

# Federal Parks & Recreation

Editor: James B. Coffin

Subscription Services: Gerrie Castaldo

Volume 32 Number 4, February 21, 2014

In this issue. . .

**Yosemite plan finds some favor.**

*Rep. McClintock, NPCA appear to endorse plan to manage the valley. NPS yields a little to supporters of commercial recreation.... Page 1*

**CBO rings alarm on highway money.**

*Says gasoline tax will come up \$13B short on October 1. Boxer says she will prepare bill for EPW committee by April..... Page 2*

**FY 2015 budget due out on March 4.**

*December budget agreement solved one big problem - total spending cap. May still be battles.. Page 4*

**Wyden will stick with NPS bill.**

*Will continue to address, even as he chairs Finance. Landrieu's eyes are only on energy..... Page 5*

**Ozark Riverways battle heats up.**

*Opposition to plan spurs House bill to transfer to state... Page 6*

**Farm Bill signed with little fuss.**

*Obama says little about conservation. Sportsmen accept... Page 7*

**Landrieu focuses mostly on energy.**

*New energy committee chair says little of other resources... Page 9*

**Senate also gets paddlers bill.**

*Barrasso introduces measure after House okays parks opening... Page 10*

**Great Outdoors Month ratchets up.**

*Fed and nonfed supporters will give greater emphasis..... Page 10*

**Notes..... Page 11**

**Conference calendar..... Page 13**

## Is third Yosemite Valley plan the final, final one?

Yosemite National Park February 14 completed a plan governing the heavily-used valley that appears to satisfy the park's biggest critic - Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.)

The plan, developed after a decade-long struggle, is required for the management of the Merced River. But because the river courses through the middle of the valley the plan also addresses uses throughout the valley, such as camping, hiking and commercial recreation activities.

After Yosemite proposed a Merced plan on Jan. 8, 2013, McClintock, who represents the Yosemite area in the House, went ballistic. He said the proposed plan would change the raison d'être for Yosemite by removing recreation amenities. They include horseback riding, bicycle rental, swimming pools and an ice skating rink.

But on publication of the final plan February 14 McClintock said, "I am particularly gratified that the final report has rejected radical proposals to close many traditional tourist amenities at the park, including swimming pools, raft and bike rentals, horseback riding stables, and ice skating and lodging facilities. The plan retains the historic Sugar Pine Bridge, maintains retail services to accommodate park visitors and minimizes the loss of campsites and parking - all significant improvements from the draft report."

He added, "Although I remain concerned about some aspects of the plan, my first reaction is one of relief. Yosemite Valley belongs to the American people for the express purpose of 'public use, resort and recreation.'"

From the other side the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) appeared willing to accept the concessions NPS made to more intensive commercial uses of the valley.

Neal Desai, Pacific regional field director for NPCA, said environmentalists still like a lot in the final plan. "With the Merced River Plan's calls for redesigned roads, pathways, and parking, expanded access to free hybrid shuttles, and the continued bike rental operations, visitors will experience a less congested and confusing park experience," he said.

"The National Park Service demonstrates its commitment to improving the resiliency of the Merced River by restoring 189 acres of meadows and parkland near the river while removing 6,048 linear feet of riprap to restore the river's natural flow," he added.

NPS Superintendent Don Neubacher summarized the plan in a Friends of Yosemite letter, "Actions included in the preferred alternative provide for the restoration of over 180 acres of meadow and riparian habitat. Parking areas will be relocated away from sensitive riparian areas and abandoned infrastructure will be removed from meadows, riverbanks, and culturally-sensitive areas."

NPS said in a press release that active recreation would still be allowed, albeit with some changes. "Recreational activities, such as rafting, bicycling, and ice skating will continue, with rental facilities and services provided at locations outside of the river corridor," said NPS.

The agency continued, "With watercraft allowed on eight miles of the Merced River in Yosemite Valley, boaters will be able to float new and challenging reaches of water framed by views of El Capitan and Half Dome. Valley stables will be active, servicing the High Sierra camp and supporting NPS administrative activities. Private horseback riding and boarding will continue in Yosemite Valley and further into the high country."

The plan has trod a long and winding road. NPS published a first edition in August 2000. Friends of Yosemite Valley and Mariposans for the Environment and Responsible Government took the plan to court and, in 2003, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said plan failed because it did not consider user capacities.

NPS in June 2005 completed a revised plan. Once again the environmentalists went to court and once again in 2008 the Ninth Circuit endorsed a lower court decision holding that NPS didn't adequately consider user capacities.

After that decision NPS entered mediation with the plaintiffs and came up with a settlement agreement in September 2009 that committed Yosemite to complete a new plan by March 31 of this year. In the interim the agreement has restricted the kinds and amounts of activities NPS can allow in the valley.

