Full Committee Markup – FY 2016 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill
June 16, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared

I want to begin this morning by thanking Chairman Rogers for his support and leadership.

I also want to thank my good friend and our ranking member, Ms. McCollum, for her partnership and work on this bill. Finally, I want to thank each of our Subcommittee Members for their efforts and the collegiality that continues to be a hallmark of our Subcommittee's deliberations.

The fiscal year 2016 Interior and Environment bill is funded at $30.17 billion which is $246 million below the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and $3 billion below the budget request. We have made a sincere effort to prioritize needs within our 302(b) allocation.

The Committee has again provided robust wildland fire funding in its fiscal year 2016 bill. Fire suppression accounts (including the FLAME reserve fund) are again _fully funded_ at the ten-year average level.

This bill also makes critical investments in Indian Country. Overall, funding for the Indian Health Service is increased by $145 million (or three percent), while funding for the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Education is increased by $165 million (or six percent) from fiscal year 2015 levels—the largest percentage increase in this bill.

This bill provides full funding in fiscal year 2016 for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

The bill provides $2.7 billion for the National Park Service, including more than $60 million in new funding relating to the Centennial of the Park Service.

We have also attempted to address a number of priorities within the Fish and Wildlife Service accounts. The bill funds popular grant programs at slightly above fiscal year 2015 enacted levels. It also provides additional funds to combat international wildlife trafficking; protects fish hatcheries from cuts and closures; continues funding to fight invasive species; and reduces the backlog of species that are recovered but not yet de-listed.

The bill provides $248 million for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs that enjoy broad, bipartisan support. We have attempted to return the emphasis of LWCF to its original intent of recreation, and State and local acquisitions.

Overall, funding for EPA is reduced by $718 million (or 9 percent) from fiscal year 2015 enacted levels. Again this year, there is a great deal of concern over the number of regulatory actions being pursued by EPA in the absence of legislation and without clear congressional direction.

For this reason, the bill includes a number of provisions 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. We have no interest in interfering with science and no interest in letting any species go extinct. But, _we are_ concerned about Federal regulatory actions lacking in basic fairness and common sense, and the continued use of the judicial system to make land management decisions. Nowhere is this more evident than with sage-grouse.

States are rightfully concerned that a listing, or unnecessarily restrictive Federal land use plans, will jeopardize existing conservation partnerships with States and private landowners. These partnerships are necessary to save both the sage-brush ecosystem and local economies.

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 maintains a one-year delay on any decision to list sage-grouse, along with full funding to implement conservation efforts.

In closing, I want to thank the staff, on both sides of the aisle, who have worked hard on the legislation before us today.

This markup is the next step in a long process and I hope over the coming months we'll come together—as we do each year—to find common ground. In that spirit, I look forward to continuing to work with Ms. McCollum and the Members of the Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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