

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 06, 2018

Ms. Mary L. Kendall
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Kendall:

We are writing to request you investigate potential alterations to scientific reports produced by the Department related to climate change including a pending report titled “Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge Projections for the National Park Service” (the “NPS sea level report”). We have reason to believe that references to human-caused climate change were recently removed or edited by Department of the Interior employees in this report and are concerned about the alteration of others.

During a hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on March 13th, Secretary Zinke defended his department’s respect for scientific integrity and challenged Senators and the public to find evidence that his department was editing so much as a comma in scientific reports for political purposes. Subsequent media reports indicate that National Park Service documents relating to the risk of sea level rise and storm surge on coastal national park sites are being edited for any mention of anthropogenic climate change.¹ If true, this situation casts doubt on the accuracy of the Secretary’s comments, and raises serious concerns with respect to how the Department is—or is not—applying its scientific integrity policies to publicly released scientific reports.

According to the National Park Service website, this particular report – the NPS sea level report – is a culmination of a three-year project beginning in 2013 and ending in 2016 and was done in collaboration with the University of Colorado Boulder. The purpose of the report was to provide the best available science to park planners and managers so that they can protect park resources and park visitors well into the future. The website notes that the report would be released to the public in late 2016, yet it is now April 2018 and the report has yet to be released. This delay is particularly concerning given National Park Service staff would certainly benefit from this information in order to properly plan for and manage some of America’s greatest treasures, as 92 percent of our coastal National Parks are threatened by sea level rise.

¹ Elizabeth Shogren, “Wipeout: Human role in climate change removed from science report,” *Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting*, (April 2, 2018), <https://www.revealnews.org/article/wipeout-human-role-in-climate-change-removed-from-science-report/>

We request that your investigation looks into:

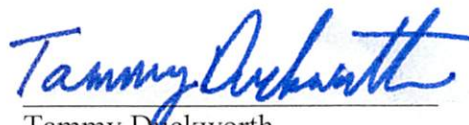
1. Any instances of Department of the Interior employees, who are not subject matter experts, editing the NPS sea level report, and which employees directed such edits;
2. The cause and impacts of the delayed release of this report;
3. Any other instances of interference with scientific reports and scientific communications released or being prepared by the Department of the Interior, including but not limited to responses to media requests and public presentations by scientific staff at the Department; and
4. Any activities at the Department of the Interior, including those cited above, that may violate Department of the Interior Manual Part 305 Chapter 3: Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

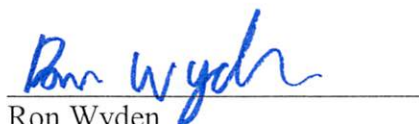
Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



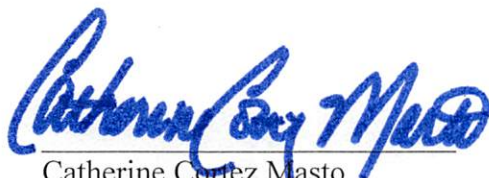
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator