

Congressman Ryan Zinke

Before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

January 17, 2017

Thank you Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Cantwell, and members of the Committee. Thank you also Montana Senators Tester and Daines for your kind remarks, leadership, and continued service on behalf of the Treasure State and our great Nation. It is an honor to appear before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to recognize the members of my family who have joined me today. My wife Lolita who is a member of President-elect's National Hispanic Advisory Council, my daughter Jennifer and her husband Jack, and my two granddaughters Matilda and Charlotte. I told my daughter two things: Don't join the Navy and don't marry a Navy SEAL. I am proud to say that she ignored my advice, was a Navy Diver and married a Navy SEAL. I am very proud of her. My sons Wolfgang and Konrad have returned to school and I hope are studying today.

As a son of a plumber and a kid who grew up in a small timber and railroad town next to Glacier National Park in Montana, I am humbled to be before you as the President-elect's designee for Secretary of the Interior. I am also humbled because of the great responsibility the position holds to be the steward of majestic public lands, the champion of our great Indian nations, and the manager and voice of our diverse wildlife.

Upfront, I am an unapologetic admirer of Teddy Roosevelt and believe he had it right when he placed under federal protection millions of acres of federal lands and set aside much of it as National forests. Today, much of those lands provide American's the opportunity to hike, fish, camp, recreate and enjoy the great outdoors. It was on those lands that my father taught me to fish and hunt and the Boy Scout's taught me the principles of environmental stewardship and the importance of public assess. It is also these lands that many communities, like the town I grew up in, rely on to harvest timber, mine, and to provide our nation with energy. Without question, our public lands are America's treasure and are rich in diversity. I fully recognize and appreciate that there are lands that deserve special recognition and are better managed under the John Muir model of wilderness, where man is more of an observer than an active participant. I also recognize that the preponderance of our federal holdings are better suited to be managed under the Pinchot model of multiple use using best practices, sustainable policies, and objective science.

During the recent centennial of our National Park Service, I found myself at the ceremony at Yellowstone National Park, our first National Park established by Congress and signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872. As I enjoyed the celebration under the famous Roosevelt arch, I could not help but notice the words etched in the stone at the top of the arch "For the benefit and enjoyment of the people." And, on the side of the right pillar was a plaque with the words "Created by Act of Congress." I thought "What a perfect symbol' of what our land policy in a Nation as great as ours should be. The lesson here is this. It takes both sides to create an arch that serves higher purpose and that higher purpose is best achieved through

the approval and consent of Congress. In a nutshell, that is my commitment to you. If confirmed, I will work with each of you to ensure the use of our public lands reflects higher purpose so that our children's children can look back and say "we did it right". I have met with almost every member of the Committee and understand that each state is different, and you have different priorities and issues. I am confident we can work together to get the job done.

When asked about what my goals might be, I would say there are three immediate tasks.

The first is to restore **trust** by working **with** rather than **against** local communities and states. I fully recognize that there is distrust, anger, and even hatred against some federal management policies. Being a listening advocate rather than a deaf adversary is a good start.

Second, is to prioritize the estimated 12.5 billion dollars in backlog of maintenance and repair in our National Parks. The President elect is committed to a jobs and infrastructure bill, and I am going to need your help in making sure that bill includes shoring up our Nations treasures.

And third, to ensure the professionals on the front line, our rangers and field managers, have the right tools, right resources, and flexibility to make the right decisions that give a voice to the people they serve.

As a former Montana State Senator and Current Congressman, I have learned a lot since I was a SEAL in the deserts of Iraq. To accomplish my mission as Secretary of Interior, I know that I am going to need your help, confidence, and perhaps even prayers. I look forward to answering your questions and, if confirmed,

representing the interests of our great nation and giving a voice to all Americans, to include our great Indian Nations, on how we manage and sustain our public lands and treasures they contain.

Madam Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today, and I look forward to your questions.