

Subcommittee Chair Debra Haaland

NPFPL Oversight Hearing — “Climate Change and Public Lands”

Statement and Questions

February 13, 2019

- **Today is an exciting day. It will be the first of a new era for this Committee and for this Congress. An era of inclusion, where the diverse voices of the American people are clearly heard in these halls.**
- **We will hold up our public lands as a point of pride that all Americans share in and co-own.**
- **These special places will serve as refuge for our highest values and as places of growth towards our nation’s future.**
- **I want to start this hearing, the first of the 116th Congress for the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, by thanking my fellow Members for joining me in this important work.**

- **I am grateful for the confidence you have expressed in selecting me to Chair this Subcommittee.**
- **It is my sincere hope that we will find common ground on important issues, and I promise you that we will lead this Congress, the most diverse in history, towards bold policy solutions that benefit our federal public lands and our communities.**
- **We begin that leadership today as we confront the most pressing issue facing our nation—climate change.**
- **We will hear testimony from a leading scientist about the disproportionate impact climate change is already having on our public lands.**
- **Our national parks are warming twice as fast as the rest of the country.**

- **Parks in the Southwest, my home, and the home of many of my fellow members here on the dais, are experiencing unprecedented aridity.**
- **That means less water for our ecosystems—which in turn means less water for our homes and our farmers, because we live in a deeply interconnected world where changes to one system impact all others.**
- **We rely on the natural world to provide us with many of the things we depend on each day, from clean water and clean air to flood control and coastal protection.**
- **At a time when these natural services are under threat from global climate change, Americans will require strong leadership to ensure that we are**

ready to adapt to these changes and to meet these challenges.

- **Unfortunately, the Trump administration has failed to provide this leadership.**
- **They see fit to pursue energy dominance at all costs; to push an extractive and destructive agenda that has left our public lands responsible for nearly one quarter of all U.S. CO₂ emissions.**
- **At the same time, the administration has suppressed science and prevented adaptation.**
- **They canceled Executive Orders outlining adaptation strategies on public lands and even pulled back guidance on climate change and national security.**

- **They ignore the science of climate change, relying on outdated and inadequate mandates, and put Americans in harm's way.**
- **[Anecdote (New Mexico?)]**
- **If this administration will not take the lead, this Committee will.**
- **Dr. Gonzalez will help us understand the threat we face by explaining the impact climate change will have on our public lands.**
- **We will then hear from a top climate change adaptation scientist, Dr. Lara Hansen, because we can no longer afford to stand on the sidelines and do nothing.**

- **It is time for America to act on climate change, and our public lands are one of the best resources for us to do so.**
- **Public lands protect biodiversity and the ecosystems on which our daily lives depend.**
- **They provide space for the natural world to adapt to the new climate we have created.**
- **And they form the backbone of a nearly-trillion-dollar outdoor recreation economy that can help us create good, clean jobs.**
- **Climate change is an unprecedented challenge that will require big and bold solutions.**
- **Today, we take the first step towards meaningful action by hearing the risks we face and by considering how we can prepare our communities,**

our country, and our public lands for the challenges climate change presents.

- **Thank you all for joining me here today.**
- **I look forward to our leadership on these issues.**

Thank you again to the witnesses. I look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize Ranking Member Mr. Curtis for their opening statement.

[RM gives their opening statement]