

**STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS ON H.R. 3681, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE GREEN SPACES, GREEN VEHICLES INITIATIVE TO FACILITATE THE INSTALLATION OF ZERO-EMISSIONS VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE ON NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LAND, NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM LAND, AND CERTAIN RELATED LAND, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**February 27, 2020**

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Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 3681, a bill to establish the Green Spaces, Green Vehicles Initiative to facilitate the installation of zero-emissions vehicle infrastructure on National Forest System land, National Park System land, and certain related land, and for other purposes.

The Department appreciates efforts to enhance access to national parks and public lands, and is currently working with partners to meet the needs of those visitors who use electric vehicles. However, the Department does not support H.R. 3681 as the National Park Service (NPS) already has the authorities provided in this legislation, and needs to utilize resources to reduce the NPS deferred maintenance backlog and address other critical infrastructure needs.

H.R. 3681 would require the Department of Energy, the NPS, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to collaborate on an initiative to facilitate the installation and use of zero-emission vehicle infrastructure in national parks, forests, and nearby communities by entering into agreements to acquire, install, and operate charging or fueling infrastructure for zero-emission vehicles; acquiring zero-emission fleet vehicles; providing information to the public such as maps and station availability; and allowing for employee use of charging infrastructure. In determining the location for zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, H.R. 3681 would require the agencies to complement, to the extent feasible, the alternative fuel corridor networks established by the Federal Highway Administration. The bill would authorize up to \$50 million per year for this initiative.

H.R. 3681 would require the NPS and USFS to give priority consideration, when entering into an agreement for shuttle or other transportation services, to an entity with zero-emission vehicles. The bill would require the agencies to develop a strategy to, by 2030, increase the number of zero-emission vehicles in the fleet by either 125 percent or to a number that is 25 percent of the total fleet, whichever is greater.

This legislation is unnecessary, as the NPS currently has the statutory authority provided in this bill, including installing infrastructure to fuel or charge electric vehicles and acquiring electric vehicles in the fleet. Efforts to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the national parks have been underway since the first major auto manufacturers began offering electric vehicle models. With electric vehicles becoming a more viable transportation option for park

visitors as a result of increased battery ranges, there is increased demand for electric vehicle charging stations at national parks. To this end, the NPS has partnered with and completed charging installation efforts with several organizations.

Recently, BMW of North America, the National Park Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the NPS entered into a partnership for the installation of 100 electric vehicle charging stations at locations in and near national parks across the country. Overall, with the installation of the first electric vehicle charging station under this program at Thomas Edison National Historical Park, and including other initiatives, almost 150 charging stations have been installed system-wide, including in Death Valley National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Yellowstone National Park, and Cape Cod National Seashore. The NPS is also currently working with the California Energy Commission to complete additional electric vehicle charging installations at national parks in California.

Several parks have also added electric vehicle charging to support fleet vehicles. In 2019, more than a dozen all-electric cars and motorcycles were added to the US Park Police fleet, made possible through a partnership between the NPS and the Department of Energy. These vehicles provide transportation to law enforcement officers and staff in and around the National Mall and its memorials and monuments. In addition, the NPS has replaced some older diesel buses that shuttle visitors to and through national parks with new electric buses. Yosemite National Park recently procured two electric buses and other parks are considering the acquisition of electric buses for the 58 shuttle bus and tram systems currently operating in national parks.

Rather than mandate an unnecessary new program, the Department urges Congress to address the aging infrastructure and maintenance backlog facing the NPS. The President's 2021 budget again includes a proposal to establish the Public Lands Infrastructure Fund to address the backlog of deferred maintenance on our public lands. One of our highest priorities is to address the crumbling roads, bridges, water systems, and facilities within the national park system.

Chair Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS ON H.R. 4236, A BILL TO ENCOURAGE RECYCLING AND REDUCTION OF DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BOTTLES IN UNITS OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**February 27, 2020**

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Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4236, a bill to encourage recycling and reduction of disposable plastic bottles in units of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department does not support enactment of H.R. 4236.

H.R. 4236 would require each National Park Service (NPS) regional director to establish a program for recycling and reducing disposable plastic bottles within park units, including eliminating the sale of water in disposable plastic bottles in park units if several factors are considered. H.R. 4236 would also require each regional director to develop a visitor education strategy to establish visitor expectations of water availability and explain the disposable plastic bottle recycling and reduction program. The disposable plastic bottle recycling and reduction program would need to be incorporated into agreements with organizations operating within the National Park System units, including concessioners and cooperating associations. Not less than every two years, each regional director would be required to evaluate the recycling and reduction of disposable plastic bottles using criteria included in the proposed legislation.

Encouraging recycling and the reduction of waste at national park units has been a goal for the NPS. Since 1998, it has been the Department's policy that each of its bureaus develop, implement, and conduct thorough recycling programs that assure compliance with the spirit and intent of applicable Federal, State, and local recycling requirements and provisions; promote sound environmental practices by preventing pollution and recovering resources through recycling; and educate and monitor for recycling participation at all of its activities, including those of contractors and concessioners.

In 2011, the NPS instituted a program similar to that proposed in H.R. 4236, encouraging park managers to eliminate the sales of water in disposable plastic bottles, with the installation of water bottle filling stations in parks as one of the key pre-conditions to implementation. However, the NPS rescinded this effort after a few years in 2017 in order to expand hydration choices for visitors. The program, which sought to eliminate sales of bottled water in fact removed the healthiest beverage choice while still allowing sales of bottled sweetened drinks, and did not result in a marked reduction in waste in the 23 parks that installed the program. Rescinding the sales ban allowed visitors to decide for themselves how to best stay hydrated during a park visit. Parks continue to promote the recycling of disposable plastic water bottles and many parks have worked with partners to provide free potable water in the bottle filling stations located at visitor centers and near trailheads.

From composting and dedicated recycling bins to water bottle filling stations to Propane Bottle Recycler machines which prepare lantern and camp stove fuel bottles for recycling, the NPS continues to implement new and innovative approaches to reduce waste in our landfills. In 2018, the NPS achieved a nearly 40 percent service-wide waste diversion rate, diverting approximately 26,000 tons of waste from our landfills. Many NPS sites utilize interpretive kiosks and active interpretive programs to inform and educate park visitors on the benefits of recycling, reducing and composting waste.

Chairwoman Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.