

Federal Parks & Recreation

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Hill money leaders need to make calls on caps, omnibus

When Congress returns to work on September 6, House Republican leaders will be faced with two crucial decisions on fiscal year 2012 appropriations bills.

First, they will have to decide how to allocate an extra \$20 billion in discretionary domestic spending that House and Senate leaders agreed to in a grand budget deal (PL 112-25 of August 2). The House has already passed or begun work on a clutch of spending bills that may set higher caps.

Second, the House leaders must decide if they will consolidate remaining appropriations bills into one omnibus measure. If they do, that could limit the number of floor amendments for an Interior and Related Agencies spending bill (HR 2584).

A House Appropriations Committee staff member said this week those decisions have not been made yet. In particular of an omnibus measure she said, "Any decisions on or speculation about the consolidation of bills is very premature." That of course doesn't mean it isn't likely to happen.

Although the House worked on HR 2584 for a week in July, it still has not acted on at least two crucial park and rec amendments. One would bar uranium mining on federal lands near Grand Canyon National Park. Another would bar the designation of national monuments by the President.

Of the extra \$20 billion authorized by the budget agreement, very little may make its way into the Interior bill. "I don't expect any new money for land acquisition and consultation, although there may

be a little for operations," said one lobbyist. "There won't be much change in Interior."

The Senate budget/appropriations situation is simpler than the House because neither the Senate Budget Committee nor the Senate Appropriations Committee has begun to address fiscal 2012 domestic spending. So those committees will begin work anew with the PL 112-25 budget ceilings. In fact appropriators believe they can proceed without waiting for the budget panel.

On the bottom line most observers predict the Senate will come out in the neighborhood of the House numbers in the Interior bill.

Both the House and Senate are running out of time, as usual. Fiscal 2012 begins October 1. So one could expect some temporary spending extensions.

Meanwhile, an unlikely coalition of green eyeshade taxpayer advocates and environmentalists August 24 recommended an elimination of subsidies to consumptive uses that lead to environmental harm. The elimination of those subsidies could free up money for conservation programs.

The *Green Scissors* report from Taxpayers for Common Sense, Friends of the Earth and kindred groups proposes cutting subsidies for many fossil fuel, nuclear, and alternative energy resources. Other targets include federal timber sales, road construction projects, and Corps of Engineers water projects.

"These common-sense cuts represent the lowest of the low-hanging budgetary fruit," said Taxpayers for Common Sense President Ryan Alexander. "Lawmakers across the political spectrum should be scrambling to eliminate these examples of wasteful spending and unnecessary tax breaks that are squandering our precious tax dollars while the nation is staring into a chasm of debt."

SUMMING UP IN THE HOUSE: The House during its consideration of HR 2584 in July voted three times in favor of

the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). But at the end of the day House Republicans are still on course to reduce federal acquisition from LWCF by almost \$100 million. And to provide no money for state LWCF grants.

In one policy vote July 27 the House approved a provision that would bar the Interior Department from designating any new 'wild lands.' That may not be necessary because Salazar has already said the Bureau of Land Management will not on its own designate wild lands but will ask Congress to do so. (*See related article page 11.*)

A separate floor amendment may be offered to support a ban on the withdrawal of one million acres of public land near Grand Canyon National Park from mining claims. The bill as approved by the House Appropriations Committee would remove the withdrawal ban.

Also possible is an amendment from Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.) that would prevent the administration from designating national monuments. The Antiquities Act of 1906 gives the President authority to designate national monuments. (*See related article on Interior riders page 10.*)

Federal land managers are doing a bit better than conservation grant programs in HR 2584, with Park Service and Forest Service appropriations in the neighborhood of fiscal 2011 numbers. (*See related article on land management spending page 6.*)

In other spending measures the House approved a fiscal 2012 Department of Agriculture appropriations bill (HR 2112) June 16 with reductions of \$1 billion in conservation spending. And the \$1 billion comes on top of a \$500 million reduction in fiscal 2011.

The House July 15 approved a fiscal 2012 Energy and Water appropriations bill (HR 2354) that would block a proposed new Obama administration wetlands permit policy. That is the same provision that is included in the Interior bill.

Finally, a fiscal 2012 Transportation spending bill has not begun to move. It was originally scheduled for subcommittee action July 14, followed by full committee July 26. The committee has set a spending cap for the bill of \$47.7 billion that is \$7.7 billion less than the fiscal 2011 appropriation of \$55.4 billion.

The appropriations committee staff member did say her panel intended to mark up a Transportation bill next month.

House Republican leaders had deferred action on the Transportation bill until fall to allow time to resolve budget deficit disagreements. Now PL 112-25 will guide the House in spending for transportation.

Although the House Interior bill is on course to reduce spending across-the-board for conservation programs, it did find money for commercial users of the public lands.

For example to accelerate the renewal of grazing permits the committee approved a \$10.6 million increase for grazing management by BLM to \$87.5 million from \$76.9 in fiscal 2011. For the Forest Service the committee approved an increase in grazing of \$5.7 million to \$55.4 million from \$49.7 million in fiscal 2011.

