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Murkowski's Interior Bill Boosts Southeast Alaska

Supports Transboundary Water Quality, Struggling Timber Industry

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Chairman of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Committee, today announced a series of provisions within her Fiscal Year 2019 Interior Appropriations bill that will provide significant resources for communities throughout Southeast Alaska. The full Appropriations Committee approved the bill through a historic, unanimous vote. It will now head to the Senate floor for final consideration.

“With our state budget in flux, this bill provides much-needed fiscal stability. I’m proud of the work we have done to direct federal resources to where they are needed most, from new and existing infrastructure to protections for our land and people. My bill also takes significant strides to reduce the National Park Service’s maintenance backlog and improve our parks for Alaskans and visitors alike,” said Senator Murkowski. “As communities across Alaska and the nation address the opioid epidemic, we fund a new grant program to provide significant resources to help tribes fight back against abuse and addiction, and take steps to end the over-prescription of opioids. Overall, this bill will empower Alaskans across the state, including in Southeast, to boost our economy and create healthy communities.”

(Note: Numbers are nationwide program funding levels.)

Boosting Infrastructure, Economic Development and Opportunities

- **Payment in Lieu of Taxes:** Fully funds the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program which provides monetary compensation to local governments throughout Alaska that contain federal lands that are not subject to state or local taxation. The funds help local governments provide vital services, such as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search-and-rescue operations.
- **Transboundary Water Quality:** Allocates increased funding of \$1.5 million for transboundary river stream gauges, including for the Unuk River, and directs the U.S. Geological Survey to enter into a formal partnership with local tribes and other agencies to help develop a water quality strategy for transboundary rivers.
- **State Water Revolving Funds:** Slightly increases funding to \$2.85 billion to help local communities improve both wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. Funding from this program can be used to address problems like lead content in water.
- **National Parks:** Addresses the National Park Service's maintenance backlog by increasing its construction and deferred maintenance budgets.
- **Forest Products:** Increases national funding for the Forest Service's timber program to \$368 million, which includes the timber program on the Tongass to continue to support jobs and opportunities in the timber industry in Southeast Alaska.
- **Tongass National Forest Management:** Requires the Forest Service to gather sufficient data about the timing and availability of young-growth timber to ensure that any timber program in the Tongass provides for a viable timber industry in Southeast.
- **Alaska Red Cedar and Economic Timber Sales:** Continues current law that requires that timber sales in Alaska be economic, and requires that Alaska and West Coast sawmills be given the first right to process the timber, in order to keep these jobs in the U.S.
- **Increasing Public Access:** Forests Service recreation access programs are funded at a combined total of \$336 million. The bill provides more than \$4 million of additional funding to improve the Forest Service's capacity to issue additional special use permits, helping to expand recreation-based businesses in the Chugach and Tongass National Forests. These funds will also be used to maintain Forest Service recreation assets like cabins, trails, and campgrounds.
- **North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA):** The bill includes \$43

million for the NAWCA, an increase of \$3 million, to help increase bird populations and wetlands habitat. NAWCA is a popular program among sportsmen and bird watchers.

- **Gustavus Intertie:** Directs the National Park Service to consult the City of Gustavus on a regular basis as they issue contracts related to the hydraulic intertie at Glacier Bay National Park.

Please Note: Senator Murkowski's FY 2018 Interior Appropriations bill provided two years of funding for the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program. SRS was not included in this bill because it is already funded for FY 2019.

Health and Safety

- **Fighting Opioids:** The bill establishes a new grant program through IHS, which will provide \$10 million to help tribes fight back against opioid abuse. Also in the effort to fight opioid addiction, \$7.5 million provided to BIA. To help address the problem of opioid over-prescription, language is included requiring a report on both federal and tribal pharmacy compliance with state Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs.
- **Contract Support Costs:** Fully funds contract support costs, the operational and overhead costs in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service, to ensure tribes have the resources they need to deliver programs and services. This is especially important to Alaska because all healthcare for Alaska Natives is directly provided by tribal organizations. The account is continued as an indefinite appropriation so that if estimates made by the respective agencies are too low, funds are available to pay these costs without taking funds from other programs, which would reduce their capacity.
- **Village Built Clinics:** Increases funding to \$15 million for Village Built Clinics, a program unique to Alaska that supports 150 healthcare clinics in rural areas that often serve as the only local health facility.

Reining in Federal Overreach

- **Fish Grinding:** Directs EPA to address a longstanding issue of unworkable standards for grinding of fish waste by exempting offshore processing vessels. Further instructs the agency to develop a policy to treat onshore seafood processors who use the best available technology as in compliance.
- **Lead Bullets and Fishing Tackle:** Continues to prohibit EPA from regulating lead

content of ammunition and fishing tackle.

- **Kagalaska Caribou Hunt and Chirikof Island Cattle:** Fights wasteful government spending by prohibiting the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) from using funds to conduct a caribou hunt on Kagalaska Island in the Aleutian Chain. The FWS estimated that it would cost \$71,000 in taxpayer money to send four employees to the island to hunt and process the caribou. The bill also prohibits costly and impractical efforts to remove cattle from the remote Chirikof Island.

Mapping for Safety, Minerals, and More

- **3D Alaska Mapping:** Maintains funding at \$7.7 million for Alaska mapping initiatives that will help gather data to improve maps, enhancing the safety of aviation and other activities.
- **Mineral Resources and Critical Minerals Programs:** Includes \$7 million for a new critical minerals initiative that will improve topographic, geological, and geophysical mapping.

Sustaining Alaskan Culture

- **Cultural Arts:** Provides increased funding to \$1 million to begin an arts and cultural program with Sealaska and the Institute of American Indian and Alaskan Native Culture and Arts Development.
- **Sealaska Cultural Sites:** Maintains \$450,000 in funding for Alaska Native programs to certify claims for historical places and cultural sites.
- **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH):** Increased funding is provided to support the arts through NEA and NEH, including support for NEA's the Healing Arts Program, developed by the NEA and the Department of Defense (DoD) to help our nation's wounded and injured service members and their families in their transition into civilian life.
- **Alaska Subsistence:** Maintains \$2.5 million for the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct activities relating to the Federal Subsistence Board, and collaborates with Alaska Natives to gather information, expand employment and capacity building, and assist subsistence users with law enforcement compliance activities, such as obtaining essential permits and meeting harvest reporting requirements.
- **Native Handicrafts:** Encourages the Fish and Wildlife Service to do more to ensure that Native handicrafts can continue to be sold.

Providing Tribal Support

- **Small and Needy Tribes:** Maintains \$4.4 million in funding to ensure all tribes have a base level of support to run tribal governments. Almost 90 percent of national funding goes to Alaska.
- **Tribal Management:** Includes \$11.2 million for Alaska subsistence programs, extending critical pilot projects and ensuring additional opportunities for Alaska Native involvement in federal subsistence processes.
- **Tribal Court Funding (PL280):** Maintains \$13 million in funding to Public Law 280 states, such as Alaska, in order to help develop tribal court systems for communities.
- **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):** Maintains \$2 million for training and specific VAWA tribal court needs.
- **Metlakatla Hatchery:** Maintains funding at \$545,000 to Metlakatla for a fish hatchery, fixing a historical error that previously deprived the tribe of their entitled funds.

*The **Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee** controls funding levels for federal agencies and departments such as the Department of the Interior (DOI), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Forest Service (FS), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and Indian Health Service (IHS). Murkowski, as Chairman, is able to write the Senate's annual appropriations bill for the Subcommittee.*