

Chairman Lisa A. Murkowski Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Markup of the FY2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill

September 24, 2019

(As delivered)

Good morning everyone. Welcome to the subcommittee markup for Fiscal Year 2020 for the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. I want to start my comments this morning by thanking my colleague and my partner on these initiatives Senator Udall, as well as your team and my great staff that have been working these issues. We all know that this account is not one of the easy ones, that there are a lot of competing interests when you talk about our public lands and how they impact our respective states. There are a lot of issues that are very local to our states and so understanding, hearing, appreciating those needs is a big part of our challenge and I think the work that we have done in this subcommittee is a laudable mix of accommodating our colleagues, accommodating the states' interests, the federal interests, and really ensuring that we are working to address the needs of our lands, our waters, and our peoples.

This bill includes funding for all of the major federal land management agencies – this is the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

We also provide funding for essential Indian health, education, and resource management programs through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service, and funding for important cultural institutions like the Smithsonian, the National Gallery of Art, and the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. So we've got a significant and broad and fun portfolio.

The Administration's request for the 2020 Interior bill is approximately \$30.158 billion, which is roughly \$3.1 billion below the enacted. The Subcommittee's 302(b) allocation for FY 2019 is \$35.85 billion which is \$248 million more than last year.

We adopt in our bill a similar approach to the FY19 Interior bill by rejecting unwarranted decreases proposed in the budget and making investments in our highest priorities – especially infrastructure investments for the land management agencies, Indian Country, and wastewater and drinking water improvements.

We know that we have an obligation to fund vital programs for Indian country, many of which have increased substantially since we enacted the FY19 bill. Among those are contract support and leasing costs, as well as staffing costs associated with new health care facilities that are operated by the Indian Health Service or by tribes under compact agreements. It is important to me and Senator Udall that we do our best to fund critical services for Indian Country, and I think that this bill truly does that.

In the two main agencies that deliver services for the Indian community – this is the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service - we have restored proposed budget cuts and maintain critical program funding with some important increases for Indian Country. We were able to maintain the substantial increases previously included to help with the construction, operation, and maintenance of Indian schools and irrigation systems as well as sustain programs at the enacted levels and provide full funding for contract support costs. I would like to point out to colleagues that we include, for the first time, a comprehensive look with an additional funding, for those issues related to missing and murdered indigenous women. Many who live in tribal communities are located in rural areas. They don't have adequate public safety. And we see high rates of violence, abuse, murder, and trafficking. I have been working with several of my colleagues, certainly Senator Udall with his position on the Indian Affairs Committee, Senator Hoeven, Senator Daines – so many to address these challenges. We know it is going to take a lot of coordination and communication among law enforcement agencies to get this right. I note that within the CJS appropriations subcommittee that we'll have an opportunity to be a part of a little later this morning, that they too recognize the need to address these issues.

Our recommendation in this subcommittee includes \$6.5 million for cold case investigations, equipment, training, background checks, and the necessary report language to move us in the right direction.

We were able to increase funding for the Indian Health Service by \$237 million. The recommendation includes funding for new tribes and facilities as well as provides full funding for contract support costs and the current estimates for the 105 (L) leasing activities. I would like to note for colleagues, and just to put it on the record, that the funding for the 105 (L) activities is currently estimated at \$97 million. This is a \$61 million increase over the FY19 enacted. So, this comes as a result of the 2016 court decision, in *Maniilaq Association v. Burwell*, that established that Section 105(l) of the Indian Self-Determination Act mandates payment of leasing costs when tribal facilities are used to operate IHS programs. So we have seen significant, we are seeing significant increases. We know that they are just going to grow. We have raised this with the agencies, asked them, pressed them, to develop a plan because we can't just be doing this ad hoc. But we need work together, work with the tribes and the tribal organizations, to better understand the costs. Other increases include \$10 million for recruitment and quality improvement as well as a \$24 million increase for facilities, including a \$5 million increase for medical equipment.

The 2018 Omnibus created the wildland fire cap adjustment and FY2020 is the first year that it is available. Our bill invests \$5.167 billion in wildland fire activities, including \$2.25 billion in fire cap adjustment funding. We saw a record breaking year in Alaska in so far as the costly, devastating fires that we've seen this summer. Record breaking heat. So I certainly know how important it is to have the capacity to fight our fires. This bill not only invests in fire suppression, it all invests in state and volunteer fire assistance and provides increases for hazardous fuels reduction.

For the EPA budget, we prioritized the programs that lead to tangible, on-the-ground cleanup and environmental benefits. One of the issues I hear about a lot from colleagues as well as so many back home is PFAS contamination. And I know, Senator Capito, you have certainly been working on that, as well as others in the EPW Committee. In this bill we've provided \$25 million in increases to address PFAS, including \$20 million for EPA grant programs to support state-led

cleanup and remediation efforts of PFAS contaminated water sources, water systems, and lands. From the newly authorized programs in the AWAI Act, America's Water Infrastructure Act, to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving funds, funding is provided to programs that build and support critical water infrastructure in communities across the country. Our bill equips EPA with a powerful set of tools to further the Agency's core mission of clean air, clean water, and clean lands.

Our bill also provides \$500 million for PILT funding, which is the fully estimated amount needed for this program in FY19. This maintains the subcommittee's commitment to fully meeting the needs of local communities for county roads, public safety, and schools through the PILT program. Earlier this year we saw strong support in the Congress for the Land and Water Conservation fund. It was a priority of many members, and we have built on that support that we advanced earlier in making LWCF permanent by building on the funding support. And our bill the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) receives \$465 million, \$30 million above the enacted level, including \$140 million for the NPS State side program, as well as an additional \$5.5 million for recreational access.

Consistent with FY19, we do not include new policy provisions that were not in the enacted bill. We worked with Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Senator Udall, and I, again, to assemble a package that hopefully both sides can support, and strongly support out of our committee. We have, as I mentioned at the outset, we've worked hard to put together a bill that reflects in member priorities, that reflects bipartisan support, that invests in programs aimed to protect our land, our water, our people, enable infrastructure projects to boost the economy, help communities provide vital, basic services that perhaps many would take for granted. We have also worked hard to shape this bill so that it reflects the priorities of members on both sides, and I am proud of the good work that we've been able to put towards this in directing federal resources to where they are need most, providing much-needed investments in communities all across the nation.

So again Senator Udall let me express my thanks. We have had a few bumps. We have had a few surprises that could have derailed our progress with this. But we made a commitment earlier on that we were going to get to a place where we could both be in support of this bill. So I thank you for that. I thank your lead staffer Rachel --Emmy, Lucas, Nona-- those who have worked so hard to make this happen. So I do hope that if there's no objection we could ask members to hold off on amendments until the full committee markup on Thursday. Subcommittee staff will be available to work with everyone preparing a managers package for that markup. So we would ask that you let us know as soon as possible if any amendments are intended to be offered.

But with that, Senator Udall thank you again for your great work and I now turn to you for your statement.

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