began to move toward an alternative pipeline route without federal funding." [Nick Smith, "[Red River Valley pipeline moves away from federal process](#)," *Bismarck Tribune*, 03/07/16]

This state plan, which would limit "as much contact with the federal government as possible," would "place water pipes from the Missouri River to the Sheyenne River along a path south of Highway 200" which could "be grandfathered into existing federal standards for water pipelines and not be subject to potential future rule changes. This would include construction of an outlet along the Sheyenne River, attaining land easements along the route and completing the permitting process." This first plan has "an estimated cost of \$800 million to \$1.1 billion."

However, a second "older, discarded alternative" plan is also "being reconsidered. While past efforts to move Missouri River water east by utilizing the McClusky Canal were unsuccessful, project supporters are cautiously optimistic of reopening those talks with President Donald Trump's administration. There is an estimated project savings of \$170 million, if use of the canal became a viable alternative." [Nick Smith, "[Large strides expected for water projects](#)," *Bismarck Tribune*, 05/22/17]

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District wants to get started on the project soon because the Trump administration's "environmental and natural resource policies are supportive of projects like the water supply pipeline." North Dakota officials fear that a delay "could mean adverse policy decisions from a future administration, including a broader definition of wetland, which could make it much more difficult to get an approved pipeline route." [Patrick Springer, "[ND officials: Optimism builds over \\$1 billion water pipeline to serve Red River Valley, central ND](#)," *WDAY*, 11/06/17]

As of July 2017, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District had "requested permission from the U.S. Department of the Interior to use the McClusky Canal to draw Missouri River water, as it would result in \$171 million in capital savings to the RRVWSP." Ken Royse, the Garrison Diversion board chairman, said that, "We are hopeful the Department of the Interior will grant our request to use the McClusky Canal for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project," as using the canal is "the most cost-effective option." ["[RRVWSP 2017-2019 Work Plan presented to Water Topics Overview Committee](#)," *Foster County Independent*, 07/31/17]

David Bernhardt, before he was Deputy Secretary of the Interior, provided "legal services" to the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District. He had been in contact with GDCD since January 2016; GDCD hired Bernhardt's lobbying firm, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck "to assist with" the Red River Valley Water Supply Plan in March 2016.

David Bernhardt is currently the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department. Before holding this position, he was a "top executive" at the law and lobbying firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck. On his Public Financial Disclosure Report that he filed before becoming Deputy Secretary, Bernhardt wrote down Garrison Diversion Irrigation District as a source of "compensation exceeding \$5,000 in a year." He said he provided GDCD "legal services." [Jesse Paul, "[Colorado's David Bernhardt is sworn into post as deputy Interior secretary after contentious nomination](#)," *Denver Post*, 08/01/17, and David Bernhardt, [OGE Form](#), 2017]

In February 2016, the Red River Valley Committee of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District discussed "the process used for selecting national legal counsel to assist with legal issues concerning the RRVWSP. A selection process took place with an appointed Ad Hoc/Review Committee to review the submitted proposals and conduct interviews. Two firms were selected for interviews by video conference, which took place on January 6. The Review Committee recommended hiring Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, and the full board approved the recommendation at its January 7 board meeting. The chief attorney, who the committee has been corresponding with is David Bernhardt. Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm, reviewed the retainer agreement with the committee." [[Red River Valley Committee Meeting Minutes](#), Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, 02/26/16]

In March 2016, the board of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District unanimously consented to hire Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck to "assist with the RRVWSP." Bernhardt had a two-day meeting with the conservancy district in Carrington, North Dakota on March 1 and 2, 2016. [[Executive Committee Meeting Minutes](#), Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, 03/10/16]

David Bernhardt oversaw Donald Trump's Interior Transition team in November 2016. By January 30, 2017, Bernhardt was rumored to be nominated for Interior Deputy Secretary. Months later, on April 7, 2017, Bernhardt participated in a Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Board of Directors meeting, during which GDCD received a "Report of Washington, DC, Consulting Firm." In this report, Bernhardt "gave a summary of the DOI meeting" to GDCD.

David Bernhardt "was in charge of Trump's Interior transition team for a short time after the November presidential election." [Robin Bravender, "[Bush-era official seen as front-runner for No. 2 slot](#)," *Greenwire*, 01/30/17]

As early as January 30, 2017, David Bernhardt was being rumored as the "front-runner to become Interior's next deputy secretary." [Robin Bravender, "[Bush-era official seen as front-runner for No. 2 slot](#)," *Greenwire*, 01/30/17]

On April 7, 2017, the Board of Directors of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District had a meeting in Carrington, North Dakota. In the meeting, there was a "Report of Washington, DC, Consulting Firm," in which "David Bernhardt, Emily Sullivan and Luke Johnson of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, participated in the meeting via conference phone" and "Mr. Bernhardt gave a summary of the DOI meeting." ["[Board of Directors Meeting Minutes](#)," Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, 04/06/17-04/07/17]

On April 28, 2017, David Bernhardt was nominated Deputy Secretary of the Interior. Just days prior, on April 17, 2017, his former lobbying firm had registered to lobby the Department of the Interior on behalf of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District. Bernhardt was confirmed Deputy Secretary of the Interior on July 24, 2017 and sworn into office on August 1, 2017.

