

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3172, THE RESTORE OUR PARKS ACT.

JULY 11, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3172, the Restore Our Parks Act.

The Department supports S. 3172, which builds upon the collective efforts of Senators Portman, Warner, Alexander, and King. We appreciate that this bill combines the elements of both S. 751, the National Park Service Legacy Act, and S. 2509, the National Park Restoration Act, to accomplish the goal of providing mandatory funding to address the National Park Service's (NPS) deferred maintenance backlog and closely aligns with the Administration's Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal to establish a dedicated fund.

S. 3172 would establish a separate account within the United States Treasury called the National Park Service Legacy Restoration Fund. This funding will help substantially reduce the NPS \$11.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog. Deposits to the Fund are authorized up to \$1.3 billion per year for five years through Fiscal Year 2023, and could total \$6.5 billion if full funding is achieved each year. The bill requires 65% of funds to be used for buildings, utilities, and visitor facilities and 35% to be used for transportation projects. Along with the annual funding NPS receives from the Federal Highway Administration, this would provide greater transportation/non-transportation parity in funding, to approximately 50-50. Funds would come from all sources of federal energy development revenues, including both renewable and conventional sources (oil, gas, and coal), and not from taxpayer dollars. This aligns with the Administration's "all-of-the-above" energy strategy.

The National Park Service Legacy Restoration Fund would not change or modify established revenue sharing payments to the States under the Mineral Leasing Act (MLA), the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA), or other statutes, nor would it affect deposits to other established funds, such as the Reclamation Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), or other dedicated uses of onshore and offshore revenues. These existing uses would receive all of their dedicated funding before the Fund receives anything. After all existing obligations are met, fifty percent of the revenue that would otherwise be deposited as miscellaneous receipts will be deposited into the Fund to address the NPS maintenance backlog.

The Fund also allows for public donations in the form of cash or in-kind donations. This allows the NPS to expand and encourage relevant public-private partnerships that work towards the reduction of the deferred maintenance backlog.

The Fund would be available for use, without further appropriation or fiscal year limitations, for the high-priority deferred maintenance needs that support critical infrastructure and visitor services, as determined by the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the NPS. Funding could not be used for the acquisition of land. The bill also requires annual updates and reporting to Congress on the projects funded each year.

Currently, appropriated funds are the primary source of funding for deferred maintenance. However, as Secretary Zinke indicated earlier this year before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, we cannot rely solely on appropriated dollars to address this problem. Without a dedicated funding source, the deferred maintenance backlog will continue to grow. The backlog of projects at our national parks impacts park visitors' access, recreational opportunities, and experiences. The network of roads, trails, restrooms, water treatment systems, drinking water, and visitor centers are aging and are exceeding a capacity they were often never designed to hold and support.

We greatly appreciate the effort of this Committee, Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, Senators Alexander, Warner, and Portman and all your colleagues in Congress who have sought to craft real solutions to our maintenance backlog and we look forward to working together with you as the bill is refined through the legislative process. The legislation we are discussing today reflects a bipartisan approach that the Administration believes is necessary to achieve our goals.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.