

*This blog post was drafted by Jamie T. Martinez.*

On February 12, the Senate passed the [Natural Resources Management Act](#) (NRMA), 92-8. What does the NRMA do? Simply put: a lot. If passed by the House of Representatives and signed by the President, the NRMA will protect approximately 1.3 million acres as wilderness areas, expand eight national parks, create three national park units, and much more. The bi-partisan NRMA packs something for everyone in its 662 pages.

Below is an overview of many of the key provisions (out of 170 total that make up the bill).

### **Reauthorization of Land and Water Conservation Fund (see Title III § 3001):**

This provision is arguably the most significant provision within the NRMA because it affects conservation efforts in nearly every state. Enacted by Congress in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) sets aside revenues from energy companies (from offshore drilling and gas extraction leases) to protect areas, such as national wildlife refuges, national forests, rivers and lakes, community parks, and trails. However, the fund expired on September 30, 2018. Since the LWCF's expiration, conservation programs have lost approximately 335 million dollars in funding nationwide. LWCF's permanent reauthorization ensures that funding continues, funding that supports activities ranging from maintenance in local parks to preserving designated wilderness areas.

### **Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment (see Title I § 1119):**

Alaska Natives were entitled to apply for federal land allotments under the Native Allotment Act of 1906, but that process ended in 1971 with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The ANCSA entitled native Alaskans to 44 million acres of land and \$962 million in compensation. However, many Alaska native veterans did not have an opportunity to apply due to their military service during the Vietnam War.

This provision aims to address that issue by establishing a program that gives land to Alaska Native veterans who served from 1964 to 1975. An eligible Alaska native veteran may select one parcel of land that is more than 2.5 acres but less than 160 acres. The provision also creates a system that identifies lands that are available for allotment.

### **Wilderness Designations and Withdrawals (see Title I §§ 1201-1204):**

These provisions significantly expand existing wilderness within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in New Mexico. They also create the 13,420-acre Cerro Del Yuta Wilderness and 8,120-acre Rio San Antonio Wilderness, both in New Mexico.

Additionally, they withdraw from future mining activity two areas near national parks: Methow Valley, Washington near North Cascades National Park and Emigrant Crevice, Montana near Yellowstone National Park.

### **California Desert Protection and Preservation (see Title I §§ 1401-1460)**

These provisions balance differing interests, ranging from enabling recreational use of off-road vehicles to protecting endangered animals. In particular, the Secretary of the Interior must establish, operate, and maintain a trans-state desert conservation program that conducts research, disease monitoring, rehabilitation, and reintroduction for desert tortoises, a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Further, they significantly expand Death Valley National Park and Joshua Tree National Park, while protecting additional public lands in Mojave National Preserve. Together, these provisions ensure more connectivity between the three protected areas. Moreover, the Secretary of the Interior will be required to assess the impacts of habitat fragmentation on wildlife in the California Desert Conservation Area. The Secretary must also establish policies and procedures to ensure the preservation of wildlife corridors and facilitate species migration.

### **National Parks (see Title II §§ 2101-2504)**

Multiple national parks and monuments will be expanded, including: Shiloh National Military Park in Tennessee, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park in Georgia, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Georgia, Fort Frederica National Monument in Georgia, Fort Scott National Historic Site in Kansas, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in Colorado, Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota, and Acadia National Park in Maine.

Additionally, three new national monuments will be created: Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument in Mississippi, Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument in Kentucky, and Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument also in Kentucky. The first site honors two modern-day civil rights leaders, while the other two protect and preserve historical locations from the Civil War.

The NRMA also extends existing national trails. The National Trails System was created in 1968 to preserve public access to outdoor areas and historic resources of the nation - one of the most famous examples is the Appalachian Trail. The NRMA continues this mission by rerouting and extending the North Country Scenic Trail Route from 3,200 miles to 4,600

miles. Additionally, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail will be extended by 1,200 miles.

**Sportsmen's Access (see Title IV §§ 4001-4503):**

The NRMA designates all federal lands as open for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting, unless otherwise expressly forbidden. Although current policy allows for this already, the NRMA codifies this status. The Act also gives the Secretary of Agriculture power to prohibit fishing, hunting, and recreational shooting on federal lands. However, the Secretary must designate the smallest area for the least amount of time that is required for public safety.

These provisions also establish a priority list that identifies all public lands where hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting is currently allowed, but where public access is not available or is significantly restricted. The list will be used to make these lands more accessible to the public through planning for the future acquisition of land or easements.

Finally, **§ 9001—the Every Kid Outdoors Act** - gives fourth grade students, or 10 year-old home-schooled students, free access to Federal land and waters. Once a student is granted a pass, it is effective from September 1st to August 31th of the following year.