On April 28, 2017, three weeks after he gave updates to the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, David Bernhardt was nominated Deputy Secretary of the Interior. [Department of Interior, [Press Release](#), 04/28/17]

On April 17, 2017, just days before David Bernhardt's nomination, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, Bernhardt's former lobbying firm, registered Garrison Diversion Conservancy District as a lobbying client. The general description of GDCD's business listed on the lobbying disclosure form is to "develop and ensure adequate water supply for North Dakota." ["[Lobbying Registration](#)," United States Senate Lobbying Disclosure Database, 05/31/17]

David Bernhardt was confirmed Deputy Interior Secretary on July 24, 2017. He was sworn into office on August 1, 2017. [Jesse Paul, "[Colorado's David Bernhardt, Trump's nominee for Interior Department post, is confirmed by Senate](#)," *Denver Post*, 07/24/17, and Jesse Paul, "[Colorado's David Bernhardt is sworn into post as deputy Interior secretary after contentious nomination](#)," *Denver Post*, 08/01/17]

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck lobbied the Department of the Interior in the second and third quarters of 2017. The lobbying reports filed said that Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck lobbied the Department of Interior on "issues related to water delivery in North Dakota," on behalf of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District. Luke Johnson, William McGrath, and Emily Sullivan are the lobbyists who have lobbied Department of Interior on behalf of GDCD. ["[Second Quarter Lobbying Report for Garrison Diversion Conservancy District](#)," United States Senate Lobbying Disclosure Database, accessed 11/17/17, and "[Third Quarter Lobbying Report for Garrison Diversion Conservancy District](#)," United States Senate Lobbying Disclosure Database, accessed 11/17/17]

In August 2017, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District general manager Duane DeKrey said he expected the district's project of "moving water from the Missouri River to eastern North Dakota" to "get to yes," and cited GDCD's employment of David Bernhardt, who had since been "named deputy secretary of Interior." [Mike Jacobs, "[Jacobs: More work, new life in Garrison project](#)," WDAY, 08/01/17]

Interestingly, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District did not ask to be reimbursed from the Lake Agassiz Water Authority for Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck's legal services for the period from July 1, 2017 to September 30, 2017. On GDCD's billing statement for July 1, 2017 to September 30, 2017, the "Legal Services- Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck" balance is "\$0.00." ["[Billing Statement](#)," Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, 10/09/17]

In what appears to be a somewhat unusual move for a water district, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District officials have met with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at least twice in the past year, once in March and once in October. The goal of the October meeting was to "update Zinke on the water project and to garner his support for federal approval of supplying water out of the McClusky Canal for municipal, rural, and industrial uses." In the meeting, Secretary Zinke said "'as of today we are taking a fresh look at this project,'" and he "told officials attending the meeting to expect a response from the Department of the Interior in the near future." One GDCD board member described the meeting with Secretary Zinke as "'a very good meeting;'" after this meeting, the GDCD expects that the diversion project will receive approval from the federal government.

In March 2017, after David Bernhardt was already rumored to be nominated for Deputy Secretary of the Interior, "Duane DeKrey, general manager of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District" and "other Garrison Diversion officials were in Washington, D.C.... to talk with the North Dakota congressional delegation and officials with the U.S. Department of the Interior." "DeKrey said conversations with Ryan Zinke, secretary of the Interior Department, went well." There is no mention of DeKrey or GDCD officials meeting with Secretary Zinke in Zinke's March calendar on the Department of Interior website. [Robin Bravender, "[Bush-era official seen as front-runner for No. 2 slot](#)," *Greenwire*, 01/30/17, Keith Norman, "[Moving water across Nd](#)," Red River Valley Water Supply Project, 03/25/17, and [Ryan Zinke March Calendar](#), Department of Interior, accessed 11/20/17]

On October 25, 2017, officials with the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District had a meeting with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. The meeting was "orchestrated" by Congressman Kevin Cramer; when Secretary Zinke and Congressman Cramer were in Congress, the two "worked closely" together. The goal of the meeting was to "update Zinke on the water project and to garner his support for federal approval of supplying water out of the McClusky Canal for municipal, rural, and industrial uses." In the meeting, Secretary Zinke said "'as of today we are taking a fresh look at this project,'" and he "told officials attending the meeting to expect a response from the Department of the Interior in the near future." [Kevin Cramer, [Press Release](#), 10/25/17, Kevin Cramer, [Tweet](#), accessed 11/27/17, and Mike Jacobs, "[Jacobs: More work, new life in Garrison project](#)," WDAY, 08/01/17]

After meeting with Secretary Zinke, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District now expects "a letter from the federal government approving" the diversion project. Ken Vein, who is on the board of the GDCD, described the October meeting with Zinke as "'a very good meeting.'" [Patrick Springer, "[ND officials: Optimism builds over \\$1 billion water pipeline to serve Red River Valley, central ND](#)," WDAY, 11/06/17]

On Thursday, December 14, 2017, the Executive Committee of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District will meet. Two of the items on the agenda are a "Bureau of Reclamation Report" and a "McClusky Canal Update." ["[Meeting Notice-Executive Committee](#)," Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Executive Committee, accessed 11/20/17]

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum met with Secretary Zinke in September 2017. In the meeting, Governor Burgum "advocated for approval of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project intake permit from the Garrison Diversion's McClusky Canal."

