

Land Rights Network
American Land Rights Association
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Massive North Country Trail Threatens Thousands of Landowners

Park Service history on trails in US means landowners face eminent domain or condemnation.

A bill in Congress to reauthorize, reroute and extend the North Country Scenic Trail from Vermont to North Dakota (ultimately it will be extended on to Seattle, Washington) has been introduced in both the House (H.R. 799) and the Senate (S. 403). You must help defeat this bill to save yourself a lot of heartache and money.

Your chance to save your self is to fight this trail now. By fighting back against the trail now you may not stop the trail but you'll get Congress to place limits on the Park Service use of eminent domain and limit on how far from the trail Park Service land acquisition authority goes.

Billed as the longest continuous hiking trail in America, this 4600 mile trail is located in the eight states of Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota. The obvious extension will be to go through Montana, Idaho and Washington. Not good for ranchers and farmers in its path.

A 'Dear Colleague' letter from Minnesota Congressman Rick Nolan (chief author), and Vermont Congressman Peter Welch, states that the purpose of the legislation is to "improve the trail's route and boost our nation's outdoor recreation economy." Yet the history in other Park Service areas over the past 40 years means economic damage often occurs instead of economic activity.

This is a non-motorized, hiking trail only! Even horses are not allowed. How is this going to improve the nation's outdoor recreation economy? What will be the impact on other outdoor recreation uses, such as hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, boating, and ATV use? The history of the National Park Service on these issues is really quite bad.

There will be an adverse effect on landowners and the economic sectors of agriculture, energy, forestry, mining, and business in general.

Proponents of this National Park System, Wilderness-type recreation have been "cooking the books" on economics for decades. The fact of the matter is that National Park Service units in rural parts of the country have become less, not more popular. This is documented in numerous reports by the Interior Department Inspector General and other investigators.

It appears that the proponents of this legislation in Congress are not so much concerned about the economic impacts of a 4600 mile non-motorized trail, but more as a payback to the powerful environmental lobby for their support in the last election.

The other purpose of the bill, according to its proponents is to improve the trail route, in order to connect to the Appalachian Trail in the east, and to replace a 100 mile stretch of trail through extensive and unnavigable wetlands in the West.

This trail is modeled after the Appalachian Trail that runs from Maine to Georgia, over 2000 miles. In my 36 year career, this is the Park Service project with the most Park Service land acquisition abuses and angry landowners.

The original authorization for the North Country Scenic Trail was approved by Congress in 1980, when Congressman Phil Burton of California chaired the National Parks Subcommittee.

He included the North Country Trail in his Omnibus Parks Bill which was the second largest bill of its kind in history. There was little oversight and debate of the legislation then. Most Members of Congress had no idea what was in the whole bill. There were over 50 National Park projects. The fact that the North Country Trail was located through 100 miles of non-navigable Wetlands in northern Minnesota is in itself proof that little care was taken in passing this legislation.

You need to make sure that this ill-conceived legislation gets the attention and scrutiny that it deserves.

Here's what you can do:

-----1. Forward this message to at least ten other people. Your whole list if possible. A big problem for opponents of trails is lack of information. Help your friends and neighbors know what is coming at them. Do not assume they know. Send us names, faxes and e-mails for anyone we should be in contact with.

-----2. Call your Congressman at (202) 225-3121. Ask for the staff person who handles National Park issues. Express your concern about the bill.

Urge him to take condemnation authority away from the Park Service and limit the distance from the trail condemnation can be used.

-----3. Learn as much about what happens to landowners who face land acquisition by the National Park Service as you can. American Land Rights has a number of films on our website (www.landrights.org) that will help you see what you are facing.

-----4. Go to www.landrights.org to read my testimony to Congress on the Appalachian Trail. The Park Service threatened landowners with condemnation who owned land miles from the trail. This is a really big deal.

-----5. Type North Country Scenic Trail into Google to find the Park Service and organizations that are supporting the trail.

