



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

Thad Cochran of Mississippi, Chairman

NEWS RELEASE

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FY2016 INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL APPROVED BY SENATE COMMITTEE

Bill Promotes Responsible Public Lands Management & Environmental Policies, Honors Trust Responsibilities

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Appropriations today approved the FY2016 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, a \$30.01 billion measure to promote responsible resource development on public lands while funding important environmental programs.

The bill, the first such spending measure marked up in the Senate since 2009, recommends funding for the Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Forest Service (*U.S. Department of Agriculture*), Indian Health Service (*Department of Health and Human Services*), and numerous agencies and programs regarding the management of public lands, including national parks and forests. The bill addresses growing concerns across the country about aggressive EPA regulatory proposals. The measure was approved 16 to 14.

The Senate bill would provide \$1.05 billion in emergency fire suppression funds. The measure fully funds the 10-year average for firefighting and includes a new budget cap adjustment so that when these funds are exhausted the agency has access to additional resources so they do not have to borrow from other programs to pay for firefighting in severe wildfire seasons. In addition, the bill provides additional funding to address backlog construction and maintenance projects for the National Park Service in order to provide for a safe visitor experience. It also fully funds contract support costs for the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs in support of tribal self-determination.

“While this bill includes important funding increases across numerous accounts and agencies, this legislation is not just about spending. It is a measure to improve government efficiency and reduce federal spending in numerous areas. It provides an appropriate balance of congressional oversight to ensure the Executive Branch remains within its jurisdictional boundaries so that taxpayers are not subject to undue regulatory burden and red tape,” said **U.S. Senator Thad Cochran (R-Miss.)**, chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations. “I look forward to the Senate taking up this bill as soon as possible.”

“I thank my colleagues for the time and energy they spent crafting this legislation. It balances responsible spending while still producing a bill that reflects the will and priorities of the nation,” said **U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska)**, chairman of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. “I welcome the Senate’s return to normal order and look forward to a robust debate on the measures in this bill that addresses the needs and concerns of everyday Americans.”

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Highlights of the Senate FY2016 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill:

Department of the Interior – The bill provides \$11.05 billion overall for the Department of the Interior.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – The bill provides \$1.18 billion for BLM, an increase of \$65.5 million above the enacted level. Within this funding, an increase of \$45 million is devoted to sage-grouse activities and \$19 million is allocated for responsible natural resource development activities. The bill also includes a provision giving states flexibility related to the BLM hydraulic fracturing rule.

National Park Service (NPS) – The bill provides \$2.72 billion for the NPS, an increase of \$112.7 million above the 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 \$110 million has been provided for the Centennial Initiative.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – The bill provides \$1.43 billion for FWS, \$2.3 million below the FY2015 enacted level. Important program increases include funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). 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.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) – The bill provides \$1.06 billion for the USGS, \$17 million increase over the enacted level. Within this amount, important program increases have been included for energy and mineral resources, mapping, natural hazards, groundwater monitoring network, streamgages, invasive species, and the requested funds for Landsat 9.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – The bill provides \$5.12 billion for the USFS, an increase of \$67 million above the enacted level. Important increases are included for hazardous fuels reduction, road maintenance and construction, and forest products production.

Wildland Fire Suppression – The bill provides a total of \$3.61 billion to fight wildland fire. This represents fire suppression funded at 100 percent of the 10-year average. The bill also includes \$1.054 billion in emergency spending, which may only be used if all discretionary appropriations are exhausted. Also included in bill language is a fire cap adjustment that would make fire suppression expenditures above 100 percent of the 10-year average eligible for disaster assistance.

Indian Health Service (IHS) – The bill provides \$4.77 billion for the IHS, an increase of \$135 million above the FY2015 enacted level. The bill includes a \$55 million increase for Contract Support Costs, representing the full amount of contract support costs owed to tribes. An additional \$20 million is provided for construction to address the agency's backlog of priority construction facilities. The bill also contains an additional \$40 million to be equally divided--\$20 million for sanitation facilities construction and \$20 million for maintenance and improvement.

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Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education (BIA/BIE) – The bill provides \$2.69 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education, an increase of \$92 million above the enacted level. Within this amount, contract support costs are fully funded and important increases for public safety and justice programs receive additional support. An additional \$6.3 million above the enacted level has been provided for construction.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – The bill provides \$7.6 billion for EPA, \$538.8 million below the FY2015 enacted level. Funding for core EPA regulatory programs is reduced by \$57.1 million while on-the-ground cleanup programs receive a \$21.5 million increase. This funding level is intended to return the agency to its core mission of cleaning up environmental problems instead of writing costly rules that will harm the economy.

The bill does the following to stop EPA executive overreach:

- Prohibits the EPA from forcing federal plans on states that do not support the Obama administration’s onerous greenhouse gas regulations
- Prohibits the EPA Waters of the United States rule
- Prohibits the EPA from lowering the ozone standard until 85 percent of counties in non-compliance with the current standard come into compliance
- 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

Smithsonian Institution – The Smithsonian Institution is funded at \$819.5 million, equal to the FY2015 enacted level.

National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities – The bill includes \$146 million for each Endowment, level with the FY2015 enacted level.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) – The bill funds the CEQ at \$3 million, equal to the FY2015 enacted level. The bill prohibits further action by CEQ to incorporate climate change into National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews, which is outside of the scope of NEPA.

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