



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**FY 2017 Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Appropriations Bill
Full Committee Markup
June 15, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

The fiscal year 2017 Interior and Environment bill is funded at \$32.095 billion which is \$64 million below the FY16 enacted level and \$1 billion below the budget request. We have made a sincere effort to prioritize critical needs within our 302(b) allocation and in reviewing nearly 5,300 Member requests.

The Committee has provided robust wildland fire funding in this bill. Fire suppression accounts are again fully funded at the ten-year average level—which rose by \$133 million from last year. The Committee has also addressed concerns about forest health and active forest management, and provided a \$30 million increase for hazardous fuels.

This bill also makes critical investments in Indian Country—a top priority of this Committee. Overall, funding for the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Education is increased by \$72 million (or three percent), while funding for the Indian Health Service is increased by \$271 million (or six percent) from fiscal year 2016 levels—the largest increase in this bill.

The bill also provides \$2.9 billion for the National Park Service, including more than \$65 million in new funding to address the maintenance backlog and other priorities related to the Park Service Centennial.

The bill increases Fish and Wildlife Service grant programs above the 2016 enacted levels. It also provides additional funds to combat international wildlife trafficking; protects fish hatcheries from cuts and closures; continues funding to fight invasive mussels and Asian carp; and reduces the backlog of species that are recovered but not yet de-listed.

This bill provides full funding in fiscal year 2017 for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

The bill provides \$322 million for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs that enjoy broad, bipartisan support.

Overall, funding for EPA is reduced by \$164 million from fiscal year 2016 enacted levels. Held harmless from these cuts are many of the geographic programs that many members of this committee care about.

Again this year, there is a great deal of concern over the number of regulatory actions being pursued by EPA in the absence of legislation and without clear congressional direction. For this reason, the bill includes a number of provisions to stop unnecessary and damaging regulatory overreach by the agency.

Before closing, I'd like to make an additional point about the challenges facing Flint, Michigan and other communities across the country addressing lead in drinking water. This is an issue of great concern to Committee members. It is not a partisan issue.

What occurred in Flint has called greater attention to aging infrastructure and the need for prudent management and oversight of water systems. This bill provides targeted investments and prioritizes resources that will help the EPA, States, and communities respond to Flint and other affected areas nationally by addressing the entire water system.

The bill provides an increase of \$207 million above the fiscal year 2016 enacted level for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. It also includes \$50 million for the new Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation (WIFIA) program which may be leveraged through direct Federal loans or loan guarantees to fund \$3 to \$5 billion worth of water infrastructure projects nationwide.

In addition, the bill provides increases for State grants for improved State oversight and operations of drinking water systems, and for communities to work on integrated plans for pipe replacement. The bill also directs the GAO to assess the number of lead service lines by State.

Lastly, the Committee is taking an additional step to provide relief to communities like Flint by including bill language that allows States to use State Revolving Fund (SRF) dollars to forgive a portion of a community's outstanding prior-year loans. This, and other steps taken in this bill, will have a real impact.

In closing, I want to thank the staff, on both sides of the aisle, who have worked hard on the legislation before us today.

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