According to California newspapers the plaintiffs have not yet commented on the plan.

The plan is enormous. Just the first volume of five volumes runs 592 pages. Implementation of the plan would cost \$210 million.

The plan is available at [www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/mrp.htm) and [http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp\\_feis](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mrp_feis).

## **Spurred by new CBO report, senators speed highway bill**

Provoked by a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report that the Highway Trust Fund is in dire condition, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said last week Congress must come up with new money for surface transportation programs - and fast.

CBO made official what everyone suspected - come October 1 the Highway Trust Fund will produce only \$34 billion per year from gasoline taxes, yet surface transportation expenditures will amount to \$46 billion, if held level. That's a \$13 billion gap, and it assumes

absolutely no increases for individual programs.

So Sen. Boxer said at a February 12 hearing that Congress must not only come up with a new surface transportation bill before October 1, it must also find north of \$15 billion in new money to pay for it. The existing law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), PL 112-141 of July 6, 2012, expires on October 1.

"Let me be clear - the pending Highway Trust Fund shortfall needs to be addressed by an infusion of funds, otherwise CBO estimates that obligations for new projects in 2015 would need to be reduced to zero," said Boxer, chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW). "This would result in federal highway, highway safety, and transit funding being cut by \$50.8 billion in FY 2015 with almost 1.8 million jobs lost. Only old projects could be funded - no more new projects."

Boxer said at the hearing she aims to propose legislation to the EPW committee in April. She said she hopes to produce a five-year or six-year bill.

But her committee only writes the programmatic portion of surface transportation legislation; the Senate Finance Committee must come up with the money. Said Boxer, "I have begun discussions with (Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron) Wyden (D-Ore.) and Ranking Member (Orrin) Hatch (R-Utah) on funding the Highway Trust Fund. They have that responsibility and I know we will all work with them."

Her counterpart House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Ohio) in early February laid out this schedule for developing a bill this year: "We hope to take Committee action in the late spring or early summer with the goal to be on the House floor before the August recess. This way there will be time to conference our bill with the Senate's bill."

President Obama and Congressional leaders are airing quite different ideas on how best to pay for the next, multi-year surface transportation bill.

After the President's State of the Union address January 28 his office circulated a recommendation for a "grand bargain" on taxes to pay the bill.

"As the President first proposed in Chattanooga in July 2013, he stands ready to work with Congress on a grand bargain for middle-class jobs that pairs comprehensive reform to simplify our business tax code with investments to rebuild America's infrastructure that create more good construction jobs that our economy needs right now," said the White House.

But Congressional Republican leaders have ideas of their own. Shuster said February 4 in a speech to a group called Building America's Future that he favors a mileage fee rather than a gasoline tax.

Several other proposals for raising the billions needed have emerged in recent months including: tax revenues from corporations that have hidden billions of dollars in foreign countries that agree to bring their money home (Transportation Department Secretary Anthony Foxx); an increase in the gasoline tax (HR 3636 from Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and taxes on oil wholesaler fees, i.e. the levy that gas stations pay when they buy supplies (Boxer).

The proposals are crucial to outdoor programs because without significant new sources of money Congressional leaders will be tempted to limit surface transportation spending to core highway construction. And they might terminate recreation programs such as transportation enhancements and recreational trails.

Meanwhile, the 16 Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee urged panel chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.) last month to get moving on legislation to pay for the next multi-year transportation bill.

Separately, 17 governors from both political parties wrote House and Senate leaders January 30 urging Congress to address surface transportation legislation.

Raising billions of dollars for highways is a most sensitive business, particularly for fiscal conservatives in Congress, thus the Ways and Means Democrats are attempting to put the onus on their Republican colleagues. The House Transportation Committee under chairman Shuster will write the details of the next multi-year surface transportation bill, but the Ways and Means Committee must come up with the money.

### **FY 2015 budget due March 4; one problem already solved**

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) says it will release a fiscal year 2015 budget request on March 4, a month later than it was due under federal law (February 3).

One possible obstacle before a fiscal 2015 money bill has already been removed - an overall domestic spending cap. The House, the Senate and the administration agreed to that in December in a two-year budget agreement (PL 113-67 of Dec. 26, 2013).

But of course Republicans and Democrats can still fail to agree on details of individual appropriations bills.

OMB said the fiscal 2015 budget has been delayed by negotiations over a fiscal 2014 appropriations bill (PL 113-76 of January 17).

The December budget agreement set a spending ceiling for all domestic programs in fiscal 2015 that is \$583 million more than the fiscal 2014 final appropriation. The fiscal 2014 allocation is \$491,773,000,000. The fiscal 2015 allocation is \$492,356,000,000.

However, by the time that \$583 million is allocated among hundreds of agencies not much may be left for park and rec managers such as the Park Service, the Forest Service and the Corps of Engineers.

