

**Questions from Ranking Member John Barrasso**

**Question 1:** Local health departments know best what they can handle when it comes to responding to public health challenges. We saw this first hand in Wyoming in 2020 when the Park Service worked with local leaders to keep parks open during the COVID lockdowns.

- a. **If confirmed, will you commit to coordinating with state and local health departments before closing a park, including in the case of another COVID outbreak?**

**Response:** As the former COVID-19 Response Incident Commander for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation for nearly two years, I have worked closely with Tribal, local, state and federal health authorities in developing health and safety protocols that worked best for both private and public entities and organizations. The use of sound science and verifiable data determine the most appropriate courses to be taken to protect public health. The health and safety of the National Park Service's visitors, employees and partners are a priority. If confirmed, I will get briefed on the National Park Service's approach to these issues and will work together to find solutions.

**Question 2:** National parks are not immune from the threat of the introduction and spread of invasive species, including zebra mussels and cheatgrass. Lake trout, found in Yellowstone Lake, have had a significant ecological impact on the native Yellowstone cutthroat trout, creating cascading impacts to other native species.

- a. **What is your familiarity with invasive species management and if confirmed, what will be your management strategy?**

**Response:** Over the course of my career, I have managed large landscapes and helped to eradicate invasive species from hundreds of miles of riparian areas and tens of thousands of acres of meadows and forest lands. I have pulled Japanese Knotweed, purple star thistle, English ivy, zebra mussels, and cheatgrass, while planting millions of native plants and trees in restoration projects from Queens, New York, to the Chesapeake Bay and on to the Snake, Clearwater, Salmon, Umatilla, American, and Columbia Rivers. I understand the serious threat that invasive species can pose to local wildlife and the ecosystems and economies that depend on them. I believe addressing invasive species requires a coordinated approach with multiple stakeholders, bringing together the different offices and bureaus within the Department, other federal agencies, along with state, Tribal and local governments, and working in partnership with private land owners, farmers, ranchers, community and other organizations to leverage financial and personnel resources to tackle this issue.

**Invasive species in our parks can also travel to and from adjacent private, state, federal and tribal lands.**

- a. **If confirmed, will you commit to coordinating with other agencies and land owners in the proactive management and response to invasive species?**

**Response:** Yes, I believe that such coordination is crucial to addressing the challenge of invasive species, particularly on such a large scale.

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**Question 3:** During the 2013 government shutdown the Obama Administration went out of their way to close the parks. This was a crass politicization of our nation's most cherished places. During the shutdown in 2018 and 2019 Secretary Bernhardt used Park Service entrance fees to keep the parks accessible and to ensure NPS employees continued getting paid.

- a. **Will you commit to using the same approach that was used in 2018 and 2019 to protect public access to the parks?**

**Response:** In the unfortunate event of a lapse in appropriations, I would consult thoroughly with the legal experts at the Department, along with the budget experts, to understand all of the options, including the ramifications of different approaches. I appreciate the disruption that can come from closures and am also mindful of the impacts to sites if they are open without adequate staff to protect the resources and serve the public. I do not bring a pre-conceived approach to this question and would also listen to the perspectives of members of Congress, states and communities, along with other Departmental and Administration leadership, if faced with this question.

**Question 4:** Deferred maintenance estimates have not been provided by the Park Service since Fiscal Year 2018. Up-to-date maintenance estimates are critical for our legislative and oversight work.

- a. **If confirmed, will you provide the Committee with an updated deferred maintenance estimate?**

**Response:** If confirmed, I would work wherever I can to provide the Committee with updated and accurate information on all matters, including this one.

**Question 5:** Among the many challenges facing our public lands, particularly in our National Parks, is visitor safety. Visitation to national parks can pull resources from local communities, particularly in Wyoming and other rural states. This includes local law enforcement, search and rescue, and other emergency services. It is critical that National Parks play an integral role in coordinating with local and state law enforcement and emergency response agencies.

- a. **If confirmed, will you commit to coordinating with these state and local agencies on a regular basis?**
- b. **Will you require park superintendents to coordinate with state and local agencies as they perform their duties?**

**Response to a and b:** Yes. I believe that the National Park Service should regularly coordinate with state and local agencies on these issues and, if confirmed, I will ensure that parks continue to coordinate with state and local agencies as appropriate.

**Question 6:** Delaying the maintenance of roads, bridges, trails, water structures, buildings, and other assets could accelerate their rate of deterioration, increase their repair costs, and decrease their value. **What priority should DOI give deferred maintenance relative to regular maintenance for NPS?**

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**Response:** I agree that as the National Park Service addresses its maintenance backlog, it must also focus attention on routine and cyclic maintenance to keep its assets in the best condition possible. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the subject matter experts within the National Park Service to better understand the maintenance challenges facing the agency, and I commit to investing the significant maintenance funds provided by Congress to best address maintenance needs in our national parks.

**Question 7:** What is your priority for maintaining existing infrastructure relative to acquisition of new assets?

**Response:** The Great American Outdoors Act has provided an incredible opportunity to work together for conservation and infrastructure. While I am currently not with the Department, I believe that the National Park Service must take care of the assets that it currently manages, but it must always be open to opportunities to expand the diversity of stories it shares with the American people. If confirmed, I would always seek to balance the needs of existing infrastructure relative to new responsibilities. I look forward to working with the subject matter experts within the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to best achieve this approach.

**Question 8:** Do you expect that the mandatory funding provided through GAOA will be sufficient to address NPS' most urgent deferred maintenance needs? What additional funding will be needed to buy down the deferred maintenance backlog?

**Response:** If confirmed, effective implementation of GAOA will be one of my top priorities. While I am not at the Department and do not have access to all relevant information, it is my understanding that the deferred maintenance funding for the National Park Service in GAOA will make significant progress but not eliminate the bureau's deferred maintenance needs. I look forward to understanding in greater detail the GAOA process and the scope of NPS needs, including additional funding sources that may be used to address infrastructure in parks. If confirmed, I will work in a transparent way to provide accurate, up to date information about NPS deferred maintenance backlog, and look forward to working with Congress on this important issue.

**Question 9:** NPS has long had the largest maintenance backlog of all DOI agencies. What additional actions could NPS take to reduce deferred maintenance? Is disposal of federal lands and assets a viable option some areas or facilities?

**Response:** Because I am not yet at the Department, I do not have the information necessary to provide a detailed response to this question. However, I believe it is important to explore all options for addressing the deferred maintenance issue at the National Park Service. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the subject matter experts to better understand this issue and the related legal and statutory considerations.

**Question 10:** What is the role of partnerships with external groups in addressing the deferred maintenance backlog at the Park Service? Are there opportunities to increase participation of external partners?

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**Response:** Throughout my career, I have been committed to working collaboratively with both internal and external groups to achieve shared goals. If confirmed, I will bring this approach to best manage the assets of the National Park Service. I look forward to exploring all the ways in which partnerships can help the National Park Service do its work, including addressing its deferred maintenance backlog.

**Question 11: Please describe the process used to identify and prioritize projects for GAOA funding? How will you spend the funds that are freed up as a result of GAOA funding? How will you ensure that NPS maximizes funds received from Congress for deferred maintenance?**

**Response:** I am not at the Department and do not have access to the information necessary to answer a detailed question like this. However, I understand that these funds are intended to address deferred maintenance backlog in the most effective manner possible. Thanks to Congressional action on GAOA, this funding has reduced the pressure on deferred maintenance funding sources, allowing the National Park Service to make more progress on its important facility needs. In my experience as a Tribal administrator, I understand the importance of smart contracting and project management practices to maximize the value for each dollar available. I look forward, if confirmed, to supporting the National Park Service to ensure that these funds are spent in a cost-effective and impactful way.

