

Senate Appropriations Committee

[Review of the President's FY 25 Budget Request for the Dept. of Interior](#)

8 May 2024

Witness: Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Dept. of Interior

Highlights:

- The Senate Appropriations Committee members primarily asked Sec. Haaland about the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs law enforcement, and National Parks.
- Tribal food and ag was discussed in response to questions about Tribal fisheries and Tribal sovereignty.

Highlights of [Sec. Haaland's testimony](#):

- The Department's FY2025 budget amounts to \$18b, with a net discretionary authority of \$17.8b, a 3% increase from the 2024 continuing resolution level. An additional \$360m is allocated for wildfire suppression. \$14.8b in permanent funding is also available. Within the requested increase, \$206m for fixed-cost increases, while \$412.2m to cover 2024 fixed costs not included in the CR base. The 2025 President's Budget includes mandatory funding through the Great American Outdoors Act, with \$1.6b for deferred maintenance projects and \$681.9m for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs.
- The 2025 Legislative proposals are:
 - Wildland Firefighting Workforce
 - Indian Water Rights Settlements
 - Transfer Authority for Implementation of BIL projects
 - Tribal contract support costs
 - Payments for Tribal leases
 - Land and water conservation fund program for Tribes
- The Dept. of Interior's plans to further strengthen Tribal nations are:
 - Honoring Tribal Sovereignty
 - Investing in Tribal communities
 - Advancing Indian Education
 - Meeting Financial Tribal Trust Responsibilities
- The Dept. of Interior's plans to address climate change and build resilience:
 - Wildfire management
 - Drought and ongoing water challenges
 - Building resilient communities
 - Healthy public lands, water, and wildfire
- The Dept. of Interior's plans to create jobs and meet energy and environmental challenges:
 - Developing a robust, clean energy economy

- Conventional energy
- Reclamation jobs
- The Dept. of Interior's plans to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion of underserved communities:
 - Ongoing commitment to diversity and equity
 - Increasing representation and Tribal co-stewardship
- The Dept. of Interior's plans to building agency capacity:
 - Interior's workforce and infrastructure
 - Investing in technology and information management

General Notes:

- Tribal Sovereignty Payments
 - Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) discussed the importance of reclassifying Tribal sovereignty payments, also known as contract support costs and 105 L Building leases, as mandatory funding in the President's budget. He highlighted Supreme Court decisions affirming the federal government's obligation to pay Tribes for these administrative overhead and leasing costs. Senator Merkley noted the significant increase in these payments and the potential impact on BIA and BIE programs if they are not reclassified. Secretary Haaland confirmed that these payments are required by law and emphasizes their importance for Tribes, stating that the Department will follow the law.
- Tribal Fisheries
 - Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) discussed the importance of prioritizing funding opportunities, particularly for the DOI Fish Hatchery Operations Program, which supports fish-producing Tribes in hatching, rearing, and stocking programs. He highlighted the program's role in fishery recovery efforts, boosting commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, and ecosystem benefits. Secretary Haaland mentioned the significant funding provided to Great Lakes Tribes for restoration projects through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and ongoing efforts to keep stakeholders informed of progress.
 - Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) raised concerns about Tribal consultation regarding Sherwin leasing decisions, particularly for Tribes with fishing rights for Pacific salmon. Secretary Haaland emphasized the Department's commitment to Tribal consultation, stating that [the Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#) engages with Indigenous communities and has a designated liaison for Tribal engagement. She noted efforts to support capacity building and meaningful engagement with Tribal communities, including partnerships with wind companies. Secretary Haaland acknowledged recent agreements between the industry and Tribes and highlighted her personal engagement with Tribes on offshore wind issues. Senator Murray

expressed continued concerns about Tribal consultation, prompting Secretary Haaland to offer further follow-up with her staff.

- Senator Jeff Merkley discussed the Klamath Gone Fishing hatchery project aimed at saving two species critical to Tribal culture and nutrition in the Klamath River Basin. He provided an update on the progress of the hatchery expansion, with construction projected to be completed by spring or summer of 2025. Senator Merkley emphasized the importance of completing the hatchery to save the species from extinction. He also raised concerns about stalled negotiations on the Western Oregon Operating Plan (WOOP) for wildfire preparation and requested Secretary Haaland's commitment to completing the negotiation before the current agreement expires.