Still, the agreement on an overall ceiling removes one stumbling block

from individual appropriations bills and avoids a renewal of the infamous sequestration law.

In fiscal 2013 a budget sequestration law (PL 112-25 of Aug. 2, 2011) cut in on Feb. 28, 2013, and mandated that \$85 billion in budget reductions in fiscal 2013 come out of the appropriations law. The five percent across-the-board cut removed \$218 million from the Park Service budget, \$26 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and \$129 million from the National Forest System.

Fiscal 2014 got off to its own rocky start when Congress was unable to agree on appropriations and the federal government shut down from Oct. 1, 2013, through Oct. 17, 2013, when an interim spending agreement kept the government in money into January.

Congress agreed on a budget policy in December that led to a final fiscal 2014 appropriation law (PL 113-76) in mid-January that antes up somewhat higher park and rec appropriations in fiscal 2014 than in fiscal 2013. That law avoided another \$109 billion sequestration axe. (And it posted an overall spending cap for fiscal 2015 as well.)

Setting up the Interior and Related Agencies portion of the fiscal 2014 bill was an unexpected \$30.58 billion allocation from the full House Appropriations Committee. Going in a House Congressional budget had recommended \$6 billion less, or \$24.3 billion compared to the Senate's \$30.2 billion.

Although Democrats and Republicans have agreed on a macro non-defense domestic spending number for fiscal 2015, they still may have substantial differences on how much money each individual appropriations bill should have, and how much individual programs should get.

In the House this year a new chairman, Rep. Ken Calvert (R-Calif.), will be in charge of writing an Interior and Related Agencies subcommittee bill. Calvert actually replaced former

chairman Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) last year, but late in the year. Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) chairs the counterpart Senate subcommittee.

**The numbers:** Here are some of the final fiscal 2014 numbers compared to fiscal 2013, but not counting 5.5 percent across-the-board sequestrations in fiscal 2013.

**LWCF FEDERAL:** For federal land acquisition HR 3547 contains \$167.4 million, compared to \$186 million in fiscal 2013. The breakdown: NPS acquisition, \$43.5 million; BLM, \$19.5 million; FWS, \$54.4 million; and FS, \$43.5 million.

**LWCF STATE:** For state LWCF grants the law contains \$48 million, compared to \$45 million in fiscal 2013 and a House subcommittee recommendation of no money.

**STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS:** For wildlife grants the law contains \$58.7 million, compared to a fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$61.2 million and a House subcommittee recommendation of no money.

**URBAN PARKS AND RECREATION RECOVERY:** For urban parks the law contains no money, although a Senate mark and the Obama administration requested \$10 million. The fiscal 2013 appropriation was no money.

**NPS OPERATIONS:** For operation of the Park Service the law contains \$2.237 billion, compared to a fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$2.214 billion.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION:** For the National Historic Preservation program the law appropriates \$56.4 million, compared to a fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$56 million.

**NPS CONSTRUCTION:** For NPS construction the law appropriates \$137.5 million, compared to \$131 million in fiscal 2013.

**NPS REC AND PRES:** For NPS recreation and preservation the law appropriates \$61 million, compared to \$60 million in fiscal 2013.

**NPS HERITAGE AREAS:** For National Heritage Areas the law doubles the appropriation to \$18.3 million from a fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$9 million. In addition the law extends for one year the authorization for 12 national heritage areas.

**BLM LAND AND RESOURCES:** For management of BLM lands the conferees approved \$957 million, or \$8 million more than a \$949 million appropriation in fiscal 2013.

**BLM RECREATION:** For BLM recreation the law appropriates \$66.9 million, compared to \$70.5 million in fiscal 2013.

**FOREST SERVICE:** For the National Forest System the law appropriates \$1.496 billion, or \$41 million less than a fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$1.537 billion.

**FOREST SERVICE RECREATION:** For Forest Service recreation the law appropriates \$261.7 million, about the same as the fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$261 million.

**FOREST TRAILS:** For Forest Service trails the law contains \$75 million, compared to \$82.5 million in fiscal 2013.

**FWS OPERATIONS:** For operation of the Fish and Wildlife service the conferees appropriated \$1.188 billion, or \$23 million less than the fiscal 2013 appropriation of \$1.211 billion.

**WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM:** For management of the National Wildlife Refuge System the law contains \$472, compared to \$499 million in fiscal 2013.

## **Wyden still committed to NPS Centennial bill; Landrieu?**

Even though he has now taken over the time-consuming job of chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) intends to press on with Park Service Centennial legislation.

Wyden will remain a member of the Senate Energy Committee that he chaired until last week. Said a spokesman for the senator, "Yes, Sen. Wyden is

continuing to work with Sen. (Mark) Udall (D-Colo.) to develop creative solutions to fund the Park Service's maintenance needs for the next hundred years."

