



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

Q&A:

Title 30 of NDAA, Natural Resources Related General Provisions

The bipartisan House-Senate agreement, included in Title 30 of NDAA, supports American job creation and economic growth through a balanced approach to improve the management of our public lands and natural resources. It will create thousands of American jobs, cut red-tape to energy production on federal lands, boost American mineral production, protect multiple-use and public recreation on federal lands, convey over 110,000 acres of federal land for job-creating economic and community development, protect treasured lands through the measured establishment of locally-supported parks and wilderness areas, and provide new means to enhance private dollars to support America's National Parks.

Below are questions and answers on specific provisions in Title 30.

Question: Why are Natural Resources Provisions included in annual defense bill (NDAA)?

Answer: It is a long-standing fact that the NDAA traditionally incorporates provisions within the jurisdiction of the House Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee – and has done so for multiple Congresses. Title 30 builds upon natural resources provisions in the House-passed NDAA (HR 4455). In fact, the House-passed NDAA bill included multiple provisions primarily under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Committee. When a formal conference committee is convened on NDAA, the House names the Natural Resources Committee as official conferees.

Question: Isn't this a 'massive federal land grab'?

Answer: It is the exact opposite. Provisions in Title 30 provide for over 110,000 acres of land to be conveyed out of federal ownership to be utilized for economic development (including mineral production, timber production, infrastructure projects) and community development (ie, local cemetery, shooting range). In addition, it releases approximately 26,000 acres of current wilderness study areas, which unlocks lands to be used for multiple beneficial purposes, including economic development and recreation. It only includes limited wilderness and select national park designations that all have strong local and Congressional support. The bill repeatedly includes protections of private property by explicitly ensuring that no private property can be condemned.

Question: Why is the Women's History Museum included?

Answer: Title 30 includes nearly three dozen House-passed suspension bills, which includes H.R. 863, the "Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Women's History Museum Act. This bill is sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Maloney of NY and Rep. Marsha Blackburn of TN and passed the House on May 7, 2014. Contrary to assertions, this bill does not authorize a museum – it only authorizes a commission to study a potential museum. Claims that hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds would be spent on a museum are not accurate -- no federal funds are authorized for the study – the effort must be privately funded. A further Act of Congress would be required before any potential museum would ever be authorized.

Question: Why is the Sealaska provision included?

Answer: Title 30 includes multiple bills that have previously passed the House. Legislation to fully and finally satisfy Sealaska's land claims under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act after 43 years has previously been approved by the House (Roll Call 387, 112th Congress). In addition to fulfilling obligations rightfully owed to Alaska Natives, this bill supports economic activity and hundreds of jobs by ensuring responsible timber production in Southeast Alaska, where federal bureaucracy has hampered responsible management of federal forests.

Question: Why designate new parks and new park studies?

Answer: Title 30 includes a modest number of locally-supported park provisions that encourage economic development, tourism and recreation. The agreement includes five new national historical parks and transfers management of two existing federal areas to the National Park Service. All of the new historical parks have been formally studied and recommended for inclusion in the National Park System and focus on specific historic sites of national significance. The agreement also authorizes the National Park Service to conduct studies for potential additions to the park system – all eight of these study authorizations have previously passed the House under suspension or through the Senate by unanimous consent. To encourage greater private funding for National Park Service operations, the agreement includes a commemorative National Park Service centennial coin (same language as H.R. 627, approved by the House earlier this year by a vote of 403-13) and language to responsibly recognize and encourage private donations to the National Park Service.

Question: Why extend authorizations for national heritage areas?

Answer: The agreement includes a limited number of extensions for existing heritage areas – no new heritage areas are created. The language in the agreement is based on the heritage area extension language that has been included in recent appropriations bills (FY2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act (PL 113-76), Division G, Section 119).

Question: Why are new Wild and Scenic River designations included?

Answer: A few new wild and scenic river designations are included in the agreement. Each has previously been passed by unanimous consent in the Senate, been passed by the House this Congress, or been reported favorably by the House Natural Resources Committee. For rivers that run through areas of private property, these designations include buffer zone provisions and protections for landowners from condemnation – a first in the history of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Question: Why are new wilderness designations agreed to in this?

Answer: Less than 250,000 acres of wilderness nationwide is designated in this agreement. This agreement includes Republican-sponsored designations in Washington, Colorado and Nevada that were previously reported favorably out of the House Natural Resources Committee. The areas designated enjoy local support and in most cases are not managed for economic development uses (much of the acreage is already protected roadless area or wilderness study area). Importantly, the wilderness designations include protections for adjacent activities and are balanced with economic development opportunities on other public lands in the agreement. In addition, it releases approximately 26,000 acres of current wilderness study areas, which unlocks lands to be used for multiple beneficial purposes, including economic development and recreation.

Question: How does this agreement benefit Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives?

Answer: This agreement includes provisions to protect cultural resources and traditional uses of land in Arizona. It helps protect hundreds of timber jobs in rural and Native communities and protects the environment by allowing the Sealaska Native Corporation to receive its remaining land conveyance under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. It fulfills a long-standing promise by the United States to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in Montana to restore their reservation to full tribal ownership. Finally, it places in trust 1,553 acres of land in Wisconsin on a closed Army facility for the benefit of the Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin.