

November 19, 2014

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator McConnell:

It has come to my attention that a package of public lands bills is being considered for inclusion on the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). I am writing to inform you of my intent to utilize all procedural options at my disposal as a United States Senator, including objecting to any unanimous consent agreements or time limitations, if NDAA contains extraneous public lands provisions such as authorizing new National Park units, expanding wilderness areas, creating new National Heritage Areas, or expanding the federal land base.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have repeatedly objected to measures that seek to expand the responsibilities of the Department of the Interior in the absence of dedicating the resources needed to maintain the vast commitments Congress has already made. For years, instead of addressing the urgent maintenance needs of our parks, memorials and other public lands, Congress has been singularly focused on establishing additional National Park units while adding more lands to the federal base. Unsurprisingly, the Department of Interior has accumulated more than \$20 billion in deferred maintenance needs, including \$12 billion in our National Park System alone.

Moreover, a bill that defines the needs of our nation's defense is hardly the proper place to trample on private property rights. Nor is it the place to restrict access to hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities on massive swaths of taxpayer supported lands.

With a nearly \$18 trillion national debt and a multibillion dollar maintenance backlog on our public lands, Congress should be actively debating how to prioritize our limited resources toward our most pressing needs. I am disheartened to learn that Congress will instead work to compound these existing problems through an NDAA process that will preclude any amendments or substantive debate.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator