

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES

SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL, *Ranking Member*



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Opening Statement Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) Hearing on National Park Service Centennial Act (S. 2257) December 8, 2015

“Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for scheduling this hearing and to the witnesses for being here.

“I introduced legislation on behalf of the administration, specifically Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis. Welcome, good to have you here this morning.

“Next August will mark the 100th anniversary of when President Wilson signed the 1916 law creating the National Park Service.

“My state’s experience with national parks actually goes back even further, with Mount Rainier having been established in 1899, and Mount Olympus National Monument—which later became Olympic National Park—established in 1909.

“Not only are we home to some of the older national parks, but the state of Washington, along with Tennessee and New Mexico, is also home to the newest addition to the national park system—the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, which was formally dedicated just last month.

“The upcoming centennial provides us with a good opportunity to assess the state of our national park system, so that we can determine what we need to do to improve and so the National Park Service can provide the proper level of services that allow the American public to enjoy their national parks.

“The administration has recommended several new authorizations and funding proposals in its centennial bill. It seems to me that in order to evaluate these proposals, we need to better understand what the Park Service’s objectives are for the future.

- For example, are we trying to increase overall visitation, or is it a question of improving utilization of less-visited national parks?

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- What aspects of the current Park Service budget are working, and where do we need to improve funding levels to ensure their long-term viability?
- What are the plans for recognizing new additions to the national park system?

“These are some of the issues that I would like to explore in more detail today with Director Jarvis and the other members of the panel.

“I also would like to get a better understanding of how the Park Service plans to take advantage of new technologies to modernize its communications, to enable more of the American public and international visitors to be aware of these unique and amazing natural, historic and cultural resources our country has to offer.

“I agreed to introduce the administration’s legislation that we are considering this morning, not because I agree with all of the recommendations, but because I thought it is important to begin a discussion on how to best take care of our national parks into the next century. I believe the administration’s proposal gives us a good starting point for this discussion.

“It is our responsibility to provide the Park Service with adequate resources for the parks that are enjoyed by millions of Americans every year, and I will continue to work to ensure that the Park Service has the resources it needs to protect our national interests.

“It will be very difficult to pass a bill with the level of mandatory spending in the administration’s proposal, but I hope today we can hear what the priorities are of these proposals and the consequences for not having mandatory funding.

“Madam Chairman, in addition to Director Jarvis who is here with us this morning, we have a very qualified panel of witnesses who have extensive backgrounds in our national park system and the issues. I look forward to discussing with each of them these priorities and how we move forward.

“I hope that we have a very productive hearing and that we can move forward and do something to make sure that these national parks get the attention and resources they need into the second century.

“Thank you all very much.”

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