LWCF AMENDMENTS: The most significant LWCF amendment would have eliminated all federal land acquisition. It was defeated in an unrecorded vote. Chief sponsor Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.) would have lopped off all federal land acquisition money. (The House Appropriations Committee had already eliminated grants for the state side of LWCF.)

The second LWCF amendment succeeded. It would increase federal land acquisition by \$20 million by deducting the same \$20 million from Interior Department overhead. It was approved on an unrecorded vote. The sponsor was Rep. Charlie Bass (R-N.H.)

The third LWCF amendment also succeeded. It would add \$5 million to

the federal side of LWCF for hunting and fishing access. The money would come from EPA's Brownfields Restoration program. The amendment was sponsored by Rep. Scott Tipton (R-Colo.)

In addition Rep. Rush Holt (D-N.J.) has prepared but not yet offered a pro forma amendment that would guarantee LWCF \$900 million per year, without further appropriation. Guaranteed funding is the Holy Grail of LWCF supporters, but it has zero chance of House acceptance.

PROGRAM SPENDING LEVELS: Here's what HR 2584 looked like when it reached the House floor for other grant programs:

For national *heritage areas* the committee met the administration request of \$9 million, but that is \$8.4 million below the fiscal 2011 enacted level of \$17.4 million. The committee noted that Congress has increased the number of heritage areas in recent year from 27 to 49 and urged partnerships that manage those areas to find new sources of funding.

The House on July 26 rejected by voice vote an heritage area amendment from Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.J.) that would have restored the additional \$8.4 million from last year. To pay for the increase, Tonko would have deducted \$8.4 million from an Office of the National Parks Service account.

For state and Indian *wildlife conservation grants* the bill contains \$22 million, down by \$40 million from the \$62 million in fiscal 2011.

For the *Historic Preservation Fund* HR 2584 would provide \$49.5 million, or almost \$5 million less than the fiscal 2011 level and \$11.5 million below the budget request.

For the *Save America's Treasures* grants program the bill contains no money, the same as fiscal 2011 and the administration request. In fiscal 2010 Congress appropriated \$25 million.

For the *Preserve America* grants program the bill contains no money, the same as fiscal 2011 and the

administration request. In fiscal 2010 Congress appropriated \$4.6 million.

NPS describes ambitious 2016 plan, but at little cost

Mindful of the difficult economic times, the Park Service yesterday laid out an ambitious five-year plan for the National Park System with minimal new expenditures.

The 36-point *Call to Action*, prepared in anticipation of the system's Centennial in 2016, begins with a recommendation for the creation of an integrated national system of parks and protected areas, without using federal money.

"The NPS should encourage local communities and national constituencies to find the best strategies to conserve the resources they consider important," says the plan. "Those strategies could include creating new parks, natural and historic landmarks, heritage areas, national trails, or local designations that do not require federal funds."

The *Call to Action* also includes a recommendation for a \$1 billion legacy endowment to be assembled from philanthropic sources, presumably without federal money.

Says the report, "The NPS will establish a national work group including NPS leaders, the National Park Foundation, and representatives of national park friends groups" to pull the initiative together.

NPS Director John Jarvis and his top aides August 25 introduced the *Call to Action* at an employee town hall meeting at Ford's Theater National Historic Site in Washington, D.C. The report is available at <http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/>.

The 36 recommendations include everything from more healthful eating to greater diversity in the workforce. Many track the recommendations of an America's Great Outdoors initiative (AGO), President Obama's signature outdoor recreation program.

For instance the AGO report calls for a shake-up of the state side program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The *Call to Action* follows suit by recommending that the 60 percent of state grant money now allocated on the basis of population be awarded competitively.

"This action would convert the 60 percent allocation to a national, competitive grants program focused on three recreation priorities: urban parks, waterways, and large landscape conservation," says the *Call to Action*.

More broadly the report recommends protection of five large landscapes. Again, the report emphasizes partnerships. But it does not rule out the use of some federal money.

"To achieve this goal we will protect continuous corridors in five geographic regions through voluntary partnerships across public and private lands, and by targeting a portion of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to make strategic land acquisitions within national parks," says the report.

The report does not identify the corridors except for a Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor that stretches from Worcester, Mass., to Providence, R.I.

The billion-dollar foundation recommendation is reminiscent of a Bush administration proposal to spend \$2 billion on non-core improvements to the National Park System. In 2007 then Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne launched a \$3 billion National Park System Centennial Initiative that included the \$2 billion Centennial Challenge.

Kempthorne recommended that Congress put up \$1 billion at a rate of \$100 million per year to be matched by \$1 billion in nonfederal contributions, again at a rate of \$100 million per year. In fact Kempthorne solicited well over \$300 million in non-federal commitments, only to see the initiative lapse on Capitol Hill.

Boxer will seek extension of roads bill; Obama stirring

A leading Senate committee chairman said last week that she will seek a four-month extension of an existing highway bill to give Congress time to write a multi-year bill.

Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said she intends to mark up an extension bill September 8. She said the bill would simply continue the existing law and would contain no substantive policy changes.

On a related front President Obama has strongly suggested that on September 5 he will call on Congress to provide a substantial spending boost for transportation programs.

