

**Subcommittee Chair Debra Haaland
NPFPL Legislative Hearing
Opening Statement
July 18, 2019**

- **Thank you all for attending this Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' legislative hearing on four public lands bills.**
- **I would like to extend my gratitude to the bill sponsors joining us today to testify.**
- **I would also like to welcome our witnesses, many of whom have traveled a long way to speak about the personal and national significance of these proposals.**
- **Today we will consider four important pieces of legislation that seek to enhance our public lands.**
- **Two of the bills before us today have the potential to resolve public access concerns while increasing educational and interpretational opportunities for visitors.**
- **We will also consider a bill that addresses the important role native plants play in maintaining resilient ecosystems on our public lands.**

- **Finally, we will discuss a proposal that would help express our nation's appreciation, and honor the ultimate sacrifices made by military service mothers and families.**
- **H.R. 401, introduced by Representative O'Halleran, would convey 640 acres of National Forest System land to the 125-year-old Lowell Observatory.**
- **The conveyance is intended to further its mission of scientific discovery and public education while increasing access to the site.**
- **While the bill receives widespread, bicameral and bipartisan support throughout Arizona, including Coconino County, the City of Flagstaff and multiple community organizations, I am eager to learn more about the context and understand if this bill is that the most appropriate way to manage these concerns.**
- **Next, I want to applaud Representative Tipton on introducing his bill which would enlarge the Yucca House National Monument – an important community center during the Great Pueblo Period.**
- **The boundary expansion encompasses solely donated land to the east of the existing monument.**

- **In addition to protecting more ancestral Puebloan archeological sites and cultural resources, the donated land would address a long-standing issue of public access to the monument and provide the National Park Service with an opportunity to improve the visitor experience at Yucca House National Monument.**
- **Representative Quigley’s bill would direct land management agencies to study and prioritize native plant materials for ecosystem restoration, species, and addressing the impacts of climate change.**
- **The bill would also direct the Department of the Interior to hire 20 new full-time employees with backgrounds in botanical sciences to conduct botanical science research in support of the department’s land management responsibilities.**
- **I appreciate Rep. Quigley’s thoughtful approach to this legislation, generating a proposal that will provide benefits to rural economies and agricultural producers while simultaneously restoring the health of our public lands.**

- **Finally, Representative Kim's legislation would extend the authorization to establish the Gold Star Families National Monument in Washington DC – helping us honor those whose sons and daughters made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.**
- **Gold Star families have felt the pain and sorrow of losing a loved one and they have courageously turned those feelings into support for service members, veterans and their families.**
- **I would like to thank the sponsoring Members for their leadership on these issues.**
- **And to the witnesses, thank you again for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.**
- **At this time, I would like to recognize the Ranking Minority Member for 5 minutes.**