



May 5, 2025

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman and Members of the Committee on Natural Resources:

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. We also work to protect the surrounding landscapes to safeguard wildlife corridors, historical resources, watersheds and more. On behalf of our nearly 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to **oppose** as written the language before the committee providing for reconciliation pursuant to H. Con. Res. 14. **Supporting this resolution is a vote against America's national parks.**

Last year, there was a record 331 million visits to America's national parks, and for good reason. These cherished places protect and share some of our nation's most important cultural and natural resources with visitors from around the country and world. The National Park Service (NPS) is considered the most favorable government agency.

Despite this, NPS has consistently been underfunded. The hiring freeze instituted in January, rescission of job offers and forced departure of 2,500 staff only makes matters worse. Instead of pushing back against these attacks, the committee's resolution robs the National Park Service of critical staffing funds. **Section 80309** rescinds \$267 million in funding for rangers, emergency responders, curators, scientists and other critical staffing needs. This dedicated funding fills critical roles in the Park Service's workforce to help them plan, implement and maintain infrastructure and other improvements across the system. In addition, **Sections 80307-08** rescind \$12 million, which is helping prepare national parks across the country from floods, fires and storms. These dedicated investments are small compared to the big results they produce in protecting the natural and cultural resources people want to see when they visit their parks.

National parks do not exist in isolation and are part of larger interconnected landscapes. What happens on nearby lands has an effect on the water, air and wildlife, which move across park boundaries. Oil and gas development on lands adjacent to national parks can have lasting impacts on park resources. **Section 80105** seeks to open more federal lands to oil and gas development until all available lands nominated by the oil and gas industry in Wyoming, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Nevada are leased. At a time when the Department of the Interior is offering as many leases as possible, this resolution aims to take in less revenue from industry. Section 80105 also lowers the royalty rate paid by oil and gas companies from the current 16.67% to 12.5% - the rate that was set in 1920. This rate is lower than the royalty rate in the states listed above with oil and gas development on their state lands. The rate is also lowered to 12.5% for offshore oil and gas development. Money from royalties goes to states to use for education, health and safety programs. The money that stays with the federal government goes to help manage western waters, contributes to conservation programs including the Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Fund and helps fund the U.S. Treasury. This resolution would ensure fewer funds flow into these accounts while making it easier to drill for oil near national parks.

The resolution also rescinds needed protections in places where local communities have tried to balance the multiple uses of lands that surround national parks. **Section 80131** would rescind protections to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and its surrounding watershed, which includes Voyageurs National Park, and facilitate copper mining activities in the area. This watershed is no place for toxic

sulfide-ore copper mining. Voyageurs' waterways offer world-class fishing and recreational opportunities to thousands of visitors that pump over \$20 million into local economies. All this will be at risk if mining is permitted in the park's watershed. Pollution from as far as 100 miles away could flow downstream into the national park's waters, threatening public health and wildlife. **Section 80132** would force NPS and the Bureau of Land Management to approve permits to allow the Ambler industrial mining road through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve in Northwest Alaska, ignoring the destructive impact this project would have on Alaska Native communities and subsistence food resources, including caribou and salmon. The previous administration's decision to revoke the permits was based on science, Traditional Knowledge and a robust consultation process that involved the input of numerous Tribes and community members, with 82% of all public comments opposed to the project. The fees this resolution imposes on the right-of-way would bring in a scant \$5 million over 10 years, placing an insultingly low value on the destruction of a way of life this road will cause.

Sec. 80151 also weakens the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by prioritizing the private sector in the environmental review process. Ecosystem protections will suffer as project sponsors avoid crucial steps that ensure projects don't cause unnecessary harm.

Sections 80201-2 would rescind unobligated funds for highly effective National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) programs providing critical grants for coastal communities to enhance their resilience to extreme storms and funds to address the long-term infrastructure backlog at marine sanctuaries. Many of these funds are critical to the protection of national park coastal and marine resources. For example, grants for coral reef restoration in the Florida Reef Tract benefit multiple park units and the south Florida economy.

This is an anti-national parks resolution. NPS has been understaffed for over a decade. The oil and gas industry should be paying their fair share when drilling on public lands and waters, not getting a cheap deal to exploit more resources. This resolution is the opposite of what is needed and could do irreparable harm to our parks. It is an effort to dismantle the National Park Service. **We urge you to vote NO.**

Sincerely,

Kristen Brengel
Senior Vice President