



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands; Aniela Butler, Taylor Wiseman, and Lauren Limke – [Aniela@mail.house.gov](mailto:Aniela@mail.house.gov), [Taylor.Wiseman@mail.house.gov](mailto:Taylor.Wiseman@mail.house.gov) and [Lauren.Limke@mail.house.gov](mailto:Lauren.Limke@mail.house.gov); x6-7736  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 19, 2023  
**Subject:** Legislative Hearing on Four Outdoor Recreation Bills

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The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will hold a legislative hearing on four outdoor recreation bills:

- H.R. 1657 (Rep. Stauber), “*Lake Winnibigoshish Land Exchange Act of 2023*”;
- H.R. 3107 (Rep. Neguse), “*Improving Outdoor Recreation Coordination Act*”;
- H.R. 3200 (Rep. Zinke), “*Gateway Community and Recreation Enhancement Act*”; and
- H.R. 4984 (Rep. Comer), “*D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 2:15 p.m.** in room 1334 Longworth House Office Building.

Member offices are requested to notify Colen Morrow ([Colen.Morrow@mail.house.gov](mailto:Colen.Morrow@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, September 18, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- Public lands are juggernauts for the outdoor recreation economy. Recently released data from the National Park Service (NPS) shows the impact visitors to these iconic places have on the economy. Just last year, visitors to national parks generated \$50.3 billion in economic benefits and supported over 378,400 jobs.
- Improving access to our public lands, including addressing localized issues, is key to unlocking the full potential of the outdoor recreation economy.
- The four bipartisan bills for this hearing each address a unique, pressing issue such as lack of access, support for gateway communities, interagency coordination, and revitalizing recreation opportunities on underutilized public lands.
- This hearing continues the Committee’s work of advancing bipartisan initiatives to help Americans across the country get outside and explore the unparalleled recreation opportunities on our federal lands.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel I (Members of Congress):

- *To Be Announced*

### Panel II (Administration Officials and Outside Experts):

- **Mr. Mike Reynolds**, Deputy Director, Congressional and External Relations, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 3107, H.R. 3200, H.R. 4984*]
- **Ms. Jacqueline Emanuel**, Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 1657, H.R. 3107, H.R. 3200*]
- **The Honorable Cory Smith**, Commissioner, District 1, Itasca County, MN [*H.R. 1657*]
- **The Honorable Randy Brodehl**, Commissioner, Flathead County, Kalispell, MT [*H.R. 3200*]
- **Ms. Ambreen Tariq**, Senior Program Director, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 3107 and H.R. 3200*]
- **Mr. Delano Hunter**, Acting Director, D.C. Department of General Services, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 4984*]

## III. BACKGROUND

### [H.R. 1657 \(Rep. Stauber\), “Lake Winnibigoshish Land Exchange Act of 2023”](#)



Lake Winnibigoshish. **Source:** Bowen Lodge, 2020.

In and around federal land, small and often times family-owned businesses provide robust outdoor recreation experiences. This is true in north-central Minnesota in the Chippewa National Forest and Lake Winnibigoshish. Along the pristine lake, Bowen Lodge, a fishing and hunting resort, has been welcoming guests since 1982. Currently, the Lodge has a 20-year permit from the U.S.

Forest Service (USFS) to operate and maintain a marina along the lakeshore. The resort would like to acquire approximately 13.8 acres of federal land adjacent to their property, which contains approximately 1,640 feet of shoreline and would provide permanent access to the lake.

H.R. 1657 would facilitate a land exchange between Bowen Lodge and the USFS. This legislation would provide certainty and predictability for the business, employees, and guests to

ensure the continued use of the marina. In exchange for the land, the resort would convey approximately 38 acres of land on Lake Winnibigoshish to the USFS to be added to the Chippewa National Forest. The USFS proposed this acreage in order to better align with property boundaries and management of the exchange parcel. H.R. 1657 establishes an equal value exchange between the parcels. If necessary, a cash equalization payment between the parties will be pursued in order to equalize values.

Exchanging these parcels is a win-win, as it would provide permanent access to Lake Winnibigoshish for the Lodge and eliminate a headache-inducing checkerboard pattern of land ownership for USFS. This is a continuation of the Committee's work to "right size" the federal estate by allowing for greater access and reducing checkerboard land ownership. So far this Congress, the Committee has moved legislation that would reduce the amount of federal land ownership by 4,530 acres.<sup>1</sup> H.R. 1657 is a bipartisan bill led by Representative Stauber (R-MN) and co-sponsored by Representatives Brad Finstad (R-MN), Michelle Fischbach (R-MN), Joe Neguse (D-CO), and Jared Huffman (D-CA).