On September 7, 2017, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum met with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. In the meeting, "Burgum advocated for approval of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project intake permit from the Garrison Diversion's McClusky Canal." Secretary Zinke's calendar describes the meeting as a "Meeting with Governor of ND," and the "description" says "Red River Valley Water Supply Project - Water intake, McClusky Canal & the Bureau of Reclamation" among other topics covered. Alan Mikkelsen, the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, was also in the meeting. [Ann Dalrymple, "[Burgum makes pitch for federal drought relief](#)," *Bismarck Tribune*, 09/07/17, and [Ryan Zinke September Calendar](#), Department of Interior, accessed 11/20/17]

Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Andrea Travnicek, when she worked for North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple, said that "'Everybody knows that getting water to the Red River Valley is important.'"

Andrea Travnicek is currently a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the Interior Department. When she worked as North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple's "senior policy adviser for natural resources," Travnicek said that "'Everybody knows that getting water to the Red River Valley is important.'" [Department of Interior, [Press Release](#), 07/12/17, and Patrick Springer, "[Red River Valley water supply project may stall](#)," Inforum, 03/21/15]

David Bernhardt and Eni Petroleum

In August 2017, Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt included Eni Petroleum, North America on ethics recusal, writing that, absent a waiver, he would be "recused from particular matters" in which Eni was involved. In November 2017, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement approved Eni's application to drill in the Arctic, making Eni the first company to get approval for drilling in federal Arctic waters since 2015.

Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, on August 15, 2017, wrote in his Ethics Recusal that he would "not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which" he knew that he had "a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter" or in which he knew "that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver."

In his recusal, David Bernhardt includes a "list of recusals" in which "absent a waiver" until August 3, 2019, he pledges to be "recused from particular matters involving specific parties in which any of the following entities either is a party or represents a party to the matter." One of the entities he includes in this list is Eni Petroleum, North America. Eni U.S. Operating Co. Inc is the North American subsidiary of Eni Petroleum Co. Inc. [[David Bernhardt Ethics Recusal](#), Department of the Interior, 08/15/17, and "[Company Overview of Eni US Operating Co. Inc.](#)", Bloomberg, accessed 12/21/17]

In November 2017, Interior's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement "approved an application Eni U.S. Operating Co. Inc. to drill exploratory wells in the Beaufort Sea." When drilling begins, it will "be the first in federal Arctic waters" since 2015. Environmental groups are "strongly opposed to Arctic Ocean drilling." [Dan Joling, "[Eni receives federal permit for U.S. Arctic offshore drilling](#)," *Associated Press*, 11/28/17]

David Bernhardt/ James Cason and MGM Resorts International

Secretary Ryan Zinke's Interior Department is currently being sued by the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes for refusing to make a decision on allowing the tribes to open a new casino in Connecticut. The delay in approving the new casino "stands to benefit politically connected gambling giant MGM Resorts International," which is planning on opening a competing casino nearby.

In September 2017, the Interior Department refused to sign off on the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes' "plans for a third Connecticut casino." While "federal law gives Interior just 45 days to issue a yes-or-no verdict after a tribe submits proposed changes to its gaming compact with a state... the department declined to make any decision in this case." Acting Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Michael Black wrote in a letter to the tribes that "approving or disapproving the amendment to their gaming compact was 'premature and likely unnecessary,' and said Interior had 'insufficient information' to make a decision."

The Interior Department's delay in approving the new casino "stands to benefit politically connected gambling giant MGM Resorts International." "The proposed Connecticut casino would sit on non-tribal land just across the border from a billion-dollar casino that MGM is planning in Springfield, Mass."

The Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes are now suing the Interior Department, in an attempt to "force approval of the contract." The tribes are "arguing that the law does not allow

Interior to refuse to render a verdict." [Nick Juliano, "[Zinke's agency held up Indians' casino after MGM lobbying](#)," *Politico*, 02/01/18]

MGM Resorts International has been using "Florida-based Trump fundraiser Brian Ballard" and former Interior Secretary Gale Norton as lobbyists. Ballard met with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke as part of a "social visit" in August 2017. Gale Norton, who, as George W. Bush's Interior Secretary was current Interior Associate Deputy Secretary James Cason's former boss, recently got Cason a gig as a keynote speaker at the Colorado Oil & Gas Association's Annual Energy Summit in Denver in August 2017. Additionally, Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt's old lobbying firm has been lobbying on behalf of an MGM affiliated company.

