

Chair Joe Neguse
NPFPL Legislative Hearing
Opening Statement
June 14, 2022

- I would like to start by thanking the sponsoring Members of Congress as well as our witnesses for joining us today to speak about the personal and national significance of these proposals.
- This month is Great Outdoors Month – a time for us to celebrate our Nation’s parks, wildlife refuges, forests, monuments, national conservation lands, and other natural treasures.
- Every day, Americans across the country draw inspiration and pride from the beauty of our public lands. Our national parks have always been central to America’s heritage and essential to our identity as a nation, as we know well in Colorado.
- This Committee has the responsibility to ensure that our federal counterparts have the tools they need to maintain these iconic outdoor spaces and tell the stories that shape our country.
- Today, we will consider eight proposals that seek to enhance and strengthen our National Parks and provide the resources the National Parks Service needs to address the challenges they face today.
- We will consider a bill from Ranking Member Westerman that would reauthorize federal funding for the National Park Foundation through fiscal year 2030 and increase the authorization level from \$5 million to \$15 million.

- The National Park Foundation is an indispensable partner that has ensured the National Park Service can achieve its mission to protect our public lands and waters for present and future generations.
- I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of this important bill to protect and improve our national parks and hope to see it move swiftly through the committee process.
- We will also consider legislation, including from several members of this Subcommittee, that seeks to address challenges faced by the National Park Service.
- H.R. 1548, the Native Plant Species Pilot Program Act, introduced by Representative Cartwright, would create a pilot program to utilize native plant materials in projects within National Park Service regions to protect native plant biodiversity and direct the Park Service to review existing data and study the cost-effectiveness of using native plants.
- H.R. 1548 would enhance how the Park Service utilizes native plant materials for revegetation. Native plants require fewer pesticides and fertilizers, less water and maintenance, and prevent the spread of invasive non-native species.
- H.R. 6442, the PACTS Act, introduced by Ranking Member Fulcher, would expand the use of co-management agreements to include Tribal Governments and quasi-governmental entities to alleviate some administrative hurdles currently facing the National Park Service.
- H.R. 7615, introduced by Committee member Representative Moore, seeks to remedy Park Service staffing shortages due to increased visitation to our national parks.

- The LODGE Act would provide the National Park Service with new authority to enter into innovative housing partnerships with the private sector to provide a much-needed supply of housing in these high-demand regions and help NPS retain and hire staff.
- We will also consider two bills that will honor those who played a role in shaping our Nation's history.
- Introduced by Representative Lieu, H.R. 4658 would designate the Anthony "Tony" Beilenson Trailhead in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.
- Congressman Beilenson dedicated a significant amount of his time in Congress to environmental issues, including contributing to the formation of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.
- I can think of no better way to honor his memory than to designate a trailhead with his namesake in the National Recreation Area he fought so hard to establish.
- It also seems fitting, that during National Caribbean American Heritage Month, we will hear a bill regarding a national park in the Virgin Islands.
- H.R. 7496 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to install a plaque at the peak of Ram Head in the Virgin Islands National Park to commemorate the slave rebellion that began on St. John in 1733.
- H.R. 7496 would ensure that those who travel to the Virgin Islands National Park take inspiration from the strength and resilience of one of the earliest successful slave uprisings in the Americas, as

well as honoring the tragic collective suicide of enslaved peoples which took place on Ram Head a year later.

- I would like to thank Representative Plaskett for her leadership and for her efforts to ensure that our national parks tell important stories such as this one.
- We still have a long way to go to ensure that the National Park System represents the full American story; these bills are a step in the right direction.
- Thank you again to the sponsoring Members and witnesses for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimonies.

With that, I yield back my time and recognize the Ranking Member for his opening remarks.