

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

**Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Hearing to Examine the President's
Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior**

June 11, 2025

Sen. Cantwell Q&A

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Secretary Burgum, good to see you. I think that there's a big theme here about public lands, and I join my colleagues, the Ranking Member and Senator from Nevada, who have asked you about the selling of public lands.

But we've already had this debate here. We had a very big debate here. So my state, obviously, we like public lands. It's a juggernaut of an economy. So, when you think of our state, you think of ports and parks, and you think of \$22 billion and over 200,000 jobs. So, it's big money to us.

So, we led a fight with many of our colleagues on this Committee to get permanent funding for LWCF -- to get it reauthorized and permanent funding. In fact, this, if you'll hold that up, is an actual quote from the President of the United States during the big battle. He said, "I'm calling on Congress to send me a bill that permanently funds LWCF and restores our parks. I'll sign it into law. It will be historic, and it will be for our public lands."

Okay. So, I was there, I was at the bill signing. I know what it says. It basically says you have to do acquisition. It is setting in law the amount of money that should be spent on acquisition. So, when we're talking here this morning, we're all amazed that you seem to be putting forth a budget that is basically saying, "I don't want to acquire. I want to actually sell public lands."

What we figured out as a coalition of people -- hunters, fishermen, outdoor recreationists, travel and tourism people -- we figured out that it's a juggernaut of an economy and we want to grow it. And we were able to get President Trump to sign a bill.

So, now your budget -- and I asked you about this at your confirmation hearing -- I asked you specifically whether, if confirmed, you said, "I will implement the law as enacted by Congress." Well, the law enacted by Congress basically says that you have to spend 40% of this LWCF funds and make acquisition.

It doesn't say sell public lands. It says acquire lands. So I don't know how you're proposing a budget that basically is going in the opposite direction of what was, let me refresh my memory, 60 sponsors in the Senate, 254 in the House.

This was not a little decision. This was putting to bed this notion that: oh, it's either I'm going to fix some roads in our forest or I'm going to do land acquisition. Now I get -- even the Chairman, he and I have had many conversations, as did his former colleague from Utah, Mr. Bishop, we've had many conversations about LWCF in the past. I get some of their issues that they have brought up about LWCF, but Congress voted and President Trump signed the law. Now we're asking you to implement it. And so I want to understand how you're proposing anything other than following the Dingell Act?

Sec. Burgum: Well, certainly, we'll continue and we'll follow the law. And I think that what we're having here is we shouldn't be confused that two things can happen at the same time. Which is -- and so it's about which lands and which acquisitions because 40% of the LWCF is a pretty small number relative to the scale. I mean, it's meaningful hundreds of millions of dollars, but the opportunity for us to accelerate

purchases, say, of infill, and fill out the squares where we might be acquiring land for the Federal Government that is private in holding inside of a national park, inside of a —

Sen. Cantwell: We do it all the time. One of the biggest things we used LWCF for is because the Federal Government kept having to spend money because a road washed out in accessing Mount Rainier.

Sec. Burgum: Yes.

Sen. Cantwell: So, we basically acquired more land, built the road on a different thing, so we weren't paying \$250,000 every few years. So we're all for that. But we're for following the Dingell Act, following the law of the Great Outdoors Act, and making sure that we are actually doing acquisition. Why? Because we have figured out -- I think somebody said during that time that it was the third biggest industry behind finance and health care. So, we figured out that it is a big economic engine for our nation. So, we want to see it.

Now, I get that you have people here who didn't succeed in that battle and who may not believe that, but this was bipartisan, bicameral, and we need that support. I want to just —

Sec. Burgum: I'm just saying, both of these things can happen at the same time. You can take LWCF—

Sen. Cantwell: Your budget doesn't say that, and I think it's heading to a catastrophe. So that's why I'm bringing it up.

On the fire point. We have a big fire in Cle Elum right now. They aren't getting the direction. I hear what you just described as governor and the issues, but this is where we're heading. This is where we are now. This is where we're going to be [in] September. All of this in red.

So we have a fire in Cle Elum now, and we need direction. We need to know -- my constituents want to know: What are people going to do to help coordinate with Interior and the Forest Service? We need to know now. So, if you could help us with that, I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.