On March 02, 2017, "Florida-based Trump fundraiser Brian Ballard" registered as lobbyist for MGM Resorts International. On August 29, 2017, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke "invited several lobbyists for MGM to join him and other guests for a social visit on his office balcony, which overlooks the National Mall." [[Ballard Partners Lobbying Registration](#), United States Senate Lobbying Disclosure Act Database, 03/02/17; Nick Juliano, "[Zinke's agency held up Indians' casino after MGM lobbying](#)," *Politico*, 02/01/18]

On October 25, 2017, Former Interior Secretary Gale Norton registered as a lobbyist for MGM Resorts International. The specific lobbying issues listed on her registration are "Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Connecticut gaming amendments." [[Norton Regulatory Strategies Lobbying Registration](#), United States Senate Lobbying Disclosure Act Database, 10/25/17]

When Interior Associate Deputy Secretary James Cason worked at George W. Bush's Interior Department, Gale Norton, as Secretary of the Interior, was his boss. Cason has been involved at tribal issues while at Secretary Ryan Zinke's Interior Department. On May 12, Cason sent a "technical guidance letter to the tribes" acknowledging "that the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act provides for a 45-day review period for compact amendments and that the department may disapprove them only for violating the act, other federal laws or trust obligations to the tribes." This interpretation would seem to indicate that, in May, Interior had "seemed inclined to agree with the tribes' interpretation of the law." [Adam Federman, "[The Plot to Loot America's Wilderness](#)," *The Nation*, 11/16/17; Nick Juliano, "[Zinke's agency held up Indians' casino after MGM lobbying](#)," *Politico*, 02/01/18]

Sometime prior to August 14, 2017 Gale Norton contacted James Cason about the "opportunity" to attend a Colorado Oil & Gas Association's 29th Annual Energy Summit in Denver, Colorado on August 23, 2017.

On August 14, 2017, "on the recommendation" of Gale Norton, Colorado Oil & Gas Association sent James Cason received a formal invitation to attend the summit. Rachel McNerney, COGA's Programs & Administrative Coordinator, said that COGA would be "thrilled" to have Associate Deputy Secretary Cason participate. COGA cced Gale Norton, using her gmail address, on Cason's invitation. [OS-2017-001063 (Sage Grouse Comms from Industry), Page 425]

James Cason "spoke alongside Gale Norton" at the event. According to the agenda Norton and Cason participated in moderated discussion together at COGA's keynote luncheon on August 23, 2017. [OS-2017-001063 (Sage Grouse Comms from Industry), Page 295; Adam Federman, "[The Plot to Loot America's Wilderness](#)," *The Nation*, 11/16/17]

Additionally, in 2017, Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt's former lobbying firm, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP, lobbied on behalf of MGM Public Policy LLC "on issues including gaming." MGM Public Policy LLC is "an affiliated company" of MGM Resorts International. [Nick Juliano, "[Zinke's agency held up Indians' casino after MGM lobbying](#)," *Politico*, 02/01/18]

James Cason and Booz Allen Hamilton

James Cason is Associate Deputy Secretary at the Interior Department. He previously worked at consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton. On November 30, 2017, Booz Allen Hamilton received a \$63,072 contract from the Interior Department.

James Cason is currently Associate Deputy Secretary at the Interior Department. From 2010 to 2012, Cason worked as "a Senior Member of the Energy, Transportation and Environment Team" at Booz Allen Hamilton. [Department of Interior, FOIA Response, 08/24/17, "[James Cason](#)," Bloomberg, accessed 12/18/17, and Interior Department, [Press Release](#), 05/26/17]

On November 30, 2017, Booz Allen Hamilton received a \$63,072 contract from the Interior Department for a National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System. The Interior Department awarded this contract after a full and open competition, but Booz Allen Hamilton's offer was the only offer Interior received for this contract. ["\$63,072 Federal Contract Awarded to Booz Allen Hamilton," *Targeted News Service*, 12/03/17, and "[BOOZ ALLEN HAMILTON INC 140D7018F0020](#)," *USA Spending*, accessed 12/07/17]

James Cason and the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma

In 2016, Associate Deputy Secretary of the Interior James Cason "earned \$50,000 in less than five months" for "consulting" services he provided to the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma. In June 2017, at the National Congress of American Indians Mid-Year Conference, Cason "said Quapaw Chairman John Berrey was working with an group of fellow leaders about ways in which tribes could exercise more control of their own lands," and encouraged other tribal leaders to contact Berrey with ideas. In August 2017, Chairman Berrey had a video call with Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. There is no indication of what the call was about.

In 2016, the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma hired James Cason, who is currently the Associate Deputy Secretary at Interior, "as an 'independent contractor.'" "For his 'consulting' work," Cason "earned \$50,000 in less than five months but didn't provide additional information about the extent of his 'research' for the tribe."

In June 2017, at the National Congress of American Mid Year Conference and Marketplace Connecticut," James Cason "said Quapaw Chairman John Berrey was working with an group of fellow leaders about ways in which tribes could exercise more control of their own lands. Though the group appears to be ad-hoc in nature, Cason urged others to contact Berrey with ideas and 'help us figure out a way that we can be more responsive.'" [["Quapaw Tribe paid \\$50,000 to senior Trump administration official for 'research,'" Indianz.com, 12/15/17, and 2017 Agenda In Brief, NCAI, accessed 01/23/18\]](#)]

On Thursday, August 24, 2017, John Berrey had a video call with Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. There is no indication of what the video call was about. According to Bernhardt's calendar, the only other person in the meeting was Gareth Rees, who appears to be one of Bernhardt's schedulers. [[David Bernhardt Calendar](#), Department of Interior, 08/17]