The new chair of the energy panel, Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), has long supported outdoor programs, particularly the Land and Water Conservation Fund. But Landrieu made clear last week that she will focus primarily on energy policy this year. (See article page 9.)

The precipitating event behind the legislation is, of course, the National Park System's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2016. The National Park System Advisory Board has created a National Park Service Centennial Advisory Committee to coordinate preparations for the Centennial. That committee was scheduled to meet last week, but a winter storm cancelled the event.

Meanwhile, NPS is tending to downplay the Centennial for fear that the expenditure of too much energy up-front will sap momentum later on.

But not everyone accepts that theory. "The Park Service has always talked about Centennial fatigue, but many of us know that now is the prime time to look at implementation of the Centennial," said Derrick Crandall, a member of the advisory committee and counselor to the National Park Hospitality Association.

Wyden, Udall, Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and others have begun the conversation about major legislation to rejuvenate the National Park System. Wyden and company have received recommendations from various parties, including the Park Service, for numerous provisions in a bill, in addition to the maintenance money.

But as the Wyden aide indicated the lead pony appears to be an attack on the multi-billion dollar Park Service maintenance backlog, perhaps a billion-dollar endowment with a mix of public and private money.

Almost sure to be wrapped into

a bill is either an extension of an existing recreation fee law or a revision to it. The existing one, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, expires on Dec. 8, 2015.

The senators are following up in a way on both a private Second Century Commission report that advocates regeneration of the park system and the Park Service's own agenda *A Call to Action* of Aug. 25, 2011. *A Call to Action* also recommends a \$1 billion endowment program.

As a follow-up to *A Call to Action*, major organizations backing NPS are attempting to identify unconventional revenues for the parks. The National Park Foundation, the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Park Hospitality Association have come up with some 16 recommendations.

## **Ozark Riverways battle heats; Smith would transfer to state**

Rep. Jason Smith (R-Mo.) last week ratcheted up his campaign against a proposed Ozark National Scenic Riverways management plan. He introduced legislation (HR 4029) to transfer the entire Park Service unit to the State of Missouri.

Two weeks ago Smith persuaded the House to approve legislation (HR 3590) that would maintain current levels of motorboat access in the riverway. Smith and some of his constituents in the business world object to the proposed plan because a preferred alternative would designate motorized free zones, close horse trails and convert off-road trails to hiking paths.

"Let me be clear, my constituents and I will continue fighting any attempts to designate new wilderness areas in the ONSR, close walking and horse trails, limit hunting, fishing, trapping, gigging, close access points, ban camping, restrict boat motor horsepower or other recreational activities in the park," said Smith on introducing his bill to transfer the park to the state February 10.

The following day business owners and some users asked the Missouri state legislature to help them fight the proposed plan. Rick Mansfield of the Ozarks Heritage Project told the House Wetlands Management Issue Development Committee the proposed plan was based on "sheer ignorance," according to the *News-Leader* newspaper.

But the Park Service has significant firepower backing its plan, beginning with Gov. Jay Nixon (D-Mo.) He wrote Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell February 7, "Floating, fishing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, and other such recreation along the Riverways have provided visitors with enjoyable outdoor opportunities. And these activities have a significant positive impact on Missouri's outdoor economy. But some of these activities, in the wrong location or in too heavy a concentration, can pose a threat to the Riverways. Similarly, there are acceptable levels of activity that can accommodate both enjoyment and preservation of these treasures."

Nixon added, "Alternative B strikes the most appropriate balance between these two, provided that it also contains the flexibility that is necessary and appropriate in managing a resource such as the Riverways."

Ozark Superintendent Bill Black said February 11 at the conclusion of a public comment period on the proposed plan that he anticipated it would be completed this summer.

"We have begun the process of reading and considering every comment that was submitted to determine if modifications to the Draft are appropriate and necessary," he said. "We anticipate that it will take several months to evaluate all the comments and incorporate the appropriate changes." More than 2,700 comments were submitted.

The proposed plan was published Nov. 1, 2013. It contained five alternatives ranging from no action to "restrictive environmental".

Annual visitation ranges from 1.3 million to 1.5 million per year

with visitors spending an estimated \$55 million.

The preferred Alternative B would restore 55 miles of roads to a natural or primitive state; designate 35 miles of new horse trails while closing 65 miles of undesignated trails; establish motor-free zones in the upper reaches of the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers that make up the Riverways; and more.

A broad coalition of conservation groups called the Friends of Ozark Riverways (FOR) in general endorsed the preferred alternative, but FOR said some coalition members prefer the environmental protection alternative.

