



OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INSPECTOR GENERAL'S STATEMENT

Summarizing
the Major
Management
and Performance
Challenges Facing
the U.S. Department
of the Interior

FISCAL YEAR 2023





OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NOV 02 2023

Memorandum

To: Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior

From: Mark Lee Greenblatt 
Inspector General

Subject: Final Report – *Inspector General’s Statement Summarizing the Major Management and Performance Challenges Facing the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fiscal Year 2023*
Report No. 2023–ER–012

In accordance with the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000, we are submitting what we have determined to be the most significant management and performance challenges facing the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) for inclusion in the DOI’s *Agency Financial Report* for fiscal year 2023. We have organized this report around three main challenge areas—“Managing Spending,” “Delivering Core Services,” and “Ensuring Health and Safety”—but note that some topics span multiple challenge areas.

If you have any questions, please call me at 202–208–5745.

cc: Rachael Taylor, Chief of Staff, DOI
Mili Gosar, Deputy Chief of Staff, DOI
Bivan Patnaik, Acting Director, Office of the Executive Secretariat, DOI
Preston Heard, Deputy Director, Office of the Executive Secretariat, DOI
Tonya Johnson, Deputy Chief Financial Officer and Director, Office of Financial Management, DOI



Source: U.S. Department of the Interior

CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION
AND APPROACH 1**

**CHALLENGE AREA:
MANAGING SPENDING 2**

Contract and Grant Oversight 2

Deferred Maintenance 5

Infrastructure Spending 7

**CHALLENGE AREA:
DELIVERING CORE SERVICES 9**

Cybersecurity 9

Data Quality 10

Energy 12

Water and Power Management 15

Responsibility to Native Americans 17

**CHALLENGE AREA:
ENSURING HEALTH
AND SAFETY..... 19**

Wildfire Management 19

Law Enforcement 20

Climate Change Response 22



Source: iStockphoto

INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

In accordance with the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000, we are reporting what we have determined to be the most significant management and performance challenges facing the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). Pursuant to the statute, this report is required to be included in the DOI's *Agency Financial Report*.

As in recent years, our fiscal year (FY) 2023 report is organized in three sections: "Managing Spending," "Delivering Core Services," and "Ensuring Health and Safety." In each section, we summarize topics relevant to the challenge area. Some topics span multiple challenge areas, serving as a reminder of the complex nature of the DOI's mission. For example, the DOI must balance competing priorities—to take one example, it must consider different and potentially competing land uses such as conservation, energy production, recreation, forestry, and habitat protection. These substantive priorities often overlap across multiple DOI bureaus, sometimes leading to a decentralized approach. For example, we continue to recognize the DOI's response to climate change as a cross-cutting issue that presents challenges related to how the DOI fulfills its responsibility to Tribal communities; manages land use, water resources, and wildlife and their habitats; and adapts to the frequency and severity of natural disasters.

This report is primarily based on our work and general knowledge of the DOI's programs and offices as well as the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reviews, including the GAO's [High Risk List](#). We link to our reports related to the identified challenge areas throughout this document.

The Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) oversight responsibilities are commensurate with the full range of the DOI's own programs and operations. These oversight responsibilities are reflected in the audits, evaluations, inspections, and investigations that we undertake. For example, we set forth our anticipated work in our [Oversight Plan for FYs 2023 and 2024](#). The DOI itself implements its programs and operations through its 11 bureaus:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
- Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
- Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE)
- Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

In addition to these bureaus, there are a number of offices that fall under the Office of the Secretary and other components, including the Office of Natural Resources Revenue, Office of Wildland Fire, Office of Law Enforcement and Security, and Office of Insular Affairs.

CHALLENGE AREA

Managing Spending

According to the DOI's FY 2024 budget request, Congress appropriated the DOI \$16.9 billion¹ in FY 2023 to continue carrying out its wide-ranging programs and operations under the following categories: addressing climate challenges and building resilience; creating jobs and meeting energy and environmental challenges; strengthening Tribal Nations; leveraging science across the DOI; promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion of underserved communities; and building agency capacity. In addition to those appropriated funds, in the last several years the DOI has received billions of dollars in supplemental funds from disaster relief appropriations and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Additionally, the Great American Outdoors Act and the Inflation Reduction Act established mandatory funding for DOI; a significant portion

of these funds remains available for future use. We discuss these funds in more detail below.

The DOI manages 20 percent of the Nation's lands and waters—many of which have historic or cultural significance—including approximately 43,000 buildings and 83,000 structures valued at more than \$400 billion, such as visitor centers, schools, power generating facilities, housing, campgrounds, fire stations, roads, trails, and water and wastewater treatment plants. To maintain these assets and accomplish its mission, the DOI must manage significant spending, including contracts and financial assistance in the form of grants and cooperative agreements. Below, we summarize the DOI's challenges, plans, and progress in managing spending related to contract and grant oversight, deferred maintenance, and infrastructure.

Contract and Grant Oversight

One key responsibility for the DOI is managing its significant funding, which is often accomplished through the use of contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements. According to USAspending.gov, the DOI awarded \$7.8 billion in contracts and approximately \$10.8 billion in financial assistance totaling \$18.6 billion in FY 2023 (through August 30, 2023).

Our FY 2023 work has continued to identify substantial risks regarding contract oversight, pre-award processes, and post-award monitoring. For example, in a recent [audit](#), we found that Indian Affairs did not conduct an adequate

Our previous work has consistently identified inadequate oversight and failure to follow Federal regulations for contracts and grants that were awarded using emergency funds. For example, in our 2022 audit, [The Omaha Tribe Did Not Account for CARES Act Funds Appropriately](#), we found that the Tribe did not maintain the required supporting documentation for hazard pay and incurred costs that were unreasonable and not allocable to CARES Act funding. As a result, we questioned a total of \$292,662 (29 percent) of the transactions selected for testing.

¹ U.S. Dep't of the Interior, *Fiscal Year 2024 The Interior Budget in Brief*, at A-18 (Mar. 2023). Specific amount can be found under "2023 Enacted," "Net, Current Authority (w/o transfers, supplementals, and cap adjustment)."

price analysis when adding labor categories and rates to a time-and-materials contract, creating a risk that it may have paid and may continue to pay unreasonably high prices. In addition, our investigative work has also identified instances of [misused grant funds](#), [wire fraud and embezzlement of public funds](#), [major fraud against the United States](#), [money laundering](#), and [procurement fraud](#).²

The DOI received \$2.4 billion in disaster relief funding in FY 2023. These funds are available for emergency response activities related to drought, wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. Financial awards for emergency response activities are generally high risk because they are awarded

quickly and often without competition, therefore requiring enhanced oversight. For example, in a recent [audit](#) of supplemental funds the DOI awarded to the U.S. Virgin Islands' government for hurricane recovery, we identified internal control deficiencies, such as the lack of written procedures for determining cost allowability, inadequate policy for allocating compensation costs, and inadequate controls of information systems. The DOI will continue to face challenges managing its contracts and grants to prevent fraud, waste, and mismanagement, particularly with the significant increase in funding opportunities. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to contract and grant oversight on the next page.



Source: iStockphoto

²The U.S. Department of Justice's press releases summarize the results of these investigations and our participation in those matters.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses contract and grant administration throughout the DOI; for example, we are reviewing the administration of the Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program and the contract oversight for guard services at the Statue of Liberty National Monument.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

Internal Control Within the U.S. Virgin Islands' Accounting System for U.S. Department of the Interior Hurricane Supplemental Funds (Report No. 2020–CGD–003)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Can Improve the Closeout Process for Public Law 93–638 Agreements (Report No. 2020–CGD–060)

Indian Affairs Acquisitions Can Improve Administration and Oversight of Contract No. 140A1620C0007 (Report No. 2022–CGD–010)

Issues Identified With Target Range Grant, North Atlantic-Appalachian Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Report No. 2021–ER–029–A)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Great Plains Region Did Not Oversee CARES Act Funds Appropriately (Report No. 2021–FIN–032)

Progress Made by the U.S. Department of the Interior in Implementing Government Charge Card Recommendations, Fiscal Year 2022 (Report No. 2023–FIN–006)

Summary: Nonprofit Official Misused \$233,636 in Federal Funds (Report No. 22–0157)

The Omaha Tribe Did Not Account for CARES Act Funds Appropriately (Report No. 2021–FIN–032–B)

Availability of Administrative Funds for Land and Water Conservation Fund State Side Grants (Report No. 2021–ER–026–A)

The Bureau of Indian Education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Need To Improve Accountability for Federal Funds (Report No. 2020–CGD–001)

The Three Affiliated Tribes Did Not Account for CARES Act Funds Appropriately (Report No. 2021–FIN–032–C)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Could Expand Its Use of Contracting Flexibilities and Should Establish an Acquisition Policy for Future Disasters (Report No. 2020–CGD–006)

The National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey Did Not Consistently Obtain or Maintain Evidence of Management Review and Approval of Modifications Made to Construction Contracts (Report No. 2020–FIN–007)

Fulfillment of Purchase Card Orders (Report No. 2021–FIN–022)

Pandemic-Related Contract Actions (Report No. 2021–FIN–010)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Needs To Improve Support for Price Reasonableness Determinations and Justifications for Sole-Source Awards (Report No. 2020–FIN–008)

Summary: Alleged Misappropriation of Grant Funds by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (Report No. 20–0118)

Summary: Company Improperly Billed Hours to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant Overseen by the DOI (Report No. 20–0431)

Lessons Learned From Oversight of the Coastal Impact Assistance Program Grants (Report No. 2020–ER–057)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 71 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 34 are closed.

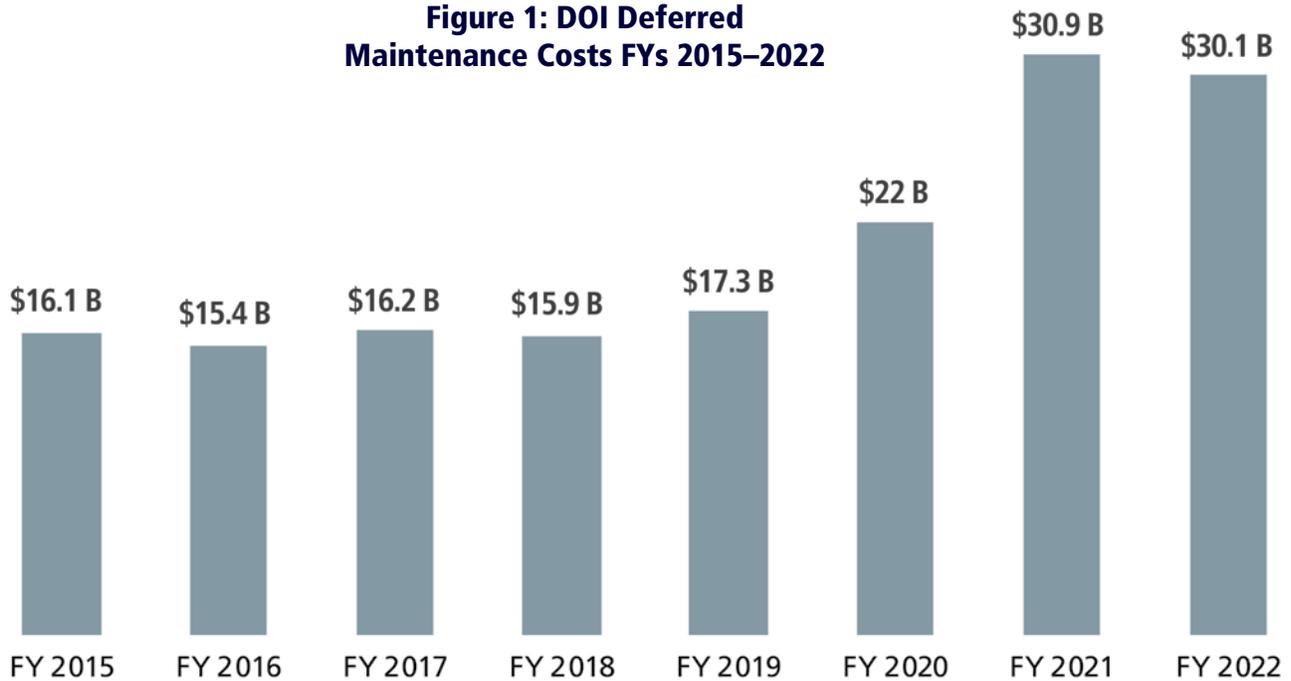


Deferred Maintenance

As we have previously reported, DOI officials have stated³ for years that the DOI has not had sufficient funding for annual maintenance for its varied resources and assets—including national parks, historic sites, and Indian schools—and that this continues to pose a risk to public and employee health and safety. When maintenance

and repairs are not completed on schedule, work may be delayed, or deferred, until later—the DOI refers to this as deferred maintenance. According to the DOI’s *Agency Financial Reports*, the estimated cost of its deferred maintenance has slightly decreased from \$30.9 billion in FY 2021 to \$30.1 billion in FY 2022 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: DOI Deferred Maintenance Costs FYs 2015–2022



In August 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), Pub. L. No. 116–152, was enacted and authorized up to \$1.9 billion per fiscal year from 2021 to 2025 to reduce deferred maintenance on public lands and at Indian schools through the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. As of June 30, 2023, the DOI had obligated more than \$2.01 billion in GAOA funding and reported that it had initiated 276 projects under the GAOA Legacy Restoration Fund with an estimated budget of \$3.82 billion to address the DOI’s deferred maintenance

and launched a [website](#) with additional project information. In FY 2023, the NPS also stated that it plans to begin or continue work using funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub. L. No. 117–169), which was enacted in August 2022, to address \$200 million of the maintenance backlog that is not otherwise eligible for deferred maintenance funding under the GAOA. For FY 2024, the DOI has proposed 56 GAOA Legacy Restoration Fund projects to address deferred maintenance for the BLM, FWS, NPS, and BIE.

³For example, in 2013, the NPS Director testified that the NPS would need to spend nearly \$700 million per year on deferred maintenance to hold the backlog at a steady level. He went on to state that funding in the previous fiscal year fell short of the necessary amount, so every park had to decide “which facilities to repair and which ones to defer.” *Senate Hearing 113–82, Supplemental Funding Options To Support The National Park Service* (2013), at 20. Similarly, the GAO reported in 2022 that officials from the DOI stated that maintenance funding had not kept up with costs and had led to increases in deferred maintenance and repairs. GAO Report *GAO–23–106124, Real Property Deferred Maintenance* (2022), at 5.

