

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, today applauded Senate passage of legislation honoring Alaskan Native Walter Harper, the first man to summit North America's highest peak.

The Denali National Park Improvement Act (S. 157) renames the National Park Service Ranger Station in Talkeetna after Harper. The Talkeetna Ranger Station is home to Denali National Park's mountaineering rangers and a mandatory stop for anyone planning to climb Denali.

"It's fitting that the Senate should pass this bill in the same month that marks the 100th anniversary of Walter Harper's ascent of Denali," Murkowski said. "This legislation is a small gesture but one that means a great deal to many Alaskans, who are proud of the historical accomplishments of their fellow Alaskans."

Harper was a member of Hudson Stuck and Harry Karstens' 1913 climbing party, and was the first among the group of four climbers to reach the 20,320-foot south summit on June 7.

Harper, of Athabascan and Scottish descent, was born in 1892. He died in 1918, in the sinking of the *SS Princes Sophia* near Juneau.

In addition to honoring Harper, the Denali National Park Improvement Act includes separate measures to decrease the use of diesel fuel and improve energy access in the park.

- *A land exchange for the Kantishna Hills small hydroelectric project*

- Authorizes a small land exchange of 10 acres between the National Park Service and Doyan Ltd, the Alaska Native corp. for the Interior, to facilitate construction of a 50-kilowatt hydropower project

in the Kantishna Hills area of the park. The measure also allows the Interior Secretary to permit other small hydropower projects within the park. The use of renewable hydropower will allow the Kantishna Roadhouse and other lodges to cut their reliance on diesel fuel to generate electricity, and subsequently reduce the number of delivery trucks traveling the park road.

- The permitting of a natural gas pipeline along the Parks Highway in Denali National Park and Preserve

- Permits a natural gas pipeline to be buried in the utility corridor of the Parks Highway for the seven miles the road passes through Denali National Park and Preserve – allowing an apples-to-apples comparison with a possible Richardson Highway route and preventing a more environmentally damaging route just outside park boundaries.

The Denali National Park Improvement Act was part of a package of public lands bills approved by unanimous consent by the full Senate on Wednesday.

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