-----6. Ask the Park Service to get on their mailing list about the trail.

-----7. You will see maps of parts of the trail. No one knows for sure where it will go in Montana, Idaho and Washington. And the trail route is going to change in other states. You must get involved so you can protect your property and future. You can only do that by alerting your neighbors and staying informed about what is happening on the Trail.

-----7. Let American Land Rights know if you are interested in being kept informed on this issue. Just send an e-mail to ccushman@landrights.org

-----8. Join American Land Rights if you are not already a member. That way you can receive updates on what is happening on the Trail and also with Park Service land acquisition in Congress. Just send \$25 if you are a first time member to American Land Rights, PO Box 400, Battle Ground, WA 98604. Or go to www.landrights.org and you can pay online. If you are already a member and renewing your membership for 2015, please send your check for \$35, the regular membership amount.

-----9. Tens of thousands of letters, faxes and e-mails must be sent to defeat this huge land grab. It will cost American Land Rights over \$89,000 if we can raise the money. You can make contributions for \$1,000, \$500, \$200, \$100, \$50, \$25 or whatever you can afford to defeat the trail and condemnation at www.landrights.org or by simply mailing a check to American Land Rights at the address below.

For more information about American Land Rights, check us out on Google, LinkedIn.com or Facebook.com. Search for the American Land Rights Association, National Inholders Association or the League of Private Property Voters.

You can find more by searching Chuck Cushman or Charles S. Cushman on Google.

Sincerely,

Chuck Cushman
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American Land Rights
PO Box 400
Battle Ground, WA 98604
(360) 687-3087

P.S. American Land Rights must now inform all the Senators and Congressmen and all their staff about the threat you face from the North Country Trail. They must understand the danger for landowners and communities along the Northern tier of the United States. This is really important.

Background:

The National Park Service will become a voracious land acquisition monster like it was in the Carter Administration if the Land and Water Conservation fund is extended by Congress. The LWCF must not provide for automatic trust fund land acquisition funding or no landowner anywhere near the North Country Trail will be safe.

Any new Park Service area is a threat to local landowners and communities.

Like most Americans, I cherish our great national parks but today the National Park Service (NPS) is more interested in grabbing more land than in taking care of the parks they have.

My father was a Park Service ranger and I have been an inholder in Yosemite for 44 years. I served in the Student Conservation Corps in 1959 and was a volunteer in what are now three national parks. I was appointed by President Reagan to the National Park System Advisory Board in 1981.

The Park Service we know today gets confused. They think they are a great agency because they manage great places.

The park system has an 11 billion dollar operations and maintenance backlog and the number of Americans who visit their parks is declining.

There is a reason for this according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) (Formerly the General Accounting Office)

The priority of present leadership of the National Park Service (NPS) is claiming control over more land rather than providing parks for the enjoyment and use of the American people.

They are reducing visitor facilities and campsites in popular parks such as Yosemite and jacking up entrance fees throughout the park system. Increasingly, they are forcing visitors onto tour busses rather than letting them enjoy the park as a family in the family car. These policies are a threat to the future of our existing great parks and it is the LWCF that provides the funds to continue this tragic course.

The Park Service generally fails to work with local communities. As a result, economic damage often occurs. Ask any inholder in a National Park Service area if he likes his park. He'll say yes. Ask him if he likes the Park Service and he'll say no. The Park Service is not a good neighbor.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has a really bad history of funding Federal Land Acquisition by the National Park Service. Whole communities have been wiped out by condemnation. Whole cultures obliterated.

Look at the Socio-Cultural assessments done on a number of Park Service areas in the upper right corner of the home page of American Land Rights at www.landrights.org

Condemnation (Eminent Domain like Kelo) has been abused so much by the Park Service that their authority to use Declarations of Takings had to be curtailed in the past by Congress. And this is all related to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. As someone once said, "It's the Money, Stupid."

