Statement of Kevin J. Lilly
Nominee for the Position of Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
at the U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
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Good morning, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and Members of the Committee. I am both honored and humbled that President Trump has nominated me, and for Secretary Burgum's trust in me, to serve as Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior.

I am grateful for the unwavering support of my wife, Lesley. Throughout our many years together, her faith and resilience have always been my north star. I am also proud to be the father of two Eagle Scouts and of a remarkable daughter who has made us doting grandparents. Their commitment to service, leadership, and family has inspired me as much as I have tried to inspire them. Much of my life has been devoted to encouraging young people to grow in character and confidence — whether through my work as an Assistant Scout Master or as a youth baseball and softball coach. These experiences reinforced my belief in mentorship, responsibility, and community.

Our family's love of hunting, fishing, and camping has carried me across some of the most beautiful and diverse landscapes in our nation. Experiencing these places firsthand has deepened my appreciation for the public lands entrusted to us and strengthened my desire to expand access to them so that more Americans can share in the same sense of wonder, peace, and connection to the land. My faith has always guided my respect for creation, grounding my belief that natural resources are gifts to be cared for with humility and gratitude.

The values that guide me today were shaped early in life. Growing up in federal housing as the youngest of five taught me resilience, gratitude, and the importance of hard work. My maternal grandparents immigrated from Sicily in search of opportunity. My grandfather, poor and uneducated, found work as a street cleaner in New York City. My father, whose Irish ancestors immigrated to Boston, served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and as a Police Officer. My older brother served honorably in Vietnam before losing his life to the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure. These experiences gave me a deep understanding of hardship, strengthened my empathy for others, and instilled in me a profound respect for the strength families and communities can provide.

These foundations have shaped my approach to service throughout my life — first as a commissioned U.S. Army Cavalry Officer and Tank Commander, then as a Texas state police commissioner, and now in my work at the Department of the Interior. Over the past year, serving as a steward of America's natural resources has been more than a professional opportunity; it has been a calling. My faith, rooted in care, responsibility, and respect for creation, aligns naturally

with work that protects public lands and wildlife. I carry into this mission a sense of purpose rooted in humility and gratitude. I am also grateful for the dedicated career men and women who serve faithfully in the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. I am inspired each day by their public service.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with our tribal, state, local, and external partners, as well as our gateway communities, and the hundreds of friends groups. This is a collaborative effort to serve the American people and conserve our public lands.

As Assistant Secretary, my focus will be straightforward: keeping our national parks open, safe, and properly staffed for the families who visit them; supporting the men and women of the Fish and Wildlife Service in their work to recover species and sustain healthy habitat; and confronting the deferred-maintenance backlog that affects both visitor safety and the condition of these treasured places. I will work hand in hand with our state, tribal, and local partners — and with the gateway communities whose livelihoods depend on these lands — to advance both conservation and access.

In closing, I want to share a moment that defines this vision. After this year's Artemis II mission — the first time Americans flew around the Moon in more than fifty years — the mission's commander, by his own account not a religious man, described being so overwhelmed by what he experienced that, back aboard the recovery ship, he broke down in tears at the simple sight of a chaplain's cross. Recently while at Yosemite National Park, I awoke to see the sun cresting above Half Dome and I was also overwhelmed with that sense of awe and grace. It is that moment that I hope each American can in some way experience, that our nation's children can find comfort not in the virtual world, but the creator's world. Our national parks and wildlife refuges are the salvation of the American soul.

I commit to you and the Committee, I will remain an unwavering steward of the precious resources under my watch while ensuring Americans can enjoy public lands safely, responsibly, and fully — today and for generations to come.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I am happy to answer any of your questions.