Our work found that the DOI and its bureaus face challenges accurately and reliably estimating the cost of deferred maintenance. Without accurate estimates, the DOI will not have the quality information required to make informed decisions when addressing deferred maintenance. Further, the GAO [reported](#) on the substantial increases in deferred maintenance across several Federal agencies, including the DOI, in October 2022. It noted that agencies reported several factors that contributed to the increases, such as funding constraints, cost increases, deliberate deferral, and changes to how the estimates are collected or calculated. We expect that the DOI will continue to face challenges ensuring that it can promptly deploy funding, prioritize projects, maintain staffing and resource capacity, and establish sufficient oversight. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to deferred maintenance below.

In our 2023 evaluation, [The National Park Service Faces Challenges in Managing Its Deferred Maintenance](#), we found that the NPS was unable to effectively identify and manage its deferred maintenance, in large part due to inaccurate and unreliable data. The NPS is responsible for some of the Nation's most treasured resources and irreplaceable cultural and historical sites, scenic byways, and monuments. However, the NPS has struggled to keep up with its growing maintenance needs, and its self-identified deferred maintenance has nearly doubled since FY 2016 despite its number of assets remaining relatively unchanged. These findings are particularly pressing given the influx of funding intended to address this issue. We acknowledge the NPS' efforts to make improvements to its approach and that some changes have, in fact, already been implemented.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses the NPS' Great American Outdoors Act construction cost estimates, the BIE's deferred maintenance prioritization process, and the NPS' management of biosolids and wastewater deferred maintenance.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

[The National Park Service Faces Challenges in Managing Its Deferred Maintenance](#) (Report No. 2020–CR–066)

[Review of the U.S. Park Police's Communications Recording System in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area](#) (Report No. OI–SI–21–0171–W)

[The U.S. Department of the Interior Needs a Strategy To Coordinate Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act](#) (Report No. 2021–CR–031)

[Verification Review – Recommendations 1–15, 19, and 21 From the Evaluation Report Titled Condition of Indian School Facilities \(C–EV–BIE–0023–2014\)](#) (Report No. 2020–CR–026)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 15 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 2 are closed.



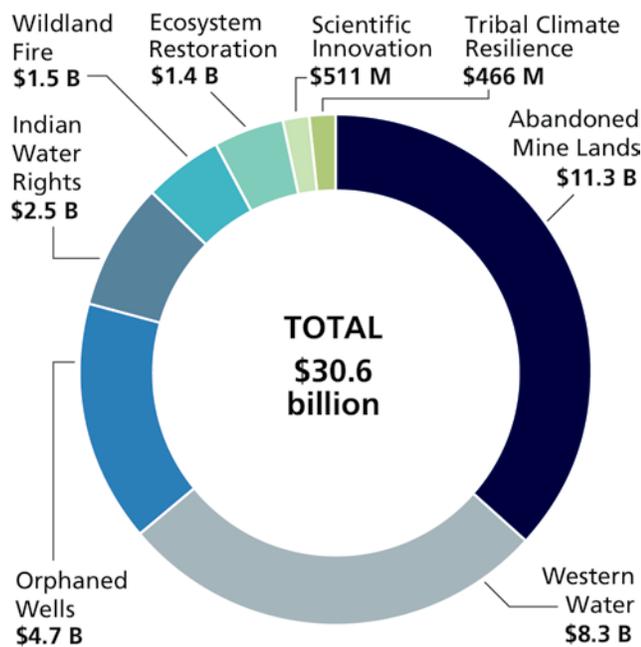
Infrastructure Spending

As the steward for America’s public lands, the DOI manages critical infrastructure that it describes as essential to protect natural resources, support American jobs, and provide water to the Western United States.⁴ In November 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Pub. L. No. 117–58, was enacted with the intent of addressing aging infrastructure. The legislation provides more than \$30 billion (see Figure 2) to the DOI to address legacy pollution, invest in water and drought resilience, assist with wildland fire management, restore critical habitats, and help communities prepare for extreme weather events. The DOI also received funds from the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides an additional \$6.6 billion in similar programs as the IIJA aimed at water management and conservation efforts in high-drought areas.



Source: iStockphoto

Figure 2: DOI IIJA Appropriations by Major Program⁵



Since the passage of the IIJA in November 2021, the DOI [reported](#) that it has invested more than \$7.3 billion in over 1,300 projects Nationwide; hired more than 450 staff across bureaus and offices to implement new programming; and hosted stakeholder meetings to hear directly from States, Tribes, and local communities to determine where funding is needed most. Additionally, in FY 2023, the DOI’s bureaus and offices submitted spending plans to Congress that covered the major programs shown in Figure 2. These plans included information on the program at issue and on the funding allocation, prior accomplishments, planned efforts, and milestones. In July 2023, the DOI launched an interactive [map](#) to track the IIJA-funded projects across the country. The DOI continues to face challenges in ensuring it can promptly deploy the funding, maintain staffing and resource capacity, produce reliable information, and establish appropriate program controls. For example, in a recent [inspection](#), we reviewed the extent to which the BLM had made progress on implementing recommendations from our 2018 report on the idle well program. We found that the BLM had yet to fully implement six recommendations that would help ensure the program had sufficient internal controls. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI’s progress in implementing recommendations related to infrastructure spending in the box on the next page.

⁴The BOR considers the following States to be the “Western United States”: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

⁵Numbers rounded.

Abandoned mine lands (AMLs) are lands, waters, and surrounding watersheds where minerals were extracted and reclamation, or restoration of the land, has not occurred. AMLs present serious threats to human health and the environment. The Federal Mining Dialogue, which is a partnership of Federal environmental and land management agencies, estimated that there may be as many as 500,000 abandoned coal mines in the United States. The OSMRE will distribute \$10.9 billion of the \$11.3 billion appropriated IJA funds from the reclamation fund for AML projects. It will do so through grants to 22 eligible States and the Navajo Nation on an annual basis over 15 years, with the remaining funds available for administrative

costs. Our March 2023 report, *The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Made Progress in Implementing Corrective Actions To Improve Its Oversight of the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, but Some Recommendations Remain Outstanding*, found that the OSMRE addressed 9 of the 11 recommendations we made in our [2017 report](#) but still needs to address 2 recommendations—even though we issued our report more than 5 years ago—regarding the accuracy and reliability of its data entry process and data verification. By overseeing State and Tribal AML reclamation programs, the OSMRE can enhance safety and address the hazards and environmental degradation posed by legacy coal mines.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses the OSMRE's preparedness to expend IJA funds, the Orphaned Wells Office's oversight of State funding, and the Office of Wildland Fire's fuels management program's use of IJA funding.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' and the Office of Insular Affairs' Support for Climate Adaptation Practices (Report No. 2022–ER–019)

Flash Report: The U.S. Department of the Interior's Infrastructure Investment for Aging Infrastructure and Dam Safety (Report No. 2022–INF–049)

The Bureau of Land Management Made Progress in Implementing Corrective Actions To Improve Its Idle Well Program (Report No. 2022–CGD–020)

Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Programs – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Efforts To Collect Data To Meet Annual Orphaned Wells Programs Reporting Requirements (Report No. 2022–INF–042)

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Made Progress in Implementing Corrective Actions To Improve Its Oversight of the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, but Some Recommendations Remain Outstanding (Report No. 2022–CR–022)

Flash Report: Abandoned Mine Lands Program – The U.S. Department of the Interior Prepares to Spend \$11.3 Billion (Report No. 2022–INF–037)

Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Programs – Breaking Down Responsibilities for Addressing Orphaned Wells (Report No. 2022–INF–043)

Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Program – The U.S. Department of the Interior Prepares to Spend \$4.7 Billion (Report No. 2022–INF–024)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 18 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 2 are closed.

