

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman
Hearing Memo

June 11, 2015

To: Federal Lands Subcommittee Members
From: Spencer Kimball, Subcommittee Staff, x 6-7736
Subject: Legislative hearing on H.R. 2223, “Craggs, Colorado Land Exchange Act of 2015” on **June 16, 2015 at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth.**

H.R. 2223 - “Craggs, Colorado Land Exchange Act of 2015”

Bill Summary

H.R. 2223, introduced by Congressman Doug Lamborn, (R-CO), would authorize, direct, expedite, and facilitate a land exchange in El Paso and Teller Counties, Colorado. The purpose of and need for this exchange is to dispose of National Forest System lands encumbered by permanent improvements at Emerald Valley Ranch that have lost their National Forest character and use that opportunity to acquire private lands in the Pikes Peak region with high National Forest values. Specifically, the bill requires the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to convey 83 acres of Federal land underlying the Emerald Valley Ranch and a perpetual access easement to the Broadmoor Hotel Inc. (BHI) in exchange for a 320-acre parcel owned by BHI on the west side of Pikes Peak and a perpetual public access easement for the lower portion of the Barr Trail.

Cosponsors

Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO)

Invited Witnesses

Ms. Leslie Weldon, Deputy Chief, National Forest System
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C.

Background

Proposed Exchange

This bill would require the USFS and BHI to perform a land exchange, wherein BHI would convey to the United States the 320-acre Craggs property and a perpetual public access easement for the lower portion of the Barr Trail in exchange for an 83-acre Federal parcel located at Emerald Valley Ranch and a perpetual access easement along Forest Service Road (FSR) 371 from FSR 368 (Old Stage Road) to the existing closure gate approximately one-half mile west of Emerald Valley Ranch. If the value of the Non-Federal parcel exceeds the

value of the Federal parcel and perpetual access easement, BHI will donate the excess value to the United States.

The exchange is intended to provide increased recreational opportunities for the public on the Pike National Forest, including securing perpetual access on the portion of the Barr Trail located on private lands outside the Pike National Forest boundary. Acquiring the Crags property would complement management of the Pikes Peak West Roadless Area and other adjacent National Forest System lands and would eliminate management encumbrances and liability to the United States associated with buildings at Emerald Valley Ranch.

The bill is currently supported by: El Paso County, Colorado; the City of Manitou Springs, Colorado; the City of Colorado Springs, Colorado; Trust for Public Land; Colorado Natural Heritage Program; Trails and Open Space Coalition; Pikes Peak Marathon Inc.; Friends of the Peak; and Incline Friends.

Non-Federal Parcel and Barr Trail Public Access Easement

BHI recently acquired the 320-acre Crags property on the west side of Pikes Peak. The property is completely surrounded by the Pike National Forest and has been the top acquisition priority for the Pikes Peak Ranger District for several years. The property provides several opportunities to connect Forest System trails emanating from The Crags Campground with trails in the Horsethief Park/Putney Gulch area. In addition, existing trails within the property could become key links in the proposed Ring-the-Peak Trail.

The trailhead for the Barr Trail is located just west of the Pikes Peak Cog Railway Station on property owned by the City of Manitou Springs. After climbing a series of switchbacks, the trail enters property owned by the Manitou & Pikes Peak (M&PP) Railway Company, a sister company of BHI. Historically, the M&PP Railway Company granted term easements to the U.S. Forest Service to provide legal public access along the segment of the Barr Trail. Although there is currently no easement in place on this segment, the M&PP Railway Company is presently allowing public access on the trail.

Federal Parcel and Perpetual Access Easement

The Emerald Valley Ranch is located on a federal parcel located southwest of Colorado Springs on the southeast side of Pikes Peak. BHI acquired buildings on the parcel from the previous owner in 2012. In October 2012, USFS issued a 20-year special use permit to BHI to operate and maintain Emerald Valley Ranch as a guest ranch. Since issuance of the special use permit, BHI has invested in significant upgrades and improvements throughout the parcel, including a water supply system, a portion of the toe of the dam for the southernmost reservoir along Little Fountain Creek, and a historic road that provides secondary and emergency access to Emerald Valley Ranch.

Administration Position

Unknown at this time.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.