Todd Willens and Feld Entertainment

From 2000 to 2002, Todd Willens was Vice-President of Government Relations for Feld Entertainment, the parent company of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. Willens is now the Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department, and from July 18 to September 30, 2017, he was also the Acting Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. In this position, he supervised the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Todd Willens, who has been described as an "Endangered Species Act foe," is currently Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department. Previously, from January 2000 to January 2002 Willens was the Vice President of Government Relations for Feld Entertainment, the parent company of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. While at Feld Entertainment, Willens "lobbied against animal-welfare rules." Willens began working in Trump's Interior Department in July 2017. [Keturah Hetrick, "[Endangered Species Act foe takes top Interior post](#)," Legistorm, 07/06/17, Legistorm Profile for [Todd Willens](#), accessed 12/18/17, and Department of Interior, [Press Release](#), 07/12/17]

On July 18, 2017, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke issued a Secretarial Order "to temporarily redelegate authority" for "Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks to Todd Willens, Assistant Deputy Secretary." In this capacity, Willens was serving as the Acting Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks and was responsible for "exercis[ing] secretarial direction and supervision over the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service." According to the order, Willens' authority as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks lasted until September 30, 2017. [["Order No. 3345, Amendment No. 6,"](#) Department of the Interior accessed via cayuganation.gov, 07/18/17, and "[Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior](#)," Our Public Service, accessed 12/18/17]

After Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey closed in May 2017, Feld Entertainment applied for an Endangered Species Permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to export fifteen big cats to their original owner in Germany.

After Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus closed in May 2017, fifteen of the companies trained big cats—lions, tigers and one leopard, were "awaiting permanent new homes." Feld Entertainment, Ringling Bros.' parent company, applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for an Endangered Species Permit, asking USFWS "for permission to send the captive-bred animals back to Germany to their owner and original trainer, Alexander Lacey." [Michael Doyle, "[Where do the big cats prowl when the circus closes?](#)" *Energy & Environment*, 07/21/17]

"Import and export permits for endangered species are issued by the Division of Management Authority," which is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Division of Management Authority "works under the Endangered Species Act to conserve and protect endangered and threatened species and their habitats." [Kristin James, "[Feld Entertainment applies for permit to send tigers to German circus](#)," *Orlando Weekly*, 05/26/17, and "[Division of Management Authority](#)," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, accessed 12/18/17]

Feld Entertainment's application said that, if the permit was granted, the animals would be "involved in public exhibition," upon their return to Germany. The application "kicked off a furious debate," and most of the comments posted on the Federal Register website "beg[ged] FWS not to grant the permit."

The application noted that "prior to coming to the United States, these animals were involved in public exhibition and education in Europe and they will do so again upon their return to Germany." If the animals were returned to Germany, they would "be confined to 215 square feet for every four animals." [Michael Doyle, "[Where do the big cats prowl when the circus closes?](#)" *Energy & Environment*, 07/21/17]

Feld Entertainment's application "kicked off a furious debate." Over 100,000 comments were "posted on the Federal Register website, most begging the FWS not to grant the permit." If the animals were returned to Germany, they would "be confined to 215 square feet for every four animals." [Emily Atkin, "[For Sale: Endangered Tigers. Will Perform for Food](#)," *New Republic*, 07/03/17, and Michael Doyle, "[Where do the big cats prowl when the circus closes?](#)" *Energy & Environment*, 07/21/17]

On August 18, 2017, while Todd Willens was the Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks and as such was overseeing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USFWS "granted Feld a permit to re-export the big cats."

On August 18, 2017, shortly after Secretary Zinke had assigned Todd Willens Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which was under Willens' supervision, "granted Feld a permit to re-export the big cats." [Michael Doyle, "[Feds join inquiry into shooting of Suzy the circus tiger](#)," *Greenwire*, 09/12/17]

Scott Cameron and R3 Government Solutions LLC

Scott Cameron is Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Policy, Management and Budget at Interior. From May 19, 2017 until July 28, 2017, Cameron was Acting Assistant Secretary, Water and Science for the Department of Interior, a capacity in which he oversaw the Bureau of Reclamation.

Scott Cameron has been serving as the Interior Department's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget since May 14, 2017. [FOIA Response, Department of the Interior, 08/24/17, and Department of Interior, [Press Release](#), 05/26/17]

On May 19, 2017, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke issued a Secretarial Order "amending the temporary delegation of authority" for "Assistant Secretary - Water and Science to Scott Cameron." In this capacity, Cameron was serving as the Acting Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science and was "responsible for overseeing" the Bureau of Reclamation. Cameron was delegated the authority for Assistant Secretary – Water and Science until July 28, 2017, when Secretary Zinke issued a new Secretarial Order re-delegating that authority to Andrea J. Travnicsek. ["[Order No. 3345, Amendment No. 5](#)," Department of the Interior, 05/19/17, Ariel Wittenberg, "[Infrastructure, flood bills set to advance](#)," *Energy & Environment*, 06/19/17, Department of the Interior, [Press Release](#), 11/14/17, and "[Order No. 3345, Amendment No. 7](#)," Department of the Interior, 07/28/17]

Before working at the Interior Department, Scott Cameron worked at a consulting company called R3 Government Solutions, first as a Senior Vice-President and more recently as an Executive Advisor. According to one post on his LinkedIn, he left the company in January 2017.

