# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of the Interior

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Energy and Natural Resources[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Agency Mission | The Department of the Interior protects and manages the nation’s natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives and affiliated island communities.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for water and science oversees both the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Reclamation, and guides the development of national water and science policies while supporting environmental improvement. The assistant secretary also represents the secretary of the interior on several boards and committees, and prepares proposals for the secretary’s consideration. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500[[3]](#endnote-3) (5 U.S.C. § 5315) |
| Position Reports to | Deputy Secretary and Secretary of the Interior[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | The assistant secretary for water and science provides oversight for the projects and programs of the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Geological Survey and the Central Utah Project Completion Act Office. The Office of the Assistant Secretary had a fiscal 2016 budget of $749,000 and four full-time equivalents.[[5]](#endnote-5) The U.S. Geological Survey had a fiscal 2016 budget of $1.2 billion and 8,136 full-time equivalents.[[6]](#endnote-6) The Bureau of Reclamation has 5,344 employees and a $1.073 billion budget.[[7]](#endnote-7) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Discharges the duties of the secretary with the authority and direct responsibility for policy and program oversight of water project operations, facility security, natural resource management and research involving geology, hydrology, cartography, biology and technology
* Guides the development of national water and science policies and supports environmental improvement
* Oversees the U.S. Geological Survey, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Central Utah Project Completion Act Office[[8]](#endnote-8)
* Advises the secretary of the interior on scientific issues, and coordinates and integrates the U.S. Geological Survey with other department bureaus
* Represents the secretary of the interior on the Federal Geographic Data Committee, Civil Applications Committee, Advisory Committee on Water Information, Interagency Global Positioning System Executive Board, Interagency Group for Antarctic Policy, Emergency Mobilization Preparedness and other interagency efforts
* Prepares proposals for the secretary to consider by reconciling and adjusting individual policy proposals and programs submitted by subordinate bureaus and offices
* Assists in developing economically and environmentally sound resource activities, including the development and conservation of the nation’s water supply and support of cost-sharing techniques for developing and managing water supplies in the 17 Western states
* Improves the focus and effectiveness of departmental scientific research in biology, geology, hydrology and geospatial information[[9]](#endnote-9)
* Maximizes effectiveness of program operations of the bureaus
* Provides leadership on water supply conflicts
* Ensures program goals are identified and results are measured against departmental objectives
* Ensures appropriate consultation, communication and coordination with all affected parties in program and policy development and implementation[[10]](#endnote-10)
* Sets program priorities based on secretarial policies
* Represents the secretary of the interior in interpreting and communicating assigned program activities
* Assigns responsibilities for the execution of all laws and executive orders
* Liaises with members of Congress and committee staffs
* Testifies before congressional committees on budgetary matters and legislative proposals
* Represents the department in contact with other governmental agencies[[11]](#endnote-11)
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Some scientific knowledge of the issues, and significant knowledge of water issues in general
* Prior government experience, either on Capitol Hill or in a similar state function (helpful)
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| Competencies | * Strong communication skills to communicate well within the department, across different agencies and with external stakeholders
* Political savvy and sensitivity
* Willingness to travel
* Ability to manage offices that conduct scientific research, and strategic mindset to balance priorities
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Anne Castle (2009 to 2013) – Member of the South Platte River Basin Task Force; Partner at Holland and Hart; Board of Directors for the Genesee Water and Sanitation District and Member of the Colorado Ground Water Commission[[12]](#endnote-12) |
| Mark Limbaugh (2005 to 2007)[[13]](#endnote-13) – Deputy Commissioner for External and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Bureau of Reclamation; President of the Family Farm Alliance; Watermaster for Idaho’s Payette River Basin and Executive Director of the Payette River Water Users Association[[14]](#endnote-14) |
| Bennett William Raley (2001 to 2004)[[15]](#endnote-15) – Attorney for Davis, Graham & Stubbs; Special Assistant Attorney General for New Mexico’s Interstate Stream Commission; Staff Counsel to Senator Hank Brown[[16]](#endnote-16) |

1. Plum Book [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Partnership for Public Service position description [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Partnership for Public Service position description [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. DOI fiscal 2017 budget justification, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/FY2017_OS_Budget_Justification.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. U.S. Geological Survey budget, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/migrated/budget/appropriations/2016/highlights/upload/BH051.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.usbr.gov/main/about/fact.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. DOI handbook, <http://elips.doi.gov/ELIPS/0/doc/493/Page1.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. DOI fiscal 2017 budget justification, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/FY2017_OS_Budget_Justification.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. DOI handbook, <http://elips.doi.gov/ELIPS/0/doc/1973/Page2.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. DOI press release, <https://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/2009_06_19_release> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. DOI press release, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/archive/news/archive/07_News_Releases/070702.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Mark Limbaugh profile, <http://www.thefergusongroup.com/Details-Page/ArticleID/29/The-Hon-Mark-A-Limbaugh> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. DOI press release, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/archive/news/archive/04_News_Releases/041201.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Congress.gov Bennett Raley testimony, <https://www.congress.gov/107/chrg/shrg75010/CHRG-107shrg75010.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-16)