

Subcommittee Chair Debra Haaland
NPFPL NPS Budget Hearing
Statement and Questions
April 3, 2019

- **Thank you all for being here for the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' Oversight Hearing: *Examining the Spending Priorities and Mission of the National Park Service.***
- **Since 2010, 28 new units and 5 million acres have been added to the National Park System. In this same 9-year span, the system has seen 37 million additional visitors each year.**
- **Despite these increases, this Administration has proposed a fiscal year 2020 budget with 3,500 fewer full-time equivalent employees and has requested Congress slash funding to fiscal year 2010 funding levels.**
- **In short, the National Park Service's fiscal year 2020 budget proposed by the Department of the Interior is reckless and irresponsible.**
- **It shows a total disregard for our country's cultural and historical sites, scenic and environmental attributes and educational and recreational opportunities. It puts our resources at risk.**

- **The proposed budget we have before us today cuts Natural and Cultural Resource funding, despite the NPS's 2006 Management Policies that have made it clear that the NPS's predominate mandate is to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife" within the parks for future generations.**
- **Deputy Director Smith, just yesterday you appeared before this subcommittee to deliver the Department's position on four public land bills.**
- **You stated that the agency does not support enacting those pieces of legislation because your priorities are about "focusing resources on reducing the National Park Service's \$11.9 billion deferred maintenance backlog and addressing other critical national park needs."**
- **Seemingly the budget proposal is not in line with your own agency priorities as it would significantly reduce funding for park maintenance and repair and would reduce money available for construction.**
- **Going forward, I hope that the Park Service will testify before this committee based on their conservation mandate and not hide behind a deferred maintenance backlog as an excuse to leave resources unprotected.**

- **On the other hand, the NPS’s proposal cuts out very successful programs.**
- **The highly successful Historic Preservation Fund provides resources to partners outside of the NPS, including states, tribes, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to protect and conserve cultural and historic assets and sites. The Department’s proposal reduced this line item by nearly 70 percent.**
- **This budget also drastically reduces NPS’s protection of important resources for underrepresented communities.**
- **The proposed budget does not include ANY funding for the Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Grants, Japanese American Confinement Site Grants, or the American Indian & Native Hawaiian Art & Culture Grants.**
- **In his Senate nomination hearing last week, Acting Secretary Bernhard stated, “I recognize that climate is changing and that man is contributing to that,” but the Department’s budget does little to help our parks respond to the impacts of our changing climate, something you have been consistently pushed to prioritize by**

this Congress, the conservation and protection community, and the American public.

- **And the Department proposed essentially eliminating the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a bipartisan program that is well-supported by the majority of Americans and which this Congress just provided with permanent Authorization in the lands package the President signed into law.**
- **I know that Members on this subcommittee have a long list of concerns with how the Department is protecting our treasured park resources, and I do not believe that this budget alleviates any of those concerns.**
- **Rather, it only raises further questions about this administration's prioritization of certain uses over the health of our public lands.**
- **I look forward having our questions answered, and to hearing about how NPS is managing the lands it is obligated to protect.**