Whether recreation would be cut in on the transportation money remains to be seen. But the President's proposal could open the way for Congress to approve substantial spending levels close to existing levels, and to avoid huge cuts envisioned by House Republican leaders.

Those projections might sound like sheer speculation except for the President's own words last week at a political rally in Alpha, Ill., when he said, "There's no reason why, as (Secretary of Transportation) Ray LaHood knows, we've got over \$2 trillion worth of repairs that need to be made around the country - this is a great time for us to rebuild our roads and our bridges, and locks in the Mississippi, and our seaports and our airports. We could be doing that right now, if Congress was willing to act."

Giving a little substance to Obama's words is the big budget agreement he reached with Congress this summer that will provide an additional \$20 billion in discretionary domestic spending for fiscal year 2012, compared to an initial budget (H Con Res 43) approved by the House April 15.

House and Senate committees are poised to begin work on a multi-year

surface transportation bill next month. They will have to move fast because the existing law expires September 30.

Both the House Transportation Committee and the Senate EPW Committee have outlined new legislation. Although the bills haven't been fleshed out, the outlines spell trouble for most park and rec programs, especially in the House.

House Transportation Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.) described a six-year surface transportation bill July 7 that, as expected, would provide little assistance to recreation.

He said the bill would eliminate some 70 programs and delegate to states responsibility for dividing up appropriations money. State transportation departments traditionally favor road construction over recreation.

Unlike the existing surface transportation law the House committee bill will probably set aside no money for transportation enhancements, recreational trails, scenic byways, Safe Routes to School and other recreation programs.

Senate EPW leaders outlined a two-year surface transportation bill in July that would eliminate dozens of stand-alone programs. EPW Chair Boxer and ranking Republican James Inhofe (Okla.) didn't identify programs that would be eliminated, but Boxer said that Safe Routes to School and recreational trails programs would be retained.

An EPW committee outline also says that federal lands roads will continue to be financed by the bill. The outline says the measure when fleshed out will "provide money for highway projects on Federal lands, tribal reservations, and roads that provide access to Federal lands. Agencies receiving funding include the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Fish and Wildlife Service."

The Senate bill will be called MAP-21 after Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century. Mica and his allies

have not named the House bill yet.

On the all-important money question the Senate committee bill and a House Transportation Committee bill differ greatly. That of course could change as a result of the budget agreement.

But Mica's outline of a bill would stay within the Highway Trust Fund and slash funding for surface transportation by more than \$16 billion per year compared to fiscal year 2011. The total annual allocation would come in around \$27 billion.

Boxer and Inhofe would continue existing spending levels of more than \$50 billion per year for two years. (Transportation-spending math doesn't always add up.) Inhofe said the Senate measure would require an extra \$12 billion.

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION: The administration's fiscal year 2012 budget recommended a \$556 billion six-year surface transportation bill or \$92.6 billion per year. The administration would provide robust funding for such outdoor programs as transportation enhancements, recreational trails, scenic byways and federal lands roads. It would consolidate them into a new "Livability" line item at \$4.1 billion. Comparable programs under the existing law received \$2.9 billion in fiscal 2010.

Fed agencies doing slightly less bad than conservation

Federal land management agencies will almost certainly be treated a bit less severely than conservation programs next month in a fiscal year 2012 Interior and Related Agencies spending bill (HR 2584).

The measure now on the House floor will almost certainly receive a small boost from a giant budget agreement that Congress and the White House struck this summer (PL 112-25 of August 2). The agreement provides an extra \$20 billion for all domestic appropriations bills above the amount the House originally allocated. And some of that is expected

to go to agency operations.

As HR 2584 now stands after a week of House consideration in July, it would reduce the appropriation for Park Service operations by "only" \$6.9 million, from \$2.250 billion in fiscal 2011 to \$2.243 billion.

For Forest Service recreation management the bill would meet the fiscal 2011 appropriation number of \$281.6 million, although that was \$8.9 million below the administration's fiscal 2012 request.

For Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation management the bill would provide \$67.6 million, down \$1.2 million from fiscal 2011 and \$9.2 million below an administration request.

On the other hand the House is about to take the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) managed by BLM to the woodshed, cutting the appropriation by \$11.9 million, to \$20 million from \$31.9 million in fiscal 2011.

Moreover, the appropriation represents almost a 50 percent reduction from the Obama administration request of \$39.3 million. The 26 million-acre NLCS is by definition made up largely of conservation lands, including "wild lands."

Also on the losing end is management of national wildlife refuges. The House bill calls for a \$37 million decrease for fiscal 2012, in sharp contrast with a recommendation from the Obama administration.

The White House attacked both the spending numbers and substantive provisions in HR 2584. The bottom line, said the Office of Management and Budget in a July 21 statement, is a likely veto. However, that threat came before Congress and the White House struck the 10-year budget agreement, which could modify HR 2584.

For FWS refuge management the bill would provide \$455 million, or \$37 million less than the fiscal 2011 appropriation of \$492 million. The

administration requested \$503 million.

