

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Markup

June 10, 2026

Sen. Cantwell Remarks

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I definitely am perplexed by this morning's markup and hearing. I would have loved to have seen the Wild Olympics [Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act] on this.

I think we may be creating an artificial divide here this morning. I mean, it's clear, Mr. Chairman, that you would like to sell public land. On our side of the aisle, we would like to continue to acquire public land and set it aside for the general public to use.

This Sunday, I will attend the memorial service for Jim Whittaker, the first American to summit Mount Everest and the founder of REI. It will be a great celebration of his life, but [what] REI and the outdoor industry means is that when you add public land, the public gets to recreate and we create an economy and it grows jobs.

So, what we have in this debate now on adding to the [Senator] Barrasso bill, a bill that we've passed out of committee prior to help us fight wildfires, and I appreciate Senator Barrasso attending the hearing with me in Seattle, and helping pioneer some policy that we actually got implemented, and help us change the fire borrowing problem that this committee was plagued with for many years.

But we have much more to do on fire prevention, and we should come together, but this amendment is now offering an eradication of the roadless rule, which is simply a rule that says aren't there some elevations of public lands that are so high and so expensive to take care of that we should not basically try to use the public dollars to [build road infrastructure].

I thank my colleague from Idaho for implementing, when he was governor, a roadless rule, and it shows that these policies can work and can be cost-effective for the public.

Why is this so important? Because we're more challenged, we're more challenged on our public lands, and we have to be smarter with the taxpayer dollars, but to now, today, say we're going to get rid of the roadless rule, which is basically like saying, okay, we're just going to go build a road anywhere, even where it's not cost-effective, even where it costs the public more.

And instead of focusing on the [maintenance] backlog and getting out of this administration the money that was promised in a bipartisan bill to continue to implement the land policies that we agreed to under legislation that our former colleague from Colorado and many of us worked on is like – there's a divide here and it's a bad divide and let's be efficient with the taxpayers dollars.

Let's not kill the roadless area rule. Let's make sure that we're working together on fire prevention and make smart use of public policy, because it's a damn big economy, and doing anything else is just wrongheaded. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sen. Cantwell Additional Remarks

[VIDEO]

Sen. Cantwell: Mr. Chairman.

Sen. Lee: Yes.

Sen. Cantwell: If I could make one quick comment – I think that what Senator Risch said is so prescient, which is to listen to the people in that state, and I think [the] roadless rule is a public process, and you do hear from people in your state, and you do take that information and you figure out how to make the best decisions.

And so I'm not saying [Senator] Risch for governor of Alaska, but anyway, I am saying it is proof that the process can work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.