Before working at the Interior Department, Scott Cameron was affiliated with R3 Government Solutions LLC, an organization that offers "consulting services," and according to its website, "provides government with powerful transformational capabilities in business process, human capital and information technology & security to drive successful program execution and mission achievement." ["[Company Overview of R3 Government Solutions LLC](#)," Bloomberg, accessed 12/07/17, and "[Home](#)," R3 Government Solutions, accessed 12/07/17]

From at least 2011 to October 2013 Scott Cameron was the Senior Vice-President of R3 Government Solutions. Starting in November 2013, he was an Executive Advisor for R3 Government Solutions. According to one post on Cameron's LinkedIn profile, he left R3 Government Solutions in January 2017. ["[Managing in an unsettled environment](#)," *Ask Magazine*, Spring 2011, "[Leadership](#)," R3 Government Solutions, accessed via the wayback machine, 10/13/13, "[Leadership](#)," R3 Government Solutions, accessed via the wayback machine, 11/13/13, and LinkedIn Profile for [Scott Cameron](#), accessed 12/07/17]

On September 18, 2017, the Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation awarded a \$111,694 federal contract to R3 Government Solutions LLC for the "Writing of Standardized PDs."

On September 18, 2017, the Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation awarded R3 Government Solutions LLC in Arlington, Virginia a "\$111,693.54 federal contract... for 'Writing of Standardized PDs.'" The Bureau of Reclamation awarded the contract after a "full and open competition," but R3 Government Solutions' bid was the only offer received. ["Contract Award: R3 Government Solutions Wins Federal Contract for 'Writing of Standardized PDs,'" *US Fed News*, 09/19/17, and "[R3 GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS, LLC INR17PD00971](#)," *USA Spending*, accessed 12/07/17]

Doug Domenech and Compass Minerals

In October 2017, a month after he started his job as Secretary of Insular Affairs, Doug Domenech "bought more than \$15,000 of stock in a mining company that does business with the Interior Department."

At the end of October 2017, a month after he was confirmed as Secretary of Insular Affairs, Doug Domenech "purchased between \$15,001 and \$50,000 worth of shares in Compass Minerals, a Kansas-based company that produces salt, potash and fertilizers. Its two salt production areas are in the Great Salt Lake in Utah and salt caverns in Louisiana.

Compass has won contracts with the departments of Interior, Defense, Transportation and Veterans Affairs going at least as far back as 2011 for chemicals and road clearing." In 2017, "Interior paid the company \$15,000." [Ben Lefebvre, "Interior official buys shares in salt mine company that does business with department," *Politico Pro*, 02/05/18]

Tara Sweeney and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation

If approved, the "controversial Liberty project," which has been opposed by environmental groups, would be a nine-acre gravel island that would be the "nation's first oil production platform in federal Arctic waters." The project is in the "final stages of permitting" with Department of Interior's Bureau of Offshore Energy Management.

Arctic Slope Regional Corporation is currently involved with "the controversial Liberty project in the Arctic." The Liberty project "would involve construction of a nine-acre" artificial gravel island, "drilling wells to tap underwater oil reserves and building an underwater pipeline more than five miles long to send the oil to onshore facilities." Development costs for the project "are estimated at \$1 billion," and Liberty is expected to "produce 50,000 to 80,000 barrels per day if it proceeds." ["[Hilcorp Only Bidder in Alaskan Lease Sale](#)," *Maritime Executive*, 06/21/17, Elizabeth Harball, "[Industry, environmental groups speak out as Hilcorp paves the way for](#)

[drilling in federal Arctic waters](#)," Alaska Public Media, 10/11/17, and Tim Bradner, "[ConocoPhillips, Hilcorp moving ahead aggressively with production and exploration](#)," *Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman*, 11/18/17]

Environmental groups and opponents have criticized the project because oil "spills are inevitable and cannot be cleaned up in icy Arctic water." If the project moves forward, it will be the first drilling in federal Arctic waters since 2015 and the "nation's first oil production platform in federal Arctic waters." [Dan Joling, "[Company seeks to build island off Alaska for Arctic drilling](#)," *Associated Press*, 10/19/17, and Elizabeth Harball, "[Industry, environmental groups speak out as Hilcorp paves the way for drilling in federal Arctic waters](#)," Alaska Public Media, 10/11/17]

"A final decision" on the Liberty Project "is in the hands of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke." The development of Liberty "is now in the final stages of permitting with the U.S. Bureau of Offshore Energy Management." [Dan Joling, "[Company seeks to build island off Alaska for Arctic drilling](#)," *Associated Press*, 10/19/17, and Tim Bradner, "[ConocoPhillips, Hilcorp moving ahead aggressively with production and exploration](#)," *Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman*, 11/18/17]

Tara Sweeney, President Trump's nominee for Department of Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, is currently Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC). Ten percent of the Liberty project is owned by Arctic Slope Exploration, an ASRC subsidiary.