The Senate thus far this year has been missing in action. The Senate Budget Committee failed to develop a Congressional budget and the Senate Appropriations Committee has scheduled no domestic bill mark-ups, yet. Now that Congress has reached agreement with the White House on a ten-year budget the Senate too intends to begin working on spending bills.

Here are some of the numbers in HR 2584 for land management agencies, compared to fiscal 2011:

* Park Service operations: \$2.243 billion, or \$6.9 million less than the \$2.250 billion in fiscal 2011. The administration request was \$2.297 billion.

* Park Service construction: \$152 million, or \$58 million less than the \$210 million in fiscal 2011. The administration request was \$152 million.

* Park Service recreation and preservation: \$49.4 million or almost \$10 million less than the \$59 million in fiscal 2011. The administration request was \$51.6 million.

* National Forest System: \$1.547 billion, or \$2 million more than the \$1.545 billion in fiscal 2011.

* National forest recreation management: \$281.6 million, or the same as fiscal 2011. The administration requested \$290.5 million

* BLM recreation management: \$67.6 million, or \$1.2 million less than the fiscal 2011 level of \$68.8 million. The administration requested \$76.8 million.

* BLM NLCS: \$20 million, or \$11.9 million less than the fiscal 2011 appropriation of \$31.9 million. The administration requested \$39.3 million.

* FWS refuge management: \$455 million, or \$37 million less than the fiscal 2011 appropriation of \$492 million. The administration requested \$503 million.

Salazar, Jarvis listen to Maine Woods Park arguments

Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar and NPS Director Jon Jarvis gave a little credibility to the idea of a

Maine Woods National Park last week by traveling to the state to hear locals air their opinions.

With citizens sharply divided on the issue both Salazar and Jarvis said they were in Maine just to listen and learn. Said Jarvis, "The North Woods are, without question, a special place, and it is vital that we hear a wide range of views and feedback as we consider the idea that has been put forward."

The parks idea is being pushed most prominently by Roxanne Quimby, founder of the Burt's Bees business. She has said she is willing to donate 70,000 acres for a park and to set aside another 30,000 acres as a state park for traditional recreation uses such as snowmobiling and hunting.

But a substantial number of residents of northern Maine, particularly in the economically struggling community of Millinocket, fear the proposal would grow like Topsy. The critics, aware of an environmentalist proposal for a 3.2 million-acre park, fear a Maine Woods park would not only destroy a struggling timber industry but also a thriving recreation industry built around snowmobiling, hunting and fishing.

According to a report by the Maine Public Broadcasting Network on the Salazar-Jarvis visit, Salazar attempted to ease concerns that the Quimby initiative would lead to a park as large as Yellowstone. "That there's somebody, some Goliath from somewhere, some unknown federal bureaucrat, going to come down here and is going to impose a 10 million-acre park that's going to kick out the community and its way of life," he reportedly said. "That's ain't going to happen, okay? Because the law won't let it happen."

Still Sen. Susan Collins (R-Me.), Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Me.) and the House member from the area, Rep. Michael Michaud (D-Me.), have shown little interest in the idea, if not downright skepticism.

Salazar and Jarvis were in Maine

last week as part of a northern New England tour to drum up support for conservation. At meetings at the L.L. Bean store in Freeport, Me., and at the Eastern Mountain Sports Store in Portsmouth, N.H., they both played the economic benefits card of recreation

"Our nation's investment in conservation of our land, water, and wildlife and in providing outdoor recreational opportunities for the public is an investment in economic growth and jobs for local communities," Salazar said in New Hampshire.

At the L.L. Bean store Sen. Collins backed the concept that recreation pays. "Tourism generates nearly one in every five dollars of sales and supports the equivalent of one in six Maine jobs," she said.

Like most other domestic programs, however, recreation and tourism are facing serious budget cuts in fiscal year 2012 and beyond. The engine that powers the acquisition of land for new national parks - the Land and Water Conservation Fund - has been particularly hard hit.

Although Quimby said she would donate the land for a Maine Woods National Park, there would still be start-up costs and potential acquisition costs.

At any rate a Maine Woods National Park is years away. The skeptical Maine Congressional delegation would first have to back legislation authorizing a study by the Park Service. Years after that Congress would have to approve the deal and authorize the money.

Park supporters say Maine voters overwhelmingly support the idea. The National Parks Conservation Association commissioned a poll last summer that indicated that 77 percent of Maine voters back a national park created in partnership with the state of Maine. The poll was conducted by Zogby International.

The idea of a Maine Woods National Park and Preserve was initiated by the conservation group, RESTORE: The North Woods years ago. RESTORE says a park

is needed because timber companies that once owned 10 million acres of Maine forest are rapidly selling off their lands.

And, RESTORE says, the buyers are often developers who will place the land off-limits to hunting, fishing, hiking and snowmobiling.

In a grand trade-off the old timber companies have traditionally made their lands available for hunting, fishing, hiking and snowmobiling in return for a right to harvest timber with minimal state regulation.

Enter Roxanne Quimby, who reportedly sold her interest in the health products company Burt's Bees for \$350 million. Among other things she owns a total of 120,000 acres of Maine woods.

