



Reorganizing the Administration of Public Lands: Zinke's Proposal to Revamp Interior Department

Secretary Ryan Zinke has announced his intention to undertake a major reorganization of the Department of the Interior, although the exact proposal is a moving target, as he has since amended it after pushback from some western governors who urged him to follow state borders. His initial reform would move field personnel into a new regional structure that would be defined by watersheds or other geographic features.

At the same time, he proposed delegating more authority to the field — including, potentially, giving rotating regional heads decisionmaking authority for the department. Other ideas floated in the proposal include moving one or more bureau headquarters to a western city. Some observers also have even discussed moving the department's main offices from Washington to the West.

There are good reasons to reorganize the department. Interior has a number of bureaus with sometimes-conflicting missions and, in years past, was described by some as the “Department of Everything Else.” So it is not surprising that Interior reorganization ideas surface on a recurring basis.

We have asked several experienced hands

to comment on whether, in their view, Congress and the Trump administration should tackle a reorganization effort and, if so, what it might look like. We asked them to respond to the Zinke proposal and make their own suggestions.

As an initial matter, should Congress take steps to clarify the Interior Department's primary roles, and align its bureaus and regional structure accordingly? Is now a good time to address the perennial question of whether the U.S. Forest Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration should be part of Interior's natural resources portfolio, rather than being in the Agriculture and Commerce Departments? What have we learned from prior formal reorganizations (such as the break-up of the Minerals Management Service), or from other management efforts to promote joint decisionmaking among the department's many bureaus?

In sum, what is the best management structure for a department that administers vast holdings throughout the United States, with an environmental charge as part of its mandate?

EDITOR'S NOTE: We asked Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt to participate in this Debate, but he declined our invitation.



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The Zinke Plan Misses the Mark

By DAVID J. HAYES

Political leaders find the prospect of reorganizing complex governmental organizations seductive. Surely, the argument goes, reorganizations can break down silos and enable agencies to be better aligned toward common goals. And what better place than the Interior Department, which includes nearly a dozen large, distinct agencies that have complex missions that sometimes don't line up together.

From the beginning of his tenure, Secretary Zinke has talked about undertaking a reorganization of Interior. I was interested in hearing what he had in mind, having developed some perspectives during my two tours of duty as the deputy secretary of the sprawling department and its 70,000 employees.

Despite the hype, much still remains unknown about the secretary's plans. With the exception of one bright spot — Zinke's proposal to establish a common regional structure for all of the department's bureaus — it is difficult not to be disappointed in what remains a largely ill-defined plan to meet unclear goals.

The concept of co-locating major regional offices in hub cities, and adopting common regional boundaries for all of Interior's bureaus, is a good one. The department works better when its bureaus have more opportunities to interact with each other, particularly at the regional level, where the vast majority of Interior's resources are allocated and difficult problems are addressed and solved.

But there is little else to commend the plan. The notion that a single, rotating regional head from one bureau should have decisionmaking authority over other bureaus in contested, multi-bureau squabbles is a recipe for disaster. Regional officials need to work

together better, and co-locating them is a good start. Setting up a Russian roulette system that gives one bureau authority over others in resolving interagency disputes, however, is sure to exacerbate infighting.

Simply put, conflicts will not be effectively resolved by randomly empowering one bureau over others. On many tough issues, Interior's bureaus have shown that when guided by the department's common, unifying mission and purpose, they eagerly work together toward that end. In my experience, the department's workforce is extraordinarily dedicated to, and proud of, Interior's goal of conservation, prudent use of our nation's natural resources, and honoring and protecting our historic and cultural resources.

On the other hand, divisive dictates from the top that depart from Interior's core mission and value system drive wedges within the department that no reorganization plan can overcome. Zinke's full-throated push to achieve energy "dominance" by expanding fossil fuel development on public lands and in offshore waters, and his political team's efforts to ignore, or outright deny, the climate change impacts that already are profoundly impacting every corner of the department's vast physical and scientific dominion, illustrate the point.

On a brighter note, here are better reorganization ideas that future, less divisive administrations might pursue.

A future secretary, for example, could accelerate the sharing, and leveraging, of land management functions and expertise that are now stove-piped in three major land management agencies in Interior (the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park System, and the Fish and Wildlife refuge system), and one at the Department of Agriculture (the Forest Service). Why not extend, for example, NPS's extraordinary talent at welcoming visitors to other land management agencies that are underserving Americans who crave more outdoor experiences?

