

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

H.R. 1612 expands the ability of the Secretary of the Interior to recruit young people and improve living conditions for the participants in the program. We support the goals of this program and want to encourage public participation in the care of America's vast expanse of public lands. Many facilities on our public lands are in need of improvement and a job corps program, if wisely managed, can be a cost-effective way of restoring public lands for the use and enjoyment of all Americans.

However, despite efforts made at full committee markup and agreements on several points of conflict with the Majority, we remain concerned that this legislation backtracks on previous commitments in this program to address deteriorating conditions in our forests by committing at least half of the funds to projects under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA).

As this Public Lands Job Corps program is currently devised, it places the highest priority on helping to create a new generation of land managers who would have the training and proper understanding of how to prevent catastrophic wildfires. It was understood that the best way of doing this was using this program to help implement the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. HFRA was passed with bipartisan support, including support from Democrats who are sitting on this Committee today, and five current Chairmen. Unfortunately, this legislation strips out any reference to HFRA in this Act. This is harmful to forest health, unfair to the timber dependent communities that have been hurt by unwise federal policies and dangerous to our federal land neighbors now exposed to increased fire danger.

We are also deeply concerned that the recent CBO scoring of this bill estimates that implementing the legislation would cost \$120 million over the 2010–2014 period—a huge increase over current spending levels and the President's requested amount.

Mr. Bishop offered an amendment that would have made wildfire prevention a priority by putting back in a reference to HFRA and set at a minimum of 50% of the funding to go to promotion of the health of our public lands. This is a step, admittedly a small one, in the right direction when it comes to fighting catastrophic wildfires. Unfortunately, this thoughtful amendment was defeated by the Majority, and the legislation moves to the House of Representatives without appropriate requirements to steer funds to where they are critically needed.

We hope that with a thorough debate, under an open rule on the Floor, we will be able to remedy this flaw and send an improved bill to the Senate.

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