

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES CONTINUED

except they want a donation of \$44.00 to the foundation for Colorado State Parks and will require 2 one time fees of \$25.00. One of these fees goes to the Highway Users Tax Fund and the other goes to the licensing services cash fund.

SB 10-110 This bill would move seat belt violations from a secondary offense to a primary offense. It is currently in the Senate in hold over status.

GREAT NEWS!

February 13, 2010 - The entire Idaho Congressional delegation has joined in a letter to Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell urging him to require that private companies managing Forest Service recreation facilities continue to honor discounts due to Senior and Disabled lifetime passholders.

The Forest Service has proposed to reduce the Senior/Disabled discount at concessionaire-managed campgrounds from 50% to only 10%. The proposal would also allow concessionaires to give lifetime passholders only a 10% discount at day-use sites instead of the free use to which the law says their passes entitle them.

More details are available [HERE](#).

The proposal was initiated by private concessionaires, who manage roughly half of all Forest Service campgrounds. They are concerned that the increasing number of people qualifying for lifetime passes is a threat to their profitability. This proposal would allow concessionaires to charge fees that the Forest Service is prohibited from charging, and they would not have to honor passes under the same terms as the Forest Service is required to by law. It would put private companies, instead of Congress and the public, in control of recreation policy on public lands. Even if you are not a Senior or Disabled, this proposal is a threat to your access to public lands!

The Idaho delegation's letter is an important step toward re-asserting Congressional oversight of public lands policy and they are to be commended for it!

Senator Crapo is also a sponsor of Senate bill S.868, which would repeal the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and limit fees to developed campgrounds, cabin rentals, and other specialized facilities. S.868 would put an end to the fees currently being levied at hundreds of National Forest and Bureau of Land Management trailheads, and for day-use, backcountry access, and dispersed uses.

The bill's other sponsors are Montana Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester. Please contact YOUR Congressional delegation.

WE'VE FOUND THE SMOKING GUNS!

Two important letters have recently been made public, both of which concern US Forest Service fee increases for seniors and disabled persons. These will put to rest any doubts you might have had that private companies are determined to achieve the total privatization of recreation on public lands and that the U.S. Forest Service is aiding and abetting them.

- 1) Derrick Crandall, President of the American Recreation Coalition (ARC), recently wrote a letter detailing ARC's anti-public lands, pro-corporate control lobbying, and posted it on their website for the whole world to see. Read Crandall's letter [HERE](#).
- 2) Warren Meyer, head of the National Forest Recreation Association, used a NFRA press release to try and frame the plan (which NFRA initiated) to cheat seniors and the disabled out of the benefits they were promised with their lifetime passes as somehow being a boon to young families.

Read the NFRA statement [HERE](#).

What's most important in these letters: -

- 1) For the first time ever, Crandall openly refers to the corporate takeover of Public Lands, giving ARC credit for its central role in establishing Fee Demo and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, or R.A.T. (Recreation Access Tax), and states the support of ARC for privatization of public lands along with charging prices for recreation at the same rates as private corporations do. Even some members of ARC are against increasing fees, especially members of RV groups like the Family Motorcoach Association and the Good Sam Club, many of whom are seniors. They have seen the value of their retirement savings plummet and they rely on their discount to make camping affordable. All citizens need a fair level of access in return for funds supplied by our taxes.
- 2) The NFRA statement makes clear that the policy changes being proposed by the Forest Service are originating with them for the benefit of the firms they represent, and that the Forest Service is merely acting as their front man. There is no public benefit to the policy changes, only benefits to private interests.

Some pro-fee supporters say that the US Forest Service is short of funds and therefore continually increased fees are essential for its basic operations, which include the expense of fire-fighting. However, their recreation budget is separate from fire and the overall funding for the USFS is not only substantially ahead of inflation but has increased by over 60% since 2000.