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House Advances Appropriations Bill Protecting Alaska Public Lands and Waters

Washington — Today the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations moved out of committee its 2020 Interior Appropriations bill that together will protect the Tongass National Forest, Arctic Ocean and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge while simultaneously protecting the American taxpayer.

Statement by Leah Donahey, Legislative Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“Today, the House Appropriations Committee voted to rein in the Trump administration’s assault on Alaska’s national treasures while simultaneously protecting taxpayers.

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should never be auctioned off to oil companies regardless of price. But by requiring the administration to set minimum lease sale bids sufficient to meet revenue promised in the Tax Act, the House is calling drilling proponents’ bluff. The reaction of the pro-drilling crowd to this provision, that it is arbitrary, unrealistic and will ‘kill development,’ tells you all you need to know.

“Neither the Trump administration, nor Senator Murkowski believed their own revenue justifications during the tax bill process, and now with the price of oil recently reaching historic lows, the entire basis for which development was ever allowed in the Refuge has been rendered utterly unrealistic. They simply want to sell off America’s largest wildlife refuge for a pennies on the dollar in order to get leases into the hands of oil companies as quickly as possible, regardless of whether they fulfill their promise to the American people.

“The Tongass National Forest is not only America’s largest remaining temperate rainforest in the world, it is an essential carbon sink as well. It is also a poster child for allowing federal taxpayer resources to subsidize the destruction of our national forests. Alaska national forests already face a \$68 million road maintenance backlog and the Tongass timber program costs taxpayers on average \$30 million in federal subsidies each year. We can do better.

“As Representative Quigley said on the floor today during debate, ‘A loss of nearly \$30 million per year that I hope alone would be enough reason for my friends across the aisle to oppose the continuation of this wasteful policy. The provision that this amendment seeks to remove would save taxpayers money and protect our natural resources.’



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“We applaud passage of these bipartisan provisions and urge Congress to ensure they both are included as part of the final 2020 Interior-Appropriations bill.”

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Alaska Wilderness League stands with, serves and supports the many people and organizations that believe in a sustainable future for Alaska. We honor and respect the cultures of Alaska Natives whose way of life remains deeply connected to the state’s land, waters, and wildlife. We believe that Alaska’s long-term economic future and subsistence traditions are inexorably tied to the health and sound stewardship of its natural resources, which support hunting, fishing, tourism and unrivaled outdoor experiences that are central to Alaskans’ quality of life.



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