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Fee Alert!

A congressional hearing has been scheduled in Washington DC for Wednesday June 18th at 10am EDT, on public lands access fees.

Your comments are needed and may be emailed directly to the House's National Parks, Forests and Public Lands subcommittee for inclusion as testimony in the official record of the hearing.

Below you will find background information, some points to include in your comments, the format required, and the email address to send them to. There is also a sample letter to fax to Subcommittee members requesting their attendance at the hearing.

You can also watch the hearing live on your computer, on June 18th! Information about the live webcast will be posted at the [Subcommittee website](#).

BACKGROUND:

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) was enacted as a rider to the 2005 omnibus appropriations bill. It replaced the Recreation Fee Demo Program that had been in place since 1996. It was never voted on in the House and was never introduced in the Senate.

The oversight hearing on Wed June 18th, before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands is titled "Paying to Play: Implementation of Fee Authority on Federal Lands." The subcommittee will be examining all aspects of implementation of the FLREA and all comments will be useful.

In the US Senate, S. 2438, introduced in December 2007, would repeal most provisions of the FLREA and revert fees to the statutes in place prior to Fee Demo's enactment in 1996. S. 2438 has not yet been scheduled for a legislative public hearing in the Senate. Neither has it yet been introduced in the House

of Representatives.

It is the hope of fee opponents that the upcoming outcry from the American public to the House public hearing on June 18th will lead to a number of Representatives coming together to introduce a House version of S. 2438.

As usual, this action alert is truly a grassroots effort, passed from organization to organization and from family to family around the nation. There is no wealthy big-name nationwide group leading this push for comments. The input to the House Subcommittee at the June 18th public hearing is very much up to you, and to thousands of others like you, who believe in the long-standing principle of fee-free access to undeveloped federal public lands. Please participate!

WHAT TO WRITE:

Please send testimony that is as specific as possible. Do not copy the phrases below verbatim. Change them around and make them personal. Add additional concerns that you have about access fees.

Some points to include in your comments:

- The FLREA specifies that access fees are prohibited simply for hiking, biking or horseback riding on public lands. Yet thousands of trailheads are still subject to access fees on Forest Service and BLM lands (name some such trailheads which you use).
- Protest the Forest Service's creation of HIRAs (High Impact Recreation Areas), where fees are levied for access to thousands of acres of undeveloped land. The FLREA restricts access fees to developed sites that have six amenities present (permanent toilets and trash cans, picnic tables, interpretive signs, designated parking and security services).
- Mention that National Park visitation has fallen 5% since 2000, and that Forest Service visitation declined 25.7% on forests surveyed in 2000 and again in 2005.
- State your concern about the Forest Service's Recreation Facility Analysis, a nationwide program that proposes to permanently close thousands of recreation sites which the agency considers unable to pay their way with fees. This is going on with little or no public notice.
- Recreation Resource Advisory Committees, set up by the Forest Service to give the green light to new and/or increased access fees (as required by the FLREA), are conducting their business without meaningful public input. Moreover, the costs of these committee meetings are not being counted as an administrative fee program expense by the agency.
- Many National Parks charge additional fees (on top of entrance fees) for access to backcountry areas, for interpretive programs, and for mandatory transportation systems set up to protect some Parks from excessive

traffic.

- Include examples of places where fees are being charged by the Forest Service and BLM for: parking, scenic overlooks, hiking/riding trails, general access, use of undeveloped backcountry, and camping in undeveloped areas, even though all of those are prohibited from fees by the FLREA.
- Relate any experiences you may have had with enforcement authorities.
- Say that you support a return to the fee policy that existed from 1965 to 1996 under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, when the Forest Service and BLM charged fees only at developed camping, boating, and swimming sites, and the entrance fees at National Parks covered access to interpretive programs, backcountry activities, and mandatory transportation systems. Fee revenue should be subject to oversight by Congress, not levied as a double tax by local managers who get to keep the money and make the spending decisions.

WRITTEN EMAIL TESTIMONY IS BEING ACCEPTED FROM NOW THROUGH 5 PM EDT ON JULY 2 BUT PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. YOUR TESTIMONY WILL BECOME PART OF THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE HEARING.

HERE'S HOW TO SUBMIT TESTIMONY. PLEASE FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY TO BE SURE YOUR TESTIMONY IS NOT REJECTED.

1. TESTIMONY MUST BE SUBMITTED AS A WORD OR WORD PERFECT EMAIL ATTACHMENT, SINGLE SPACED AND FORMATTED FOR 8 1/2 X 11 PAPER. Note: NOT pdf format!

2. THE SUBJECT LINE SHOULD READ: TESTIMONY FOR JUNE 18 OVERSIGHT HEARING.

3. BODY OF EMAIL SHOULD SAY: PLEASE INCLUDE THE ATTACHED TESTIMONY IN THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE OVERSIGHT HEARING ON "PAYING TO PLAY: IMPLEMENTATION OF FEE AUTHORITY ON FEDERAL LANDS."