Quimby, who was appointed a member of the National Park Foundation last year, is now trying to persuade the federal government to accept 70,000 acres for a national park. The land is adjacent to Baxter State Park, home of Mount Katahdin.

Quimby pays \$300,000 per year in taxes on the 70,000 acres, according to the Portland Press Herald. But backers say a national park would bring in a lot more money than \$300,000 per year.

To assuage snowmobilers and hunters Quimby has also proposed to establish a 30,000-acre state park where those uses could continue.

Major shake-up of historic preservation posts asked

An alliance of leading national historic preservation organizations is calling on the Park Service, the Interior Department and the Council on Environmental Quality to give historic preservation more due.

The organizations, convened by Preservation Action, said in a new report that, while nonfederal partners have aggressively helped implement the National Historic Preservation Act of

1966, federal partners have not kept up.

The report recommends these four major structural changes:

(1) a reorganization within the Park Service to establish a new deputy director for Historic Preservation and Heritage who reports to the NPS director;

(2) creation of an Interior Department position for a senior policy officer in charge of historic preservation;

(3) conversion of the chairmanship of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to a full-time position; and

(4) designation of a historic preservation staff member in the Council on Environmental Quality.

Said the report, "This is not an issue that individual leadership can overcome in the long term, but one of structural necessity to institutionalize and elevate historic preservation within the federal government so that true national leadership again becomes feasible."

The report was published earlier this month against a backdrop of federal budget cuts for historic preservation programs, and the threat of even more severe cuts to come.

A fiscal year 2012 Interior and Related Agencies appropriations bill (HR 2584) pending on the House floor would provide \$5 million less for historic preservation in the Park Service, or \$49.5 million compared to \$54.5 million in fiscal 2011. The \$49.5 million is also \$11.5 million below the administration's budget request.

In addition a press release from Preservation Action suggests that NPS places emphasis on environmental concerns to the detriment of historic preservations.

"Further, a disproportionate focus on environmental and parks-based resources has led to stagnation

in fulfilling the Federal mandate to also provide 'maximum encouragement' for the preservation of significant historic resources that are privately owned," said the release. "The result is unhelpful competition for resources, lack of program visibility, and a lack of innovation that is not serving either well."

The report, *Aligned for Success... Recommendations to Increase the Effectiveness of the Federal Historic Preservation Program*, is available at www.preservationaction.org.

Said Erik Hein, president of Preservation Action, "The broad-based effort and collaborative work of the Task Force has led to this thoughtful set of recommendations that help us better leverage our scarce federal resources to meet the full intentions of the National Historic Preservation Act."

Members of the task force preparing the report include Preservation Action, the Preservation Action Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the National Trust Community Investment Corporation, the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, the American Cultural Resources Association, the Historic Tax Credit Coalition, the U.S. National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the Society for Historical Archaeology.

Visitation to national parks dips a bit; rec sales fair

The Park Service is reporting that visitation to national parks is down about one percent for the year through July, compared to last year.

The park's Public Use Statistics Office says that some 163 million people visited the National Park System through July of this year compared to some 165 million through July of last year.

Last year was a banner year for the parks so the dip may not be all that

significant. "Overall, it's been more of an average year," said Bruce Street, a management analyst in the NPS Public Use office. "The truth is we have a lot of carrying capacity issues. We can't tell anyone that Yosemite is full." In other words there isn't much room for more visitors.

Street said visitation is also heavily affected by the Euro. When the price of the Euro is up against the dollar Europeans visit the U.S. in flocks. "It makes a huge difference on our visitation numbers because when the Euro is up they can come here longer and visit more parks," said Street.

As always, the visitation numbers are spotty, with some parks showing substantial decreases and others showing substantial increases. On the upside battlefields that are commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War are expected to receive increases in visitation.

For instance Manassas National Battlefield Park showed a 12 percent jump from 442,931 to 500,786 year-to-date on the 150th anniversary of the first major battle of the war.

Other factors also come into play. Last summer Gulf Islands National Seashore suffered a drop in visitation after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. This year the park has seen a jump of some 25 percent with an increase of more than 740,000 visitors to more than 3.7 million total.

On the down side visitation to the Washington, D.C., mall is generally down, led by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with a decrease of more than 636,00 followed by the Lincoln Memorial with a decrease of more than 487,000 and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial with a decrease of more than 339,000.

However, some sites on the Washington Mall do show increases, including a hike of 102,000 at the World War II Memorial and 9,000 at the Washington Monument.

Derrick Crandall, counselor to the National Park Hospitality Association,

said of the overall national decrease, "It's a reflection of the consumer malaise. All my concessioners are telling me that people are waiting and not spending much." He anticipated visitation to slip two to three percentage points after all is said and done this year.

On the other hand, Crandall, who doubles as president of the American Recreation Coalition, said that the sale of recreation equipment has not decreased this year, although it hasn't increased either. "Boat sales, RV sales will be just about flat for the year," he said.

The human-powered recreation industry appears to be doing better. The Outdoor Industry Association reported this week that sales for the year were up 5.7 percent over 2010, at \$5.2 billion. The association doesn't make its monthly trend statistics available to the public.