Similarly, as President Obama

pointed out in a State of the Union address, it makes no sense that two agencies in two different departments (FWS at Interior, and NOAA at Commerce) co-regulate endangered and threatened species.

Also, climate change impacts are challenging land, water and wildlife managers across the entire span of Interior. There is no playbook for how best to discharge stewardship responsibilities in the face of extended droughts, elongated and more intense wildfire seasons, the spread of invasive species, sea rise and storm surge impacts on coastal resources, and changing wildlife patterns. So wouldn't it make sense to aggressively explore more collaborative science and management responses across agency lines to systematically analyze and address these new and already-present threats?

Hopefully, a future secretary and Congress will have an appetite to pursue these ideas, and more. While they are at it, they might take a cue from former Republican and Democratic secretaries who urged that Interior be renamed to reinforce its mission area, by calling it the Department of Conservation, the Department of Energy and Natural Resources or, my preference: the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

So there is a lot to discuss when it comes to a potential reorganization. But like so many tough issues addressed in the department, a successful outcome depends on dispassionate, inclusive analysis undertaken by knowledgeable, nonpartisan champions of Interior's mission, complemented by congressional input and broad public engagement.

Perhaps Secretary Zinke's plan will provide the spark to pull together such an effort. I will be the first to thank him, if it does.

David J. Hayes is executive director of the State Energy & Environmental Impact Center at New York University School of Law. He was deputy secretary of the interior in the Clinton and Obama administrations.

A Proposal Meant to Hamstring Agency Function

By AMANDA LEITER

Reorganizing the Department of the Interior is a perennial project for new administrations, likely due to the department's size and reach. DOI manages over 400 million acres of land, employs over 70,000 people, and houses 11 separate bureaus that work on issues of almost unimaginable breadth, from protecting endangered species, to managing national parks, to leasing mineral resources, to overseeing 183 tribal schools.

The latest reorganization effort is Secretary Ryan Zinke's proposal to separate DOI into 13 newly designated "unified regions." Like past proposals, this plan would generate winners and losers, and has received mixed reviews from employees, regulated entities, and interest groups. In two respects, however, the current plan is far worse than its predecessors: the process of and context for proposal development make clear that this administration has no real intention of improving DOI structure and function but instead hopes to sow confusion, destabilize the department, and encourage staff departures.

According to DOI's cursory explanation, the proposed reorganization will respond to certain "organizational challenges," including curtailing "unnecessary bureaucracy." Under the proposal, DOI will assign staff from all bureaus to the 13 unified regions. Apparently, regional chains of command will be defined by geography not subject matter, thereby advancing three goals: greater bureau cooperation; increased regional influence; and reduced political oversight.

The proposal is short on details, but two significant flaws nevertheless stand out. The first relates to the process of proposal development. Unlike past re-

organization efforts, this proposal does not implement a suggestion from an outside evaluator, like a congressional oversight committee or an independent commission. Rather, this proposal seemingly originated with political appointees who are new to DOI and unfamiliar with its structure.

That unfamiliarity is concerning because DOI's unwieldy structure represents a deliberate compromise among competing goals. Aspects of that structure already advance the three goals identified in the proposal (improving bureau cooperation; increasing regional influence; and reducing political oversight), but other structural elements promote contrasting goals, including reducing conflicts of interest, establishing checks and balances, promoting democratic accountability, and mitigating capture.

To take just a few examples, existing laws and regulations already require that multiple bureaus approve significant land management decisions, thereby ensuring bureau cooperation. On the other hand, DOI divides certain incompatible functions (like mineral leasing, risk reduction, and royalty collection) into separate bureaus. This division, and the balance of power among the resulting bureaus, ensures that each function gets proper attention, but no single function can overreach.

With respect to regional influence, many bureaus assign field staff to their Washington offices on short-term details to share their perspectives, and some bureaus also employ regional councils to advise on resource management. On the other hand, big decisions must still be made in Washington, to guarantee that DOI remains responsive to presidential priorities, and to mitigate the risk that a regional office will make decisions that benefit local constituencies at the expense of the broader public.

The proposed reorganization includes no details about whether and how DOI intends to maintain these existing structural protections. At

best, therefore, the proposal offers a drastic and expensive solution to a non-problem. At worst, it threatens to destabilize the existing power balance among bureaus, and between regions and headquarters, in favor of an ill-defined, untested, and one-sided new structure.

