

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Young
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Oversight Hearing on “Climate Change and Public Lands: Examining
Impacts and Considering Adaptation Opportunities”

I would first like to congratulate Representative Haaland (HA- LAND) on her election to the House of Representatives and for being selected as the new chair of the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee. I look forward to working with her this Congress on many of the important land management issues facing our country.

- Today we meet to discuss the impacts of climate change on our federal lands and to examine adaptation opportunities. It is certainly my hope that we use this time to discuss innovative land management solutions that fall under this subcommittee’s jurisdiction.
- All too often, this issue has been used as a vehicle to push a radically progressive agenda that would prove to be devastating for American families and would offer minimal at best climate results.
- Among the ludicrous policy goals that have been expressed includes calls for the complete elimination of air travel, cows, and nuclear energy.
- Fearmongering and unrealistic rhetoric should have no place in this debate. Instead we should focus on pragmatic solutions that offer realistic environmental benefits.
- One area of policy actually under this committee’s jurisdiction is forestry. It’s common knowledge that the poor health of our nation’s forests is has reached crisis levels.
- If the Democrat Majority is truly serious about reducing vast amounts of Carbon Emissions into the atmosphere, they should be working more closely alongside Republicans in supporting common-sense forest management reforms which include the responsible cutting and replanting of trees, as well as grazing on public lands.

- Before our own eyes, we've seen the nation's once flourishing federal forests transform into dead and burned out waste lands.
- The sorry state of our federal forests has become a national disgrace and national emergency. While climate change has certainly exacerbated the challenges facing our federal forests, there is much that we can be doing to help our forests adapt and become more resilient in a time of changing climate.
- With 16.8 million acres, the Tongass National Forest is the largest national forest in the United States. In the last 90 years, only 4% has been managed for timber production. To make matters worse, the Forest Service has been unwilling and unable to provide a reliable and sufficient supply of timber sales.
- In my home state of Alaska, over the past 35 years we have seen the closure of two pulp mills, five large saw mills, and countless small mills due to misguided forest policy. This has cost Alaskans over 5,000 good paying- family wage jobs.
- For decades we have failed to proactively manage our forests in order to reduce hazardous fuels buildup. As a result, the excessive fuel loads that have piled up are increasing the likelihood of explosive, unmanageable and costly megafires that wreak havoc on our rural communities and emit millions of metric tons of carbon dioxide into the air.
- We cannot continue to ignore the forest health crisis. The Federal government's current rate, treating a paltry 2% of the nearly 60 million acres identified as high risk to wildfire, is not acceptable.
- To solve our nation's forest health crisis, we must enact measures to increase the pace and scale of active management across our forest lands.
- The American people want our forests returned to health. They want the growing scourge of wildfire brought back under control. They want the destruction of mountain habitats by fire, disease and pestilence arrested and reversed. They want the prosperity of their forest communities restored.

- Our witness, Dr. Elaine Oneil, has spent her career specializing in forest health, climate change, and forest carbon accounting. Dr. Oneil's written testimony offers reasonable solutions that would be beneficial for our forests, for our climate, and for the American people.
- I look forward to a robust discussion on the state of our federal lands.