4. SIGN THE BODY OF YOUR EMAIL WITH YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS.

5. ATTACH YOUR TESTIMONY AS A WORD OR WORD PERFECT DOCUMENT SINGLE-SPACED AND FORMATTED FOR 8 1/2 X 11 PAPER. MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS. THE GREETING ON YOUR TESTIMONY SHOULD READ: "DEAR MR CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE."

6. YOUR TESTIMONY MUST BE NO MORE THAN 12 PAGES, PREFERABLY NO MORE THAN TWO PAGES.

7. ADDRESS YOUR EMAIL TO: Domenick.Carroll@mail.house.gov with a cc to Laurel.Angell@mail.house.gov.

8. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE EMAIL YOU CAN FAX WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO: 202-226-2301

Please spend some time asking friends and family to submit comments as well! The more comments that are received, the stronger will be the case for repealing the FLREA. Thank you all for your help.

BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Another important action to take is to contact the members of the Subcommittee and ask them to be sure and attend the Hearing. Let them know that this is an important issue to you and that you are submitting written testimony and will be watching the webcast.

If your own Representative is on the Subcommittee (see list below) you can ask for their attendance by email using the form at their website. Start at www.house.gov to find your Representative's site. This only works if you are one of their constituents.

All others should be contacted by phone or (preferred) fax. Don't use regular mail, it will be delayed in security.

Keep your message short, simple, and polite. Here is a sample message. (It cannot be stressed strongly enough that exact copies of this sample letter will carry little weight with the Representatives, since using it verbatim takes so little effort. PLEASE change it around, put it in your own words AND add some personal comments.)

"Hello, I am contacting you to request that Representative _____ please attend the oversight hearing on public land recreation fees on June 18 in the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands. I am concerned that excessive fees are limiting access, reducing visitation, and discouraging Americans from enjoying the benefits of outdoor recreation on the beautiful National Forests, Parks, and Bureau of Land Management lands that we all own in common. This is an important issue to me. I will be submitting written testimony into the record and will be watching the webcast of the hearing. I hope to see Representative _____ there."

Here is the contact information for the Subcommittee members:

Raul Grijalva, Chairman (AZ) Phone: 202-225-2435 Fax: 202-225-1541

Dale Kildee (MI) Phone: 202-225-3611 Fax: 202-225-6393

Neil Abercrombie (HI) Phone: 202-225-2726 Fax: 202-225-4580

Donna Christiansen (VI) Phone: 202-225-1790 Fax: 202-225-5517

Rush Holt (NJ) Phone: 202-225-5801 Fax: 202-225-6025

Dan Boren (OK) Phone: 202-225-2701 Fax: 202-225-3038

John Sarbanes (MD) Phone: 202-225-4016 Fax: 202-225-9219

Peter DeFazio (OR) Phone: 202-225-6416 Fax: 202-225-0032

Maurice Hinchey (NY) Phone: 202-225-6335 Fax: 202-226-0774

Ron Kind (WI) Phone: 202-225-5506 Fax: 202-225-5739

Lois Capps (CA) Phone: 202-225-3601 Fax: 202-225-5632

Jay Inslee (WA) Phone: 202-225-6311 Fax: 202-226-1606

Mark Udall (CO) Phone: 202-225-2161 Fax: 202-226-7840

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (SD) Phone: 202-225-2801 Fax: 202-225-5823

Heath Shuler (NC) Phone: 202-225-6401 Fax: 202-226-6422

Rob Bishop (UT) Ranking Member Phone: 202-225-0453 Fax: 202-225-5857

John Duncan (TN) Phone: 202-225-5435 Fax: 202-225-6440

Chris Cannon (UT) Phone: 202-225-7751 Fax: 202-225-5629

Thomas Tancredo (CO) Phone: 202-225-7882 Fax: 202-226-4623

Jeff Flake (AZ) Phone: 202-225-2635 Fax: 202-226-4386

Steve Pearce (NM) Phone: 202-225-2365 Fax: 202-225-9599

Henry Brown (SC) Phone: 202-225-3176 Fax: 202-225-3407

Louie Gohmert (TX) Phone: 202-225-3035 Fax: 202-226-1230

Tom Cole (OK) Phone: 202-225-6165 Fax: 202-225-3512

Dean Heller (NV) Phone: 202-225-6155 Fax: 202-225-5679

William Sali (ID) Phone: 202-225-6611 Fax: 202-225-3029

Doug Lamborn (CO) Phone: 202-225-4422 Fax: 202-226-2638

PLEASE TAKE ACTION TODAY TO RESTORE PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS!

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