CHALLENGE AREA

Delivering Core Services

Each of the DOI's bureaus and offices serves a unique role and has specific responsibilities to deliver core services in support of the DOI mission. These core services support the DOI's ability to fulfill its responsibilities to external stakeholders—such as managing public lands, protecting the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage, conserving land and water, and upholding Tribal trust and related responsibilities.

These services also extend to internal DOI customers; for example, the DOI relies on secure information systems and reliable data to accomplish its mission. Below, we summarize the DOI's challenges, plans, and progress in delivering core services related to cybersecurity, data quality, energy, water and power management, and responsibility to Native Americans.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity continues to be a high-risk area for Federal agencies, including the DOI. The DOI relies on complex, interconnected information systems to carry out its daily operations and spent about \$1.8 billion in FY 2023 on its portfolio of IT assets, according to the [Federal IT Portfolio Dashboard](#). In its 2020–2025 [Information Resource Management Strategic Plan](#), the DOI acknowledged the challenges it faces in delivering technology and information resources to mission programs and the public, and it identified six strategic goals that support its complex and diverse mission and geographically dispersed workforce.

Our work likewise has described ongoing challenges in implementing an enterprise cybersecurity program that balances compliance, cost, and risk while enabling bureaus to meet their diverse missions. Additionally, the [FY 2022 annual independent Federal Information Security Modernization Act audit](#) issued by our office identified necessary improvements and made 24 recommendations intended to strengthen the DOI's information security program as well as those of the bureaus and offices. Overall,

In our 2023 inspection, [P@s\\$w0rds at the U.S. Department of the Interior: Easily Cracked Passwords, Lack of Multifactor Authentication, and Other Failures Put Critical DOI Systems at Risk](#), we found the DOI's management practices and password complexity requirements were not sufficient to prevent potential unauthorized access to its systems and data. During this inspection, the team was able to crack 18,174 of 85,944—or 21 percent of active user passwords, including 288 accounts with elevated privileges and 362 accounts of senior U.S. Government employees.

the DOI should remain attentive to ways that it can improve its management of its complex information systems and operation of a secure infrastructure to protect its Federal computer networks and data from cyber threats. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to cybersecurity on the next page.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses the security of DOI data stored in cloud computing services, the DOI's software vulnerability identification and remediation practices, and the DOI's cybersecurity threat-hunting efforts.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Cyber Risk Management Practices Leave Its Systems at Increased Risk of Compromise (Report No. 2020–ITA–030)

P@s\$w0rds at the U.S. Department of the Interior: Easily Cracked Passwords, Lack of Multifactor Authentication, and Other Failures Put Critical DOI Systems at Risk (Report No. 2021–ITA–005)

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Cyber Threat Detection and Defense Controls (Report No. 2020–ITA–067)

Weaknesses in a USGS System Leave Assets at Increased Risk of Attack (Report No. 2019–ITA–003)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 27 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 7 are closed.

GAO High-Risk Areas

Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation

Improving the Management of IT Acquisitions and Operations

Data Quality

As we reported last year, the DOI relies on a wide variety of data to perform its mission, and the quality and accuracy of this data substantially affects how the DOI accomplishes its mission. In its *FY 2022–2026 Strategic Plan*, the DOI acknowledged the importance of reliable data and reliable information to the development and improvement of sound programs and equitable program delivery. The plan also describes the DOI's strategy to fully use the breadth of its data to support planning and decisions and to harness technologies to expand data management to make it searchable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable for staff, collaborators, and the public. These goals are consistent with the GAO's analysis, which states that information such as data, statistics, and studies can provide important insights to Federal agencies and that agencies should use that data and evidence to understand and improve program performance (“[Improving Federal Programs Through Data and Evidence](#)”).

In our *Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Programs – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Efforts To Collect Data To Meet Annual Orphaned Wells Programs Reporting Requirements*, we reported on the DOI's progress in collecting information for the required reporting elements. We found that the DOI did not have data to fully respond to four of five required reporting elements. These reporting elements are (1) descriptions of the orphaned wells programs established, (2) updated inventory of orphaned wells or wells that are at risk of becoming orphaned, (3) estimates of orphaned well emissions of methane and other gases as well as reductions in emissions, (4) number of jobs created and saved, and (5) acreage of habitat restored. As a result, the DOI's first report to Congress on orphaned wells lacked key elements because of the limited availability of data.

Our work, however, continues to identify data reliability issues across a variety of DOI programs. For example, we have identified data concerns related to COVID-19 spending, NPS facilities, the mineral leasing program, royalty reporting, a previous Freedom of Information Act review process, and the compensatory mitigation

program. Without complete, timely, and accurate data, the DOI will continue to face challenges in fostering accountability and accomplishing its mission efficiently. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to data quality below.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses internal controls over scientific integrity and misconduct in USGS labs and the NPS' implementation of the Justice40 Initiative and other applicable equity action priorities in the Land and Water Conservation Fund State Side program.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

The National Park Service Faces Challenges in Managing Its Deferred Maintenance (Report No. 2020–CR–066)

Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Programs – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Efforts To Collect Data To Meet Annual Orphaned Wells Programs Reporting Requirements (Report No. 2022–INF–042)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Has an Opportunity To Protect Its Research and Development (Report No. 2022–CGD–023)

The Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education Have the Opportunity To Implement Additional Controls To Prevent or Detect Multi-dipping of Pandemic Response Funds (Report No. 2021–ER–015)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Needs To Continue To Strengthen Governance Practices To Improve Its Management of Geospatial Data (Report No. 2022–CGD–026)

Weaknesses in the BLM's Compensatory Mitigation Program Data Management (Report No. 2019–FIN–022)

Lack of Tracking and Unclear Guidance Identified in the U.S. Department of the Interior's Awareness Review Process for Freedom of Information Act Requests (Report No. 2019–ER–057)

The Bureau of Land Management Did Not Review the Federal Exclusions List Before Issuing Federal Mineral Leases (Report No. 2021–CR–007)

Better Internal Controls Could Ensure Accuracy of the Office of Natural Resources Revenue's Royalty Reporting and Adjustments (Report No. 2020–CR–009)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 45 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 18 are closed.





Source: iStockphoto

Energy

As the manager of one-fifth of the Nation's landmass and 1.7 billion acres off its shores, the DOI is the steward of Federal energy resources. According to the DOI, these resources provide 30 percent of the United States' domestically produced energy—including oil, gas, coal, hydropower, and renewable energy. According to the [Office of Natural Resources Revenue](#), the DOI collects more than \$10 billion in revenues on average annually from leases for energy and natural resource development on the Outer Continental Shelf and onshore Federal and Indian lands. Energy development can also, however, pose significant risks to the environment, including dust and water runoff, methane emissions, and oil spill contamination. As we identified in our previous management challenge reports, the DOI continues to face challenges in managing complex energy operations, including collecting revenues; overseeing leasing; and ensuring that development is safe, efficient, and sustainable.