Trying to put sideboards or limits on condemnation in the North Country Trail bill will not stop the Park Service from using the condemnation as a weapon against landowners.

The Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund monies must only be used with Willing Sellers. Giving the Park Service the money automatically gives them the ability to use Condemnation (Eminent Domain). Condemnation does not need to be mentioned in the law. Most of the time it is not. But the courts say if Congress gives them money to the Park Service, they give them the authority to use Condemnation.

***Further, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has become a slush fund for the land trusts and green groups. The Park Service rarely buys land directly anymore. They now purchase land already acquired by land trusts.

So who is setting the priorities? Who is planning the North Country Trail? It is the groups supporting the trail. It is also land trusts like the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land and Conservation Fund. And on top of it all the land trusts are skimming a profit off their sales to the Park Service and other agencies. The land trusts actually make the acquisition process more expensive wasting scarce taxpayer dollars.

For more documentation go to www.landrights.org and watch the PBS Frontline Show "For the Good Of All" about Park Service land acquisition. Look for "More Videos" on the left side of the Home Page at the Landrights.org website. You can also see a full length documentary "For All People, For All Time." Look for the CARA testimony toward the top of the Home Page or Chuck Cushman's testimony about the Appalachian Trail.

Go to YouTube and watch the very short films "Big Park" and "In Condemnation, The Cuyahoga Valley". You'll really get a laugh out of "Big Park." But you'll surely understand the danger of land acquisition by the National Park Service.

Ask American Land Rights for a list of GAO Reports (Government Accountability Office) (Formerly known as the General Accounting Office) about land acquisition and the abuses by the Park Service and other agencies.

Despite the fact that some of these reports are from the 80's, nothing has happened in the law or by Congress to stop the Park Service from continuing the abuses. The only effective tool is to take away Park Service money. Or put strings on the money to take away their ability to use the LWCF as a slush fund.

***Take one case for example: In 2000 the Park Service on the Appalachian Trail in Maine used its authority to threaten eminent domain of the Saddle Mountain Ski Area anytime the former owner wanted to upgrade his ski area or install safety equipment. This went on for 20 years until American Land Rights helped the landowner get the Congressional Committees to take away the Park Service authority to continue these threats.

Another example is the Buffalo National River in Arkansas. There were 1108 landowners when the Park Service took it over in about 1975. There

were only 8 landowners left when I debated a key Park Service official on the Today Show in 1988.

The key to these abuses is money. If the Park Service has the money they will use it to threaten eminent domain in nearly every conversation with private landowners about selling their property. "Sell or else" is their frame of reference.

Also important was a secret Memorandum of Understanding between the Park Service and the Appalachian Trail Conference which gave the Appalachian Trail Conference great authority over the route of the trail and which landowners would be condemned. This MOU was not discovered until Chuck Cushman testified before Congress in 2005. Send an e-mail to ccushman@landrights.org and we'll send you a copy of the testimony.

Former Park Service Chief of Land Acquisition Will Kriz was quoted in a newspaper as saying "There is no such thing as a willing seller." Now some people do want to sell. But if they don't, the Park Service creates an environment where they are forced to change their minds.

Congress can only control this systematic abuse of power by limiting the funds that are available under the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

To unsubscribe, please reply to alra@pacifier.com with "Unsubscribe" in the Subject Line, please make sure and indicate which email this message was sent to.

Please forward this urgent message as widely as possible. Please send it to at least 10 other friends, neighbors and business associates. Your community deserves to know what is coming at them.

If Obama and Congress change the LWCF into a Trust Fund, Eminent Domain and Condemnation will rule rural America like it did in the Carter Administration. The Park Service and other agencies have abused condemnation and eminent domain ever since although not at the same level. Only Congress keeping funding down and using appropriated funds saved Rural America from a complete wipe out.

The LWCF should be used to take care of the land already owned by the Government. The GAO says Park Service alone is over 11 Billion behind in basic maintenance.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is incredibly dangerous to landowners, farmers, ranchers, miners, forestry advocates and anyone who owns private land or private rights.

Anyone who owns land, forest cabins, grazing land or permits, mining claims or small mines will face elimination if LWCF is converted into an automatic Trust Fund and a fully funded at \$900 starting level.

An automatic Trust fund will facilitate in the long term conversion of millions of acres of private land into Government owned land.

Action Items:

-----1. Please forward this message to at least 10 other people. Your whole list if possible.

-----2. It's URGENT that you call both your Senators today to urge them to oppose full funding for the Land and Water Conservation fund. The LWCF must be reauthorized by September. President Obama and his staff want to convert fully fund the LWCF and convert it into a full automatic trust fund starting in 2017. Call any Senator at (202) 224-3121.

-----3. Call your Congressman at (202) 225-3121 and follow the same instructions as for your Senators.

Our view: Keep private land in private hands.

Especially dangerous is the involvement of Land Trusts in this process. The Nature Conservancy, Trust For Public Land and Conservation Fund and many others use the LWCF as a slush fund. They go out and buy land and then the LWCF buys the land from them, usually at a higher price. The taxpayer loses.

Obama Administration wants LWCF converted into automatic unappropriated \$900 million per year land acquisition Trust Fund. And that will be just the start. Then it will be raised little by little every year till they get to the goal of the Greens of a \$3 Billion per year automatic off budget land acquisition trust fund.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) must be reauthorized by September of 2015. The Greens and their allies in Congress are using this as an opportunity to turn the LWCF into an automatic \$900 million per year trust fund. **That must not be allowed to happen.**

Talking Points:

-----The LWCF must not be reauthorized without protections for landowners and communities from eminent domain (condemnation).

-----**The LWCF funds must only be allowed to be used with Willing Sellers.**

-----**The LWCF must not be allowed to become a trust fund.**

-----**Land & Water Conservation Fund Threatens Rural America.**

-----**Keep private land in private hands.**

-----**All LWCF funding must go through the appropriations process.**

-----**All LWCF funding must have Congressional appropriations oversight.**

-----**The LWCF must not allow condemnation or eminent domain without specific Congressional action.**

-----**The LWCF should be used to take care of land already owned by Federal land agencies but not cared for.**

-----**The LWCF must stay subject to competing each year with other priorities** and not allowed to take a priority over the Military, education, Social Security, health care, the military and other important priorities.

Under the proposal in Congress, the LWCF money will be given to the Park Service and other agencies automatically empowering them to use eminent domain (condemnation). Rural America has been savaged over the years by Park Service land acquisition and condemnation. Other agencies have also abused condemnation.

Does this sound like CARA light? This is CARA again. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act. What we called the **Condemnation and Relocation Act**. This idea was dropped by Congress in 2001 after a great deal of opposition.

Reauthorizing the LWCF means automatic funding at the \$900 million per year for land acquisition now without going through the Congressional appropriations process.

Congress also turned down the \$1 billion per year American Heritage Trust in 1988.

You must join the All-out effort to stop land acquisition trust fund now.

President Obama's proposed budget is for \$900 full funding in 2016 fiscal with the LWCF (Land and Water Conservation Fund) converted to an automatic \$900 million trust fund where funds do not have to go through appropriations process each year starting in 2017.

If the Obama plan is successful it means the end of Rural America over time.

The National Park Service will become a voracious land acquisition monster like it was in the Carter Administration. The LWCF must not provide for automatic trust fund land acquisition funding.

Billions of dollars are being wasted by the National Park Service and other agencies buying land they don't need and paying too much for it.

Any new Park Service area is a threat to local landowners and communities.

Like most Americans, I cherish our great national parks but today the National Park Service (NPS) is more interested in grabbing more land than in taking care of the parks they have.

