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**SENATE FY2017 INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL
APPROVED, FULL COMMITTEE REVIEW NEXT**

*Bill Promotes Responsible Public Lands & Environmental Policies,
Fully Funds Wildfire Suppression, Honors Trust Responsibilities*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies on Tuesday approved a bill providing \$32.034 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs and other agencies.

The FY2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill is scheduled to be considered by the Senate Committee on Appropriations on Thursday. Today’s action leads to just the second markup in six years of this important legislation, which funds lands management, environmental needs, and critical programs for American Indian populations.

“This year’s Interior appropriations bill will provide much-needed investments in our public lands and opportunities for communities all across the nation. This bill strikes a critical balance – directing federal resources where they are needed, while blocking excessive regulations and obstruction that are causing harm and burying us in red tape,” said **U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski** (R-Alaska), chairman of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee.

“It aims to fulfill federal trust responsibilities that are crucially important to the lives of Alaska Natives and sustains critical infrastructure investments in rural communities. And on the heels of one of the worst wildfire seasons in the nation’s history, this bill gives forestry managers and firefighters the tools they need to keep Americans safe and protect our land. I am proud of the work we have done in this bill to empower all Americans to build our economy and create healthy communities where we can access care for our families,” she said.

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The Senate bill, which is \$125 million below the FY2016 enacted level, recommends funding for programs that promote responsible resource development on public lands, while funding important environmental and conservation programs. It provides funding to address backlog construction and maintenance projects for the National Park Service in order to provide for a safe visitor experience.

The measure fully funds the 10-year average for firefighting. To avoid forcing the U.S. Forest Service and Interior Department from borrowing from other programs to pay for firefighting in severe wildfire seasons, the bill includes a new budget cap adjustment that gives the agency access to additional resources when these appropriated funds are exhausted.

The bill funds contract support costs for the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs in support of tribal self-determination.

Bill Highlights:

U.S. Department of the Interior – \$12.16 billion overall for the Interior Department, including full funding, \$480 million, for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – \$1.24 billion for the BLM, an increase of \$6 million above the FY2016 enacted level. Within this funding, an increase of \$10 million is devoted to sage-grouse activities and significant investments are made to improve land management and responsible natural resource development opportunities.

National Park Service (NPS) – \$2.74 billion for the NPS, an increase of \$68 million above the FY2016 enacted level. This includes important increases for construction backlog, maintenance, and new park units established under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015. An additional \$66.5 million has been provided for the NPS Centennial Initiative.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – \$1.49 billion for the FWS, which is \$11.9 million below the FY2016 enacted level. Important program increases include funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), and funding to support FWS implementation of the RESTORE Act. The bill also provides funding to maintain continued operation of fish hatcheries. The bill continues the prohibition on listing the sage-grouse as an endangered species, and includes a provision to allow the Service to move forward with its recommendation to delist the gray wolf in Wyoming and the Great Lakes. A similar provision was included in FY2011 to delist wolves in Montana and Idaho.

Office of Surface Mining – \$236.8 million for the OSM, a \$3.7 million decrease below the FY2016 enacted level. The bill continues a \$90 million pilot program to help address reclamation and economic development in areas negatively affected by the Administration's harmful coal policies. The bill also includes a provision to prohibit funding for the Stream Buffer Zone rule, which has been criticized by nearly all the states that initially agreed to participate as cooperating agencies in the rulemaking process. Eight of the 10 states have withdrawn from that process because of a lack of cooperation from OSM.

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U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) – \$1.06 billion for the USGS, a \$6 million increase over the FY2016 enacted level. Within this amount, important program increases have been included for energy and mineral resources, mapping, natural hazards, groundwater monitoring network, and streamgages. The bill provides the requested funds for the Landsat 9 project.

Indian Health Service (IHS) – \$4.99 billion for the IHS, an increase of \$186 million above the FY2016 enacted level. The bill includes an \$82 million increase for Contract Support Costs, representing the full amount of contract support costs owed to tribes. Additional funds are focused on suicide prevention, domestic violence prevention, and alcohol and substance abuse problems. Funds are also included for infrastructure improvements to health care facilities.

Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education (BIA/BIE) – \$2.85 billion for the BIA and BIE, an increase of \$58 million above the FY2016 enacted level. Within this amount, Contract Support Costs are fully funded, and public safety and justice, human services, and resource management programs receive increased support.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – \$8.1 billion for EPA, \$31.2 million below the FY2016 enacted level. Funding is focused on returning the agency to its core mission of environmental cleanup instead of writing costly rules that will harm the economy. The Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds receive more than \$2.37 billion, an increase of \$113 million over the FY2016 enacted level and \$370 million above the administration's request. Additionally, the Water Infrastructure Finance Act (WIFIA) program is funded at \$30 million, which will enable hundreds of millions in loans to address water infrastructure challenges.

The legislation does the following to stop EPA executive overreach:

- Prohibits the EPA Waters of the United States rule
- Prohibits the EPA from requiring duplicative financial surety rules on the mining industry
- Continues to prohibit the EPA from regulating certain types of ammunition and fishing tackle

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – \$5.2 billion for the USFS. The full 10-year average for wildfire suppression is included, as well as important increases for hazardous fuels reduction, road maintenance and construction, and forest products production.

Wildland Fire Suppression – \$3.78 billion to fight wildland fire, representing fire suppression funding at 100 percent of the 10-year average. Also included in bill language is a fire cap adjustment that would end the destructive practice of “fire borrowing” and make fire suppression expenditures above 100 percent of the 10-year average eligible for disaster assistance.

Smithsonian Institution – \$860.2 million, an increase of \$20 million above the FY2016 enacted level, for the Smithsonian Institution.

National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities – \$148 million for each Endowment, an increase of \$500,000 above the FY2016 enacted level.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) – \$3 million, equal to the FY2016 enacted level, for CEQ.

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