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**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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**Opening Statement by**  
**The Honorable Rob Bishop**  
**Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests & Public Lands**  
**At the Oversight Hearing on**  
**“Concession Contract Issues For Outfitters, Guides and Smaller Concessions”**  
**Thursday, August 2, 2012, at 2:00 p.m.**

The Park Service has the double mission of being both a good steward of the land and of ensuring public access and enjoyment of the parks. To carry out both of these statutorily imposed missions the Park Service has often found it best to use concession contracts and commercial use authorizations with private companies – most of them small businesses - to provide many of the services visitors need and expect.

Today, however, increased fees, bureaucracy and regulation are driving up the cost of running private businesses in National Parks making profitable operation difficult and threatening the continuation of visitor services that make visitor access possible and affordable for American families while providing thousands of local jobs.

Our witnesses will tell us that recently the Park Service proposed increasing the minimum liability coverage held by certain small contractors from 5 hundred thousand dollars to 5 million dollars and requiring Mom and Pop outfitters whose businesses precede the park to enter into contracts only Fortune 500 companies could handle. Lawyers and CPA's with regulatory savvy now supersede generations of on the ground experience in the park concessions world.

In some cases, it seems the Park Service is pushing small businesses into making expensive capital improvements to government facilities that were not contemplated by the concession contract and with costs that are impossible to recoup over the short course of the standard 10 year contract.

Although the law requires the Park Service to provide “simplified procedures for small, individually-owned, concessions contracts,” we are told that in the past ten years contracts have expanded greatly in length and complexity. One small seasonal business that grosses less than \$150,000 a year reports that in 10 years, their contract grew 15 pages to 54 pages. The cost of complying with the requirements and endless reports is passed on to the public, of course. The stories we hear are all too familiar as agency after agency acts as though its mission is to create obstacles to job creation, tie down entrepreneurs and provide additional examples of overbearing government run amok.