The second flaw concerns the context for proposal development. The proposal comes on the heels of personnel and administrative actions that have alienated DOI's dedicated career staff. Over the last year, Zinke has involuntarily reassigned over 50 senior employees, sometimes to areas outside their expertise. Moreover, as he explained to Congress, he plans to use reassignments to reduce full-time staff (presumably through resignations). In addition, DOI suspended the activities of about 200 advisory panels — the very panels that formerly brought a regional perspective to resource management decisions. Finally, in September, Zinke publicly accused one-third of his staff of disloyalty "to the flag" and promised "huge" restructuring.

In this context, any effort to move or reassign large numbers of people must be viewed with suspicion and interpreted not as an effort to improve agency function but as a strategy to encourage departures. In short, this context reveals the reorganization proposal for what it really is: an effort to disrupt chains of command, and to shift career personnel from jobs they have done well for years to locations and into roles where they will be less comfortable and less expert, and hence more likely to leave DOI. If that is the secretary's true aim, then this proposal may well succeed — but success will come at great cost to DOI's effectiveness and, in turn, to tribal interests and to America's precious cultural, mineral, wildlife, wilderness, and open space resources.

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A Little Historical Perspective on Interior's Mission

By PATTI LIMERICK

I write to offer my personal gratitude to Ryan Zinke but also to propose an improbable premise that initially will make little sense but then will evolve into persuasiveness; to suggest an essential next step that, if Secretary Zinke takes it, will go a long way toward making my premise carry force; to provide a glimpse of the bigger picture that historical perspective can provide; and to make a case for consultation with historians as the activation of an advance warning system for ironic outcomes.

First, the gratitude. As a citizen who watches the Department of the Interior with the intense interest that better-adjusted Americans reserve for sports teams, I am now unmistakably in the secretary's debt. With his reorganization plan, he has dispelled the boredom and ennui that usually set in at the first mention of the word bureaucracy. His proposal has stirred up a lively round of public deliberation on Interior's mission and structure, and the prospects for engaging my fellow citizens in energetic conversation are correspondingly enhanced.

Second, the improbable premise. In a nation fragmented by specialization as much as by polarization, contemplating Interior's agglomeration of agencies with wildly disparate missions offers a wondrous opportunity to find — and embrace — alternatives to the shouting matches that dominate civic discussion in 2018.

Third, Zinke's essential next step. To permit that cheerful premise to gear up for action, the secretary must invite historians to play a central role in the process of deliberation that he has initiated. His frequently expressed admiration for Theodore Roosevelt and for the explorer John Wesley

Powell provides compelling evidence that he is predisposed to accept my suggestion.

Fourth, if we aim historical perspective at Interior, the first recognition to appear is a very positive one: the lands and natural resources under the management of agencies located in the department represent a great legacy given to the Americans of the present by the Americans of the past. The second recognition is less heartening: this magnificent inheritance comes in the same package with the unwieldy administrative entity called the Department of the Interior.

Interior's agencies make an exact match to an under-utilized term of organizational analysis: they constitute a "hodgepodge," or, as Merriam-Webster defines the term, "a heterogeneous mixture." When Zinke rode on horseback to his first day at work, he did indeed dismount into a heterogeneous mixture of agencies and bureaus.

Newly arrived secretaries instantly find themselves charged with overseeing everything from the National Park Service's trails and wildlife to Reclamation's dams and reservoirs, from the U.S. Geological Survey's sensitive studies of climate change to the Bureau of Land Management's leases for subsurface (onshore and offshore) oil and gas development.

Thus, historical perspective and the secretary's viewpoint at least momentarily coincide: his proposal for reorganizing Interior responds to a genuine dilemma presented by our inheritance from our predecessors on the planet. It is perfectly natural for a secretary to exclaim, "How can anyone possibly expect me to manage such a hodgepodge?"

In the 20th century, the implementation of conservation practices in Interior's land management agencies had to proceed while responding to two contrasting frameworks of strong opinion. Believers in what we will call "the romance of local control" endorsed the superior wisdom, legitima-

cy, and moral right of the people who lived in proximity to — and made some share of their living from — the lands under federal management. By contrast, believers in the "romance of centralized expertise" championed, with an equal intensity of righteous sentiment, the superior expertise and greater claim on scientifically based authority held by appointed officials, often stationed in offices distant from those lands.

