

Rep. Diana DeGette
NPFPL Legislative Hearing
Opening Statement
October 14, 2021

- **Thank you all for joining us today for the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' legislative hearing on 10 public lands bills.**
- **I would like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues who have sponsored these bills, as well as today's witnesses for their testimony.**
- **Subcommittee Chair Neguse is attending the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, so he is unable to be with us today, but I know he extends his gratitude as well.**
- **Today's hearing is an opportunity to recognize the recreational and conservation values of the National Trails System and the National Wild and Scenic River System.**
- **The National Trails System promotes the enjoyment and appreciation of trails while encouraging greater public access throughout the country. The system includes around 18,000 miles of national scenic trails, national historic trails, and national recreation trails.**

- **These trails are found in both urban and rural settings for people of all ages, interests, skills, and physical abilities.**
- **Today we will be reviewing proposals to add to the trail network. These include Representative Estes' bill to establish the Chisholm and Western National Historic Trails and Representative LaHood's bill to establish the Route 66 National Historic Trail.**
- **These are, of course, from two different eras but they both retrace the routes of captivating times in our nation's history.**
- **I am also eager to hear more about Chair Neguse's bill to facilitate completion of the Continental Divide Trail, which runs through my home state of Colorado.**
- **In addition to national trails, we will also consider several bills that examine the possibility of adding new river segments to the National Wild and Scenic River System.**
- **National Wild and Scenic Rivers are a collection of exceptional rivers that have been designated to protect their free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values for the enjoyment of present and future generations.**

- **These rivers, or sections of rivers and tributaries, are protected in their free-flowing condition and not dammed or otherwise impeded.**
- **I look forward to hearing more about the bills from Representatives Pingree, Buchanan, and Soto and their respective river segments in Maine and Florida.**
- **Rivers throughout the country offer scenic destinations for solitude and contemplation, offer ample opportunities for outdoor recreation, and supply clean drinking water for millions of Americans.**
- **Water is a precious resource, and the National Wild and Scenic River System ensures that our children continue to receive these benefits from our most exceptional and pristine rivers.**
- **H.R. 980, sponsored by House Transportation and Infrastructure Chair DeFazio, is another bill we are reviewing today that will permanently protect a critical water resource.**
- **This bill extends an existing mineral withdrawal in Southwest Oregon's Pistol River and Rough and Ready watersheds. These rivers supply water and provide critical habitat for salmon and many rare plants.**

- **This is a prime example of why it is important to protect rivers and water supplies from the toxic impacts of misplaced development and mining projects. I look forward to hearing more from our witness, Mr. Finnerty, about the broad coalition of support for this proposal.**
- **Finally, we will have Representative Trone's bill to enhance the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center in Frederick, Maryland.**
- **This important training center utilizes historic preservation projects as the main vehicle for teaching preservation philosophy and building crafts, technology, and project management skills.**
- **This is where and how the National Park Service develops a critical workforce in specialized trades that keep our parks running and our historic resources preserved and revitalized.**
- **I look forward to learning more from the bill sponsors and witnesses here today.**
- **With that, I'd like to recognize Ranking Member Fulcher for his opening remarks.**