My father was a Park Service ranger and I have been an inholder in Yosemite for 44 years. I served in the Student Conservation Corps in 1959 and was a volunteer in what are now three national parks. I was appointed by President Reagan to the National Park System Advisory Board in 1981.

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You must call both your Senators at (202) 224-3121. First ask for your Senator by name, and then ask for the staff person who handles Federal Land Acquisition and the LWCF.

You must call your Congressman at (202) 225-3121. First ask for your Congressman by name, and then ask for the staff person who handles Federal Land Acquisition and the LWCF.

Tell him or her not to allow Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to become an automatic trust fund. Funding for any acquisition projects must go through Congressional Appropriations Committees each year with full

Congressional oversight. LWCF funds must only be used with Willing Sellers.

Do not allow the LWCF to become a trust fund. Right now it is authorized at \$900 million a year. This amount was only funded by the Appropriations Committees one year, 1979. After that the Appropriations Committees funded it at a much lower amount each year and made the LWCF compete each year with other important national priorities each year. The LWCF must stay subject to competing each year with other priorities and not allowed to take a priority over the Military, education, Social Security and other important priorities.

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*****Further, the LWCF has become a slush fund for the land trusts and green groups.** The Park Service rarely buys land directly anymore. They now purchase land already acquired by land trusts. **So who is setting the priorities? Who is planning the park like areas? It is the land trusts like the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land and Conservation Fund.** And on top of it all the **land trusts are skimming a profit** off their sales to the Park Service and other agencies. The land trusts actually make the acquisition process more expensive wasting scarce taxpayer dollars.

For more documentation go to www.landrights.org and **watch the PBS Frontline Show "For the Good Of All"** about Park Service land acquisition. Look for "More Videos" on the left side of the Home Page at the Landrights.org website. You can also see a full length documentary "For All People, For All Time." **Look for the CARA testimony toward the top of the Home Page.**

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(Formerly known as the General Accounting Office) about land acquisition and the abuses by the Park Service and other agencies. Despite the fact that some of these reports are from the 80’s, nothing has happened in the law or by Congress to stop the Park Service from continuing the abuses. The only effective tool is to take away Park Service money. Or put strings on the money to take away their ability to use the LWCF as a slush fund.

Take one case for example: In 2000 the Park Service on the Appalachian Trail in Maine used its authority to threaten eminent domain of the Saddle Mountain Ski Area anytime the former owner wanted to upgrade his ski area or install safety equipment. This went on for 20 years until American Land Rights helped the landowner get the Congressional Committees to take away the Park Service authority to continue these threats.

The key to these abuses is money. If the Park Service has the money they will use it to threaten eminent domain in nearly every conversation with private landowners about selling their property. **“Sell or else” is their frame of reference.**

Former Park Service Chief of Land Acquisition Will Kriz was quoted in a newspaper as saying **“There is no such thing as a willing seller.”** Now some people do want to sell. But if they don’t, the Park Service creates an environment where they are forced to change their minds.

Congress can only control this systematic abuse of power by limiting the funds that are available under the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Failure to Prioritize Land Acquisitions:

Further, the Park Service and other agencies must be required to follow what has been Interior Department policy since the Reagan Administration and prioritize their acquisitions. Where can the government get the most bang for the buck? **Certainly not by allowing the land trusts to set priorities.**

The Park Service has the view that they are going to own it all eventually so why bother to prioritize. So early willing sellers actually lay the plans for any new acquisition areas (parks, battlefields etc.) because the Park Service must then plan around those acquisitions. The same is true when the priorities are set by land trust purchases (with no priorities). The land trust buys a piece of property and suddenly through their lobbying that

parcel becomes the most threatened parcel in the country. This makes no sense and wastes huge amounts of taxpayer money.

The Park Service is supposed to do Land Protection Plans for each land acquisition area (park like area) such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Monuments, National Battlefields, National Recreation Areas, National Parks, etc. where they issue a report for each park like area showing which lands are the most important to be Federally protected and which are the least.