And so, when Zinke put forward his proposal to reorganize Interior, he offered an affirmation of the fact that these two systems of belief constantly compete for the attention and loyalty of Interior's leadership.

Fifth, a case for embracing the historian's gift for sensing ironic outcomes on the horizon. Contemplating Zinke's vision for reorganization, the historians' advance warning system for unintended consequences beeps with some urgency on two counts.

Pursuing the theoretical goal of recognizing and respecting local variations, the current plan seems headed toward a one-size-fits-all prescription for the creation of regional administrative units. And aimed at goals of efficiency, economizing, and streamlining, the plan seems much more likely to direct time and attention to the production of memos and directives, preparations for testimony to congressional committees, and the crafting of responses to litigation, not to mention expenses and expenditures that will achieve an elevation that dwarfs the mountains of Interior's landscapes.

Hanging out with historians could reduce these risks significantly. And here's the best news of all: we cost dramatically less than management consultants.

Usually, we are just flattered to be asked.

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Interior Needs to Foster “Value-Creating Networks”

By LYNN SCARLETT

Federal land management has been a saga of tensions at the delicate interface of people and places. The Department of the Interior’s mission lies at this confluence, with its tensions and the challenges and opportunities they beget. Should snowmobiles traverse Yellowstone? Where might ranchers graze their cattle? Or where might we find energy to warm our houses? And who should decide?

The Interior Department makes these decisions amid a tapestry of rights and responsibilities on lands comprising some 500 million acres and increasingly involving landscape-scale issues. Fire, water, species protection, and energy production all present challenges that extend beyond lines on a map or ownership patterns and have deepened the impetus for collaboration across agencies and with the private sector.

Thus, a central question for the department is how to collaborate across boundaries and among agencies. And how managers might strengthen the voices of communities amid varying priorities, preferences, and perceptions.

These questions have prompted secretaries over three decades to try to improve coordination, enhance efficiency, operate at relevant scales of action, and strengthen participatory processes. The Clinton administration configured some decisions around watersheds. The George W. Bush administration highlighted “Cooperative Conservation,” strengthening the role of collaboration and co-locating bureaus. Obama established Landscape Conservation Cooperatives comprising multiple agencies, tribes, and others to develop shared goals and relevant science around large-landscape issues.

And, now, we have another effort.

Shortly after his confirmation, Secretary Ryan Zinke pressed for a major reorganization of the 70,000-person department. He sought to hold people accountable, improve permitting efficiency, and enhance collaboration across the department’s multiple bureaus at some 2,400 locations.

These management goals ring familiar. They mirror qualities heralded in public administration primers and sought after by various secretaries as they strived to better fulfill the department’s mission involving competing goals that often arouse strong passions among diverse constituents.

As Secretary Zinke strives to advance this reorganization, three points merit emphasis.

First, the challenges of coordination are real, but overstated. Through grassroots and Interior initiatives, the past couple decades have seen new forms of governance characterized by networks, collaboration, and partnerships. It is easy to recall the Bundy episodes and imagine these deep tensions are the norm, while forgetting the inspiring federal, tribal, state, local, public, and private partnerships advancing economic and environmental outcomes in efforts like the Blackfoot Challenge in Montana and others. These efforts have emerged organically, tailored to needs, with Interior agencies serving as boots-on-the-ground partners.

Second, I am reminded of economist Thomas Sowell’s quip that “there are no solutions; there are only trade-offs.” Good management is a balancing act among attributes often in tension: a desire for innovation versus consistency; decentralization versus uniformity and decision discipline; or efficiency versus community building.

MITRE Corporation observes that “a first instinct may be to believe . . . that moving organizational ‘boxes and lines’ will create improved results. But . . . structure is only one component of a complex organizational system.” These components include performance measures, incentive systems, decision processes — mechanisms that

improve knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Third, reorganization is not free. Political costs, practical costs, and “people” costs accompany reorganizations. And there are dollar costs. Estimates of long-term costs for reorganization as envisioned by Secretary Zinke have ranged as high as \$1 billion.

Successful management improvements hinge on having clear goals, good information about current structures and processes, and an assessment of management options and what trade-offs accompany them. These are not idle questions. McKinsey & Company research reveals that fewer than 25 percent of restructuring efforts succeed.

Zinke describes a Washington-centric organization. But is that so? Some 6,500 of Interior employees (less than 10 percent) work in the capital area. Many more work in dispersed field locations. He has also described a department top-heavy with senior management, which he would replace with junior employees. Yet just 300, or less than .5 percent, are within the ranks of the Senior Executive Service. And zeroing in on grade levels may be the wrong focus. What Interior needs are skillsets in systems-thinking, collaboration, and the ability to nurture what management expert Gary Hamel calls “value-creating networks.” These skills often spring from years of employee experiences addressing complex problems involving people with many perspectives. Interior needs people with these decades of experience.

Don’t get me wrong — there is always room for management improvements. Landscape-level problems require agency coordination at scales commensurate with those problems. But restructuring can bring high costs and fail to deliver the decision processes, people development, and tools needed for Hamel’s networks.

The Nature Conservancy’s **Lynn Scarlett** served as deputy secretary of the interior in the George W. Bush administration.

Don't Just Shuffle Offices: Give Local Officials Teeth

By PETER SCHAUMBERG

Secretary Ryan Zinke's conceptual reorganization proposals inspire cautious optimism, but to be successful the plans need teeth to achieve the presumptive goal: more timely and efficient decisionmaking.

The secretary of the interior must reconcile multiple, often competing, and sometimes mutually exclusive responsibilities when facilitating resource development on public lands. These may range from a large-scale oil-and-gas project, or a plan for development of other leasable minerals, or hardrock claims located under the Mining Law.

Such projects are at the intersection of the secretary's multiple-use mandates, responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act, statutory obligations to protect the nation's parks and wildlife refuges, and trust responsibility to manage resources for the benefit of Native Americans. Layered on these competing demands are the external interests of other federal resource agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Forest Service.

DOI organizational changes are not new. Following Deepwater Horizon, Secretary Ken Salazar reorganized the former Minerals Management Service into (forgive the acronyms) BOEM, BSEE, and ONRR, with the last, revenue-collection office reassigned under the assistant secretary for policy, management, and budget. MMS was itself created by the stroke of the secretary's pen in the early 1980s. But the mixed results of these efforts caution that not all organizational reform reduces inefficiency and confusion.

The Bureau of Land Management has seen more modest organizational

changes over the years. In response to the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the department began co-locating staff from BLM and other federal agencies to minimize duplication of effort in environmental reviews and expedite decisions. Congress further mandated inter-agency collaboration under the FAST Act of 2015 to facilitate energy and infrastructure projects, including on federally managed lands.

While these efforts sometimes succeeded in shortening environmental reviews, benefits have been limited, even where only DOI bureaus were involved. For example, if BLM is primarily responsible for completing an environmental impact statement for a major project, but Fish and Wildlife Service biologists are dilatory in completing ESA consultation, BLM lacks supervisory authority over the co-located FWS personnel to avoid protracted decisionmaking delays.

DOI surely would benefit from further organizational efficiencies to reduce longstanding problems stemming from fragmented and slow decisionmaking. As an example, BLM often has several district offices within a single state office, with multiple field offices within each district. As operators on public lands have long experienced, this multiplicity of responsibilities results in inconsistent application of policies and regulations within even a single state. But simply eliminating state offices will not resolve these problems.

The secretary has created a stir in Congress and among the states by suggesting eco-regional administrative boundaries for new DOI offices in the West. This would parallel the administrative boundaries of certain Interior and other agencies, and is attractive from a planning or high-level resource-management perspective. But reducing the role of state-level players could frustrate decisionmaking that is responsive to the needs of the people who most use federally managed natural resources.

States currently play a significant

role in determining how such resources within their borders are allocated and used. They also have a direct stake — via royalties and other economic benefits of development — in just how the federal resources within their boundaries are utilized. States are justifiably concerned that creating multi-state eco-regional decisionmaking bodies superior to state offices would upset the existing balance.

The secretary is also considering moving BLM and other bureau headquarters to the western states. Moving DOI senior managers closer to the public lands they oversee has merit, but presents a somewhat converse risk of making management of nationally owned lands too localized. Because policy governing federally managed lands historically emanates from Washington, those relocated managers risk being cut off from national policy discussion and perspective, even as they are expected to implement Washington's policies on the ground.

