

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

April 5, 2018

The Honorable Mary L. Kendall
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Inspector General
1849 C Street NW – Mail Stop 4428
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Kendall:

We are writing to request an investigation into the effectiveness of the scientific integrity policy at the National Park Service (NPS) and whether it is being adequately enforced. An investigative report from *Reveal* recently found that all references to human activities as a cause of climate change were removed from a report on the risks of rising sea levels and storm surges at NPS sites.¹ This incident follows a pattern of climate change information being limited, restricted, and censored by the Trump administration.²

Scientific integrity policies are federal agencies' first line of defense in ensuring that the scientific and scholarly information they produce is robust, rigorous, and of the highest quality. As noted in NPS' scientific integrity policy, "Scientific and scholarly activity is essential to the NPS mission." When these scientific and scholarly activities are unduly influenced by political or personal aims, agency policies and decision-making are put at risk.

In a recent hearing in our committee,³ Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva asked Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke about his demand to see a sensitive U.S. Geological Survey scientific report ahead of its release date, which was a violation of long-standing policy designed to ensure the data, which would alter markets, was not selectively released to parties who could benefit from insider knowledge. The incident led to the resignation of two scientists at the agency, raising significant concerns about a potential violation of scientific integrity. At the hearing, Secretary Zinke vehemently denied any wrongdoing, saying, "I didn't change a paragraph—a comma—in any document and I never would" and, "I don't change a comma from any scientific report, but I do read it before it goes out."

¹ Shogren, Elizabeth. "Wipeout: Human role in climate change removed from science report." 2 April 2018. <https://www.revealnews.org/article/wipeout-human-role-in-climate-change-removed-from-science-report/>

² "Silencing Science Tracker." Columbia Law School Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. <http://columbiaclimatelaw.com/resources/silencing-science-tracker/>

³ "Oversight: 'Policy Priorities at the Department of the Interior and the Administration's Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Proposal'" House Natural Resources Committee <https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/hearings/policy-priorities-at-the-department-of-the-interior-and-the-administrations-fiscal-year-2019-budget-proposal>

While it is possible that his own pen or keystroke did not alter the NPS climate change report, at least one person that worked under his leadership did. It is essential that we understand whether the changes were made in response to explicit verbal or written direction, or whether they were a result of a culture of climate denial that leads employees to believe the path of least resistance for them and their work is to follow that lead? It is equally important that we understand whether the NPS scientific integrity policy and its ongoing enforcement are preventing undue influence – by non-subject matter experts, for example - in scientific communication materials at all levels of the agency.

Thank you for consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Vic Edgerton or Lindsay Gressard of the Committee on Natural Resources staff at (202) 225-6065.

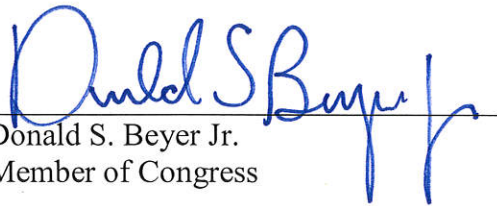
Sincerely,




Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress