



SENATE HEARING ON INTERIOR BUDGET

On Wednesday the Senate Interior Appropriations committee held a hearing on the department's proposed \$12 billion 2010 budget. Questions during the hearing focused on renewable energy projects, proposed changes in abandoned mine land funding, law enforcement in national parks and several other issues.

Subcommittee Chairwoman, Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), said Interior's budget request is a 9 percent increase over 2009 and called it "a real push in the right direction." She praised the proposed full funding for fire suppression as well as boosts for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the National Park Service and a climate change initiative.

But she and ranking member, Lamar Alexander (R-TN), raised concerns about the budgets increased funding to expedite renewable energy projects on public lands. Feinstein said solar installations require fences, troughs and steam plants and that one proposed project in California alone would cover 15 square miles. "These are huge," she said. "That has a huge mark on land that we're trying to conserve." Secretary Salazar responded to the renewable energy concerns by saying he intends to work with the key agencies within his department to develop a land use process for renewable energy projects, process for smart citing of transmission lines, and establish standards for site reclamation.

Senators Tester (D-MT), Feinstein and Alexander also expressed concern over the proposed decrease in funding for abandoned mine reclamation. The Secretary responded that he believes coal mine reclamation fees should pay for clean-

up and that the issue should also be addressed in mining reform legislation. Senator Feinstein also expressed concern that there is no clean-up priority list of abandoned mines and of how stimulus money for abandoned mines is being sent. Secretary Salazar pledged to create a priority list and do more research on the stimulus money and abandoned mines.

Other issues briefly discussed included how the NPS is dealing inappropriately with the over population of elk in North Dakota, the proposed decrease in funding for Native American housing and health programs and the increase of drugs coming up from Mexico on NPS, BLM and Forest Service lands.



HOUSE PASSES PARK, LAND AND WATER BILLS

This week House approved a variety of land and water bills including measures to study the creation of a new national park, stock lakes with fish and ramp up water conservation projects. Of the eight bills approved, all but one were agreed to by unanimous voice vote.

Following is the list of bills:

H.Res. 421 from Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tn.), which commends Great Smoky Mountains National

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Park on its 75th anniversary, passed 392-1.

H.R. 2330 from Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO) would authorize studying the suitability and feasibility of designating the former Army training facility Camp Hale, near Leadville, Colo., as a national historic district. Last year a Park Service official said Interior had no objection to the purpose of the bill but that priority should be given to previously authorized studies for potential new units of the national park system. The full House approved a similar bill last September.

H.R. 2430 from Natural Resources Committee ranking member Doc Hastings (R-WA) would direct Interior to stock lakes with fish in Washington's North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The full House approved a similar measure last July.

H.R. 689 from Rep. Wally Herger (R-CA) would transfer control of a nearly 12,000-acre pocket of land within BLM's Chappie-Shasta Off-Highway Vehicle Area that is controlled by the Forest Service to BLM. In exchange, BLM would transfer approximately 5,000 acres of scattered wilderness parcels and other BLM-managed lands to the Forest Service.

H.R. 325 from Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) would authorize \$14 million to allow Interior to participate in the planning, design and construction of water recycling facilities and to enhance and restore riparian

habitat in the Black Wash Sonoran Desert ecosystem in Avra Valley, Ariz.

H.R. 1120 from Rep. Chet Edwards (D-TX) would authorize Interior to participate in the design, planning and construction of permanent facilities to reclaim and reuse water in McLennan County, Texas.

H.R. 1393 from Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX) would authorize additional water conservation and improvement projects under the Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2000.

H.R. 1280 from Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI) would modify a land grant patent issued by Interior to the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society in Chippewa County, Mich.



HPF FUNDING FEATURED IN FEDERAL PARKS AND REC NEWS

“HISTORIC PRESERVATION BID MADE. Senators allied with the historic preservation community are urging their colleagues to support the Obama administration’s fiscal year 2010 budget request for preservation programs. That is Sens. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Me.) are calling for an appropriation for historic preservation grants of \$46.5 million, or \$4 million more than in fiscal 2009. For the Save America’s Treasures program the senators also requested the same amount of money that Obama requested, \$20 million. That also matches the fiscal 2009 appropriation. For a Preserve America’s program the senators and Obama requested \$3.15 million.”



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