

Natural Resources Management Act (S.47)

Background

S. 47 reflects a bipartisan agreement that was reached by the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee in December 2018. The bill, which passed the Senate on Feb. 12 on a 92-8 vote, includes roughly 78 Republican and 47 Democrat bills addressing various land and natural resource management challenges. The bills in this package have undergone extensive public review in the House, the Senate, or both. The majority of the measures have passed one chamber.

Highlights

- Various provisions sought by the sportsmen's community to expand access for recreational hunting, fishing and shooting on federal lands.
- A net reduction in federally-owned land which will lead to economic development across the west and greater public access to land and natural resources.
- Title transfer of certain federal water facilities to local communities and the expansion of local control over federal water projects.
- Reforms to the Land and Water Conservation Fund to curb federal acquisition, promote transparency and local input in federal land management, and increase access to existing federal lands.
- Establishes a research, development, and testing program to promote expanded use of unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, to monitor and respond to wildfires.

Sportsman's Provisions

- Requires Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service lands to be open for recreational hunting, fishing and shooting unless specifically closed. Any determination to close land would require a public process and consultation with local authorities.
- Authorizes the lawful transportation of bows on National Park Service lands.
- Provides for the use of volunteer hunters to cull excess animals on National Park Service lands.
- Establishes January 31 as the closing date for duck hunting season and provides special hunting days for youths, veterans and active duty military personnel.

Local Control of Land and Water Resources

- S. 47 provides for a net reduction in the federal estate. Roughly 18,000 acres of federally-owned land is conveyed outside of federal ownership.
- Authorizes the Bureau of Reclamation to transfer title to eligible water projects without further congressional action, and specifically authorizes the transfer of certain BOR facilities in California and Oklahoma.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Reform

- Reforms the LWCF, including limitations on federal acquisition and prioritization of recreational access at the State and local level.
 - Requires a minimum of 40% of total annual funds to be allocated to the state grant program.
 - Requires that a minimum of \$15 million or 3% of total annual LWCF funding be used to maintain or increase access to existing federal lands.
- Requires all new federal acquisitions to take into consideration management efficiencies, cost savings, geographic distribution, and other criteria.
- Does NOT include mandatory appropriations.
- All LWCF funds remains subject to appropriation (unless otherwise provided for under existing law).
- Provides for the permanent authorization of the deposit function of the LWCF. (Contrary to widespread belief, the authority to appropriate funding for LWCF does not expire and authorities of federal land management agencies to acquire land derive from other laws. In effect, the program is already permanently authorized).

Miscellaneous Provisions

- Helium Extraction Act of 2017 (H.R. 3279 in 115th Congress).
- Open Book on Equal Access to Justice Act (H.R. 752; Judiciary Committee).
- National Geologic Mapping Reauthorization Act (H.R. 318).
- National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System Act (H.R. 4475 in 115th Congress).
- Wildfire Management Technology Advancement Act of 2018 (S. 2290 in 115th Congress)

Additional Resources

[S. 47 — Bill Text \(as passed by Senate\)](#)

[S. 47 — Process Document](#)

[S. 47 — Title by Title Summary](#)

[S. 47 — Questions and Answers](#)