They are supposed to hold periodic public hearings with local landowners to discuss these priorities. And they are supposed to acquire control over the land using the least expensive method possible. Easements, cooperative agreements, and other alternatives are rarely used by the Park Service. **They insist on buying in fee title.**

One former Interior Department official David Hales said, **“If Congress puts a circle around it, we’re going to own it all.”**

As a result, Land and Water Conservation Funding is wasted buying more land than is necessary and more of an interest in the land than is needed for protection. Any new act regarding the LWCF must have the requirement that each agency publicly prioritize its acquisitions on a regular basis. They must specify what interest in the property should be acquired: Examples: Fee Title, Easement, or a Cooperative Agreement. Congress must insist on these reports. No reauthorization of the LWCF should occur without this requirement in the law.

The recommendations in the following GAO Reports are as current today as when they were written. And Congress has implemented almost none of the recommendations of the GAO.

What is the old quote: “Those that fail to remember history are bound to repeat it.”

General Accounting Office (GAO) Reports about Land Acquisition:

Federal Lands: Land Acquisitions Involving Nonprofit Conservation Organizations <http://www.gao.gov/products/RCED-94-149>

RCED-94-149: Published: Jun 15, 1994. Publicly Released: Jul 15, 1994.

National Park Service: Land Acquisition at the Cumberland Island National Seashore, Georgia <http://www.gao.gov/products/RCED-97-251R> RCED-97-251R : Published: Sep 29, 1997. Publicly Released: Oct 1, 1997.

National Park Service: Efforts Underway to Address Its Maintenance

Backlog <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-03-1177T>

GAO-03-1177T: Published: Sep 27, 2003. Publicly Released: Sep 27, 2003.

“The Federal Drive To Acquire Private Lands Should Be Reassessed” (CED-80-14) (December 14, 1979).

“Federal Land Acquisition and Management Practice” (CED-81-135) (Sep. 11, 1981).

“Lands In The Lake Chelan National Recreation Area Should Be Returned To Private Ownership” (CED-81-10) (Jan. 22, 1981).

“The National Park Service Should Improve Its Land Acquisition and Management At Fire Island” (CED-81-78) (May 8, 1981).

“Federal Protection of Wild and Scenic Rivers Has Been Slow and Costly” (CED-78-96) (May 22, 1978).

“Federal Land Acquisitions By Condemnation – Opportunities To Reduce Delays and Costs” (CED-80-54) (May 14-, 1980).

“Limited Progress Made In Documenting and Mitigating Threats To Parks” (RCED-87-36) (February 1987).

“New Rules for Protecting Land In The National Park System – Consistent Compliance Needed” (RCED-86-16) (October 16, 1985).

The recent article below shows how the groups supporting massive land acquisition try to do it under the radar by talking about the state portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund as if massive land acquisition and eminent domain are no problem at all even though most of the LWCF money goes for Federal land acquisition. Stateside spending is less of a priority.

Background:

Big Push On By Obama Administration To Buy Land

Greenwire

12. PUBLIC LANDS:

Obama admin officials, mayors call for renewing conservation fund

Corbin Hiar, E&E reporter

Published: Wednesday, January 21, 2015

With the Land and Water Conservation Fund set to expire in September, the Obama administration and a bipartisan coalition of mayors from across the country began a push today to reauthorize and fully fund the program in the face of congressional Republican opposition.

"Over its 50 years of existence, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has unmistakably contributed to the vibrancy of American cities," City Parks Alliance Executive Director Catherine Nagel said at a news conference near the White House. Her urban parks advocacy organization released a report today touting recent projects funded by the program in cities nationwide. The LWCF was established in 1964 to allow the federal government to use up to \$900 million per year of federal oil and gas royalties to support collaborative conservation efforts. The fund requires at least a 1-to-1 match of state and local dollars for initiatives it supports.