The Park service stores its visitation statistics at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/stats.cfm>.

Grand Canyon and monument riders to money bill pending

When the House resumes work on a fiscal year 2012 Interior and Related Agencies appropriations bill (HR 2584) next month, it may take up two major policy amendments.

One would support the withdrawal from mining of 1 million acres of public land near Grand Canyon National Park. The other would prevent the designation of national monuments by the Obama administration without Congressional approval.

Whether those amendments are offered depends in part on what strategy House leaders adopt to process 11 remaining spending bills. If the leaders wrap all the bills into one omnibus measure, that may effectively limit the number of amendments that could be brought to the floor.

HR 2584 already includes several substantive amendments. Whether they will get by the Senate and the White House remains to be seen.

When HR 2584 was on the House floor in July, the House voted to retain a provision that would bar the Interior Department from designating any new 'wild lands' by voice vote. Also in the bill are provisions that would prevent the administration from redefining wetlands for permitting purposes and would remove restrictions on off-highway vehicle (OHV) users.

Here are the major amendments in the bill and candidates for the bill:

GRAND CANYON MINING: Democrats are expected to offer a floor amendment in September that would allow the Interior Department to withdraw 1 million acres of federal land from uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park. As now written the bill would bar such a withdrawal.

The bill says "none of the approximately 1,010,776 acres of public lands and National Forest System lands described in (an emergency withdrawal) . . . may be withdrawn from location and entry under the General Mining Law of 1872," unless Congress approves such a law.

Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar June 20 ordered a six-month withdrawal of the one million acres to block temporarily additional uranium development. Then he chose a preferred alternative of a 20-year withdrawal in an EIS that will be completed over the next six months. Salazar said he would make a final decision this fall on a 20-year withdrawal.

MONUMENTS DESIGNATIONS: Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.) may propose an amendment that would ban the designation of national monuments by the Obama administration without Congressional approval. A ban on monument designation could be more consequential than a ban on wild lands because the Antiquities Act of 1906 has been used more than 100 times over the last decade to protect large tracts of American land.

Beginning with Teddy Roosevelt, 15 Presidents have designated national monuments ranging in size from the one-acre Fort Matanzas National Monument (managed by the National Park Service) in Florida to the 10,600,000-acre Yukon Flats National Monument in Alaska (now a wildlife refuge).

If the House takes up a Rehberg amendment, it might simply forbid President Obama from designating national monuments. Or the amendment might allow Presidential designation of monuments under the condition that Congress confirm a designation within two years.

WILD LANDS: The bar on wild land designations may not be necessary because Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar has said BLM will not on its own designate wild lands but will ask Congress to do so.

The ban is already in place through September 30 in a fiscal 2011 appropriations bill (PL 12-10 of April 15) and Salazar himself has pledged not to designate any wild lands without Congressional approval.

Rep. James Moran (D-Va.) offered the unsuccessful House floor amendment to remove the wild lands provision. But Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) said that just because Salazar promised not to designate wild lands doesn't make it so.

CALIFORNIA OHV ROUTES: The provision would direct the Forest Service in California to allow OHV use on "Maintenance Level" roads in national forests. Four Republican House members led by Rep. Wally Herger (R-Calif.) have introduced stand-alone legislation (HR 242).

Sportsmen, big political guns target GOP roadless area bill

Sportsmen are joining the Obama administration and environmentalists in opposition to western Republican legislation that would release millions of acres of federal roadless land to potential development.

The sportsmen say the legislation (HR 1581, S 1087) would eliminate roadless land managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that is now used by hunters and fishermen.

Said Joel Webster, director of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Center for Western Lands, "State fish and wildlife agencies in Montana, Colorado and New Mexico have developed reports strongly recommending that roadless areas be conserved for the benefit of big game, wild fisheries and sportsmen."

At issue are bills from Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) that would release wilderness study areas to multiple uses, repeal a Clinton administration national forest roadless rule and repeal an Obama administration "wild lands" policy permanently.

Barrasso made the case for his bill last month at a hearing of the House Natural Resources Committee. "This act ends the cycle of indefinite wilderness review and management of these non-wilderness recommended lands. The legislation allows local Americans and stakeholders, to work with agency officials to develop management plans that best balance recreation, multiple-use, and conservation," he said.

Besides, he said, federal land managers could still protect the lands after they were released. "Every released acre and activity will be subject to the respective Forest Service or BLM land-use planning process," he said.

That didn't reassure Forest Service Under Secretary Harris Sherman and BLM Director Bob Abbey. At the House committee hearing they both argued that the legislation would put tens of millions of heretofore-protected acres up for grabs.

Sherman said the legislation would effectively revoke a 2001 Clinton administration roadless rule that largely bars road construction and timber harvests on 58 million

acres of national forest. "By making the 2001 Roadless Rule's provisions inapplicable to inventoried roadless areas, and by precluding the Secretary from establishing any other system-wide management direction for such lands, this bill would undermine the ability of the Forest Service to carry out its responsibilities for conserving critical resource values," he said.

