

American Hiking Society ♦ American Horse Council ♦ American Recreation Coalition ♦ Association of Partners for Public Lands ♦ Coalition of National Park Service Retirees ♦ The Corps Network ♦ Destination Marketing Association International ♦ Friends of Acadia National Park ♦ Friends of Big Bend National Park ♦ Friends of Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park ♦ Japanese American Citizens League ♦ Massachusetts League of Environmental Voters ♦ Mississippi River Fund ♦ Montana Conservation Corps ♦ National Association of State Park Directors ♦ National Forest Recreation Association ♦ National Parks Conservation Association ♦ National Park Hospitality Association ♦ National Tour Association ♦ NatureBridge ♦ Northwest Youth Corps ♦ Outdoor Industry Association ♦ Public Lands Service Coalition ♦ Shenandoah National Park Trust ♦ Southeast Tourism Society ♦ Southwest Conservation Corps ♦ St. Croix River Association ♦ Student Conservation Association ♦ U.S. Travel Association ♦ Utah Conservation Corps ♦ Western National Parks Association ♦ Western States Tourism Policy Council ♦ Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts ♦ Yosemite Conservancy

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-128 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-146A Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

September 23, 2013

Dear Speaker Boehner; Leader Reid; Chairwoman Mikulski; Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Members Shelby, Lowey:

We write to invite your help in extending the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) for at least one year in any short- or long- term funding measure for FY14 to allow federal land agencies to continue to establish, collect, and retain entrance and recreation fees to enhance recreational opportunities at managed sites.

The extension we suggest has bipartisan support as evidenced by its inclusion in the President's FY14 budget proposal and both the FY14 House and Senate Interior Appropriations bills.

Should FLREA expire in December 2014, federal land agencies would lose approximately \$300 million in revenues during a time of considerably constrained budgets. The loss of these fee revenues would equal the reductions imposed by the FY13 sequester for the National Park Service. A simple extension of FLREA to December 2015 would allow Congress to consider a longer reauthorization and potential adjustments. Hearings on FLREA have been held or are in the planning stage before authorizing committees in both the House and Senate.

Management of our federal lands is funded primarily by appropriations, but a significant and growing portion of this management depends upon entrance and recreation fees. Revenues collected through FLREA enhance visitor experiences by providing funds to repair, maintain, and improve facilities; restore wildlife habitat for visitor recreation; offer educational materials and services; and provide law enforcement. Since FLREA enactment in 2005, the National Park Service, one of the authorized agencies, has obligated approximately \$2.3 billion in fee revenues which have funded over 9,800 projects and services within the National Park Service.

Public support for federal entrance and recreation fees is strong. Recent surveys at NPS sites show that 95% of visitors believe that the value for the entrance fee paid is “very good” or “good,” while only 1% believes that the value is less than average.

In addition to reauthorizing FLREA through a short- or long- term funding measure, we urge you to find a way to end the indiscriminate cuts to agencies that manage public lands. Collectively, we are deeply concerned over the impact of cuts over the last three years and urge you to restore funding for our public land agencies. Recent cuts have eliminated visitor programs, reduced visitor center hours, decreased educational programs for children, reduced seasonal employees and restoration and conservation programs, and otherwise harmed our public lands and their visitors.

We oppose these recent cuts and any further reductions in FY14 and urge you to work together to identify a responsible long-term budget solution that can put an end to the damaging cuts to agencies that manage our public lands, as well as ensure the continuation of FLREA until at least December 2015. An extension of FLREA is an essential step in producing sustainable, supplemental resources for federal land agencies to achieve long term stability and further our nation’s economic, health and environmental well-being.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

American Hiking Society

American Horse Council

American Recreation Coalition

Association of Partners for Public Lands

Coalition of National Park Service Retirees

The Corps Network

Destination Marketing Association International

Friends of Acadia National Park

Friends of Big Bend National Park

Friends of Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park

Japanese American Citizens League

Massachusetts League of Environmental Voters

Mississippi River Fund

Montana Conservation Corps

National Association of State Park Directors

National Forest Recreation Association

National Parks Conservation Association

National Park Hospitality Association

National Tour Association

NatureBridge

Northwest Youth Corps

Outdoor Industry Association

Public Lands Service Coalition

Shenandoah National Park Trust

Southeast Tourism Society

Southwest Conservation Corps

St. Croix River Association

Student Conservation Association

U.S. Travel Association

Utah Conservation Corps

Western National Parks Association

Western States Tourism Policy Council

Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

Yosemite Conservancy

Cc:

Minority Leaders Mitch McConnell and Nancy Pelosi; Appropriations Interior Subcommittee Chairmen Jack Reed and Mike Simpson and Ranking Members Lisa Murkowski and Jim Moran; Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Ron Wyden; National Parks Subcommittee Chairman Mark Udall and Ranking Member Rob Portman; Committee on Natural Resource Chairman Doc Hastings and Ranking Member Peter DeFazio; Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee Rob Bishop and Ranking Member Raul Grijalva.