



United States Senate Committee on

Energy & Natural Resources



Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska, *Chairman*

**Legislative Hearing – Opening Statement
S. 556, the Bipartisan Sportsmen’s Act of 2015
Senator Lisa Murkowski
March 12, 2015**

Good morning, everyone. The hearing will come to order.

Welcome to those who have joined us on the panel. We’re here to consider legislation that addresses the needs and priorities of millions of American sportsmen and sportswomen. After falling just short in 2012 and 2014 with similar legislation, I’m optimistic that the third time will be the charm – and that we will finally enact legislation on this subject in this Congress.

So, let’s get started. I recently introduced S. 405, the Bipartisan Sportsmen’s Act, along with my friend and colleague from New Mexico, Senator Heinrich. Thank you for your leadership on this.

I also thank the bipartisan leadership of the Sportsmen’s Caucus – Senators Risch, Manchin, Fischer, and Heitkamp – and the 12 additional members who have added their support to the bill.

We introduced a broad bill to show the Senate what we want to accomplish. Now we’re focused on moving it through the legislative process, and for the first time, we are doing so under regular order. I think that bodes well for its success.

This morning we’re considering S. 556, which includes the provisions of our broader bill that fall under the Energy Committee’s jurisdiction, plus one that falls under the jurisdiction of the Judiciary Committee.

The Environment and Public Works Committee will soon hold a hearing on the provisions within its jurisdiction.

Assuming all goes well, we’ll move to markups in the near future, and then we plan to reassemble one bill for consideration by the full Senate.

That’s the process, which I think is only fair to outline to colleagues, but I also want to speak to the substance of this legislation – to explain why it is so important to so many of us.

Sportsmen and sportswomen come from all over the country, from big cities and small towns, from the north and the south, from here in the east, and, of course, most certainly in our western states.

For many of us, outdoor activities are just a part of our life. I grew up in a family where we went out hunting in the fall, and we fished as long as there were opportunities for fishing – which was most of the year. And these were family traditions passed on from family to family. Certainly, coming from the state of Alaska, where we see so many who move to our state to enjoy these outdoor opportunities, whether it's for recreation or whether it's ensuring that there is food on the table. This has been part of who we are. It's a definition truly of ourselves

Anyone who has been to the Cabela's or Bass Pro Shops in Anchorage – or any other outdoor goods store in Alaska – knows that sportsmen and women play a vital role in our economy. That's true in terms of retail sales, in salaries and wages, in government revenues – and it's true in all 50 states.

That's where our Bipartisan Sportsman's Act comes in. It builds on our previous efforts and adds several new provisions to increase access and provide new opportunities for Americans to enjoy our federal lands.

Our bill includes a provision I have supported for years to ensure Bureau of Land Management and National Forest lands remain open to hunting, fishing, and other activities as a matter of law, unless closed – so that our sportsmen and women know they are welcome there.

It includes Senator Heinrich's HUNT Act, which I suspect he will be eager to discuss in further detail.

Another important provision relates to filming on public lands. You've heard me mention at a couple of hearings now the obstacles that we place on individuals who want to do nothing more than to film, to take pictures. So, working to minimize the costs and bureaucratic processes that individuals and small groups must face is important.

I think we have a good bill. We have a strong bipartisan coalition around it, and I'm hopeful that after a productive hearing, we will be able to add new cosponsors. I know we'd sure love to have all of the members of our Committee sign on.

I'll now turn to Ranking Member Cantwell.

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