

Subcommittee Chair Joe Neguse
Opening Statement
NPFPL Legislative Hearing
June 23, 2022

- Thank you all for joining us for today's Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands legislative hearing considering 5 bills addressing lands managed by the Department of the Interior. I am grateful to my colleagues who sponsored these proposals, and to the witnesses appearing today to share their expertise.
- These bills each represent locally-driven efforts to conserve our environment and support the responsible management of our public lands.
- Many of these proposals have been around for several Congresses and enjoy significant local support. They create new opportunities for recreation, protect threatened and irreplaceable environments, and support local economies.
- The American public supports protecting our public lands that provide clean air, clean water, and places to recreate. This is demonstrated by poll after poll and underscored by the growth of the outdoor recreation economy.
- This is something we know very well in Colorado, which is why I support working to advance locally-driven measures to achieve conservation gains throughout the country.
- I suspect we will hear from our colleagues across that aisle that these bills aren't meeting the needs of the American people, and that House Democrats are failing to address essential kitchen table issues. I find this deeply ironic given recent proceedings in this chamber.
- Just last week, we passed a measure to lower food costs and fuel prices to support American families facing the global crisis of inflation impacting every major economy.
- Nearly all of our colleagues across the aisle voted against that measure.

- When we asked our colleagues across the aisle to help us hold oil companies accountable to end price gouging at the pump that is increasing the price of gas, our colleagues again voted no.
- Last year, we successfully advanced the largest infrastructure bill in living memory, investing in American communities—in roads, bridges, and schools. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law made billions available to responsibly manage our forests and to protect communities from catastrophic wildfires.
- While there were a few Republican members of the House who joined us to support the bill, every Republican on this Committee voted against that historic effort.
- We can confront economic challenges without compromising the protections communities rely upon for a safe, livable environment.
- Today, this Subcommittee will consider measures from both Democrats and Republicans, including two bills requested by our Republican colleagues.
- These are important measures to protect our wild places, to support local economies, and to help combat the climate crisis.
- A bill from Rep. DeFazio would protect critical salmon habitats, free flowing streams, and a key recreation area in his home state of Oregon.
- Our distinguished colleague, Subcommittee Chair Leger Fernandez has a bill to protect the ancestral lands of the Pueblo of Taos, enhancing conservation protections in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.
- And our colleague Rep. Horsford of Nevada has worked closely across the aisle and across state lines to protect the heritage of the Great Basin and the pioneer communities who settled there. His bipartisan legislation will reauthorize two National Heritage Areas in Nevada and Utah.

- We'll also hear two measures from our Republican colleagues to transfer federal lands to meet local purposes. While I have some concerns about the details, I respect their efforts to address local needs, and look forward to working on both these efforts.
- I am proud of the work this Subcommittee has done throughout this Congress to consider a broad, bipartisan set of items protecting lands and supporting communities across the United States.
- I look forward to continuing that effort with today's proceedings.
- As House Democrats have demonstrated consistently through the measures we've supported in Committee and on the House floor, we can support American families and protect our environment, including our public lands.
- With that, I yield back the remainder of my time and recognize the Ranking Member for his opening statement.