As for specific issues the Friends group praised new limits on motorboats. "FOR supports the balanced approach of motor-free zones for upper reaches of the Current and Jacks Fork rivers and seasonal or year-round provisions for motors on other reaches as proposed in Alternative B," said FOR.

Rep. Smith's motorized vehicle legislation was approved by the House February 4 without a formal vote as an amendment to comprehensive sportsmen's legislation (HR 3590). The amendment directs NPS to manage the riverways "to allow the use of motorized vessels in a manner that is less restrictive" than the proposed NPS plan.

Smith's bill to turn the Park Service unit over to the State of Missouri is more complex. It would give the Interior Department one year to transfer the riverways to the State of Missouri lock, stock and bottle "for no consideration," i.e. for free.

## **Farm Bill signed, outdoors advocates sort of at peace**

As expected President Obama signed into law (PL 113-79) February 7 legislation that authorizes conservation programs tied to agriculture for five years.

Although the new law trimmed some conservation money compared to the last multi-year law, Congress did approve

substantial amounts of money for major outdoor programs.

Conservationists were willing to accept the loss of some \$3 billion in conservation spending over five years because of a new provision that requires farmers to comply with conservation programs in order to receive crop insurance. The law substitutes crop insurance for direct support payments to farmers.

"The new Farm Bill addresses key sportsmen's priorities, including re-linking conservation compliance with the federal crop insurance program, implementing a 'Sodsaver' provision aimed at conserving intact prairie grasslands, continuing the Conservation Reserve Program and expanding incentives for sportsmen's access on private lands," said Steve Kline, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) director of government relations.

House and Senate conferees agreed on a final Farm Bill on January 27. The House then approved the measure January 29 and the Senate February 4.

On signing the bill February 7 at an event at Michigan State University in Lansing, Mich., President Obama made one small nod to conservation. "(The law) boosts conservation efforts so that our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy places like the Mississippi River Valley and Chesapeake Bay," he said.

The Department of Agriculture February 14 announced a new initiative to use \$35 million, presumably from the Farm Bill, to help preserve prairie potholes that are breeding grounds for ducks.

"This region of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Montana provides critical breeding and nesting habitat for more than 60 percent of the nation's migratory waterfowl," Under Secretary of Agriculture Robert Bonnie said of the Prairie Pothole region. "Our goal is to help landowners manage their working lands in a way that's compatible with agricultural production and good stewardship of the

soil, water and habitat resources of the area so we are really talking about keeping working lands working."

The pothole money will come from an EQIP program - Environmental Quality Incentives Program - and from a partnership between Ducks Unlimited and the National Conservation Research Service.

Of particular importance to park and rec programs, the Farm Bill includes more than \$400 million for the payments-in-lieu of taxes (PILT), which compensates counties for the loss of tax revenues because of public lands in their midst. That matters because PILT was left out of a fiscal year 2014 appropriations law (PL 113-76 of January 17), freeing up an extra \$400 million for other programs, including park and rec programs.

According to the Congressional Budget Office the Farm Bill will distribute \$28.2 billion to conservation programs over the next five years, beginning with \$5.4 million in this fiscal year 2014 and increasing to \$5.8 billion in fiscal 2018.

The crop insurance program requires farmers to comply with EQIP and a Conservation Stewardship Program in order to receive federally-subsidized crop insurance. Here are some of the allocations in the law:

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP): PL 113-79 establishes a maximum ceiling on the number of acres set aside by farmers in conservation reserves of 27.5 million in fiscal 2014, 26 million in fiscal 2015, 25 million in fiscal 2016, 24 million in fiscal 2017 and 24 million in fiscal 2018.

Said TRCP's Kline, "While the Conservation Reserve Program has lost some acreage in this Farm Bill, those reductions reflect the current demand for the program on the ground. The bill does include 2 million acres of CRP dedicated for the enrollment of grasslands, something beneficial that has not been included in the past."

EQIP: EQIP gives financial and

technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum ten years. The law allocates \$1.35 billion in fiscal 2014 increasing gradually to \$1.75 billion in fiscal 2018.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM (ACEP): The Farm Bill allocates \$400 million in fiscal 2014, \$425 million in fiscal 2015, \$450 million in fiscal 2016, \$500 million in fiscal 2017 and \$250 million in fiscal 2018.

OPEN FIELDS (VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS AND HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM): The law authorizes \$40 million per year for each of the five fiscal years for this program that allocates money to states for programs that make private lands available to hunters and anglers.

### **Landrieu says she will focus on energy in energy panel**

Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) took over as chair of the Senate Energy Committee February 11 with a promise to focus on three things - energy, energy and energy.

Landrieu, who is expected to face a tough challenge in the November elections, by definition, will promote the energy interests of her energy-rich state.