Tara Sweeney is currently working as Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. On October 17, 2017, President Trump nominated Sweeney for Assistant Secretary of Interior, Indian Affairs. Sweeney is still waiting to be confirmed by the Senate. ["[ASRC Management](#)," Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, accessed 12/12/17, White House, [Press Release](#), 10/17/17 and "[Tracking How Many Key Positions Trump Has Filled So Far](#)," *Washington Post*, accessed 12/12/17]

Ten percent of the Liberty project is owned by Arctic Slope Exploration, which is a subsidiary of Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. The rest of Liberty is owned by Hilcorp and BP, who own 50 percent and 40 percent of the project, respectively. [Tim Bradner, "[ConocoPhillips, Hilcorp moving ahead aggressively with production and exploration](#)," *Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman*, 11/18/17]

John Tahsuda and United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria of California and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

On January 22, 2018, the Bureau of Indian Affairs allowed nine tribal gaming compacts to take effect in California. While "allowing a compact to take effect is not an unusual event in and of itself," the publication of the January 22, 2018 notice "increases the number of 'deemed approved' compacts in California by a significant amount." Two tribes whose

compacts were allowed to take effect, United Auburn Indian Community and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, were former lobbying clients of the Acting Secretary Indian Affairs John Tahsuda.

On January 22, 2018, the Bureau of Indian Affairs published a notice in the Federal Register announcing that BIA had "allowed nine tribal gaming compacts to take effect in California."

"The agreements are considered legal, but only to the extent their provisions are consistent with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, according to a notice published in the Federal Register on Monday. The Secretary of the Interior otherwise did not outright approve or outright the nine compacts."

"The Secretary took no action on the compacts within 45 days of their submission,' the notice signed by John Tahsuda, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs for the Trump administration, read."

Two of the compacts that were allowed to take effect were the United Auburn Indian Community and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. Before John Tahsuda was the Acting Secretary of Indian Affairs, he lobbied the federal government on behalf of both the United Auburn Indian Community and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

While "allowing a compact to take effect is not an unusual event in and of itself," the publication of the January 22, 2018 notice "increases the number of 'deemed approved' compacts in California by a significant amount. In all of 2016 and 2017, the BIA allowed nine compacts to take effect, so the number of 'deemed approved' compacts has doubled with the publication of just one notice." [["Bureau of Indian Affairs allows nine gaming compacts to take effect," Indianz.com, 01/22/18, Search for John Tahsuda, U.S. Senate Lobbying Disclosure Act Database, accessed 12/04/17; "Indian Gaming; Tribal-State Class III Gaming Compacts Taking Effect in the State of California, 3015-3016 \[2018-01058\]," Federal Register, 01/22/18\]](#)]

Downey Magallanes and Peabody Energy

Downey Magallanes oversaw the "controversial review of more than two dozen national monuments."

Downey Magallanes "had several one-on-one meetings" with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to discuss his "controversial" national monuments review, "in the days before Aug. 24, [2017] when Zinke submitted his draft report to the White House." She also "traveled with Zinke to several monuments, including Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears, as part of his monuments 'listening tour.'"

The review resulted in President Donald Trump "gutt[ing]" Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments. [Chris D'Angelo, "[The Daughter Of An Ex-Coal Executive Helped Lead Trump's National Monuments Review,](#)" *Huffington Post*, 12/23/17]

Magallanes' father is Frederick Palmer, who was previously the senior vice president of government relations at "coal-giant" Peabody Energy.

Frederick Palmer "spent 37 years in the coal industry, 14 years of them as the senior vice president of government relations at Peabody."

Palmer said that he was "well aware and extremely proud of his daughter's work at the agency, including her lead role in the monuments review, and supports the administration's recent rollbacks." [Chris D'Angelo, "[The Daughter Of An Ex-Coal Executive Helped Lead Trump's National Monuments Review](#)," *Huffington Post*, 12/23/17]

Palmer claimed that his daughter "'recused herself from anything having to do with Peabody,'" but she had a meeting with Peabody Energy at least once since she started working at Interior.

"Schedules show Magallanes was among three Interior officials who joined Zinke on a June 5 video call with representatives of her father's former employer — roughly a month after she and Zinke's visit to Grand Staircase-Escalante." [Chris D'Angelo, "The Daughter Of An Ex-Coal Executive Helped Lead Trump's National Monuments Review," *Huffington Post*, 12/23/17]

Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, which President Trump gutted as a result of the review Magallanes helped lead, is "coal-rich."

While Peabody Energy "does not appear to have any historic or newfound interest in mining the Grand Staircase-Escalante area, which contains vast deposits of coal. Still, it's a resource that struggling coal companies like Peabody might see as a future opportunity." [Chris D'Angelo, "[The Daughter Of An Ex-Coal Executive Helped Lead Trump's National Monuments Review](#)," *Huffington Post*, 12/23/17]

Steve Wackowski and Olgoonik Oilfield Services

On February 2, 2018, Alaskan oil exploration services and equipment company Olgoonik Oilfield Services received a \$16,500 contract from the Interior Department. Steve Wackowski, Interior's Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs, previously worked for a "joint venture" between Olgoonik Oilfield Services and Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation.