### **H.R. 3107 (Rep. Neguse), "Improving Outdoor Recreation Coordination Act"**

Outdoor recreation serves as a gateway to numerous physical, mental, and societal benefits. Engaging in outdoor activities, whether it's hiking, camping, cycling, or simply spending time in nature, promotes physical fitness and a healthier lifestyle, reducing the risk of chronic diseases.<sup>2</sup> In addition to enhancing physical wellbeing, outdoor recreation fosters a deeper appreciation for our country's natural resources, inspiring environmental stewardship, and conservation efforts.<sup>3</sup> It also strengthens the bonds of community as people come together to share recreational experiences, reinforcing the idea that access to outdoor spaces is fundamental to a prosperous society.<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that public lands play an important role in outdoor recreation, there are often conflicting levels of access or policies among the federal land management agencies. Increased coordination between these agencies could help improve access, elevate recreation as a priority among land managers, and reduce conflicting policies among federal agencies.

H.R. 3107, the "Improving Outdoor Recreation Coordination Act," would establish the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation ("Council"), to coordinate outdoor recreation policies among the various land management agencies. The bill aims to streamline processes across federal agencies to keep recreation on public lands enjoyable and sustained. This Council would also be responsible for coordination between various federal agencies involved in outdoor recreation and related activities such as the NPS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and USFS. The responsibilities of the Council would include coordinating interagency policies related to recreation management across agencies, addressing disruptions in recreational areas, managing funds designated for outdoor recreation, and circulating informational materials to the public.<sup>5</sup> The bill would not impact existing authorities,

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<sup>1</sup> Information compiled by House Natural Resources Committee Majority staff. Information on file with the Committee and available upon request.

<sup>2</sup> The Wellness Benefits of the Great Outdoors, U.S. Forest Service, March 24, 2021, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/wellness-benefits-great-outdoors>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Public Law 117-58; Enacted November 11, 2021.

regulations, or policies of individual federal agencies involved in outdoor recreation. This bipartisan bill is co-led by Representative Lawler (R-NY).

### **H.R. 3200 (Rep. Zinke), “Gateway Community and Recreation Enhancement Act”**

Recently released data from NPS demonstrates the impact visitors to our public lands have on the economy, particularly rural economies. In 2022, visitors to national parks generated a record \$50.3 billion in economic benefits and supported over 378,400 jobs.<sup>6</sup> The economic impact of recreating on federal lands is felt far and wide by the communities surrounding the federal land’s borders and entrances – often referred to as gateway communities. In national parks alone, more than 312 million visitors spent an estimated \$23.9 billion in gateway communities in 2022.<sup>7</sup> This estimate does not include spending by visitors to other locations managed by the BLM, USFWS, or USFS.



During summer months, towns like Gatlinburg, Tennessee (the gateway community for Great Smoky Mountains National Park) experience high visitation levels.

**Source:** Smokymountains.com, 2016.

H.R. 3200, the “Gateway Community and Recreation Enhancement Act,” addresses the roles and needs of gateway communities as they support visitation to federal lands. Under the legislation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of the Interior (DOI) would assess the needs of gateway communities with respect to housing, municipal infrastructure, visitation and crowding in consultation with state and local governments, Tribes, housing authorities, and non-profit organizations. H.R. 3200 also provides avenues to address these challenges including financial or technical assistance; entering into leases, rights-of-way, easements, or issuing special use permits; and encouraging the Departments’ Secretaries to enter into public-private partnerships, cooperative agreements, or memorandums of understanding.

<sup>6</sup> 2022 National Park Visitor Spending Effects, National Park Service, Accessed August 29, 2023, [https://www.nps.gov/nature/customcf/NPS\\_Data\\_Visualization/docs/NPS\\_2022\\_Visitor\\_Spending\\_Effects.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/nature/customcf/NPS_Data_Visualization/docs/NPS_2022_Visitor_Spending_Effects.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

Gateway communities are often small, rural towns whose economy depends on seasonal visitation and access to the local federal lands. Therefore, any closing or reduction of access to a national park can have severe implications for the gateway community and the families and small businesses whose livelihoods depend on predictable access. To address this, H.R. 3200 requires the NPS to consult local communities via public meetings and a minimum 60-day comment period before restricting access to national parks. There are exemptions if the park must close due to health and safety concerns. The bill also provides avenues for increased visitor access and experiences across federal land recreation units. The bill would require agencies to create a digital version of the America the Beautiful National Parks and public lands pass so visitors can seamlessly access public lands via their mobile device. The bill also establishes a pilot program to provide visitation data for recreation lands. The visitation data could encourage visitation of lesser-known areas, such as trails, to avoid congestion.