"During the coming weeks and months, I will remain focused on moving an agenda forward that is inclusive, bipartisan and focused on the job creation that America needs and wants," she said on receiving the appointment of the Senate to the energy committee post. "Everything we do will be part of helping to build the middle class and expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs in the domestic energy sector. Increasing domestic energy production and fortifying and expanding the infrastructure that connects producers, refiners and consumers will help us achieve this goal."

Landrieu replaces as chair Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) who has moved up to chair the Senate Finance Committee. The finance post became vacant when Sen. Max

Baucus (D-Mont.) was confirmed by the Senate as ambassador to China.

Meanwhile, Landrieu must decide if and when the Senate Energy Committee will vote on two Interior Department nominations - Rhea Suh as assistant secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks and Janice M. Schneider as assistant secretary of Interior for Land and Minerals Management.

Their nominations were scheduled for a vote in committee February 13 but the vote was postponed when a snowstorm prevented a quorum. Landrieu's office did not respond to our request for comment on the nominations.

Ranking committee Republican Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) said February 12 she will vote against Suh's nomination. Suh is presently assistant secretary for Policy. Among other things Murkowski said Suh has not adequately answer her questions about an Interior Department decision rejecting construction of a road across a wildlife refuge in Alaska to the community of King Cove.

"Between the lack of answers that we have received, and the lack of policy experience we have observed, I am simply not convinced that Suh is the right person to turn the Fish and Wildlife Service around," said Murkowski.

Despite Murkowski's opposition, former committee chair Wyden endorsed the nominations. "I want it understood that I strongly support both of the nominees," he said.

Only Wyden, Murkowski and Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) made it to the scheduled February 13 mark-up. Murkowski at that time asked for a delay in the vote on Suh, offering the nominee a last attempt to answer her questions.

The committee on January 16 did approve the nominations of Michael L. Connor, former Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner, as deputy director of the Interior Department; acting BLM Director Neil Kornze as BLM director; and Tommy Beaudreau as assistant secretary of Interior for Policy.

## Senate also has bill that would open parks to paddlers

Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) introduced legislation (S 2018) February 12 that would direct NPS to open Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park to paddlers. S 2018 matches a House-passed bill (HR 2954) in deferring such openings for three years.

As originally introduced by Rep. Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.), the House bill would have directed NPS to open the rivers to "hand-propelled vessels" immediately. But the House Natural Resources Committee January 28 modified the bill to give NPS three years to write regulations to open the rivers, "as determined by the director of the National Park Service."

Barrasso also adopted the House committee language. Said a Barrasso spokeswoman, "The bill removes a 60-year-old ban on paddling from the Code of Federal Regulations, which was written after World War II to limit fishing. By removing the overarching regulatory prohibition, the Superintendents of the Parks will be able to move forward developing appropriate management plans."

The National Parks Conservation Association objected that the great majority of rivers and lakes in the two parks are already open to paddlers and Congress should not interfere with the Park Service's determination to close other areas.

"Congress overriding the National Park Service is not the way to decide which uses may or may not be appropriate in these iconic National Parks. The legislation as written eliminates critically important rules that have protected these two national icons for more than 40 years," said Bart Melton, Yellowstone program manager of the original Lummis bill.

Even the modified bill would "overturn protective management of roughly 7,500 miles of park rivers and streams," Melton said.

When the original Lummis bill went

before the House subcommittee on Public Lands for a hearing Nov. 21, 2013, the Park Service was unalterably opposed. That was the version that would require all rivers in the parks to be opened immediately to paddlers.

"By overriding existing regulations and regulatory authority over hand-propelled boating, this legislation would set a troubling precedent by disrupting the carefully balanced management of recreational activities and resource protection that the (NPS) provides at Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks," C. Bruce Sheaffer, NPS comptroller, told the subcommittee.

Even after Lummis altered her bill to give NPS three years to negotiate the opening of waterbodies in the two parks to paddlers, the Obama administration was still opposed.

The Office of Management and Budget said in a Statement of Administration Policy February 5 the bill would "set a troubling precedent for the management of the use of hand-propelled vessels in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks."

## Great Outdoors Month backers plan more organized effort

Recreation leaders who coordinate Great Outdoors Month activities around the country are ratcheting up their initiative significantly this year. On both the government and non-government sides.

For one thing the federal and nonfederal recreation leaders are working with the Wal-Mart corporation to promote public lands outdoor activities in its hundreds of stores.

In addition an alliance of federal land management agencies has recommitted its efforts to promote Great Outdoors Month.

"We have gone from a loose promotion of the outdoors to an active coalition that will invest resources with our corporate partners," said

Derrick Crandall, president of the American Recreation Coalition, one of the three cochairs of Great Outdoors Month. The other chairs are Greg Miller of the American Hiking Society and Kevin Coyle of the National Wildlife Federation.

