

**Statement of  
Michael Nedd  
Deputy Director for Operations  
Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, & Mining  
S. 434, “An Act to Provide for a Report on the  
Maintenance of Federal Land Holdings”  
May 14, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 434, which requires the preparation of a report on the maintenance of Federal land holdings under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior (Department). While the Department shares the bill’s goal of ensuring accurate and timely data on Federal land holdings, we would like to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee on a few modifications to address the concerns outlined in this statement.

**Background**

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Federal government manages 635 to 640 million acres of the nearly 2.3 billion acres that constitute the United States. The largest land managers for the Federal government are the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Defense, and Energy. Within the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers approximately 245 million acres; the National Park Service (NPS) manages approximately 80 million acres; the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) manages approximately 150 million acres as part of the Refuge System; and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) manages approximately 7.8 million acres of land and easements associated with BOR projects. The U.S. Forest Service, in the Department of Agriculture, manages approximately 193 million acres. Approximately 27.9 million acres in the United States are managed by the Department of Defense. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of buildings and structures are managed by a multitude of Federal agencies.

**S. 434**

S. 434 requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and submit to Congress a report that describes 1) all Federal land holdings under the jurisdiction of the Department; and 2) the total cost of maintaining these Federal land holdings for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2019, including an accounting of holdings and expenditures by each Federal agency with respect to the land holdings. The bill further requires that this report be submitted within 120 days of the delivery of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 President’s Budget request to Congress.

The Department is aware of and appreciates the concerns expressed by some Members of Congress about the accuracy of data on lands managed by the Federal government and specifically in the Department of the Interior. It is worth noting that the Federal government is making important strides in improving the accuracy, efficiency and level of data available on the Federal real property portfolio. The Federal Real Property Council (FRPC) works across agencies to determine opportunities to spread real property best practices, achieve short and

long-term cost savings, and realign real property inventories to agency mission and service delivery.

In addition, we note that much of the information that would be contained in the required report is already publicly available. For example, the BLM's Public Land Statistics (PLS) reports are published on an annual basis. Each PLS report provides information about a wide variety of multiple-use land management activities, including public land resources and information, commercial uses and revenues, recreation activities, special management designations, as well as information regarding public health, safety, and resource protection. The NPS Land Resources Division maintains acreage data for all units of the National Park System and publishes reports each year that include separate listings organized by park unit, park type, and by State. The FWS publishes an annual report of lands data that identifies land holdings by State and purpose. Similar reports are published pertaining to land managed by the Department's other land management bureaus

The Department also notes that information regarding the costs to manage and maintain lands and programs under the jurisdiction of the Secretary is contained in each of the annual budget requests, which are available on the Department's website. Interior's budget request covers a broad spectrum of activities to protect the Nation's resources and to ensure equity in their use. These activities include the operation of the NPS and FWS, land management responsibilities of the BLM, and water management projects of the BOR, among others.

If Congress opts to move forward with the proposed report, the Department would like to work further with the sponsor and the Subcommittee on a few modifications that we believe would aid implementation. Given that the FY 2020 budget request has already been submitted, for example, the Department is concerned that the 120-day deadline for submission of the report would not be achievable. We would like to work with the sponsor to ensure that the bill provides a timeframe sufficient for each of the Department's land management bureaus to identify land holdings and determine the cost to maintain them during the specified period.

Additionally, we would like to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee on language clarifying some components of the required report. For example, it is unclear from the text whether the term "land holdings" encompasses solely the surface acreage or both the surface and mineral estate. Similarly, the Department recommends language clarifying which costs should be considered as part of the "total cost of maintaining" Federal land holdings. Many of the land management activities required by the Federal Land and Policy Management Act (FLPMA), including processing, authorizing, and monitoring rights-of-way, leases, and permits, as well as land tenure actions and resource protection activities, are necessary to ensure that public land resources remain available on a multiple use, sustained yield basis. Conversely, there are many individual parcels of BLM-managed public lands that do not have active management activities occurring in a particular fiscal year because management prescriptions may be applied on a broader basis.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. The Department looks forward to continuing to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee as this bill moves forward through the legislative process.