Abbey took issue with the proposed release of wilderness study areas (WSAs) managed by BLM. "(T)he Administration strongly opposes HR 1581 which would unilaterally release 6.6 million acres of WSAs on public lands," he said. "HR 1581 is a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, that fails to reflect local conditions and community-based interests regarding WSAs managed by the Department of the Interior."

Former Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt was even more antagonistic. He said the legislation would open up 55 million acres of national forest and 7 million acres of BLM-managed land for consumptive uses. "Were this legislation to become law, these lands would immediately lose their existing protection, to become available for industrial timber cutting and oil and gas exploitation. Simply put, this legislation trades protection of wildlife habitat, clean water, and clean air for corporate profits," he said. "It is nothing more than a giveaway of our great outdoors."

The legislation has a fair chance of House passage but is a long shot to get through the Senate and past the President. Still, it is on the table and could serve as a bargaining chip in budget negotiations between the White House and the Hill later in the year.

Here's what the bill would do

* BLM WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS: release 6.74 million acres of WSAs for multiple use. The land is part of the 12.27 million acres that BLM has studied in 546 WSAs and recommended as not suitable for wilderness. The released 6.74 million acres would be managed under a Section 202 Land Use Planning provision of the Federal Land Policy

and Management Act of 1976, which would protect some lands.

* FS INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS: release 36.1 million acres studied by the Forest Service for possible wilderness designation in IRAs and recommended as not suitable for wilderness. The land was studied under a 1979 Roadless Area Review Evaluation. The released land would be managed under the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, which would protect some lands.

* CLINTON FS ROADLESS AREA RULE: revoke the 2001 Clinton administration roadless area rule that limits road construction and timber sales on 58 million acres of national forest (many of them Forest Service IRAs.) It would also revoke a Bush administration roadless rule that allows states to petition for a state-specific rule to manage roadless areas in national forests.

* OBAMA WILD LANDS ORDER: terminate Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar's Secretarial Order 3310.

USDA moves to protect farmland north of Everglades

It may not have much immediate impact on Everglades National Park but the Department of Agriculture (USDA) is spending some \$189 million to restore land north of the park.

But, by paying big money to farmers for easements that take land out of production, the program could limit pollutants flowing south into the park.

The 50,000 acres the department intends to protect are not part of the projected 187,000 acres of sugar farms the State of Florida three years ago said it would acquire to protect the park. That 2008 proposal from former Gov. Charlie Crist (R-Fla.) has largely dried up under current Gov. Rick Scott (R-Fla.)

Still, the USDA easement acquisitions north and west of Lake Okeechobee in central Florida may minimize agricultural run off into Lake Okeechobee and down into the Everglades.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom

Vilsack himself traveled to Florida to announce the latest plan to acquire 24,000 acres in easements from ranchers and farmers over the next year. The \$100 million would come from a Wetlands Reserve Program. Last year the department paid \$89 million to acquire development rights in the same area for 26,000 acres.

Under the Wetlands Reserve Program, authorized by a jumbo farm bill, the government acquires easements and allows landowners to keep their property. In return the landowners agree not to farm the land.

However, the future of the Wetlands Reserve Program on the Hill may be in question. The House approved a fiscal year 2012 Department of Agriculture appropriations bill (HR 2112) July 16 that would cut some \$1 billion from conservation programs authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill.

Sara Hopper, agricultural policy director for the Environmental Defense Fund, praised the Everglades easement acquisitions. Then she warned, "But we cannot effectively engage private landowners in big initiatives like this one without continued, robust funding for voluntary, incentive-based programs like the Wetlands Reserve Program. It's imperative that Congress not cut funding for these programs in the coming months, as members of the House and Senate continue to look for ways to reduce the federal budget deficit."

The Wetlands Reserve Program acquisitions are not part of the \$8 billion (and growing) Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project (CERP). Congress authorized CERP in 2000. Under it the Corps of Engineers, the State of Florida and Interior Department agencies are charged with carrying out major projects to restore the Everglades by constructing reservoirs and in general replumbing south Florida. The reserve acquisitions are north of that area.

The restoration effort received an enormous boost in 2008 when Crist announced plans for the State of Florida to acquire 187,000 acres of sugar farms from the U.S. Sugar Corp. for \$1.7

billion. Then the recession hit.

Notes

Earthquake closes monuments, HQs. The 5.8 magnitude earthquake that erupted in central Virginia August 23 damaged the Washington Monument and forced temporary closure of major monuments on the national mall. The Park Service also closed temporarily the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials while it evaluated the structural safety of the buildings. The Park Service said the earthquake cracked the top of the Washington Monument. The agency had no immediate estimate on costs of repair. However, the monument could be closed for an extended period. In addition several major department headquarters in Washington, D.C., were closed while engineers checked for structural damage, including the Interior Department and the Department of Agriculture. Both departments were open for business August 25

FS: Rec is an economic engine. The Forest Service said this month that the National Forest System generates \$14.5 billion per year for the nation's economy. In a National Visitor Use Monitoring report released by chief Tom Tidwell, the service said the national forests drew 170.8 million recreational visitors last year and contributed to 223,000 jobs for the economy. The information is available at <http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nrm/nvum/results>. The service said the report backs President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative that in part tries to get Americans' outdoors. The Forest Service did not mention the economic productivity of recreation compared to other forest uses such as timber harvests, grazing, mining and energy development. In the past such comparisons have created national arguments about the relative economic values of forest uses.