This bipartisan bill, co-led by Representatives Zinke (R-MT) and Peltola (D-AK) has seven additional cosponsors. A companion bill was introduced by Senators Steve Daines (R-MT) and Angus King (I-ME). A similar version of this bill was included in the Senate's Recreation Package (S. 873, America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2023). S.873 passed out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, as amended, by voice vote.<sup>8</sup>

#### [H.R. 4984 \(Rep. Comer\), "D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act"](#)

The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus (RFK) encompasses approximately 142 acres of NPS land located in the eastern part of the District of Columbia (D.C.). RFK is owned by the City of D.C., which also has a lease NPS on the land underneath and surrounding the stadium from for sports and recreation use until 2038. From the early 1900's until 1957, the land was used as a park and open space.<sup>9</sup> In 1957, Congress authorized construction of a stadium on the land.<sup>10</sup> The D.C. Stadium opened in 1961 as a multipurpose stadium for the football team now known as the Washington Commanders and the Washington Senators (a Major League Baseball team).<sup>11</sup> By 1969, the D.C. Stadium was renamed RFK Stadium in honor of Robert F. Kennedy.<sup>12</sup> In 1996, the football team played their last game and the stadium. The Washington Nationals briefly utilized the stadium from 2005 to 2007 and D.C. United, a Major League Soccer team, utilized the facility until 2017.<sup>13</sup> The stadium is now vacant, falling into disrepair, and is set to be demolished.<sup>14</sup>

H.R. 4984 creates a long-term opportunity for coordination between the D.C. and the federal government for the future development and use of the RFK site. The "D.C. Robert F. Kennedy

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<sup>8</sup> S. Rept. 118-79 America's Outdoor Recreation Act, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/118th-congress/senate-report/79>.

<sup>9</sup> RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study, National Capitol Planning Commission, December 2006, [https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/RFK\\_Stadium\\_Site\\_Redevelopment\\_Study\\_Dec2006.pdf](https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/RFK_Stadium_Site_Redevelopment_Study_Dec2006.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957. Public Law 85-300; 71 Stat. 619, Enacted September 07, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> RFK Stadium, Stadiums of Pro Football, Accessed September 6, 2023, 2020, <https://www.stadiumsofprofootball.com/stadiums/rfk-stadium/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act” would transfer administrative jurisdiction of the RFK stadium site from the Secretary of the Interior to the General Services Administration (GSA).



RFK Stadium Campus looking west into D.C.  
**Source:** Athletic Business, 2022.

GSA provides centralized procurement and shared services for the federal government, including real estate. GSA manages a nationwide real estate portfolio of nearly 370 million rentable square feet.<sup>15</sup> Under the legislation, GSA would be required to enter into a lease

with D.C., under which D.C. may use the land for stadium purposes, commercial and residential development, providing recreational facilities or open space, or additional public purposes. The bill allows for a lease of up to 99 years, which may be renewed by GSA. The bill ensures any development of the site will not adversely impact the land, including the restoration of wetlands; is at least 30 percent parks and open space; will improve access to the Anacostia River and maintain access to the Anacostia River Trail; provide for necessary parking facilities and public safety measures; and will reduce noise and traffic in surrounding areas. Cosponsors include Delegate Holmes Norton (D-DC) and Representative LaTurner (R-KS).

#### **IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & SECTION-BY-SECTION**

##### **[H.R. 1657 \(Rep. Stauber\), “Lake Winnibigoshish Land Exchange Act of 2023”](#)**

###### **Section 3. Exchange of Land.**

- Directs an exchange of land between the USFS and Big Winnie Land and Timber (BWLTT) within 180 days of BWLTT offering to exchange land.
- Ensures the value of land exchanged is equal and subject to valid existing rights. Provides for a cash equalization payment if necessary.
- Directs USFS to manage lands acquired as part of the Chippewa National Forest.

##### **[H.R. 3107 \(Rep. Neguse\), “Improving Outdoor Recreation Coordination Act”](#)**

###### **Section 2. Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation.**

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish the “Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation” (Council) consisting of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of

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<sup>15</sup> About Us, U.S. General Services Administration, Accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us?topnav=about-us>.

Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and National Marine Fisheries Service.

- Allows the Secretary to invite other federal, state, or local agencies to participate in meetings of the Council.
- Directs the Council to coordinate on:
  - Recreation management policies, including the implementation of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act;
  - Responses to emergencies that disrupt recreation access;
  - Expenditures of recreation funds;
  - The adoption of new technologies on federal lands and waters;
  - Research activities, including quantifying the economic impacts of recreation;
  - Dissemination of educational materials to the public about recreation;
  - Improvement of access to federal lands and waters; and
  - Identification of non-federal partners to promote recreation access.

### **H.R. 3200 (Rep. Zinke), “Gateway Community and Recreation Enhancement Act”**

#### **Section 2. Definitions.**

- Defines a gateway community as a community at the entry point or adjacent to a recreation destination on federal land or water or non-federal land where there is high seasonal or year-around visitation.

#### **Section 3. Gateway Communities.**

- Establishes an assessment of the needs of gateway communities in respect to housing, municipal infrastructure, visitation, and expansion of visitation on federal recreational land and water. Directs USDA and DOI to collaborate with state and local governments, Tribes, housing authorities, and nonprofit and trade organizations in identifying these needs.
- Allows the Secretaries to address these needs by providing financial or technical assistance to gateway communities, entering into leases, rights-of-way, or easements, or issuing special use permits.
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial and technical assistance to communities through the Administrator of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service for infrastructure needs such as hotels, campgrounds, and restaurants.
- Encourages the Secretaries to enter into public-private partnerships, cooperative agreements, or memorandums of understanding.

#### **Section 4. Public Meetings Before Reduction of Access to National Parks.**

- Requires park superintendents to hold public meetings, consult local stakeholders, and provide at least a 60-day comment period before taking action to reduce access to a national park. Exceptions due to health and safety risks are provided.

#### **Section 5. Improved Recreation Visitation Data.**

- Directs the Secretaries to establish a single visitation data reporting system. Data is required for each unit of federal recreational lands and waters and Tribal land, upon the request of the Tribe.

- Provides the Secretaries a maximum of 2 years to establish a pilot program to share real-time or predictive data on visitation and information about lesser-known recreation sites in 15 units under the jurisdiction of DOI and 5 units under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Within 5 years after the date of enactment, the Secretaries shall expand the program to an additional 80 units.
- Requires the adjacent communities of the units selected for the pilot program to be supportive for inclusion in the program.
- Provides the Secretaries flexibilities in communicating information of the pilot program to the public through multiple channels and partners.
- Provides for privacy protections.
- Requires an annual report of visitation by recreational category posted on a website.

**Section 6. Establishment of a Digital Version of America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes.**

- Requires the Secretaries to establish and make available a mobile digital version of the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass by January 1, 2024.

**[H.R. 4984 \(Rep. Comer\), “D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act”](#)**

**Section 2. Transfer of Administrative Jurisdiction Over RFK Memorial Stadium Campus to the General Services Administration.**

- Amends the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to transfer administrative jurisdiction of the RFK Stadium Campus to GSA. Current responsibilities of NPS will also be transferred to GSA.
- Directs GSA and NPS to survey the campus to determine the exact boundary of the campus.
- Within 180 days after the transfer, directs GSA to enter into a lease, without consideration, with D.C.
- D.C. may use the campus for stadium purposes, commercial and residential development, recreational facilities, open space, or public outdoor recreation. These uses are subject to the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts.
- Ensures any development of the campus will not adversely impact the land, including the restoration of wetlands; is at least 30 percent parks and open space; will improve access to the Anacostia River and maintain access to the Anacostia River Trail; provides for necessary parking facilities and public safety measures; and will reduce noise and traffic on surrounding areas.
- Directs the lease term to be 99 years, with the option to renew for subsequent periods.
- Provides for a termination of the lease after a series of steps including findings of noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the lease and noncompliance continuing beyond 90 days since written notice was received. D.C. will bear the cost of rehabilitating the property if the lease is terminated. If the lease is terminated with D.C., the property will be administered as federal property and considered for sale, lease, and exchange.



- Restricts Members of Congress, Delegates, Resident Commissioners to Congress, or any other federal or D.C. government employee from benefiting from the lease or contract related to this transfer.

## **V. COST**

None of the bills have received a formal cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

## **VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION**

The administration previously testified on the Senate companion to the “Gateway Community and Recreation Enhancement Act” and stated that DOI “support[ed] the intent” of the bill.<sup>16</sup> The administration position on the remaining bills is unknown at this time.

## **VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)**

[H.R. 3107](#)

[H.R. 3200](#)

[H.R. 4984](#)

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<sup>16</sup> Statement of Michael A Caldwell before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on S. 3551, May 11, 2022, <https://www.doi.gov/oc/s-3551>.