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NEWS: FY2019 Interior, Environment Appropriations Bill Approved by Senate Committee

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RICHARD SHELBY OF ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN

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FY2019 INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee today **considered and approved** a \$35.853 billion measure to fund the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other agencies. The bill was approved 31-0.

The FY2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act totals \$35.853 billion in discretionary funding. The measure provides increased funding to address National Park maintenance backlogs and environmental and conservation programs, while also increasing funding for wildland firefighting and restoring proposed cuts to important Indian programs.

“This measure is the product of a bipartisan effort and makes appropriate investments in our federal land management agencies, Native American programs, and important cultural institutions,” **said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.)**. “I applaud Senator Murkowski, as well as Senator Udall, for their leadership and diligent work on this legislation.”

“I’m proud of the work we have done to direct federal resources where they are needed most by investing in programs aimed to protect people and our lands. This bill will empower Americans to create healthier, safer communities across the nation. This bill equips Americans with basic, vital services that many Americans may take for granted. Far too many communities in rural states like Alaska lack safe, water and adequate sewer infrastructure, but through this bill we provide substantial resources to improve wastewater and drinking water systems nationwide as well as construct new infrastructure,” **said U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska)**, chairman of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. “From support for improving and maintaining rural health facilities, to providing tools to combat domestic violence, substance abuse, and suicide --- I’m proud that this bill prioritizes the health and well-being of our nation’s rural communities. These investments today will have a lasting impact on our nation.”

Bill Highlights:

U.S. Department of the Interior – \$13.109 billion overall for the Interior Department, including full funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – \$1.34 billion for the BLM, an increase of \$11 million above the FY2018 enacted level. Funds provided ensure a robust and responsible energy and minerals program and make important investments in improving public land management.

National Park Service (NPS) – \$3.21 billion for the NPS, an increase of \$13.4 million above the FY2018 enacted level. This includes important increases for construction backlog, maintenance, and new park units. \$23 million is included for the Centennial Challenge grant program, which provides matching grants to address backlog maintenance and other needs in the national parks. The bill maintains funding for the Heritage Area program at the enacted level of \$20.3 million.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – \$1.57 billion for the FWS, which is \$19.7 million below the FY2018 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 funds to support FWS implementation of the RESTORE Act and to maintain continued operation of fish hatcheries. The bill continues the prohibition on listing the greater sage-grouse as an endangered species.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) – \$1.148 billion for the USGS, equal to the FY2018 enacted level. Within this amount, important program increases have been included for energy and mineral resources, mapping, natural hazards, and water resources. The bill also provides the requested funds for the Landsat 9 project and facility relocation expenses.

Office of Surface Mining (OSM) – \$252.8 million for the OSM, a decrease of \$2.6 million below the FY2018 enacted level. The bill continues a \$105 million pilot program to help

address reclamation and economic development in coal country and includes \$10 million to address reclamation and economic development in Indian Country.

Indian Health Service (IHS) – \$5.77 billion for the IHS, an increase of \$234 million above the FY2018 enacted level. The bill fully funds Contract Support Costs in the amount of \$822 million, representing the full amount of contract support costs owed to tribes. Additional funds are focused on combating opioid abuse, suicide prevention, domestic violence prevention, and alcohol and substance abuse problems. Funds are also included for infrastructure improvements to health care facilities and \$115 million is provided for staffing of new health care facilities.

Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education (BIA/BIE) – \$3.07 billion for the BIA and BIE, an increase of \$11.4 million above the FY2018 enacted level. Within this amount, Contract Support Costs are fully funded, while increases enacted in FY2018 for human services and natural resource programs are continued as well as important public safety and justice programs. Construction activities and projects receive \$359 million, a \$5 million increase.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – \$8.058 billion for EPA, equal to the FY2018 enacted level. Funding is focused on returning the agency to its core mission of environmental cleanup. The Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds receive more than \$2.86 billion, an increase over the FY2018 enacted level. Additionally, the Water Infrastructure Finance Act (WIFIA) program is funded at \$63 million, which will enable billions in loans to

address water infrastructure challenges. Categorical grant programs that help states implement environmental regulations are increased by \$17 million.

The bill continues a provision that prohibits the Agency from regulating certain types of ammunition and fishing tackle.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – \$6.29 billion for the USFS includes investments in funding for improved health and management of our nation’s forests, as well as increased funding to fight wildfire. A \$5 million increase for hazardous fuels reduction is provided to help prevent catastrophic wildfires, particularly in the wildland-urban interface.

Wildland Firefighting – \$4.345 billion to fight wildland fire, representing fire suppression funding at the 10-year average and \$900 million in additional funding in anticipation of regular suppression funding being insufficient to cover the costs of fighting wildfire. The bill includes \$724 million for the Forest Service and \$176 million for the Department of the Interior.

Smithsonian Institution – \$1.043 million, equal to the FY2018 enacted level for the Smithsonian Institution. Important increases have been provided for the National Air and Space Museum renovation.

National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities (NEA/NEH) – \$155 million for both NEA and NEH. This is a \$2.1 million increase above the FY2018 enacted levels for each endowment.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) – \$3.005 million, an increase of \$5,000 above the FY2018 enacted level, for the CEQ.

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