



Statement of Ranking Member Westerman

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1548, H.R. 4658, H.R. 6364,
H.R. 6442, H.R. 7496, H.R. 7615, H.R. 7693, and H.R. 7952
June 14, 2022

Thank you, Chair Neguse. I am pleased that today's hearing includes H.R. 7693, the "*National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2022*," a bill that I am proud to be co-leading with Chair Grijalva. H.R. 7693 currently has 43 cosponsors, nearly evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats. A bipartisan Senate companion of the legislation is being led by Senators Rob Portman from Ohio and Angus King from Maine. This bill is a testament to the bipartisan nature of the National Park Foundation and the important work that they do to conserve and enhance our nation's treasured national parks.

The National Park Foundation is the official charitable partner of the National Park Service and the only non-profit, non-partisan organization with a mission tied directly to supporting the success of the National Park Service through private funding and strategic partnerships. Each year they raise over \$100 million in private philanthropic from individuals, corporations, and other private foundations to support America's national parks.

The National Park Foundation is an integral part of the effort to address the significant challenges facing the National Park System, namely the deferred maintenance backlog and park overcrowding. Over the past six years, the National Park Foundation has utilized funding provided by Congress to leverage private philanthropic donations for important projects

that address important issues like deferred maintenance that would otherwise be financed solely using taxpayer funds.

The need for the National Park Foundation is more evident than ever. Recently, the National Park Service announced that its current deferred maintenance backlog stands at \$21.8 billion, an increase of roughly \$10 billion from 2018. Federal funding alone will not fix the backlog, which is why it is so vital that we work with and further empower park partners and incentivize creative partnerships.

My bill builds upon a provision in the 2016 “*National Park Service Centennial Act*,” which provided the National Park Foundation with an authorization of up to \$5 million annually for seven years. Specifically, my bill extends this authorization by seven additional years and increases the authorization to \$15

million annually. As a requirement of this appropriation, the National Park Foundation must provide at least a 1:1 match with private dollars and no funds may be used for overhead, administrative expenses, or land acquisition. These important good-governance requirements ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used wisely.

The National Park Foundation has proven to be an excellent steward of the funding they have received by routinely bringing in more private dollars than the required 1:1 to match with federal appropriated dollars. The Foundation ensures that projects that they undertake using federal funding are approved by the National Park Service and align with the priorities of the agency.

I'd like to thank each of the witnesses for being here today, and in particular, Mr. Will Shafroth, the President and CEO of the National Park Foundation, who is testifying in support of H.R. 7693 today.

I hope that the Committee moves this bill expeditiously to the floor to make sure that our parks will continue to be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.