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Senator Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4704

Dear Senator Cantwell,

July 5, 2009

I recently received a \$75 citation for refusing to pay a national forest user fee required to access a national forest trail in my home area of the Methow Valley. I am challenging this ticket based on research I conducted in 2007 that revealed some troubling consequences to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which was passed in an appropriations bill in 2004.

First and foremost is the fact that FLREA has reduced the ability of low-income families living in the vicinity of the national forests to access our public lands by nearly 50%, while reducing all other users by over 30% (see page 8 of research document attached). The Forest Service's own research indicates that visitations to the national forests in Oregon and Washington have dropped by 27% from 2004 to 2007. I would imagine that number is considerably higher since the economic collapse, which has stressed family budgets even more.

In addition, it appears that FLREA has been subjected by considerable abuse nationwide, which my ticket is a case in point. Page 6 of the law states that the Forest Service may charge a recreation fee, but only for cites that have the following amenities:

1. Designated developed parking.
2. A permanent toilet facility.
3. A permanent trash receptacle.
4. Interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk.
5. Picnic tables.
6. Security services

I was ticketed at the Cedar Creek trail outside of Mazama, WA on May 31, 2009. The parking area for this trailhead is a large gravel pit, not the required "developed parking area." The parameters of the fee area were not defined. In addition, the only amenity at the trail head was a pit toilet. The USFS is apparently allowed to skirt the law by

declaring large tracks of land as High Impact Recreation Areas (HIRA) that state if all of the "six amenities" exist anywhere within the HIRA a fee applies to everyone who enters whether they use them or not. That I should be required to pay a fee to access amenities that are 20 miles from the area I plan to hike is unreasonable and unfair and should be unlawful. Requiring citizens to pay an additional fee to access land they already pay for and own, is also unreasonable and unfair.

I am writing to ask you to support legislation to repeal the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act: S.868 sponsored by Senators Baucus, Tester, and Crapo. The unintended consequences of this Act on working families in the area of our national forests are unacceptable. Challenging FLREA also places a high burden on families who resist. The process is unclear, the tickets are extreme for first time citations, and the requirement that families living in the Methow Valley must drive five hours to Spokane places an added burden on already struggling families simply to access public lands. Families should be free to hike on national forest trails and enjoy our public lands at will. That was their intended purpose. This law is very unpopular with your constituents, and many members of regional forest service offices, as my research paper indicates. Please help rescind this unfair and burdensome law.

Best regards,

Kristi Laguzza-Boosman

Enclosures