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## **Guardians joins 500 groups in support of confirming Rep. Deb Haaland as Interior Secretary**

February 18, 2021

Washington, D.C. February 18, 2021—WildEarth Guardians has joined nearly 500 national and regional organizations representing millions of people, including Native American, environmental justice, Western communities and outdoor business, in urging U.S. Senators in party and committee leadership to confirm U.S. Representative Deb Haaland as the next Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is expected to vote on her nomination in the next two weeks and her confirmation hearing was announced by the committee for Tuesday, February 23.

Citing her considerable credentials on climate, conservation and energy issues as a member of Congress, as well as the overdue need to have a Native American lead the cabinet agency given it's historic injustices toward tribal nations, the groups said Haaland is a historic pick by the Biden administration.

“As Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee and Chair of the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands subcommittee, Rep. Haaland is a proven leader and the right person to lead the charge against the existential threats of our time – tackling the climate, extinction and COVID-19 crises, and racial justice inequities on our Federal public lands,” the letter states.

“Given DOI’s track record of failing to consult with Tribes or engage with Indigenous communities while enacting public lands policies against the better interests of Indigenous people, Rep. Haaland’s confirmation would be both an historic and much-needed step toward reckoning with a long and troubling legacy while building new, lasting, equitable achievements.”

The groups say the Secretary will be tasked with rebuilding the agency to reflect the diverse demographics of the U.S., while creating more equal opportunity for all Americans to enjoy public lands and waters, and rooting out sexism, racism and white supremacy from the people and systems which govern our national parks, refuges, forests.

As a Representative from New Mexico, Haaland cosponsored legislation to improve the permitting system for outfitters, guides and others who lead activities on national parks and other public lands.

Additionally, Representative Haaland has been a leader in pushing the U.S. to embrace a national goal of protecting 30 percent of lands and waters by the year 2030, which scientists say will help stem the ongoing extinction crisis and deterioration of the natural world.

She was an original cosponsor of a bill directing the Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from public lands and waters, recognizing the role of fossil fuel extraction on public lands driving climate change.

“Climate change is one of the most universal environmental and social justice issues of our time. As countries around the world ramp up efforts to address climate change, here in the United States, our public lands and waters provide an immediate opportunity for the federal government to act on climate change,” the letter states.

Representative Haaland’s hearing hearing will be held on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. in Room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

### **Quotes from Groups:**

“We strongly support the nomination of Representative Deb Haaland to the Secretary of Interior position; we believe Representative Haaland is the most qualified person to honor the public trust responsibilities because she has often demonstrated her commitment to the stewardship of our public resources. We are confident that she will uphold the duties and responsibilities of the Department of interior as she manages approximately 640 million acres of public lands, water resources, minerals, wildlife management, cultural heritage preservation, including 55 million plus acres of Native American Trust lands all in the best public interest.”  
– **Carol Davis, Executive Director, Diné Citizens Against Ruining our Environment**

“At GreenLatinos we are fighting for the environmental needs and priorities of the Latino/a/x community. Our public lands and waters are for all people, not just for the benefit of oil, gas, and mining extraction industries and it’s time to set a new course in this direction. As Interior Secretary, Haaland will set an agenda to achieve environmental and climate justice. In far too many Latinx communities, parks are scarce and the ones that exist are often unwelcoming and even unsafe. It’s time to create more safe urban parks and access to coastlines for our families to recreate and to remove the ‘No Trespassing’ signs and locked gates and allow everyone to realize the health benefits from our outdoor spaces.”

– **Mark Magaña, Founding President & CEO, GreenLatinos**

“Congresswoman Haaland has been a long-time advocate for expanding and preserving public lands, and has worked to safeguard and protect our wildlife and wildlife habitat so that future generations can continue to enjoy these very special places. In Congress, she has played a key leadership role in passing vital legislation such as the Great American Outdoors Act, America’s Conservation Enhancement Act, and the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act, all of which conserve wildlife habitat and expand access for hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. Secretary-designate Haaland’s track record of stewardship allows Indigenous and Latino communities the opportunity to continue to practice the multicultural traditions reflected in our diverse landscapes, and we look forward to welcoming Secretary-designate Haaland as a champion for equitable access to our public lands and the first Indigenous Cabinet Secretary.”– **Ándrea Trujillo Guajardo, Policy Director, Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors**

