

## Senate committee discusses presidential natural resource mitigation policy

March 16, 2016

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing this week to discuss a memorandum released in November 2015 by President Obama, detailing his proposed policies for mitigating the environmental impacts of natural resource development. The memorandum defines mitigation as avoiding, minimizing, and compensating for the impacts of natural resource development, and prioritizes avoidance as the first measure.

In February 2016, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and 18 other senators submitted a letter to the Administration regarding the memorandum, raising concerns over its potential impacts on private investment and federal permitting.

In the hearing chaired by Sen. Murkowski, the committee probed witnesses about how the policies would impact development on federal lands, the permitting process, streamlining mitigation policies, and increasing private investment in natural resource extraction.

Most Democrats praised the memo for its increased environmental protection, whereas most Republicans criticized it for decreasing access to federal lands and delaying the permitting process. However, both parties shared concerns over the use of prescriptive language in the memorandum.

Sources: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, The White House

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