In a recent management advisory, [Recommendation for the Department's Coordination Concerning Cryptomining Activities Impacting Federal and Tribal Resources](#), we found that that cryptomining units had been placed on or near lands and areas leased for Federal mineral development. We observed these cryptomining operations and learned that operators diverted gas from Federal leases to generators that powered the cryptomining units. Because the operations used federally owned gas on which the leaseholder did not always pay mineral royalties, the Federal or Tribal stakeholders may lose revenues. We recommended that the DOI develop guidance to address mineral revenue collection and land use issues associated with cryptomining operations on leases under Federal jurisdiction.



Source: National Park Service

Our work has also reported on this array of challenges in the area of energy. For example, in a recent [inspection](#), we reported that the DOI's bureaus do not conduct any analyses of effective royalty rates. Although we acknowledge that there is no requirement for them to do so, this information may be useful to the DOI and stakeholders alike to understand the effects that statutorily approved allowances and approved royalty relief have on the return on Federal oil and gas. Further, our own analysis of the effective royalty rates for oil and gas demonstrated significant differences between the minimum lease-stated royalty rates and the effective royalty rates. In addition, our Energy Investigations Unit has conducted more than 230 investigations in 20 States, resulting in \$209 million in monetary results and 60 criminal convictions or civil settlements in the last 6 years. To take but one example, this group's investigative [work](#) found that an oil producer drilled and then operated a well that removed Federal minerals without first obtaining a Federal lease or drilling permit.

The GAO also [reported](#) in its High Risk List that the DOI may face challenges managing its workforce and collecting what it described as its fair share of revenue from oil and gas produced on Federal lands and waters. The DOI has taken some steps to improve its capacity to address the weaknesses the GAO identified in the

DOI's ability to determine and collect revenue. However, as of February 2023, nine of the GAO's recommendations related to royalty determination and collection remain open.

In addition, increasing renewable energy—including solar, onshore and offshore wind, geothermal, and wave and tidal energy—is a top priority for the DOI, and it has partnered with other Federal agencies to increase renewable energy production on public lands and waters. For example, the DOI has proposed regulations that it states will streamline and facilitate the development and deployment of offshore wind facilities, and the BLM is updating a plan that it intends to guide responsible solar energy development on public lands. In June 2023, the BLM held an [auction](#) for utility-scale solar energy development across four parcels totaling 23,675 acres in the Amargosa Desert that could support nearly 3 gigawatts of renewable energy in Nevada. Additionally, BOEM [announced](#) in July 2023 that it approved an offshore wind project off the coast of New Jersey, which it described as the third major offshore wind project in U.S. waters.

We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to energy on the next page.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses the BLM's management of renewable energy projects, the DOI's progress in addressing potential reforms to critical mineral mining since the establishment of its interagency working group, mineral lease bankruptcy controls, and the USGS' efforts to construct an energy and minerals research facility.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

The Bureau of Land Management Made Progress in Implementing Corrective Actions To Improve Its Idle Well Program (Report No. 2022–CGD–020)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Does Not Analyze Effective Royalty Rates (Report No. 2021–CR–042)

Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Programs – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Efforts To Collect Data To Meet Annual Orphaned Wells Programs Reporting Requirements (Report No. 2022–INF–042)

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Made Progress in Implementing Corrective Actions To Improve Its Oversight of the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, but Some Recommendations Remain Outstanding (Report No. 2022–CR–022)

Recommendation for the Department's Coordination Concerning Cryptomining Activities Impacting Federal and Tribal Resources (Report No. 22–0897)

Flash Report: Orphaned Wells Programs – Breaking Down Responsibilities for Addressing Orphaned Wells (Report No. 2022–INF–043)

Flash Report: Abandoned Mine Lands Program – The U.S. Department of the Interior Prepares to Spend \$11.3 Billion (Report No. 2022–INF–037)

Summary: Oil Producer Trespassed on Federal Land in Colorado (Report No. 21–0867)

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Made Progress in Implementing Corrective Actions to Improve Its Oil Spill Preparedness Program (Report No. 2022–CR–009)

Improvements Needed in the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement's Procedures Concerning Offshore Venting and Flaring Record Reviews (Report No. OI–OG–19–0577–I)

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Should Implement Policies and Procedures For Any Future Special Case Royalty Relief Programs (Report No. 2021–CR–006)

Better Internal Controls Could Ensure Accuracy of the Office of Natural Resources Revenue's Royalty Reporting and Adjustments (Report No. 2020–CR–009)

The Bureau of Land Management Did Not Review the Federal Exclusions List Before Issuing Federal Mineral Leases (Report No. 2021–CR–007)

Allegations of Safety and Employee Health Hazards and Excessive Flaring at the Cliffside Helium Enrichment Unit (Report No. OI–OG–21–0640–I)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 26 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 19 are closed.

GAO High-Risk Areas

Management of Federal Oil and Gas Resources



Water and Power Management

According to the BOR, it is the largest supplier and manager of water in the United States and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power. As the country's largest wholesale water supplier, the BOR maintains 489 dams and operates 338 reservoirs with a total storage capacity of 140 million acre-feet. It also provides 140,000 western farmers—1 out of every 5—with irrigation water for 10 million farmland acres that produce 60 percent of the Nation's vegetables and one quarter of its fresh fruit and nut crops. As the second largest producer of hydropower in the United States, the BOR operates 53 hydroelectric powerplants that annually produced, on average, 40 billion kilowatt-hours for the last 10 years.

In addition to the IJJA funding discussed previously, the BOR received an additional \$4 billion in funding through the Inflation Reduction Act for drought mitigation in the West, with priority given to Colorado River Basin activities, including compensation for reduction in water diversions and funding for system conservation projects and ecosystem restoration to address drought.

In our 2023 *Flash Report: The U.S. Department of the Interior's Infrastructure Investment for Aging Infrastructure and Dam Safety*, we described risks that may strain water supplies, identified how the DOI plans to use IJJA funding, and discussed the BOR's oversight strategy of the funds. The BOR has asset management responsibility for a diverse portfolio of water- and power-related constructed assets, but a number of its facilities are more than 100 years old. Approximately 90 percent of the BOR's dams were built before 1970, with approximately 50 percent of the total dams being built between 1900 and 1950. Pursuant to its spend plan, the BOR intends to provide \$3 billion in funding for major rehabilitation and replacement activities related to aging infrastructure and resources. In addition, the spend plan states that the BOR will coordinate selection criteria and allocate \$500 million for the Dam Safety Program.





Source: iStockphoto

Given ongoing historic drought and low runoff conditions in the Colorado River Basin,⁶ the BOR [stated](#) in August 2022 that it would immediately initiate administrative actions in the upper and lower basins, including:

- Accelerating ongoing maintenance actions and studies to determine and enhance projected reliability of the use of the river outlet works, commonly referred to as the bypass tubes.
- Supporting technical studies to ascertain if physical modifications can be made to the dams to allow water to be pumped or released from elevations below critical and “dead pool” elevation—the point where lake levels fall so low that water can no longer flow downstream through dams to users.
- Investing in system conservation and voluntary agreements.

Both the drought mitigation funds and several key reservoir and water management decisional documents and agreements that govern lake operation in the Colorado River Basin are set to expire in 2026.

