



Chairman Ken Calvert

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Full Committee Markup – Fiscal Year 2015 Interior and Environment Bill

July 15, 2014

Opening Statement As Prepared

Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin today by thanking Chairman Rogers for his support throughout our process thus far.

Before we get into the details of the bill, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to my good friend, our subcommittee ranking member and the subcommittee's former Chairman, Jim Moran. Mr. Moran will be leaving Congress at the end of this year having served his northern Virginia constituents for 24 years. We all admire Jim for his passion and commitment to the issues he cares deeply about. We don't agree on every issue but we are good friends—and will continue to be good friends. Jim, we are all grateful to you for your service and we salute you (applause).

I also want to thank each of our subcommittee Members for their active participation in our hearing process this year and the bipartisan spirit that continues to be a hallmark of our subcommittee's deliberations. This is my first bill as chairman of the subcommittee so I thank the Members for taking it easy on me so far this year—and expect everyone to do the same today!

The fiscal year 2015 Interior and Environment bill is funded at \$30.22 billion which is \$162 million, or one-half percent, above the FY14 enacted level and \$409 million, or one percent, below the budget request. The Committee has made a sincere effort to prioritize critical needs throughout the bill within its 302(b) allocation. As you all know, we face some serious challenges.

In eight of the last ten years, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have exceeded their fire suppression budgets despite being fully funded at the ten-year suppression average for such costs. Fire seasons have grown longer and more destructive, putting people, communities, and ecosystems at greater risk. Fire borrowing has now become routine rather than extraordinary.

This is a major challenge that Congress must soon address. In the meantime, however, the Committee has provided robust fire funding in its fiscal year 2015 bill. Fire suppression accounts (including the FLAME reserve fund) are again fully funded at the ten-year average level. The Committee has also provided \$470 million to address the Forest Service's projected shortfall in fire suppression funding for fiscal year 2014. Hazardous fuels funding is increased by \$90 million over the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. And, the Committee has provided the Forest Service funding for two new aircraft to efficiently and safely fight fires—and replace Korean War era aircraft.

This bill also makes critical investments in Indian Country—a priority shared by the bipartisan Members of the subcommittee. Overall, funding for the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Education, and the Indian Health Service is increased five percent from fiscal year 2014 levels, the largest percentage increases in this bill.

This bill also provides full funding in fiscal year 2015 for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. PILT payments are made to 49 of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The bill also provides \$2.27 billion for the operation of our national parks, including requested funding relating to the Centennial of the National Park Service.

We have also attempted to address a number of concerns within the Fish and Wildlife Service accounts. The bill funds popular grant programs at fiscal year 2014 enacted levels. It also provides additional funds to combat international wildlife trafficking; protects fish hatcheries from cuts and closures; and continues funding for invasive mussels and Asian carp.

The bill also provides \$152 million for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs that enjoy broad, bipartisan support. Some Members would prefer more funding; others would prefer less funding for LWCF. We have attempted to forge a middle ground in this bill.

Overall, funding for the EPA is reduced by \$717 million (or 9 percent) from fiscal year 2014 enacted levels. However, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and many other geographic programs are funded at fiscal year 2014 enacted levels.

Again this year, there is a great deal of concern over the number of regulatory actions being pursued by the EPA in the absence of legislation and without clear congressional direction. For this reason, the bill includes a number of provisions to address some of these concerns, and to stop unnecessary and damaging regulatory overreach by the agency.

Before closing, I'd like to make one further point about several Endangered Species Act provisions in this bill. This Committee has no interest in letting any species go extinct. What we're concerned about is Federal regulatory action based more on arbitrary legal deadlines than on common sense. Nowhere is this more evident than with sage-grouse.

States are rightfully concerned that a Federal takeover of sage-grouse will jeopardize existing conservation partnerships with States and private landowners which are necessary to save sage-grouse. This takeover would eliminate jobs and curtail future job growth; devastate State and local economies; and undermine the nation's ability to develop conventional and renewable resources necessary for energy independence.

So long as sage-grouse are not under imminent threat of extinction, cooperative conservation must be given a chance to work. That is why this bill includes a one-year delay on any decision to list sage-grouse, along with a strong cross-cutting budget to help implement these collaborative conservation plans.

In closing, let me thank the staff on both sides for their fine work. It's been an eye-opening experience to see how hard they work.

This markup is the next step of a long process and I hope over the coming months we'll all come together to find common ground. In that spirit, I look forward to continuing to work with Mr. Moran and the Members of this Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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