**Question 12: Will you commit to keeping the Maintenance Actions Teams program in place so they can continue to work on small deferred maintenance projects?**

**Response:** While I am not at the Department and do not have access to all relevant information regarding this issue, I understand that the Maintenance Action Teams help provide a ready workforce to address priority projects at small and medium sized parks. I also understand that this is important for those areas that are not able to have the specialized workforces that larger parks use for maintenance needs for historic buildings and other assets. I appreciate the value of this approach and, if confirmed, I would look to learn more about the results of these teams and what additional options may be available or considered going forward.

**Question 13:** The Secretary of the Interior apportions appropriations for traditional grants in accordance with a formula set out in the LWCF Act. The formula calls for a portion of the appropriation to be divided equally among the states. The remaining appropriation is to be apportioned based on need, as determined by the Secretary. Under law, the determination of need is to include the population of the state relative to the population of the United States, the use of outdoor recreation resources within a state by people outside the state, and the federal resources and programs within the states.

- a. Do you think the requirements in law for apportioning appropriations for traditional grants are suited to the current operation of the program?**
- b. How would you advise the Secretary to determine need in order to allocate the appropriations?**
- c. What factors should the Secretary weigh most in determining need?**

**Response to a-c:** For over 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has supported the acquisition and development of public parks and other outdoor recreation sites in local communities across the nation. With the

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enactment of GAOA, Congress permanently funded the LWCF to continue this support. While I am not at the Department and do not have access to all relevant information, if confirmed, I would seek to work closely with career and legal experts at the Department on an issue like this in order to better understand the legislated formula for providing grants to states, and all of the options available to the Secretary of the Interior and to the National Park Service, including the ramifications of any potential different approaches.

**Question 14:** States can use traditional grant monies for outdoor recreation planning, acquisition of lands and waters, and facility development. Under the law, federal payments to states are limited to 50% or less of a project's total costs. The state project sponsor bears the remaining cost.

- a. Have states used grant funds to acquire lands through condemnation or only through voluntary acquisition?**
- b. Should NPS policies governing state acquisitions specifically allow or prohibit grants to be used for acquisitions through condemnation?**
- c. Some states may have difficulty providing the required match. Should something be done to assist states? For instance, should the maximum federal payment for project costs be increased? Should there be more flexibility for states in meeting the matching requirement, and if so how? Alternatively, should the federal payment be lower to perhaps stretch federal dollars generally and allow more payments to individual projects?**

**Response to a-c:** As I noted in response to the previous question about LWCF state funding, I am not at the Department and do not have access to all relevant information in order to appropriately respond to these questions. While I am not familiar with the issue of condemnation utilizing LWCF grant funds, my experience has been that local communities seek voluntary acquisitions to support outdoor recreation opportunities. With respect to the legislated match, I understand that local communities may have challenges complying with the requirements of the LWCF program. If confirmed, with regard to this issue I would work with the career experts and lawyers to fully understand the opportunities and challenges to local communities and ensure that the LWCF program is implemented as intended and in an effective and efficient manner.

**Question 15:** The LWCF State competitive grants were originally a small grant program of less than \$5 million that focused on Urban Areas. The program got \$40 million in 2020. After all of the grant applications were submitted and the grants were awarded there was still money left over. Through GAOA this year the grants with similar restrictive sideboards were \$150 million. The grant applications closed at the end of September.

- a. Do you know if NPS received grants applications in excess of \$150 million?**
- b. If not, would you propose to broaden the application process to accommodate more conservation and recreation opportunities in local communities?**

**Response to a and b:** While I do not have access to the information necessary to respond to this question, including information regarding the grant applications that the National Park Service may have received, I

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would, if confirmed, seek to maximize conservation and recreation opportunities in local communities and look forward to learning more about the status of this program.

**Question 16: With the passage of the GAOA and the permanent and perpetual funding to the land and water conservation fund do you think states are getting the support they need from the NPS to spend those dollars on intended conservation projects?**

**Response:** The Great American Outdoors Act has provided an incredible opportunity to work together for conservation and infrastructure. If confirmed, effective implementation of GAOA will be one of my top priorities. While I am not yet at the Department, I have long worked collaboratively with communities and with local, state, and Tribal governments. If confirmed to be Director of the National Park Service, I will continue to seek the views of our partners and to ensure that the LWCF program is implemented as intended and in an efficient and effective way.

