



FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER

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October 29, 2015

Representative Tom McClintock, Subcommittee Chair
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Niki Tsongas, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C. 20515

Sent via Email to: Erica.Rhoad@mail.house.gov and Brandon.Bragato@mail.house.gov

Dear Representatives McClintock and Tsongas:

Friends of the Clearwater, a citizen organization in north-central Idaho, opposes the provisions in the discussion draft legislation amending the so-called Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Of particular concern are provisions that would unduly limit citizen access to our public lands by charging fees merely to be on them and provisions for selling publicly owned facilities. We understand a hearing was held yesterday in Washington D.C. on this discussion draft. Please include these comments as part of the official hearing record.

Title I contains provisions in section 101 and 102, which redefine where fees can be charged to include just about any area that the agencies deem recreation land. Thus, citizens could be required to pay fees merely to park along roads or walking, hiking or riding through areas defined as Federal recreation lands. Other problematic provisions include requiring citizens to pay yet another fee for transportation in areas where private vehicle access is restricted.

Title II, has nothing whatsoever to do with recreation fees or updating the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Rather, it gives those who have cabin leases the right to rent out cabins for more than the prescribed rates on an experimental basis. As such, it doesn't belong in this legislation.

Title III also has nothing to do with updating the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and is therefore not germane to such a discussion. It does not deal with recreational fees, rather it allows certain interests to purchase public infrastructure on public lands and/or allow them to build private infrastructure on public lands. Aside from the fact this is not a recreation fee issue, it could rob citizens of our natural heritage and our rights to use and enjoy public lands.

Rather than this discussion draft, we urge you to adopt common sense legislation that would repeal the current Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and replace it with legislation recognizing the right of citizens to have free access to our public lands, a long-standing tradition here in Idaho. Where significant infrastructure and amenities currently exist, fees might be appropriate in some circumstances. However, the default position should be free access, something Idahoans have enjoyed for generations when fishing, hunting, hiking and recreating on public lands.

Thanks for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Macfarlane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "G".

Gary Macfarlane

cc: Senator Crapo
Senator Risch
Representative Labrador
Representative Simpson