On May 30, 2017, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced that Steve Wackowski would be the Interior's Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs ment. In this role, which is based in Anchorage, Wackowski serves as Secretary Zinke's Alaska "'point person.'" Wackowski previously worked for a joint venture between Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation and Olgoonik Oilfield Services, providing "aerial remote sensing services for the oil and gas industry in Alaska." [Brittany Patterson, "[Zinke names Alaska adviser](#)," *Energy & Environment*, 05/31/17; LinkedIn Profile for

[Steve Wackowski](#), accessed 06/21/17; Liz Ruskin, "[Former Murkowski campaign manager selected for Interior job](#)," *Alaska Public Media*, 05/30/17]

"Olgoonik Oilfield Services delivers the services, equipment and personnel needed to optimize oilfield exploration, production and environmental programs." [[Home](#), Olgoonik Oilfield Services, accessed 02/05/18]

On February 2, 2018, Olgoonik Oilfield Services received a \$16,500 contract from the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management for "the supply of fuel." [Marlyn Vitin, "Federal Contracts Awarded to Companies in Alaska (Feb. 3)," *Targeted News Service*, 02/03/18]

The only other federal contract Olgoonik has ever received was a \$22,838 contract, later readjusted down to \$14,024.95, from the Interior Department's US Geological Survey for "Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations." Olgoonik received this contract on March 06, 2017, before Wackowski worked at Interior. [[Olgoonik Oilfield Services](#), USA Spending, accessed 02/05/18]

Mike Noel and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument

Mike Noel, a Utah Representative who owned land within Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM), met with Secretary Zinke to discuss new boundaries for GSENM. Noel's land was later cut out of GSENM under the revised monument boundaries.

Utah Representative Mike Noel failed to disclose that he had "hundreds of acres of farmland near the monument and the parcel within, all owned by a company he didn't list by its registered name on conflict of interest forms." One 40-acre parcel of Noel's "appears to have been carefully cut out of the monument under the reduction order signed by President Donald Trump on Dec. 4 2017 at Zinke's recommendation." Mike Noel met with Secretary Zinke earlier in 2017 when Kane County leaders presented Interior with proposals for redrawn boundaries for Grand Staircase. [Jayson O'Neill, "[Report: Utah Rep. Noel to benefit personally and professionally from new reduced Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument boundary](#)," Western Values Project, 02/12/18; Taylor Anderson, "[Rep. Mike Noel's company owned land inside Grand Staircase-Escalante while he fought against the monument](#)," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 02/14/18; Brian Maffly, "[National ethics group calls for investigation of Utah Rep. Mike Noel 'for failing to disclose conflicts of interest'](#)," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 02/20/18]

Unnamed Interior Official Gave Preferential Treatment To Former Associates

In February 2018, Interior's Office of the Inspector General published a report that found that an unnamed former Interior official had allegedly said he "'intended to assist two American Indian tribes he had previously worked with'" and that he allegedly encouraged the hiring of his former business associates.

In February 2018, Interior's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) published a report that found that a "former senior Interior Department official made subordinates "uncomfortable" with his talk of hiring relatives and helping American Indian tribes he once worked with."

Although the official has now left the Interior Department, the IG report found that, "'In the short time he worked for the DOI, the senior official made several comments that created an appearance to other DOI employees that he was planning to give preferential treatment to entities he had relationships with.'"

The official "'allegedly told three DOI employees that he intended to assist two American Indian tribes he had worked with before he came to work for the DOI.'"

He also "allegedly encouraged the hiring of people he had worked with previously on a guaranteed tribal loan that ended up in default," when he gave a subordinate "'the names of a few candidates to consider for potential employment'" and "'two of these candidates had been the senior official's business associates.'" [Michael Doyle, "[Ex-official's comments alarmed staffers — IG](#)," *Greenwire*, 02/28/18]

Industry Groups and Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Oil and gas industry groups asked the Interior Department to issue guidance on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) months before the Interior Department issued a legal decision on the MBTA that changed the interpretation of the law and was favorable to oil and gas companies.

On December 22, 2017, the Interior Department issued a legal decision declaring that the "Migratory Bird Treaty Act [MBTA] applies only to purposeful actions that kill migratory birds, and not to energy companies and other businesses that kill birds incidentally." Industry groups appear to have been engaged on this issue with Interior months before the ruling. In August 2017, Western Energy Alliance sent a letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service asking that "FWS... work with the administration" to produce "guidance that MBTA does *not* give the FWS to regulate incidental take for migratory birds." Independent Petroleum Association of America lobbyist Samantha McDonald seems to have known that the Interior Department was considering revising their interpretation of the MBTA in November, when she emailed Deputy Director for the Office of External Affairs Timothy Williams asking if there was "any word" on the MBTA opinion. When Interior issued their legal decision on December 22, both WEA and IPAA applauded the decision. [Laurel Wamsley, "[Accidentally Killing Birds Isn't A Crime, Says Trump Administration](#)," NPR, 12/27/17; Daniel Jorjani, [M-37050](#), Department of Interior, 12/22/17; OS-2017-001063 (Sage Grouse Comms from Industry), Page 315-323; OS-2017-001063 (Sage Grouse Comms from Industry), Page 421; [Press Release](#), Independent Petroleum Association of America, 12/22/17; [Press Release](#), Western Energy Alliance, 12/22/17; Dino Grandoni and Juliet Eilperin, "[17 former wildlife officials urge Interior to rethink easing rules against killing birds](#)," *Washington Post*, 01/12/18]

Oil and Gas Industry Influence on DOI's Sage Grouse Report

See the full Western Values Project's analysis of the oil and gas industry's influence on the Interior Department's Sage Grouse report [here](#).