**Question 17:** The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Fedscope database indicates that both full-time and seasonal staffing levels for NPS have declined steadily in recent years.

- a. Have staffing levels at NPS kept up with the demand for services?**
- b. Are there particular types of positions you would seek to expand or reduce?**
- c. If you were forced to decide whether to spend your funds on hiring people who can work on addressing the deferred maintenance backlog or interpreters, which would you choose?**
- d. What are the most prevalent issues regarding staffing at NPS and how would you plan on addressing them?**

**Response to a-d:** As I stated at my hearing, I understand that there has been almost a 20 percent increase in visitation to our national parks, with almost a 20 percent decrease in staff during that same period. Since I am not yet at the Department and do not have access to all relevant information, I would not want to speculate or prematurely decide on the types of positions that are most urgent. I do believe that the National Park Service cannot fully achieve its mission to protect and share America's stories without a well-supported workforce, and that low staffing can negatively impact services to the public, safety and maintenance matters at parks. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the staff at the National Park Service to better understand its staffing needs and priorities, and to addressing the National Park Service's highest priorities in a cost-effective way.

**Question 18:** As of November 2020, the Department of the Interior (DOI) employed nearly 3,400 law enforcement officers assigned to 7 distinct organizational units within 5 DOI bureaus. This includes the U.S. Park Police (USPP) within NPS.

- a. What are staffing trends specifically in the USPP law enforcement over the past decade?**
- b. Have staff levels in these units kept up with the demand for services, and are there particular types of positions you would seek to expand or reduce?**

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- c. Do the USPP have the level of resources needed to ensure the security and safety of federal lands and visitors?**

**Response to a-c:** I understand that the United States Park Police provide law enforcement services to protect the safety of visitors and park resources in our Nation’s capital, New York, and San Francisco. As I have previously stated, while I am not yet at the Department, and do not yet have access to all relevant information necessary to answer this question in detail, the National Park Service cannot fully achieve its mission without a well-supported workforce. I am committed to addressing morale issues by focusing on our employees and ensuring appropriate staffing levels, among other things. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about staffing issues across the National Park Service, including within our law enforcement ranks, and to assuring that the Park Police have the resources necessary to do their important work.

**Question 19:** Under the National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998, NPS manages almost 500 concessions contracts and over 6,000 commercial use authorizations (CUAs). Concessions contractors are authorized to provide lodging, food, camping, transportation, or other services using government-owned facilities and resources, for terms of up to 20 years. CUAs are shorter-term agreements of up to two years, used for activities that begin and end outside park boundaries (such as some guide and outfitter tours) or meet other specified criteria. NPS commercial visitor service providers generally pay a franchise fee to the federal government.

- a. In July 2020, NPS issued a proposed rule revising regulations for its concessions program, in order to “reduce administrative burdens and expand sustainable, high quality, and contemporary concessioner-provided visitor services in national parks.” Do you support the changes proposed in the rule, such as changes to provide new types of concessions opportunities, changes affecting contract lengths, and changes affecting the determination of leasehold surrender interest (LSI)?**
- b. If not, do you support any other types of changes to the concessions program, including any different approaches to address the challenges NPS has faced with concessions contracts bearing high LSI?**

**Response to a and b:** I believe that concessioners are important partners for the National Park Service to provide quality services to the public. As a frequent visitor of our national park units, I know firsthand the valuable role that they play for visitors. I support reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and improving arrangements that provide better value for visitors and taxpayers. If confirmed, I would look forward to fully understanding the proposed rule, its current status, and carefully considering the path forward and what if any changes or additional actions should be considered.

**Question 20:** Every holiday season, millions of Americans look forward to the annual lighting of the national menorah on the ellipse to start the Hanukah celebration. If you are confirmed will you commit to personally overseeing the permitting and operation of the National Menorah Lighting to ensure it is done in a way that ensures all parties involved are treated fairly?

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**Response:** If confirmed, I will work to ensure that all parties are treated fairly in every activity in which the National Park Service is engaged.

**Question 21:** Under both the Obama and Trump Administrations, NPS proposed a significant reduction of federal financial support for national heritage areas, and encouraged heritage areas to move toward self-sustainability with nonfederal investments.

- a. Please describe your views on National Heritage Areas.**
- b. Do you support a standardized method and criteria for the designation of National Heritage Areas?**
- c. Do you support a reduction in federal heritage area funding?**

**Response to a-c:** I believe that National Heritage Areas offer unique benefits and opportunities for communities to preserve, interpret and promote the historic, cultural and natural characteristics of the area. I understand that the Department has recently testified in favor of legislation to extend a number of existing heritage areas and the need for consistent evaluation of proposed designation of National Heritage Areas. At the same time, I support ways to enhance partnerships and self-sustainability for National Heritage Areas and, if confirmed, will carefully consider options and work with Congress on the future of National Heritage Areas.

**Question 22:** On September 28, 2021, I sent a letter to Secretary Haaland asking for a current accounting of FLREA funds available, as well as the government shutdown contingency plans for each of the bureaus at Interior. I have yet to receive a response.

- a. If confirmed, will you provide me with an accounting of FLREA funds available?**
- b. If confirmed, will you commit to providing me with timely responses to my inquiries?**

**Response to a and b:** If confirmed I will work wherever I can to provide Congress with up to date and accurate information and respond to Congressional inquiries in a timely manner.

**Question 23:** The Southwest Wyoming Off-Road Trails effort is working collaboratively with local, state and federal agencies to promote southwest Wyoming as a destination for motorized trail enthusiasts. This effort requires the involvement of NPS-managed Fossil Butte National Monument to maximize connectivity of this county-wide trail system.

- a. If confirmed, will you commit to working with local stakeholders and agencies in southwest Wyoming to promote and improve visitor access opportunities, including site-specific considerations for motorized access on existing routes on park-managed lands?**
- b. How will you encourage other park system units to engage with communities to identify opportunities to attract visitation to lesser-known park units, with co-benefits to local communities and businesses?**

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**Response to a and b:** As I stated at my hearing, my record is one of engagement and collaboration, and I am committed to working with local communities and stakeholders to find lasting solutions to protect our resources and support access and visitation to our national parks. This includes exploring enhanced technology and innovative solutions that will support visitation to lesser known parks to enhance the visitor experience support local communities. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this effort in Southwest Wyoming and ensuring that the National Park Service engages with local stakeholders when it comes to the role of national park lands, including on the question of where motorized access is appropriate.

**Question 24:** In 1996, Congress created the Presidio Trust to manage land in partnership with the NPS at the Presidio in San Francisco. The law requires the Presidio to be financially self-sufficient.

- a. Please give your opinion on the model under which the Presidio operates.**
- b. If the Presidio Trust cannot accomplish self-sufficiency, will you ensure that the law is upheld and that the property under the jurisdiction of the Trust is transferred to the General Services Administration for disposal and deleted from the boundary of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area?**

**Response to a and b:** It is my understanding that the Presidio Trust is a unique arrangement that Congress created by statute, but I am not familiar with how that model has worked in the years since it was enacted. If confirmed, I would look forward to understanding how that model has functioned, what issues have arisen, and to following the law, whether it relates to the Presidio Trust or any other entity. If confirmed, I would work to support the success of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the same way that I would do so for all national park units across our Nation.

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**Question from Senator James E. Risch**

**Question:** What process do you believe states, tribes, and local governments should play in the designation of any new or expanded National Park Service properties?

**Response:** As I stated at my hearing, I believe that engagement and collaboration are the hallmark of lasting conservation of fish, wildlife, and our common spaces. I support open discussions among states, Tribes, and local governments and the federal government prior to making decisions, and this is the approach I will take if I am honored to be confirmed as Director of the National Park Service.

