

OPENING STATEMENT
Sen. Steve Daines
Chairman of the National Parks Subcommittee
July 19, 2016

The Subcommittee will come to order.

The 12 bills we are examining this afternoon cover a wide range of issues relating to the Federal land administered by the Department of the Interior, primarily by the National Park Service.

Today we will hear legislation that includes a range of issues impacting park units, including boundary adjustments, the establishment of national memorials both here in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere around the United States, redesignations, land conveyances, and even issues related to park entrance fees and public land corps programs.

I would like to take a moment to discuss S. 1403, the 21st Century Conservation Corps Act of 2017. Right now in Montana, there is a veterans public lands corps hard at work in Glacier National Park. The Montana Conservation Corps has done some great work in fuel reduction and trail maintenance, both of which work to reduce wildfire risks. With the costs and intensity of catastrophic wildfire continually increasing and the deferred maintenance backlog for land management agencies affecting management and access, Corps like the Montana Conservation Corps are good partners in tackling these challenges.

I'm anxious to hear more about how this legislation can work to expand the good work these public land corps can do to in our national parks and forests in Montana and across the United States, not only in terms of preventative maintenance, but also in providing important skillsets for a new generation of young Americans as well as veterans.

In addition, we will hear testimony on S. 926, a bill that would authorize the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation to establish the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial as a commemorative work here in the District of Columbia. Since Senator Ernst introduced S. 926 in April, 19 other Senators, including myself and Ranking Member Hirono, have cosponsored this legislation. While the legislation would require some significant exemptions from the Commemorative Works Act, I believe that this marks the beginning of a very necessary discussion regarding the need to appropriately honor those who have served in our nation's longest war.

We are also going to talk about S. 1522, the Every Kid in the Outdoors Act, which was introduced by Senators Alexander and Heinrich. It is my understanding that there may be a few details left to work out on that, but I'd just like to say, I do support the concept of getting kids and their families spending time together outside. I think that is something we can all get behind.

I look forward to a robust discussion today, as I know each of these agenda items are not only important to individual members of the Subcommittee, but to our nation's parks and citizens as a whole.

Many on our list have passed the House of Representatives. A few of these bills have been heard before in this subcommittee. Others have been considered in previous Congresses.

While a few of these bills may spark conversation, I am hopeful we can move through the list fairly quickly.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider the administration's views on these bills and allow committee members an opportunity to ask questions.

We will also include written statements that have been sent to the subcommittee in the official hearing record.

Because of the large number of bills on today's agenda, I will not read through the list, but at this time, I will include the complete agenda in the hearing record.

We have one witness today, Mr. Robert Vogel, Acting Deputy Director for Operations, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior.

I want to thank Mr. Vogel for being with us.

First let me turn to the ranking member, Senator Hirono, for her opening remarks.

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