



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

July 20, 2018

H.R. 4824

Rural Broadband Permitting Efficiency Act of 2018

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on June 6, 2018

H.R. 4824 would require the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to establish a program to enhance the permitting process for broadband Internet projects in each of the agency's field offices. The bill also would authorize BLM and the Forest Service to enter into agreements with states and tribes to allow those entities to carry out environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for broadband projects within existing rights-of-way on federal lands.

Using information provided by BLM, CBO estimates that establishing a program to enhance the permitting process for broadband projects in each of the agency's 14 field offices would cost \$400,000 in 2019. CBO also estimates that administering those programs would cost about \$300,000 a year over the 2020-2023 period. Those amounts, totaling \$1.6 million over the next five years, would pay BLM staff to develop and administer the programs. Any spending to cover those costs would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Because the bill would authorize BLM and the Forest Service to allow states and tribes to assume responsibility for completing analyses under NEPA, CBO estimates that implementing the bill could reduce the amount the agencies spend on those activities. However, CBO expects that any funds those agencies would have used for the analyses would instead be used for similar activities.

Enacting H.R. 4824 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 4824 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

H.R. 4824 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Jeff LaFave. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.