But the report argued there are many instances when a relatively small amount of federal assistance has spurred massive investments from other sources. For example, Republican Mayor Betsy Price of Fort Worth, Texas, told the audience about how LWCF's initial \$725,000 grant enabled her city to create the 325-acre Gateway Park, which then secured an additional \$4.8 million from state and local sources. Those funds allowed Price to double the acreage of the park.

"This report highlights the extraordinary success of the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the past half-century, investing revenue generated from offshore energy development into our communities and public lands for the benefit of all Americans," Interior Secretary Sally Jewell said at the news conference. "It underscores the need for Congress not only to reauthorize the fund, but also to permanently provide full funding at \$900 million annually that was intended when the law was passed." Jewell also noted that the annual appropriation limit -- which Congress has not come close to meeting in recent years -- has not been adjusted for inflation and was set decades ago, when the conservation dollars could secure a lot more land and waters.

"This truly is a bipartisan effort," said Price, one of the co-chairs of the alliance's Mayors for Parks Coalition and the only Republican at the event. Other speakers at the press conference included Mike Boots, the acting chairman of the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, and Democratic Mayors Michael Hancock of Denver; Ralph Becker of Salt Lake City; and Pedro Segarra of Hartford, Conn.

"Mayor Hancock and I work together on many things, and in other things we're polar opposites," Price said of the coalition's other co-chair. "But we understand that this is a critical part for our cities and for what we can do.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is effective, efficient and necessary."

She added, "It's a great opportunity for mayors to come together and use their bully pulpits to make their citizens' lives better, to help get this organized, to get it going and to get it reauthorized so that our children and our grandchildren will have the same access" to public lands and waters. Congress has different conservation priorities. But not all Republicans -- particularly those in Congress -- are strong supporters of spending oil and gas royalties on purchasing new conservation properties.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) "has serious issues with the current maintenance backlog on the federal land agencies, and further acquisition is not a priority for her at this moment," the Energy and Natural Resources Committee chairwoman's spokesman, Robert Dillon, said in a phone interview. "It's not doing an adequate job -- or even a decent job -- of taking care of the property it does have. It ought to be prioritizing the upkeep of the land it does have before it looks to expand."

Dillon added that Murkowski -- who is also chairwoman of the powerful Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee - - is more supportive of state-led conservation efforts and land swaps like the ones included in the National Defense Authorization Act passed at the end of the 113th Congress (Greenwire, Dec. 12, 2014).

"Nine hundred million is still a shitload of money," he said. Jewell (Interior Secretary), however, was quick to dismiss such GOP concerns during the news conference. "I don't buy that argument," she said. "I think it oversimplifies."

She acknowledged the maintenance backlog -- which is "something like \$11 billion in the National Park Service alone, more than half of that tied into roads" -- but said that "we have a crumbling infrastructure in this country overall because we have been disinvesting in the kind of investments that our parents made in infrastructure that enabled us to prosper in the way we are."

Jewell added: "Rather than using that as an excuse to not support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, what we need to do -- and what I would love to see Congress lead in -- is, let's invest in our infrastructure. Let's put people to work. Let's fix up the crumbling facilities we have in city parks and state parks and national parks and other public lands."

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/21/stories/1060012028>

Social Networking Update: The American Land Rights Association has a Page on Facebook. Please LIKE us on Facebook. Also Executive Director Chuck Cushman is on Facebook.com.

You can also find American Land Rights Association and Chuck Cushman on LinkedIn.com. We are especially active on LinkedIn.com so send an invitation to connect and join up.

American Land Rights is on Twitter as AmLandrights.
Chuck Cushman is also on Twitter under ccushman98604

Google Alert:

You can find additional information about national issues and battles American Land Rights has been involved in by going to Google and typing in the following search terms one at a time: Chuck Cushman, Charles Cushman, Charles S. Cushman, American Land Rights Association, National Inholders Association and League of Private Property Voters.

Thank you,

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