In addition to the challenges managing spending that we described previously, given the ongoing historic drought, the DOI faces challenges in managing the delivery of water, protection of fish and wildlife habitat, and the generation

of hydroelectric power. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI’s progress in implementing recommendations related to water and power management below.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to our published work below, we are focusing our ongoing oversight work on supplemental funding flash reports on ecosystem restoration; drought mitigation; and rural water storage, recycling, and desalination. Along with initiating work examining the BOR’s actions to protect the Colorado River Basin, we are continuing our audit of the BOR’s Central Valley Project internal controls over cost allocation and ratesetting.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

Flash Report: The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Infrastructure Investment for Aging Infrastructure and Dam Safety (Report No. 2022–INF–049)

Verification Review – Recommendations for the Evaluation Report Titled Improvements Needed in the Bureau of Reclamation’s Oversight of Tribal Rural Water Projects (2016–WR–026) (Report No. 2020–WR–061)

Recommendation Progress

No open recommendations.

⁶According to [Congressional Research Service Report No. IN11982](#), Federal and State Governments originally approved the Colorado River Compact with the assumption that river flows would average 16.4 million acre-feet per year. Actual annual flows from 1906 to 2022 were approximately 14.6 million acre-feet and have dropped to 12.1 million acre-feet per year since the basin’s drought began in 2000.



Responsibility to Native Americans

The DOI is the primary Federal agency charged with carrying out the United States' trust responsibility to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The DOI's *FY 2022–2026 Strategic Plan* sets forth its policy to fulfill its legal obligations to identify, protect, and conserve Tribal trust resources; carry out its trust relationship with Tribal Nations; and engage in robust, interactive, predecisional, informative, and transparent consultation on a Government-to-Government basis through all bureaus and offices on plans or actions that affect Tribal interests. DOI Indian Affairs—including the BIA, BIE, BTFA, and Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs—is responsible for carrying out the DOI's trust responsibilities, which include enhancing quality of life and promoting economic opportunity. It also has the obligation to uphold Tribal sovereignty and provide quality education opportunities in accordance with Tribes' needs for cultural and economic wellbeing.

Our work has identified an array of challenges in this area, specifically in the matters of financial oversight and health and safety. For example, in a recent [inspection](#), we found that the BIA is not actively managing the closeout process for agreements issued under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Closing these agreements, as appropriate, would ensure that Federal funds are fully spent and would allow Tribal organizations to use unspent restricted funds on agreed-upon Tribal programs and services. As a result of the failure to close out agreements as needed, we identified more than \$5 million in unused funds from 183 agreements that could be put to better use for Tribal programs and services if closed. In addition, for almost 20 years, we have reported on health and safety issues at Indian schools and detention facilities. For example, in a recent [management advisory](#), we reported on significant and longstanding health and safety issues—including structural issues, water

and sewer deficiencies and lack of functional air conditioning—at specific detention facilities. Many of these issues were the same that we identified in 2015 during site visits for our prior evaluation of BIA-funded and/or -operated detention programs.

In our 2023 audit, *The Chemawa Indian School Did Not Account for Its Financial Resources, and the Bureau of Indian Education Did Not Provide Financial Oversight*, we found that the Chemawa Indian School did not accurately account for or use financial resources in accordance with laws and regulations during FYs 2019 through 2021. Accordingly, we questioned \$593,367 in inappropriate and potentially wasteful purchases. We also found that the BIE did not adequately perform financial oversight. Specifically, the BIE did not audit the school's Student Enterprise account in accordance with Federal regulations and did not have adequate policies and procedures to ensure that the school appropriately accounted for and used financial resources.

Additionally, [according to the BIA](#), American Indian and Alaska Native people are at a disproportionate risk of experiencing violence, being murdered, or going missing and make up a significant portion of missing and murdered cases. The [GAO reported](#) that the total number of missing or murdered Indigenous women in particular is unknown because Federal databases do not contain comprehensive national data on all Indigenous women reported missing. The GAO found that this occurred for several reasons, including that Federal law⁷ does not require Tribal law enforcement agencies to report missing persons who are 21 or over to the National Crime Information Center database. In addition, the GAO reported that identifying the number of cases

⁷34 U.S.C. §§ 41307(a), 41308(3).

involving missing or murdered Indigenous women is made difficult by “underreporting of cases, misclassifications of race, and misclassifications of the manner of death.”

We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI’s progress in implementing recommendations related to responsibilities to Native Americans below.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to our published work below, we are currently performing work that assesses the condition of BIA schools and the Missing and Murdered Unit’s efforts to address American Indian and Alaska Native missing persons and murder cases.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

The Bureau of Indian Affairs’ and the Office of Insular Affairs’ Support for Climate Adaptation Practices (Report No. 2022–ER–019)

The Chemawa Indian School Did Not Account for Its Financial Resources, and the Bureau of Indian Education Did Not Provide Financial Oversight (Report No. 2022–CR–012)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Can Improve the Closeout Process for Public Law 93–638 Agreements (Report No. 2020–CGD–060)

Detention Facility Health and Safety Concerns (Report No. 2022–WR–040–A)

Status of the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation’s Tribal Consultation Process and Activities (Report No. 2020–WR–016)

Status of the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation’s Properties and Land Use Agreements (Report No. 2020–WR–016–H)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Great Plains Region Did Not Oversee CARES Act Funds Appropriately (Report No. 2021–FIN–032)

The Omaha Tribe Did Not Account for CARES Act Funds Appropriately (Report No. 2021–FIN–032–B)

The Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education Have the Opportunity To Implement Additional Controls To Prevent or Detect Multi-dipping of Pandemic Response Funds (Report No. 2021–ER–015)

The Bureau of Indian Education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Need To Improve Accountability for Federal Funds (Report No. 2020–CGD–001)

The Three Affiliated Tribes Did Not Account for CARES Act Funds Appropriately (2021–FIN–032–C)

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Did Not Account for CARES Act Funds Appropriately (Report No. 2021–FIN–032–A)

Summary: Tribal Administrator Stole Tribal Funds (Report No. 17–0939)

Facility Improvements Still Needed at Pine Hill School (Report No. 2019–CR–062)

The St. Stephens Indian School Education Association, Inc., Needs to Improve Financial Accountability for Federal Funds (Report No. 2019–FIN–058)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Jeopardized Land Buy-Back Program Accomplishments by Delegating Land Title Authority (Report No. 2019–WR–024)

Summary: A Secretary of the Credit and Finance Office Defrauded the Oglala Sioux Tribe (Report No. 15–0758)

Recommendation for Identifying, Protecting, and Ensuring Proper Handling of Tribal Data and Information (Report No. 20–0463)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 95 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 22 are closed.

GAO High-Risk Areas

Improving Federal Management of Programs That Serve Tribes and Their Members

CHALLENGE AREA

Ensuring Health and Safety

The DOI must protect the health and safety of its workforce and the public. According to its FY 2024 [budget request](#), the DOI employs almost 70,000 people and has more than 160,000 volunteers who support and serve more than 560 million visitors to public lands each year at approximately 2,400 locations across the United States, Puerto Rico, and Insular Areas. Ensuring employee and public safety is a complex responsibility that touches on many

different facets of the DOI's mission, including law enforcement; emergency response; public land management; infrastructure and facilities maintenance; and upholding trust responsibilities or commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Insular Areas. Below, we summarize the DOI's challenges, plans, and progress on health and safety issues related to wildfire management, law enforcement, and climate change response.



Wildfire Management

Wildfires can have devastating effects on local communities, public resources, ecosystems, life, and personal property. According to [Congressional Research Service Report No. IF10244](#), in FY 2022, approximately 20,000 wildfires burned around 5.8 million acres in the Western United States, compared with more than 48,000 fires that burned more than 1.8 million acres in the Eastern United States. Of these fires, 52 percent—or 4 million acres—were on Federal lands. In 2022, DOI fire suppression costs totaled \$649 million. The DOI's wildfire management program consists of the Office of Wildland Fire (responsible for oversight) and the four bureaus with wildland fire management responsibilities—the BIA, BLM, FWS, and NPS. The program manages wildfire response for more than 500 million acres of national parks, wildlife refuges and preserves, other public lands, and Indian reservations, and it is part of the Federal interagency wildfire response framework.



Source: National Forests in Florida

As the length of wildfire seasons has grown to encompass the calendar year, the DOI has stated that there is a need for a year-round firefighting workforce that can respond at any time. A recent [GAO report](#) identified seven barriers to recruitment and retention: (1) low pay, (2) career advancement challenges, (3) poor work-life balance, (4) mental health challenges, (5) remote or expensive duty stations, (6) limited workforce diversity, and (7) hiring process challenges. It also found that in FY 2021, more than half of the Federal firefighters were employed as seasonal firefighters. The DOI has

taken several steps to address workforce challenges. In addition to previous increases to firefighters' pay, the DOI co-hosted a summit to develop a joint wildland firefighter behavioral health program with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They reported the goals of establishing year-round prevention and mental health training, providing post-traumatic stress care, enhancing capacity for critical incident stress management, and creating a new system of trauma support services with an emphasis on early intervention.

The DOI continues to face challenges we have previously reported, including maintaining and recruiting a firefighting workforce, managing ecosystems to reduce fuels, and responding to active wildfires. The average annual acreage burned since 2000 is more than double the average annual acreage burned in the 1990s. The history of increased costs related to wildland fires is documented in the DOI's wildland fire management [budget request](#). We believe that the DOI is likely to continue to face increased costs associated with responding to wildfire activity, which is exacerbated by abnormally dense vegetation, increased

development in or near wildlands, drought, and other climate stressors. The DOI's FY 2024 budget request includes significant funding increases for wildland fire workforce reforms and hazardous fuels management.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

We are performing work that assesses the DOI's wildland fire fuels management and equipment programs.

Law Enforcement

The DOI's law enforcement responsibilities include Indian Country communities as well as resource protection, public lands visitor safety, special event management, and crowd control in areas that require multiple agencies to coordinate. Among executive branch departments, the DOI has the fourth largest law enforcement component, totaling approximately 3,400 law enforcement officers in 5 bureaus and offices: the BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS, and U.S. Park Police (a unit of the NPS with jurisdiction in all Federal parks). The DOI law enforcement workforce has declined by 600 law enforcement officers since last year's report.

Meanwhile, law enforcement responsibilities, policies, and priorities continue.

In response to what was described as the combination of rising crime rates in communities around the country and law enforcement staffing shortages and low morale since early 2020, the President issued [Executive Order No. 14074](#), *Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices To Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety*, in May 2022. The order includes guidance regarding use-of-force standards, no-knock entries, and the use of body-worn



Source: iStockphoto

cameras and advanced law enforcement technologies. The Executive Order required the establishment and issuance of relevant policies within 90 days of its signature. In response, the DOI established a series of new policies that it states are intended to comply with the Executive Order and advance safe, transparent, accountable, and effective policing practices; build public trust; and strengthen public safety.

Additionally, in July 2021, the DOI established a Law Enforcement Task Force focused on strengthening trust in DOI law enforcement programs; ensuring implementation of appropriate policy and oversight; and ensuring supportive resources are available for officer mental health, wellness, and safety. In July 2022, the task force completed a series of 12 listening sessions to receive public comment on issues related to trust and confidence in the DOI's law enforcement programs.

We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to law enforcement on the next page.

In our 2023 evaluation, *The U.S. Department of the Interior Can Improve Its Oversight of Tasers*, we found that the DOI had not finalized its DOI-wide taser policy since 2016 and that each bureau had its own policy. However, none of the bureaus had updated their policies to comply with the DOI's 2016 interim policy. Further, the DOI's interim policy did not address supervisory review of incident reports. Additionally, we found that taser recertification training quality varied and that officers did not routinely test tasers. As explained in our report, the DOI should have consistent and clear policies to prevent or minimize officers' misuse of tasers and the chances of taser malfunction. After we issued our report, the DOI stated that it had begun drafting new guidance policies and that it expected to issue them by the end of calendar year 2023.

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are currently performing work assessing the BIA's Indian detention programs and the DOI's radio communications program.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

Summary: Former USPP Employee Violated Post-Government Employment Law
(Report No. 19–0669)

Alleged Excessive Use of Force, NPS, DC
(Report No. 21–0009)

Detention Facility Health and Safety Concerns
(Report No. 2022–WR–040–A)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Can Improve Its Oversight of Tasers
(Report No. 2019–WR–026)

The U.S. Department of the Interior and Its Bureaus Have Not Finalized and Implemented Their Body Camera Policies
(Report No. 2021–WR–019)

U.S. Park Police Supervisor Misused Government Vehicle To Drive to Outside Employment
(Report No. 21–0618)

Review of the U.S. Park Police's Communications Recording System in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area
(Report No. OI–SI–21–0171–W)

Safety Concerns and Other Deficiencies at the U.S. Park Police's Dispatch Operations Center in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area
(Report No. 21–0171)

Review of U.S. Park Police Actions at Lafayette Park (Report No. 20–0563)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Coronavirus Response at Indian Country Detention Facilities
(Report No. 2020–WR–044)

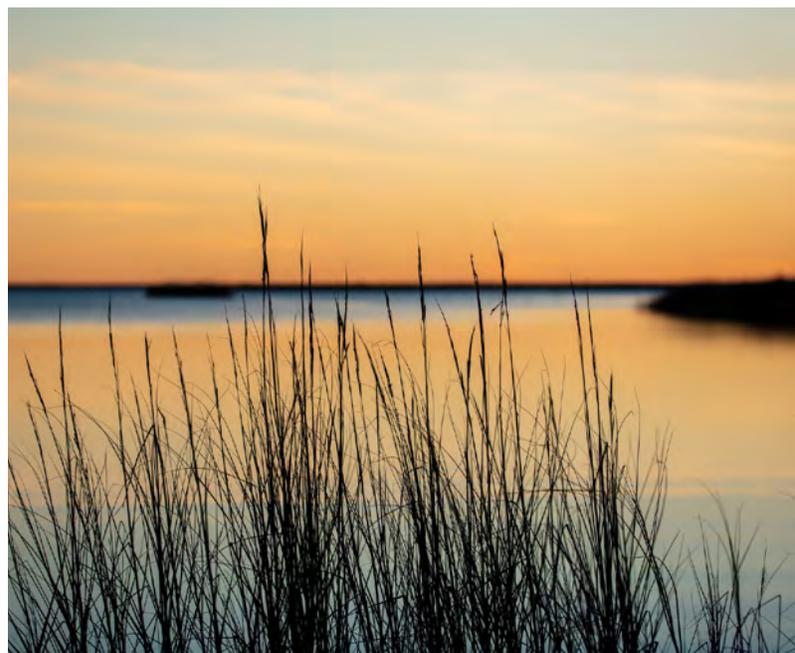
Recommendation Progress

Of the 24 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 5 are closed.



Climate Change Response

As described in last year's report, according to the *Fourth National Climate Assessment*, climate change is causing potentially harmful effects on marine and other animal life, increased high temperature extremes and heavy precipitation events, warming and rising seas, more frequent flooding, and increasing wildfires. Natural disasters can expose Federal real property assets—including office buildings, levees, roads, and bridges—to physical damage that can require substantial resources to repair or rebuild. According to the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*, climate change is a contributing factor to increasing extreme weather events. During calendar year 2022, the United States experienced 18 separate weather and climate disasters where overall damages reached

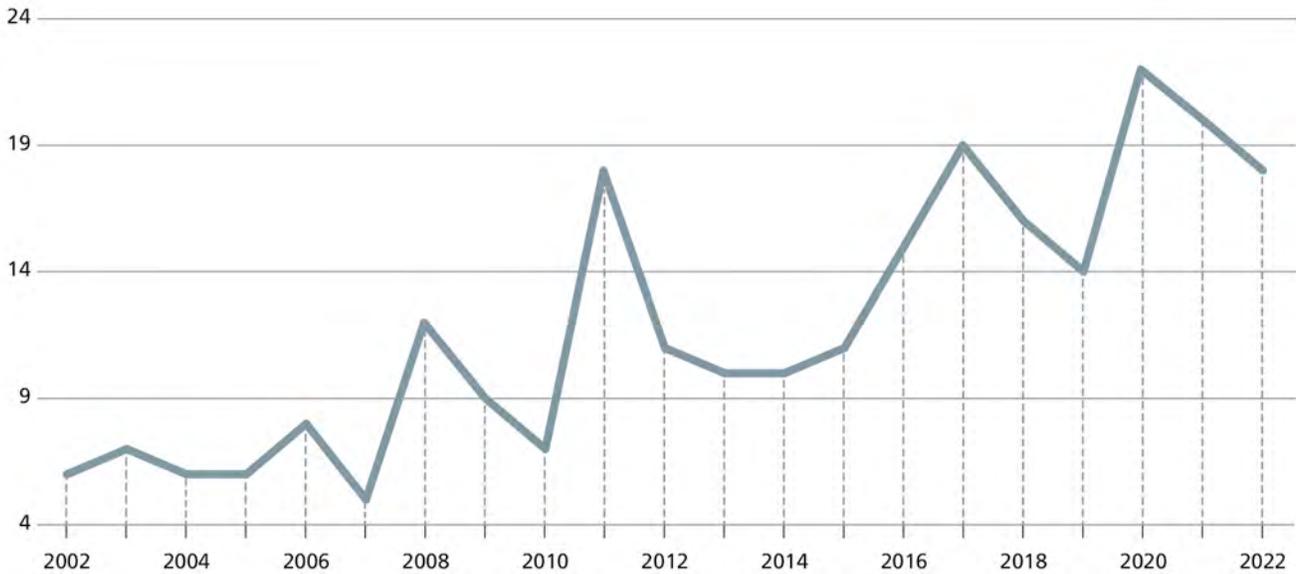


Source: National Park Service

or exceeded \$1 billion (see Figure 3). The DOI continues to face challenges in effectively and efficiently implementing its policies that respond

to the effects of climate change on its mission, programs, operations, and personnel.

Figure 3: Number of U.S. Weather and Climate Disasters Exceeding \$1 Billion⁸ in Damage 2002–2022



In October 2022, the DOI [reported](#) on its *Climate Action Plan* and provided its assessment of its own progress toward addressing the challenges that climate change poses to its mission, programs, operations, and personnel. In the 2022 progress report, the DOI provided examples and updates on priority actions and initial plan topics. The DOI reported that it had not developed a method for assessing fiscal risk exposure due to climate change; however, it stated that some bureaus are taking proactive measures to reduce that exposure. For example, according to the DOI, the NPS developed a facility investment strategy that specifically directs project proponents to consider and include climate adaptation. In our recent evaluation report highlighted in the callout box on the right, we found that that the performance measures and metrics listed in the plan were not finalized.

Additionally, in May 2023, the DOI awarded \$12 million in Inflation Reduction Act funds to

In our recent evaluation, *The Bureau of Indian Affairs' and the Office of Insular Affairs' Support for Climate Adaptation Practices*, we found that, due to various deficiencies, we cannot determine whether the DOI's, BIA's, Office of Insular Affairs', or grantees' activities are meeting goals designed to respond to climate change and grant objectives. We could not determine whether activities met specific goals because the DOI did not finalize performance measures or set targets to measure those goals. Additionally, the BIA's Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience and the Office of Insular Affairs' Technical Assistance Program did not develop performance measures or targets at the bureau and office level to assess whether the grant programs are achieving their climate mission and the DOI's goals for responding to climate change.

⁸According to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), these disaster cost assessments were developed using the most comprehensive public and private sector sources and represent the estimated total costs of these events. All cost estimates are adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index.

U.S. territories to address climate change planning, mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. In November 2022, the DOI also granted \$115 million in Inflation Reduction Act funds to assist 11 Tribes in planning and relocating their communities that are affected

by climate-related environmental threats. We detail our ongoing and published work and the DOI's progress in implementing recommendations related to the DOI's efforts to respond to climate

OIG OVERSIGHT

Selected Ongoing OIG Work

In addition to the published work below, we are performing work that assesses the BLM's renewable energy administration for wind and solar, the DOI's wildland fire fuels management and equipment programs, the Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program, the DOI's disaster preparedness and response, and the status of supplemental disaster funding.

Selected Published OIG Work FYs 2021–2023

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' and the Office of Insular Affairs' Support for Climate Adaptation Practices (Report No. 2022–ER–019)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Could Expand Its Use of Contracting Flexibilities and Should Establish an Acquisition Policy for Future Disasters (Report No. 2020–CGD–006)

Recommendation Progress

Of the 15 recommendations we made to the DOI and its bureaus and offices, 4 are closed.

GAO High-Risk Areas

Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks





REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE, AND MISMANAGEMENT

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) provides independent oversight and promotes integrity and accountability in the programs and operations of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). One way we achieve this mission is by working with the people who contact us through our hotline.



If you wish to file a complaint about potential fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement in the DOI, please visit the OIG's online hotline at www.doioig.gov/hotline or call the OIG hotline's toll-free number: **1-800-424-5081**

Who Can Report?

Anyone with knowledge of potential fraud, waste, abuse, misconduct, or mismanagement involving the DOI should contact the OIG hotline. This includes knowledge of potential misuse involving DOI grants and contracts.

How Does it Help?

Every day, DOI employees and non-employees alike contact the OIG, and the information they share can lead to reviews and investigations that result in accountability and positive change for the DOI, its employees, and the public.

Who Is Protected?

Anyone may request confidentiality. The Privacy Act, the Inspector General Act, and other applicable laws protect complainants. Section 7(b) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 states that the Inspector General shall not disclose the identity of a DOI employee who reports an allegation or provides information without the employee's consent, unless the Inspector General determines that disclosure is unavoidable during the course of the investigation. By law, Federal employees may not take or threaten to take a personnel action because of whistleblowing or the exercise of a lawful appeal, complaint, or grievance right. Non-DOI employees who report allegations may also specifically request confidentiality.