

Hearing On the President's FY 2022 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior

Tuesday, July 27, 2021

Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement

- The Committee will come to order.
- We've convened this morning to review the President's proposed budget for the Department of the Interior.
- Secretary Haaland, it is a pleasure to welcome you for your first budget hearing before this committee as Secretary of the Interior.
- The Interior Department has dual and sometimes conflicting responsibilities — on one hand the department is responsible for managing and protecting our national parks, wildlife refuges, and public lands, and providing for outdoor recreation, which has become increasingly important.
- At the same time, the Department is responsible for managing public lands and offshore resources to responsibly develop the energy and mineral resources that we need to maintain our energy independence.
- It's with that dual mission in mind that we should be reviewing priorities contained in this budget request.
- At a high level, the President has requested \$17.6 billion in appropriations for the Interior Department in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022.

- That represents an increase of \$2.5 billion, or 17% over the current enacted level, and a sharp contrast to the 16% cut proposed last year by the previous administration.
- The budget includes new mandatory funding provided by the Great American Outdoors Act, which was signed into law last year.
- That law is providing the Department with much needed funding over five years to address high priority deferred maintenance projects, as well as permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund at its fully authorized level.
- The Great American Outdoors Act was enacted with broad bipartisan support, and I think it is important that the funding process be equitable and transparent.
- I appreciate that the Administration has provided Congress with lists of its proposed maintenance and LWCF and deferred maintenance projects. I hope we can use this hearing to get a better understanding of how the Department is prioritizing funding.
- I expect there will be much discussion this morning on the Department's policies and proposals concerning energy development on federal lands and waters.
- In January, President Biden issued an Executive Order pausing new oil and gas lease sales on federal lands and waters to allow time for a comprehensive review of the program.

- While I have supported the Administration's desire to pause lease sales to make sure the American people are getting fair returns for our shared resources, we are now well into the early summer timeline when we were told the review would be completed.
- I also understand that a federal judge has issued an injunction against the Administration's pause, although I expect that decision will be appealed.
- In any event, we need a plan to move forward with responsible oil and gas leasing, both onshore and offshore, to maintain our energy independence.
- I look forward to discussing this in further detail with Secretary Haaland later in the hearing.
- I'll turn now to a constituency that is near and dear to my home state.
- Coal miners have made tremendous sacrifices and have done the heavy lifting that powered our nation to greatness.
- The country has benefitted from that work and the scars of abandoned mine lands left in those communities and it is imperative that we give back to coal communities for the sacrifices they made for our nation.
- So, I was pleased to see that the President's budget called for \$50 million increase for the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant program which helps to eliminate health and safety hazards and reclaim

areas for future economic benefit in places like West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

- I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure all outstanding mine land reclamation needs, including post-1977 areas governed under title five of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, are adequately addressed.
- Finally, I'd like to make a note about departmental nominations.
- I am pleased that the Senate confirmed Tommy Beaudreau as your deputy earlier this summer.
- But I am disappointed that we have yet to receive a nomination for a Director of the National Park Service.
- National Parks — including New River Gorge, our nation's newest national park and preserve — are seeing record visitation this summer as the nation reopens.
- And the National Park Service has significant funding decisions to make in implementing the Great American Outdoors Act.
- Yet the Park Service has been without a confirmed Director since the end of the Obama Administration.
- I urge the President to send us a nomination so we can get this position filled as quickly as possible.
- Now I will turn to Senator Barrasso for his opening statement.