

impacts can be linked to the action and the risks are reasonably certain to occur."

Enviros file multiple ESA lawsuits in West. The Center for Biological Diversity October 2 filed five lawsuits to protest the removal of critical habitat for six species in the West. The center charged that the Bush administration removed 300,000 acres of critical habitat for the species even though government scientists said the habitat was needed for the species' survival. The species include western snowy plover, California tiger salamander, southwestern willow flycatcher, Buena Vista Lake shrew and two California plants. In December FWS said it would revise in whole or in part seven decisions affecting imperiled species that involved a controversial former Interior Department employee. FWS said it would let one other decision involving the former employee stand. Controversial former deputy assistant secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife Julie McDonald oversaw all eight of the actions. Congressional Democrats and conservationists have charged that McDonald interfered with scientific assessments made by FWS employees. FWS said in the earlier December announcement it would revise decisions involving the White-tailed prairie dog, Preble's meadow jumping mouse, 12 species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies, Arroyo toad, Southwestern willow flycatcher (included in the Center lawsuit), and the Canada lynx.

BLM Wyoming begins to reorganize. Over the next year the BLM State Office in Wyoming will reorganize its field offices by adding a new management level of district offices. It will create three district offices that will oversee 10 field offices. BLM said its field offices, many of which manage the most intense oil and gas development in the country, will not change their staffs. A new Wyoming High District office will oversee Rock Springs, Rawlins, Kemmerer and Pinedale field offices. A new Wind River/Bighorn Basin District will oversee Worland, Cody and Lander field offices. And a Wyoming High Plains District will oversee Casper, Buffalo and Newcastle field offices.

Beleaguered RIK program produces revenues. The Minerals Management Service's (MMS's) royalty-in-kind (RIK) program, much criticized for ethical failures, still continues to produce big revenues. In the latest example MMS sold an estimated \$384 million worth of natural gas in western Wyoming to four companies, MMS announced October 9. Under RIK MMS takes royalties in the form of the oil and gas itself and then contracts with private companies to sell the oil and gas. MMS then pockets the revenues from the sales. In the western Wyoming RIK sale gas from the Jonah-Pinedale area was sold to Energy Commodities Group Inc., Oneok Energy Services Co., Sempra Energy Trading and Shell Energy North America. Eleven companies bid on the gas. Interior Department Inspector General Earl Devaney in three devastating September 9 reports charged the MMS RIK office with misbehavior. "More specifically, we discovered that between 2002 and 2006, nearly one-third of the entire RIK staff socialized with, and received a wide array of gifts and gratuities from, oil and gas companies with whom RIK was conducting official business," said Devaney. "While the dollar amount of gifts and gratuities was not enormous these employees accepted gifts with prodigious frequency."

Bush team prepares for transition. White House Chief of Staff Joshua Bolden will head a team of Bush administration officials that will help transfer policy to the next administration. The Presidential Transition Coordinating Council will include 14 other standing members, including various aides to the President and the director of the Office of Management and Budget. The team includes neither the Secretary of Agriculture nor the Secretary of Interior. The team is heavy on international affairs and homeland security officials. President Bush announced formation of the council in an October 9 executive order.

Grand Staircase grazing plan proposed. BLM published a proposed Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument plan amendment and draft EIS October 10 that will govern grazing uses on about 2.1 million acres in southern Utah. A preferred