**Questions from Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Question 1:** In 2019, the U.S. Navy announced the addition of 36 Growler aircraft to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. The Navy performs training activities throughout Western Washington using these aircraft. But noise from Growler training has caused a lot of concern in local communities and among recreationalists. In their recent Record of Decision for the Northwest Training and Testing Range, the Navy has indicated a route change for their Growler as they transit to their practice zone over the west side of Olympic National Park. The Growlers are no longer expected to fly over the park on these transit flights, but instead will fly around the park to address noise concerns for park visitors and wildlife.

**Will you work with the Navy to make sure that continued progress is made to protect the natural sounds and quiet of Olympic National Park, as well as the Tribal reservations and other communities nearby?**

**Response:** Yes. I served at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station from 1990 to 1992 with an A-6E Intruder squadron and I am very familiar with the noise of these McDonnell Douglas aircraft. I appreciate the concerns of the citizens who live near the air station and those who may be interrupted by the sound of the jets over public lands. If I am confirmed, I will work with the Navy to ensure the designated flight paths are appropriate and safe for our Naval Aviators, the general public and the conservation values of Olympic National Park.

**Question 2:** The North Cascades Ecosystem encompasses nearly 9,600 square miles in Washington state. Under Secretary Jewell, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began an Environmental Impact Study on grizzly bear restoration in the North Cascades Ecosystem. This process was terminated before it concluded.

**Will you direct the NPS to resume work or restart efforts to restore grizzly bears to the North Cascades?**

**If so, what is the anticipated timeline for resuming grizzly bear restoration in the North Cascades?**

**Response:** Like Secretary Haaland, I am committed to following the science and the law when it comes to Endangered Species issues at national park sites and would work closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, states, Tribes, and other stakeholders on those matters, including on the question of grizzly restoration in the North Cascades. I understand the challenges of restoring predator species to its original range, both for the species and for neighboring communities. If confirmed, I would look forward to learning more about the National Park Service's conservation issues in the North Cascades Ecosystem, including the current status of grizzly bear restoration there, options, and potential timelines for such efforts, and to working with other Department leadership to reach a thoughtful and well-balanced determination on this issue.

**Questions from Senator Mike Lee**

**Question 1:** Multiple regions in my state have significant economic build out based around the adjacent lands. Obviously working with a partner that is headquartered thousands of miles away can be complicated, but we make do because we must. The parks and these communities are symbiotic. Without food, shelter, and all the other conveniences, these parks would be inaccessible to most. **How will you work to ensure collaboration between parks and local communities in management decisions?**

**Response:** I have long worked collaboratively with communities, local, state, and Tribal governments. If confirmed, I will ensure that the National Park Service is meeting its obligations for public engagement, including with local communities, in planning and management of park units.

**Question 2:** Arbitrary visitation caps based on inconsistent data and one-size-fits-all reservation systems will result in turning families away that arrive at the entrance during summer vacations and create barriers for vulnerable populations to access these national treasures. **Do you agree that NPS' management plans would benefit from state, local, and community input when developing solutions for managing visitation at our National Parks? What do you think should be done about the increased interest in National Parks, which has caused visitation to dramatically increase during the past decade?**

**Response:** I agree that our national parks are national treasures, and it is critical that we protect these treasures so that we don't love our parks to death. As we are working to address overcrowding issues, I believe it is important to work together with local communities. The National Park Service manages parks large and small, urban and rural, natural and cultural – no one solution to overcrowding fits all parks. If confirmed, I would seek to explore ways of redistributing visitation to our public lands, while also ensuring that we are inclusive and connecting every American to their national parks. I will ensure that the National Park Service is engaged in discussions related to reservation systems and other visitor management tools with local communities and stakeholders.

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**Question from Senator Mazie K. Hirono**

**Question:** As you highlight in your testimony, workplace harassment and low morale have been issues that the National Park Service has been working to address. Additional challenges that employees are facing include overcrowding, adapting parks to climate change, and navigating the pandemic.

In a recent hearing before the Parks Subcommittee, I asked Mike Reynolds about NPS efforts to address employee mental health, to which he commented that more could be done.

**If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve morale within the Park Service?**

**Response:** I have tremendous respect for the people of the National Park Service, their professionalism, expertise, and dedication to conserving our treasured lands and resources for this and future generations. The National Park Service cannot achieve its mission without a well-supported workforce, and addressing staffing, housing and other issues impacting morale will be among my top priorities if confirmed. This is an issue that I think has been neglected for too long. First and foremost, if I am confirmed, I plan to listen to the concerns of the dedicated staff of the National Park Service. I will work with Human Resources and senior management to ensure the National Park Service staff has the necessary tools to help resolve issues and develop strategies that promote healthy work environments that ensure the safety of staff and the public alike, allowing us to protect our parks for the next generation.

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**Questions from Senator John Hoeven**

**Question 1:** Like many National Parks across the country, Theodore Roosevelt National Park has a maintenance backlog, including the Scenic Loop Road in the South Unit of the park. In May of 2019, a section of the Scenic Loop Road in the South Unit of the park washed away, making the loop unpassable. Since then, I've been working closely with the National Park Service (NPS) and Department of Transportation (DOT) to secure funding and expedite the progress of the project.

**If confirmed, will you work with my staff and I to help complete this critical project in a timely manner?**

**Response:** Yes. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your staff to complete this important project as soon as possible.

**Question 2:** As you know well, National Parks have seen record number of visits this year. In 2020, visitorship in Theodore Roosevelt National Park was down about 20% to 551,000 visitors last year, but the Park has seen increased visitorship this year.

**In general, what are your thoughts on overcrowding in parks, and if confirmed, what steps would you take to address the issue?**

**Response:** As I stated at my hearing, I understand that there has been almost a 20 percent increase in visitation to our parks, with almost a 20 percent decrease in staff during that same period. It is critical that we protect our national treasures, so that we don't love our parks to death. The National Park Service manages parks large and small, urban and rural, natural and cultural – no one solution to overcrowding fits all parks. If confirmed, I am committed to focusing on the National Park Service's staffing and employees, who are critical to addressing overcrowding and must be well-supported. I will also work closely with local communities and partners, where appropriate, to protect our treasured parks and the visitor experience. Enhanced technology and innovative solutions to access are two avenues that should be explored. Encouraging visitation to lesser known parks and areas will also enhance the visitor experience. And infrastructure also plays a part in managing visitation. I will ensure that the Great American Outdoors Act is implemented in a clear and open way, in accordance with law, to address the maintenance backlog in our parks.

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**Question from Senator John W. Hickenlooper**

**Question:** During my time here in the Senate, I have championed local park funding through the Parks, Jobs, and Equity Act, in order to provide more outdoor access to Americans who grow up lacking it. **If confirmed, how do you intend to support the NPS effort to close the ‘nature gap’ so historically underserved, rural, and indigenous communities can access quality green spaces and close-to-home parks?**

**Response:** I firmly believe that access to green spaces and close-to-home parks is vitally important to the public health and welfare. This is a particular important issue to me personally. Throughout my career, I have helped underserved communities pursue recreational and professional opportunities in and on our public lands. I have served on Oregon’s Health and Outdoor Initiative and the Oregon Outdoor Recreation Network to promote cross cultural understanding and to help identify more stakeholders to join this important conversation and work. Secretary Haaland has highlighted the importance of addressing inequitable access to the outdoors for communities of color and underserved communities, and if confirmed I will support these efforts. The enactment of the Great Americans Outdoors Act, including full, mandatory funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, has provided critical support for state and local led projects. If confirmed, I will work, together with Secretary Haaland, the Administration, the career professionals at the National Park Service, local communities and stakeholders, and our elected representatives, to leverage the resources needed to achieve these important goals.