They will be working with a federal agency coalition called the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) to promote and coordinate outdoor recreation on federal, state, local and private lands from Memorial Day until the Fourth of July. Within Great Outdoors Month the partners will celebrate Great Outdoors Week from June 8 until June 15 and Great Outdoors Day June 14. There is a Great Outdoors Day website at <http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/>.

FICOR includes representatives from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Forest Service. Chris Moyer from BLM is acting as executive director of FICOR.

"In terms of federal agencies FICOR is focusing on the whole package," he said. "We're trying to be more active."

Moyer said FICOR under chair Tom Tidwell, the Forest Service chief, is trying to line up proclamations from President Obama and all 50 governors. Traditionally, the President and the governors have issued Great Outdoors Month proclamations. More recently a number of the governors have also hosted campouts.

Wal-Mart is not the only private industry partner. The Coleman Company has been promoting Great Outdoors Month/Week/Day since the inception of the events in 1996 under President Clinton.

Also incorporated in Great Outdoors Month are National Trails Day®, National Fishing and Boating Week, the Great American Backyard Campout, and National Get Outdoors Day.

## Notes

### **Hastings to retire this year.**

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (R-Wash.), who combines genial manners with tough conservative positions, said February 13 that he will retire at the end of the year. Hastings, 73, has served in Congress for two decades and has headed the House Natural Resources Committee since 2011. The panel handles most park and recreation policy. Former committee chairman Don Young (R-Alaska) tops committee Republicans in seniority, assuming the Republican Party controls the House next year. Other logical candidates for chairman are Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah), chairman of the House subcommittee on Public Lands, and Rep. Doug Lamborn (D-Colo.), chairman of the House subcommittee on Energy. Bishop in particular has been active in park and rec policy. If by some chance the Democrats gain control of the House next year, ranking committee minority member Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) would be in line for the chairmanship.

### **NPS fills four posts.**

The Park Service February 11 announced the appointment of three agency veterans to leadership positions, including Northeast Regional Director, Alaska Regional Director and associate director for Workforce. NPS named *Mike Caldwell*, currently the deputy regional director for the Northeast Region, as Northeast Regional Director. Caldwell has 22 years with the Park Service. The agency named its current chief scientist, *Dr. Bert C. Frost*, as Alaska Regional Director. And NPS appointed *Mike Reynolds*, currently Midwest Regional Director, as associate director for Workforce. Reynolds is a 28-year NPS veteran. Finally, NPS said an official of the U.S. Embassy in Australia, *April Slayton*, will become chief of public affairs and lead NPS spokesperson. At one point Slayton worked as press secretary for the House Agriculture Committee.

### **Sportsmen focus on BLM Montana plan.**

An alliance of sportsmen is gearing up to encourage the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to protect valued hunting and fishing grounds in central

Montana. BLM announced February 10 that it will prepare a resource management plan (RMP) to govern 654,025 acres managed by its Lewistown Field Office and a portion of the Butte Field Office. The RMP would replace a 1984 Headwaters RMP and a 1994 Judith RMP. And it would incorporate an existing Off-highway Vehicle Plan amendment. Said Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Field Representative Hal Herring, "Generations of Montanans and visitors from across the nation and the world have hunted these lands, chasing sharptails and trophy mule deer on the Front, antelope on the plains and bugling elk in the Breaks. The new resource management plan will guide the decisions of land managers on this incredibly diverse mix of mountains, prairies and rivers for the next 20 years." BLM is now soliciting comments over the next 60 days on how it should prepare the RMP at <http://blm.gov/ngld>.

#### **Tax easement law renewal eyed.**

The Land Trust Alliance and allied groups will attempt to resuscitate this year a tax incentive for landowners to donate conservation easements to the government. The old law ran from 2006 through December 2013. It allowed landowners to deduct up to 50 percent of their adjusted gross income each year for donating a conservation easement. The Land Trust Alliance said thousands of landowners opted for the deduction over the year. "We are of course working hard to retroactively renew the incentive early in 2014," the alliance told its members recently. Still in place is an older law that allows donations of up to 30 percent of adjusted gross income.

#### **House okays Rim Fire salvage.**

The House approved legislation February 6 that would authorize timber salvage *pilot* projects in the Stanislaus National Forest based on a draft EIS the forest published on Dec. 6, 2013. The legislation from Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.) would declare the draft EIS legally sufficient, enabling the Forest Service to begin salvage operations this year on some of the 30,000 acres burned in last summer's huge Rim Fire. The provision was included in an omnibus lands bill (HR 2954) that

the House approved the same day. The bill doesn't authorize any activities in Yosemite National Park that also felt the wrath of the fire. McClintock compromised somewhat with critics. As introduced his original bill (HR 3188) would have ordered the Forest Service to immediately begin harvests on the entire 30,000 acres in the Stanislaus National Forest, and the bill said the program applied to Yosemite as well. The amendment in HR 2954 would only authorize pilot projects that could begin in April, and would apply only to the forest, not to Yosemite. Despite the changes, the Obama administration criticized the amendment in HR 2954 in an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) policy statement. OMB said the provision "would waive all Federal laws, including those that require consultation with Federal, State, local, or tribal governments or with local residents, in order to expedite timber harvests on certain Federal lands in California." The Stanislaus National Forest said in December that it is preparing an EIS as a lead step toward removing dead and dying trees hit by the Rim Fire in August. The forest said it intends to complete the EIS in order to begin work on restoring burned portions of the forest by this summer. The Rim Fire, which began on Aug. 17, 2013, burned more than 257,000 acres, including more than 154,000 acres on the Stanislaus and 40,000 acres in Yosemite.

#### **FS renews planning advisory board.**

The Department of Agriculture said February 3 that it has renewed a Federal Advisory Committee for Implementation of the National Forest System Planning Rule. The advisory committee submitted its recommendations to the agency on Nov. 21, 2013. The recommendations appear to be less controversial than the rule itself. They simply flesh out the Forest Service's own strategy for implementation. For instance, one section of the regs directs individual forests in writing plans to evaluate the condition of lands prior to holding timber harvests. It directs each forest to consider such things as the current level of harvest in the area and the possible impact of timber harvests on such things as fire. The Forest Service completed a planning rule on March

23, 2012, that governs the preparation of individual unit plans for the 155 national forests and 20 grasslands in the National Forest System. Those plans, required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), govern virtually all uses in the national forests. The Forest Service said the new rule will be tested out in these eight units of the National Forest System: the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest in Idaho, the Chugach National Forest in Alaska, the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico, El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico and California's Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests. While the advisory committee recommendations may not be controversial, the Forest Service rule was. A coalition of public lands user groups Aug. 13, 2012, filed a major lawsuit against the rule, complaining that it goes too far in attempting to protect species.

**Boots to act as CEQ director.** The White House February 6 named Council on Environmental Quality Chief of Staff Mike Boots as acting chair of the council. He replaces temporarily Nancy Sutley while the administration searches for a successor. The position requires Senate confirmation. Boots came to CEQ in 2009 from a job as vice president at SeaWeb, which helped develop ocean conservation policies. Sutley announced in December that she would leave the chair's post this month.

## Conference Calendar

### FEBRUARY

23-27. **Association of Partners for Public Lands 2014 Partnership Convention & Trade Show** in Albuquerque, N.M. Contact: Association of Partners for Public Lands, 2401 Blueridge Ave, Suite 303, Wheaton, MD 20902. (301) 946-9475. <http://www.appl.org>.

### MARCH

1-5. **National Association of Counties Legislative Conference** in Washington, D.C. Contact: National Association of Counties, 440 First St., N.W., 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001. (202) 393-6226. FAX (202) 393-2630. <http://www.naco.org>.

24-29. **North American Wildlife**

**Conference** in Arlington, Va. Contact: Wildlife Management Institute, 1146 19th Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 371-1808. <http://www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org>.

25-26. **NRPA National Legislative Forum on Parks and Recreation** in Washington, D.C. Contact: National Recreation and Parks Association, 1901 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Washington, DC 20006. (202) 887-0290. <http://www.nrpa.org/legforum/>.

### APRIL

23-27. **American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance National Convention & Expo** in St. Louis, Mo. Contact: AAHPERD, 1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191(703) 476-3400. <http://www.aahperd.org>.

23-27. **Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting** in Austin, Texas. Contact: Society for American Archaeology, 900 2nd St., N.E., Suite 12, Washington, DC 20002-3557. (202) 789-8200. <http://www.saa.org>.

28-30. **National Hydropower Association Annual Meeting** in Washington, D.C. Contact: National Hydropower Association, 25 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Suite 450, Washington, DC 20001. (202) 682-1700. <http://www.hydro.org>.

30-May 3. **National Ski Areas Association National Convention and Trade Show** in Savannah, Ga. Contact: National Ski Areas Association, 133 South Van Gordon St., Suite 300, Lakewood, CO 90228. (303) 987-1111. <http://www.nsaa.org>.

### MAY

13-16. **National Outdoor Recreation Conference** in San Francisco, CA. Contact: The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals, P.O. Box 221, Marienville, PA 16239. (814)927-8212. <http://www.recpro.org>

27-30. **National Sporting Goods Association Management Conference** in Indian Wells, Ca. Contact: National Sporting Goods Association, 1601 Feehanville Drive, Suite 300, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056-6035. (847) 296-6742. <http://www.nsga.org>.