



Opening Statement
Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)
Hearing on Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)
December 3, 2015

“Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing. And welcome to all the Alaskans who have traveled to be here today.

“This is the 35th anniversary of the date the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was enacted. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I can still imagine Scoop Jackson and Ted Stevens having many conversations about this law. So this is certainly an appropriate time to review the implementation — but, in my view, this has been a tremendous success.

“While the implementation of this law clearly has tremendous impact on Alaskans, I think it is important to remember that the lands covered by ANILCA are federal lands that are lands of national interest, as the title of the law itself states.

“According to the state’s tourism data, Alaska had roughly 1.7 million summer visitors — nearly double the population of the entire state. That includes visits to many of the iconic places that were protected or expanded by ANILCA, including popular National Park Service areas such as Glacier Bay, Lake Clark and, of course, Denali National Park and Preserve, which you were so instrumental in helping to get renamed, and encompasses perhaps the state’s most iconic features.

“In addition to the popular national parks and national forest areas, ANILCA has protected millions of acres of more remote lands, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Whether heavily visited or not, these are lands of significance and importance to all Americans.

“They are extremely important from an environmental and cultural standpoint by protecting intact, Arctic ecosystems as well as important fish and wildlife habitat and migration routes, which are key for subsistence and other hunting and fishing opportunities.

“And these lands provide important economic benefits. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that outdoor recreation activities in Alaska — much of which takes place on federal lands — supports more than 90,000 direct jobs and generates over \$9.5 billion in consumer spending.



“Much of Alaska’s tourism industry is based on visitors from all over the world wanting to visit the national parks and other public lands protected by ANILCA.

“I think it’s worth noting that many of the ecosystems protected under ANILCA include streams and rivers that are essential to Alaska’s significant commercial fishing activities, which support 20,000 direct jobs and are closely tied to commercial fishing in the state of Washington.

“I know the witness panel will predominately have representatives expressing concern with ANILCA or, more specifically, with the way federal agencies are implementing the law.

“But I do want to recognize there will inevitably be conflicts between federal, state and local interests in managing such large areas of land. However, much of the criticism today is directed at agency practices or interpretation of the law, so I think it would be appropriate at some time to have the relevant agencies here to provide the administration’s perspective — that would be helpful.

“While I expect that much of the hearing will focus on specific concerns different parties have on the implementation of the law, I’d like to close on a broader perspective.

“On this anniversary of the law’s enactment, I think it’s important to appreciate the significance and vision of the law, and to join with the millions of Americans who have enjoyed the treasures of this very, very special place.

“Again, welcome to the Alaskans who are here to participate in the hearing.”

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