Whether these physical moves occur or the current structure is just tweaked, the secretary should ensure that regional or local managers remain closely involved in the formulation of agency policy and, more importantly, are vested with the authority to require that co-located representatives of all DOI agencies are held accountable for timely implementation of their respective responsibilities.

Reorganization holds the promise for beneficial change. But it will take more than simply reshuffling office locations to facilitate timely actions relating to development of the nation's mineral and other resources. While expediency is the end goal, the department and Congress should assess the pros and cons of any reorganization plan slowly and thoughtfully.

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Encouraging Federal-State Partnership Key

By DOUG WHEELER

As Richard Nixon developed an ambitious environmental agenda after becoming president in 1969, he thought, also, of the need for reorganization of the executive branch to address emerging issues of air and water pollution, land use, and natural resource management. In *The Morning After Earth Day*, Mary Graham concurs that “these newly prominent issues confound the normal workings of government.” To correct these institutional deficiencies, the incoming president sought advice of his transition team and an Advisory Council on Executive Reorganization.

The transition team had initially recommended a new Department of Environment and Natural Resources. But the advisory council demurred, and proposed instead the establishment of an Environmental Protection Agency and a Department of Natural Resources, to consist of four divisions: land and recreation; water resources; energy and mineral resources; and oceanic, atmospheric, and earth sciences.

EPA was promptly established, but like earlier attempts to reshape the Department of the Interior by Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, and Lyndon Johnson, the Nixon proposal for Natural Resources fell on deaf ears, occasioned by the entrenched iron triangle of Congress, interested constituencies, and civil servants in its defense of the status quo.

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke is similarly interested in transformation of his department, in order to provide — he says — more efficient service to its diverse constituencies, a closer connection to the resources for which it is responsible, and cost savings. Although he has not yet proposed to assimilate natural resource agencies

from other departments, possibly including NOAA and the Forest Service, Zinke has proposed to establish 13 “joint management areas” based on the natural delineation of ecosystems, watersheds, and landscapes. The admirable intent is to foster closer working relationships among disparate DOI agencies with responsibilities for the management of a shared resource, presumably reducing conflict and promoting effective cooperation within a designated resource area.

This realignment would be an important step in the right direction, long sought by conservation biologists and others who argue persuasively that the current array of agencies along state and regional boundaries does not correspond to the dictates of effective ecosystem management. So far so good. But, predictably, those who fear the effects of this reconfiguration, including state governments, have objected to the Zinke plan. By disrupting the old order, they suggest, the secretary’s proposal would sever well-established relationships with federal officials, and make access to the department more difficult. In response to these concerns, Zinke appears to have abandoned his preference for ecosystem boundaries. If so, he has relinquished the most compelling argument for an internal reorganization of the department.

The states are understandably concerned about any plan for reorganization which would impede, rather than facilitate, increased cooperation with the federal government on issues of resource management within their boundaries. But believing strongly in the benefit of such cooperation as a result of long experience at the Department of the Interior and as a state resource official in California, I am convinced that state boundaries and the physical location of regional offices are not nearly so important as a mutual commitment to open communication and effective collaboration.

Upon arriving in Sacramento to serve as Governor Pete Wilson’s secretary for resources, I quickly became

aware that we could not tackle the state’s pressing resource issues without the active cooperation of our federal counterparts. California has its own endangered species act, state park system, historic preservation program, water resources department, and procedural mandates. It made no sense to administer redundant programs if, by sharing resources and expertise with agencies of the Department of the Interior, we could achieve better resource outcomes at lower cost.

Thus, with the cooperation of secretaries of the interior in Republican and Democratic administrations, we were able to merge the management of state and national redwood parks; to develop an ESA-compliant Natural Communities Conservation Program; to create a California Biodiversity Council and to design a CalFed Bay-Delta Program, among other joint initiatives, all of which are more effective than if they had been attempted by the participating state or federal agencies alone. Today, such federal-state joint ventures, usually with private sector partners, are commonplace in other states and regions, including the 10-state sage grouse initiative, the five-state Range Wide Plan for management of lesser prairie chicken habitat, and the Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative in Texas and New Mexico.

If Secretary Zinke encounters continued opposition to his reorganization plans, as did his predecessors, he would be well-advised to pursue instead a virtual restructuring of the department, in which its agencies and employees are encouraged to seek common ground with their counterparts in state and local government and the private sector. They are — after all — only a phone call or e-mail message away.

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