

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Hearing to Consider the Nominations of Ms. Katharine MacGregor to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior and Mr. James Danly to be Deputy Secretary of Energy

April 2, 2025

[\[VIDEO\]](#) | [\[AUDIO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just asking staff if they remember the last time that somebody voluntarily mentioned the Federal Power Act at a hearing, so thank you.

Danly: I would hope that I was that person.

Sen. Cantwell: You were, you were, well, we'll go back in the record and search and see when the last time somebody brought it up. We often bring it up as members, but not a witness voluntarily so I think it shows your prowess.

So let me just jump right into it. As it relates to --- we'll just stick on this subject for a second. Do you commit to opposing any proposal to auction off assets, including those owned by Bonneville Power Administration?

Danly: I'm sorry, could you repeat that? I had trouble hearing you.

Sen. Cantwell: BPA is a unique situation...

Danly: Oh, Bonneville, yes.

Sen. Cantwell: Do you commit to not auctioning off any of the PMA assets, including those by Bonneville?

Danly: So the Power Marketing administrations are fundamental components of the Department of Energy and provide electricity to huge swaths of territory in America. I love the Power Marketing administrations. I just don't know anything about --- I know there have been talks at different times for the Power Marketing administrations to be privatized, and like, I have no interest in in that subject historically in my career, and I don't really know enough about that to give an informed answer here. It certainly isn't anything I've heard talked about recently...

Sen. Cantwell: But well maybe, yeah, take a little homework assignment. Bad idea.

Okay, so PNNL as it relates to grid modernization, chemistry, and material science --- will you advocate for robust resources for our national labs to continue to play a role in the forefront of innovation as it relates to key energy and national defense applications?

Danly: I think the national labs are fundamental to America's geostrategic position in the world. And on top of that, I'm just a really big fan of them.

Sen. Cantwell: Well, a lot of great work is being done there. I invite you to come also and see the fusion technology in the Pacific Northwest -- three different fusion companies that are underway. I do think we have to think about this, like if the United States wants to run fast, if we do, if somebody creates, you know, a miracle solution here -- how do we get it integrated very quickly into the grid? So, I invite you to come and look at that.

Hanford, very big issue for us and Hanford cleanup. I'm concerned about the layoffs from DOGE, and retirements, and so I don't want to lose qualified workers.

One of the major obligations by the federal government is to live up to the Tri-Party Agreement, and so will you commit to supporting a budget that meets the milestones of that agreement? Which is previous energy secretaries committing to a plan for cleanup.

So, these are legal commitments that everybody has made. Our state, as a state where this activity is housed, and obviously is concerned about the environmental contamination and it played a key role in getting those agreements. But will you live up to a budget that lives up to the milestones of the agreement?

Danly: So fundamentally, the budgets are not the purview of the position to which I've been nominated, but I will say this, the cleanup of the of the legacy waste sites is one of the handful of the truly core missions of the department, and I have every intention of abiding by the agreement.

And to the extent that the department has obligations to discharge, I will see them discharged properly.

Sen. Cantwell: So you would worry if so many workers were laid off in the area and you didn't think you could meet those milestone agreements -- that would be something you'd be concerned about?

Danly: Put another way, would I be concerned should I be confirmed? Would I be concerned that we didn't have the workforce to discharge the duties that Congress gave us? Yes, but that that would apply to virtually anything that we're told to do.

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you. I need to get to Ms. MacGregor.

If I could, last year, we spent 96 days out of the national preparedness levels at four and five, which means we're using all of our available resources to fight fires. Over the last 10 years, that only happened in 2021, so we're very concerned about what this year's fire season is going to look like. And we don't want to see a layoff of critical employees that are going to help us for the future.

The department has the responsibility to fight [fires]. How do you make sure that we have the workforce that we need as part of our incident command teams [and fight fires]? And if confirmed, will you not support a plan that includes selling off public lands that would reduce our access?

MacGregor: Thank you for the question, Senator. I stated earlier that I think wildfire, and I think I stated in my last hearing, is one thing that actually keeps me up at night in this job, if

confirmed and that wildland firefighters are absolutely part of our essential workforce, and getting them out there is just as equally as wildland wildfire management efforts that the department, not only in our department, states in partnership with us, local communities, the Department of Agriculture, do to help give that toe hold so that we can fight fire better and more effectively, and I absolutely will commit to you to work on wildland firefighting staffing to make sure we have what we need.

Sen. Cantwell: The two of you are the first witness to come before us since all the DOGE cuts. So, I'm asking you specifically -- will you stop any cuts that will affect wildland firefighting efforts?

MacGregor: I will absolutely evaluate any proposed cuts, should they be, you know, proposed for wildland firefighting cuts, and review those very closely. I can't imagine a situation where that would occur, but if it did, I would want to make sure that we're balancing and keeping the resources we need to fight fire.

Sen. Cantwell: Yeah, I think most of us would just be able to agree today, no one here wants those cuts. We think we need more resources. We think we have a pretty good --- you'll see a lot of Western members here, and we have a very good handle on what's happening.

We've had to deal with it for a long time. And we had to fight to get the money out of deficit reduction and back into [the] firefighting budget. That was a major bipartisan accomplishment, mostly led by this committee, and now we just want to keep moving forward.

You know the Palisades fire is like more than a wakeup call, more than a wakeup call. So, we need more resources, not less. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.