

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop, Chairman
Markup Memo

October 5, 2015

To: All Natural Resources Committee Staff

From: From: Majority Committee Staff, Federal Lands Subcommittee, x-67736

Markup: Markup of H.R. 974 (Rep. Cynthia Lummis), To direct the Secretary of the Interior to promulgate regulations to allow the use of hand-propelled vessels on certain rivers and streams that flow in and through certain Federal lands in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway, and for other purposes.
October 7 and 8, 2015

H.R. 974 (Rep. Cynthia Lummis), “Yellowstone and Grand Teton Paddling Act.”

Bill Summary

H.R. 974, introduced by Representative Lummis (R-WY), would direct the Department of the Interior (DOI) to promulgate regulations to allow the use of hand-propelled vessels on certain rivers and streams within: (1) the Yellowstone National Park in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming; and (2) the Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in Wyoming.

Background

On the opening day of fishing season in 1950, the rivers and streams of Yellowstone National Park were closed to paddling to reduce fishing pressure exerted on park waters during the post-war period. In 1962, Grand Teton National Park implemented a similar policy prohibiting paddling on all park rivers and streams, except the Snake River and the stream connecting Bearpaw Lake and Jackson Lake.

Each park policy was codified in federal regulations which are now over 50 years old, and numerous Americans have been subjected to arrest and fines for paddling these rivers. The National Park Service (NPS) has other common management tools to prevent overfishing, rendering the original purpose of the paddling closures and the regulations moot.

Paddling is typically considered an appropriate activity in National Parks and other protected federal lands, and is typically managed commensurate with other similar forms of recreation. H.R. 974 opens rivers and streams throughout Yellowstone and Grand Teton to

paddling, under the NPS full discretion, and encourages the NPS to actively manage paddling as an appropriate and sustainable activity.

H.R. 974 builds upon legislation introduced by Representative Lummis in the 113th Congress. The previous bill, H.R. 3492, was favorably reported by the Committee by unanimous consent on January 28, 2014.

Major Provisions of the Bill

- Directs DOI to promulgate regulations to allow the use of hand-propelled vessels on certain rivers and streams within Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway in Wyoming.
- Makes the regulations promulgated under this Act inapplicable to waters within the Teton Range that are open to use by hand-propelled vessels on the day before enactment of this Act.
- States that the regulations issued under this Act shall not consider any expansion of commercial use of hand-propelled vessels in the Parks.
- Preempts existing regulations governing vessels in Yellowstone National Park and in Grand Teton National Park only after promulgating the regulations as directed by this Act.
- Authorizes DOI to recover all costs associated with monitoring the use of hand-propelled vessels, including the cost of inspecting and decontaminating vessels to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive or injurious species in Yellowstone, Grand Teton and the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway.

Cost

Unknown at this time

Administration Position

Unknown at this time

Amendments

Representative Lummis will introduce an amendment to H.R. 974. The amendment addresses concerns raised by environmental groups by providing a definition of hand-propelled vessel and paddling and by setting a floor for the scope of applicable waters within the Parks.