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[**STOP THIS BILL**](#)

THE FEE-FREE PRESS



DEAR PUBLIC LANDS SUPPORTER
Kitty Benzar ,

Action is urgently needed to stop a bill introduced in the House, and already rammed through Committee and ready for a floor vote.

HR 5204 would authorize the Forest Service and BLM to charge fees for all public lands, for any activity, by any person, any time.

Details follow. Please TAKE ACTION NOW!
Kitty Benzar

STOP THIS BILL

HOUSE BILL WOULD ALLOW FEES FOR ALL PUBLIC LAND ACCESS

Just before the House adjourned for their August recess, HR 5204 The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Modernization Act of 2014, was introduced by U.S. Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) and rammed through the House Resources Committee, without a hearing, by its Chairman, U.S. Representative Doc Hastings (R-WA).

It's likely that Bishop and Hastings are planning to get HR 5204 attached as a rider to the FY2015 appropriations bill. Although HR 5204 has attracted no sponsor in the Senate so far, it's likely that if attached as an appropriations rider it will pass both chambers without scrutiny or public debate, and become the law of the land, because appropriations bills are considered "must pass" in order to avoid a government shutdown.



HR 5204, if enacted, could destroy the concept of public lands as places where everyone has access and is welcome. Every place, every activity, every person, could be required to pay a fee - an additional tax on top of the taxes that already support public lands - for

access, regardless whether they are highly developed like National Parks and Forest Service or BLM campgrounds, or completely undeveloped like Wilderness Areas.

HR 5204 would allow the kind of fees that have not been controversial to continue, such as fees for developed campgrounds and National Park entrance fees. But in addition to those fees, it would allow general access fees for any federal recreational lands and waters. It would accomplish this by two types of fee: **Day Use Fees** and **Permit Fees**.

The only meaningful requirement for a Day Use Fee would be that where you park there is a toilet of some kind (could be a porta-potty or a stinky outhouse) within 1/2 mile.

The only meaningful requirement for a Permit Fee would be that where you park gives access to a "special area." Neither "special" nor "area" is defined. The land agencies would have complete discretion to claim that any place at all is a "special area."

So where there is a toilet it could be called a Day Use Fee. Where there is not a toilet, it could be called a Permit Fee. The result is the same: there would not be anyplace where a fee is not allowed. And since the agencies would get to keep all the fee money directly, there would be not be anywhere that they wouldn't have a strong incentive to charge a fee.

Public lands? Forget that. Not any more. Not if this passes.

There is other stuff in HR 5204 (like no more fee-free days, citizenship checks on annual pass holders, and overhead costs rising from 15% to 25%), but they only rearrange the deck chairs on the sinking ship of our public lands.

[A detailed analysis of the major provisions is on our website at this link.](#)

Congress is on vacation until the week after Labor Day. When they return, the 2015 appropriations bills will be among the top items of business. If Bishop and Hastings succeed in getting HR 5204 attached to one of them, it's almost guaranteed to pass.

What can stop it?

ONLY ONE THING: PUBLIC OUTRAGE-PUBLIC ACTION.

If you care about our public lands being turned into commodities available only to those who can afford to pay fees for everything, then you must let YOUR Representative and YOUR Senators hear from you. Tell them that this major change in public policy cannot be allowed, particularly without any public hearing or debate.

HR 5204 lacks any over-arching vision or framework of our public lands being spaces where we all are welcome and have access. Yet it's being supported by groups like the National Parks Conservation Association, The Wilderness Society, and America Outdoors, because it throws a bone here and there to their special interests. But for the general public, there is nothing redeeming in this bill, nor any way it could be amended into something acceptable. It represents a complete change in public lands policy, which would be accomplished without public hearings or debate.

Tell your congressional delegation to OPPOSE HR 5204 and TO NOT ALLOW IT TO BE ATTACHED TO AN APPROPRIATIONS BILL!

All the contact information you need can be found at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

Use their webform.

Call their office in Washington.

Call their local office.
Write, phone, fax, drop in in person.

Do all of the above. And then do it again!

Your personal action is urgently needed or this bill WILL PASS!

IF THAT HAPPENS, KISS YOUR ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS GOODBYE.

The Western Slope No-Fee Coalition is a broad-based organization consisting of diverse interests including hiking, biking, boating, equestrian and motorized enthusiasts, community groups, local and state elected officials, conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, and just plain citizens.

Our goals are:

- To eliminate recreation fees for general access to public lands managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management
- To eliminate backcountry fees and interpretive program fees in National Parks
- To require more accountability within the land management agencies
- To encourage Congress to adequately fund our public lands

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Kitty Benzar
Western Slope No Fee Coalition