Overflight law expires soon. The latest extension of a law governing the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and national park overflights will expire in three weeks, on September 16. Senate and House leaders struck an agreement in early August on an extension bill that

put FAA back to work after a hiatus of several weeks. Supposedly the extension gives the House and Senate time to complete long-term legislation that would include significant changes to Park Service air tour rules. But those negotiations have trailed on for years and more than 20 extensions of the old law have been required. The temporary law is designated PL 112-27 of August 5.

Yosemite extending concession. The Park Service said August 19 it is extending the contract for Yosemite National Park's largest concessioner, DNC Parks & Yosemite National Resorts, Inc. for one year, effective October 1. NPS said the extension would provide time to solicit bids on a new concessions contract. DNC Parks & Yosemite is owned by Delaware North Companies. The company said that under its Yosemite contract it operates "1,667 guest rooms, 25 Food and Beverage units, 19 retail locations, a wide range of exciting and informative guest activities, and the support services needed to keep these operations running, including office staff, maintenance, warehouses, transportation and employee housing."

Bond named NPS archaeologist. The Park Service has named former Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park Superintendent Dr. Stanley C. Bond, Jr. as the new chief archaeologist of the park system. Bond has broad experience in the archaeology field in assignments in the east, the southeast, Caribbean and Hawaii. Bond assumed the new position this month.

Statute of Liberty repairs due. The Park Service will close the Statue of Liberty crown to visitors for one year, effective October 28, while major renovations to the monument are carried out. With great fanfare Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar reopened the crown to the public two years ago after it had been closed after the September 11 attacks. Now NPS has contracted for \$27.25 million in safety repairs and maintenance works. The Joseph A. Natoli Construction Corp. of Pine Brook, N.J., is to repair stairways, replace elevators and generally upgrade infrastructure.

Boxscore of Legislation

| <u>LEGISLATION</u> | <u>STATUS</u> | <u>COMMENT</u> |
|--|---|--|
| Appropriations fiscal 2012 No bill number yet | (Interior, etc.) House committee approved July 13. On House floor in July but not finished yet. | Would reduce grant programs sharply, land management agency less so. |
| Appropriations fiscal 2012 HR 2112 (Kingston) | (Agriculture) House approved June 16. | Would reduce conservation spending by \$1 billion. |
| Appropriations fiscal 2012 HR 2018 (Frelinghuysen) | (Energy and Water) House approved July 15. | Would block issuance of wetlands permit guidance. |
| Appropriations fiscal 2012 No bill yet | (Transportation) No committee action yet. | Committee spending cap would reduce spending by \$7.7 billion. |
| Budget fiscal 2012 H Con Res 43 (Ryan) (No Senate bill yet) | House approved April 15. | Would reduce spending overall but keep natural resources level. |
| Appropriations 2011 CR Omnibus HR 1473 (Rogers) | President signed into law April 15 as PL 112-10. | Reduces spending across the board compared to fiscal 2010, sometimes substantially. Includes Interior, Energy and Water, Agriculture and Transportation bills. |
| LWCF (guaranteed funding) S 1265 (Bingaman) | Bingaman introduced June 23. | Would guarantee full funding of LWCF each year without appropriations action. |
| LWCF (fed lands access) S 901 (Tester) | Tester introduced May 5. | Would allocate 1.5 percent of LWCF for access to fed lands for rec. |
| Urban parks HR 709 (Sires) | Sires introduced February 15. | Would provide \$450 million per year to rehabilitate urban parks. |
| Roadless areas HR 1581 (McCarthy) S 1087 (Barrasso) | McCarthy introduced April 15. Barrasso introduced May 26. | Would reverse Clinton roadless rule, block Salazar 'wild lands' policy, release FS and BLM roadless areas. |
| National monuments HR 302 (Foxx) HR 758 (Herger) S 407 (Crapo) | Foxx introduced January 18. Herger and Crapo introduced February 17. | Would require state approval of any national monument under Antiquities Act. Herger, Crapo would require Hill approval within two years. |
| California Desert monument S 138 (Feinstein) | Feinstein introduced January 25. | Would designate a Mojave National Monument and protect 1.6 million acres. |
| National parks overflights HR 658 (Mica) S 223 (Rockefeller) | House approved April 1. Senate approved February 17, | House tilts towards tour operators and Senate tilts more toward protection. |
| Ski areas HR 765 (Bishop) S 382 (Udall) | House committee passed June 15. Senate panel approved July 14. | Would have FS allow year-round rec activities in ski resorts. |
| NPS air tour policy HR 658 (Mica) S 223 (Rockefeller) | House approved April 1. Senate approved February 17. | Both would revise NPS air tour policy, but bills vary greatly. |
| Glacier park protection S 233 (Baucus) | Baucus introduced January 31. | Would withdraw from mining 300,000 acres of adjacent national forest. |