“Hispanic Access Foundation supports the historic selection of Congresswoman Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Interior . Because all Americans live on Indigenous ancestral lands, it is fitting and overdue for a Tribal Nation member to be a leader in the presidential administration and the foremost caretaker of our public lands and waters. We believe Rep. Haaland will be a partner in closing the Nature Gap that leaves communities of color are three times more likely than white communities to live in nature-deprived areas, and has created a legacy of poorer health and COVID-19 severity, higher stress levels, worse educational outcomes, lack of recreation and business opportunities, and greater vulnerability to extreme heat and flooding in these nature-deprived neighborhoods. As we move forward in protecting our lands, waters, ocean, and climate, we must ensure that the benefits of nature are realized equitably, honor the sovereignty of tribal nations, and prioritize pollution reduction and climate resilience in environmental justice communities. HAF looks forward to working with Rep. Haaland and honoring the critical mission of the Department of Interior.”

– **Maite Arce, Hispanic Access Foundation President and CEO**

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“Outdoor Afro supports the confirmation of Secretary Designate Deb Haaland to lead the US Department of the Interior. As Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, Congresswoman Haaland played an essential role in stewarding the Great American Outdoors Act into law which funds and supports the enhancement of parks and recreational access for local communities throughout the country, creates conservation-orientated jobs, and helps combat climate change by protecting and enhancing our lands, wildlife, and waterways. We believe that under her leadership, Black people and communities will have increased access, representation, meaningful participation, and quality experiences from our backyards to the great wilderness beyond.” – **Taishya Adams, Policy Director, Outdoor Afro**

“If confirmed, Representative Haaland will be the first American Indian to lead DOI and the first American Indian Cabinet Secretary in our nation’s history. This is a major step forward in repairing a deeply flawed relationship between the Department and tribal nations, and upholding President Biden’s commitment to seek climate solutions and address environmental injustice. We need a strong and qualified leader at the helm of the DOI like Representative Haaland who understands the connection between the degradation of our environment and the prevalence of infectious diseases like COVID-19, and the need for just transitions to help reduce pollution while ensuring the sustainability and economic health of local and tribal communities.” – **Gwen Lachelt, Executive Director, Western Leaders Network**

“Confirmation of Representative Deb Haaland to be Secretary of the Interior would be a monumental step forward for Indigenous rights, climate action, environmental justice, and

public lands conservation. She is exactly the visionary leader and unprecedented nominee we need to lead the Interior Department toward justice, equity, and conservation.”

– **Jeremy Nichols, Climate and Energy Program Director, WildEarth Guardians**

“Rep. Haaland recognizes the ecological, recreational, economic and cultural benefits of public lands and waters, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Boundary Waters Wilderness and Bears Ears National Monument, which she’s working to protect for future generations,” said Patagonia CEO Ryan Gellert. “It’s crucial that the Senate approve Haaland as Secretary of the Interior so she can continue protecting nature and implementing solutions to the climate crisis.” – **Ryan Gellert, CEO, Patagonia**

“Representative Haaland’s nomination sends a powerful, corrective, and uplifting message to all Americans. Her confirmation will signal that the days of Native people as an afterthought are ending.” – **Jim Enote, Board of Trustees Chair, Grand Canyon Trust**

“Over the past four years our public lands were sold off to the Trump administration’s friends and former clients while draining the agencies of their experienced staff. Our country needs Representative Deb Haaland at the helm of the Department of Interior to be able to correct so many wrongdoings from the Trump administration. As an indigenous woman and a Westerner with extensive experience protecting and managing America’s most majestic landmarks, she is the ideal choice for the Secretary of Interior. We urge the Senate to confirm her as quickly as possible.” – **Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact**

“As people of faith and conscience, we support a science-based approach to climate action in order to build a world in line with our moral values of justice, courage, and love for the earth and all of its inhabitants. Rep. Haaland has the experience and the wisdom necessary to bring scientific integrity, land stewardship, and deep respect for relationships into the policymaking at DOI. We urge the Senate to move quickly to confirm Rep. Haaland as the DOI Administrator to ensure economic, racial, and climate justice for all.” – **Rev. Susan Hendershot, President, Interfaith Power & Light**

“U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland’s nomination to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the first Native American Cabinet Secretary in our country’s history, is as meaningful as it is historic. A member of Congress and future Cabinet member, Representative Haaland’s experience as a single mom who once relied on food stamps strengthens her leadership. She will protect our shared lands, demand environmental justice, and address the climate crisis in ways that help secure the healthy environment our children and families need. Rep. Haaland should be confirmed immediately.” – **Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, executive director and CEO of MomsRising**