

Positions on Legislation at May 14th Hearing

May 13, 2015

Dear Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

The National Parks Conservation Association, the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, and Park Rangers for Our Lands are the leading voices of the American people in protecting our National Park System from harmful side-effects of oil and gas development. On behalf of our more than one million members and supporters nationwide, we write to urge you to consider our positions on the following bills when they come before the committee on May 14.

S. 411 – The Natural Gas Gathering Enhancement Act, and;
S. 1196 – Federal Lands Access Act

We **strongly oppose** these bills that would strip the requirement for Congressional approval for natural gas pipelines constructed across units of the National Park System.

The continued success of the national park idea depends upon careful stewardship of their resources. Oil and natural gas pipelines are examples of a utility that could cause an unreasonable impairment to a national park unit. Such pipelines were not included in the lists of public utilities that could receive Secretarial approval under the Mineral Leasing Act and the National Park Service's administrative regulations. The threat of rupture and explosion posed by natural gas pipelines requires that their construction through our most prized public lands should require Congressional approval.

The drafters of the Mineral Leasing Act understood that the federal government should only encourage private companies to seek easements across national park lands for gas pipelines when all other options are exhausted. In the few cases where this "last resort" is reached, Congress has been willing and able to pass legislation allowing the exception of oil and gas pipelines. The Mineral Leasing Act provides a logical and effective path for oil and gas pipeline easements as it is currently written. The federal government should not encourage the use of national parks for gas pipelines.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Ellis Richard
Founding Member, Park Rangers for Our Lands

Maureen Finnerty,
Chair, Coalition of National Park Service Retirees

Nicholas J. Lund
Landscape Conservation Manager, National Parks Conservation Association