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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

September 10, 2026

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The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

I am writing in response to the Land and Water Conservation Fund project lists that the Department of the Interior (DOI) submitted for Fiscal Year 2026. As required by Section 428(2) (A) of Public Law 119-74, these lists are subject to the Committee's reprogramming guidelines.

I strongly oppose proceeding with the land exchange project in Yosemite National Park, priority number 6. In its communication with the Committee, DOI asserted that this land exchange is a priority while acknowledging that it has not identified an exchange parcel. Therefore, the National Park Service cannot possibly have assessed the public benefit or suitability of the exchange. DOI is effectively asking the Committee to approve a solution before it has identified either the property involved or the public purpose served. Given the complete absence of any demonstrated conservation or other public benefit, the unavoidable conclusion is that this project has been deemed a departmental priority to advance a private transaction rather than a public purpose. The Land and Water Conservation Fund exists to safeguard land for the American people—not to serve as a federal concierge for a private landowner's real estate ambitions. Absent compelling evidence to the contrary, which has not been provided by the Department, this project should not move forward.

Additionally, I am deeply troubled by the omission of certain Fish and Wildlife land acquisition projects, for which the Department has routinely requested funding for over recent years and for which additional funding needs remain. The information provided by the Department to date about the prioritization of projects in the Fish and Wildlife Service Fiscal Year 2026 land acquisition and supplemental lists has been wholly inadequate and provides no meaningful basis for evaluating these unexplained omissions.

Since these lists were transmitted to the Committee, staff have asked for additional details. To date, DOI has failed to provide sufficient responses to the requested information. Accordingly, I ask that the Department immediately provide complete responses to the Committee.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chellie R", followed by a horizontal line.

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related
Agencies