



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

June 21, 2018

H.R. 3400
Recreation Not Red Tape Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on April 18, 2018

SUMMARY

H.R. 3400 would change the ways that certain federal agencies issue special recreation permits and recover costs associated with the permitting process. The bill also would encourage agencies to improve access to certain federal lands and would enhance existing volunteer programs. Finally, the bill would codify an existing program offering all fourth grade students free admission to federal lands and waters.

Using information provided by the affected agencies, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$7 million over the 2019-2023 period; such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 3400 would affect the amount of fees (which are treated as changes in direct spending) collected by the affected agencies; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures apply. However, because the affected agencies have the authority to spend those fees, any change in collections would be offset by a corresponding change in spending, and the net effect on direct spending in any year would be negligible. Enacting the bill would not affect revenues.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 3400 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

H.R. 3400 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA).

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary effect of H.R. 3400 is shown in the following table. The costs of the legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019- 2023
INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	1	1	1	1	1	7
Estimated Outlays	0	1	1	1	1	1	7

Amounts do not sum to totals because of rounding.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 3400 will be enacted near the end of 2018 and that the necessary funding will be available each fiscal year. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar activities.

Permitting and Cost Recovery

Title I would change the ways that certain federal agencies issue special recreation permits and recover associated costs. In 2017, the affected agencies collected \$38 million in special recreation use fees and also recovered an estimated \$10 million for the cost of issuing those permits. Under current law, those agencies have the authority to spend all such collections.

Title I would authorize the agencies to issue permits for some new recreational activities without conducting environmental reviews that would be required under current law. It also would authorize the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to issue joint permits for activities that occur on lands administered by both agencies. Finally, title I would cap the fee that agencies could charge for a permit at 3 percent of the annual gross revenue stemming from the permitted activity. CBO lacks sufficient data to estimate the net effect on fee collections that would result from the changes required under the bill. However, because the affected agencies would retain the authority to spend those collections, any change in collections would be offset by an equal change in spending.

Title I also would require the affected agencies to waive cost recovery charges for the first 50 hours of work to issue special use recreation permits and would prohibit agencies from recovering costs for certain activities under the Endangered Species Act. Using information provided by those agencies, CBO estimates that enacting that provision would reduce collections and the associated direct spending by about \$1 million a year,

resulting in a negligible change in direct spending relative to current law. However, because the agencies would still need to perform the work necessary to issue permits they would need to spend \$1 million in appropriated funds, such spending would be subject to the availability of those funds.

Accessibility of Federal Lands

Title II would encourage collaboration among the Secretaries of Agriculture, the Interior, and Defense to enhance access to public lands by veterans and active-duty members of the armed forces. CBO expects that carrying out title II would have a minimal effect on the agencies' workload and no significant effect on the federal budget.

Title III would authorize agencies to extend the recreation season or increase recreational use of federal lands administered by the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Forest Service. CBO estimates that implementing title III would have no significant effect on the federal budget because current law allows the affected agencies to carry out those activities.

Volunteer Programs

Title IV would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to develop an initiative to enhance private-sector volunteer programs on federal lands. Because the affected agencies already work with private-sector volunteers, CBO estimates that implementing title IV would cost less than \$500,000 a year, which would be used to hire staff to expand and promote existing volunteer programs. Any spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Title V would amend the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993, which governs programs that employ young adults to work on lands managed by DOI and the Forest Service. Under current law, those programs are permanently authorized to receive appropriations totaling \$12 million a year.

Existing Public Lands Corps (PLC) programs vary by agency and funding source. Although historically some agencies have received specific appropriations to carry out the program, the National Park Service often has derived funding from recreation fees that the agency can use without further appropriation action. DOI cannot provide information regarding the amount of funding each agency has allocated to implement PLC programs in recent years.

In addition to changing the name of the Public Lands Corps to the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, title V would:

- Expand the program to include at least 11 additional federal agencies,

- Assist Indian tribes and related youth groups with the operation of the Indian Youth 21st Century Conservation Service Corps,
- Require participating agencies to designate program coordinators,
- Open the program to veterans under the age of 35, and
- Authorize agencies to use appropriated funds to provide transportation subsidies to program participants.

Although title V would expand the program and authorize several new activities under the Public Lands Corps Act, the bill would not increase the amounts authorized to be appropriated under that act. Thus, CBO estimates that implementing title V would not affect the federal budget over the 2019-2023 period.

Youth Program

Title VI would codify an existing program that grants fourth grade students and up to three accompanying adults free admission to federal lands and waters. Because the program is already authorized, CBO estimates that enacting title VI would not affect the federal budget.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS: None.

INCREASE IN LONG-TERM DIRECT SPENDING AND DEFICITS

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 3400 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

MANDATES

H.R. 3400 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

PREVIOUS CBO ESTIMATES

On September 18, 2017, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 289, the GO Act, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on June 27, 2017. That bill contains provisions that are similar to those in title II of H.R. 3400, and CBO's estimates of the budgetary effects of those provisions are the same.

On May 4, 2018, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 2987, the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act of 2017, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on January 17, 2018. That bill contains provisions that are similar to those in title V of H.R. 3400, and CBO's estimates of the budgetary effects of those provisions are the same.

ESTIMATE PREPARED BY

Federal Costs: Jeff LaFave
Mandates: Zachary Byrum

ESTIMATE REVIEWED BY

Kim P. Cawley
Chief, Natural and Physical Resources Unit

H. Samuel Papenfuss
Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis