

Exhibit Number: 1

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DATE 3/9/05
BILL NO. HT 13

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse: A Fee Demo Parade of Horribles:

- According to Arapahoe National Forest Supervisor Jim Bedwell, the Fee Demo project at Mt Evans employs 1.5 permanent employees and 11 to 14 seasonal employees. The area consists of just 14 miles of paved state highway.
- The Monticello District of the BLM reports that 69% of the fees collected go to staffing and administration, with another 14% reported as going to fee collection. Apparently the 14% does not include any personnel or administrative fee collection costs. Another 7% goes to the often fee-related signage.
- The Schulman Grove (California) Visitors Center, outhouses, and picnic area were constructed in 1996 with appropriated dollars, not fee demo funds. Forest Service officials concluded almost immediately that a longer summer season and reduced appropriations from Congress created "a situation where current and expected funding levels are no longer adequate to fund even base-level service." The business plan estimated the agency could raise \$27,275 in 1998. During 1998, visitation dropped by one third and the agency collected only \$12,600.
- John Day fossil Beds National Monument is building a \$8.5 million dollar visitor center. The area has about 15,000 visitors a year.
- Grand Teton National Park proposed building a \$1.4 million dollar "Welcome" center in a remote section of the park. Due to local opposition, the NPS subsequently proposed a 750 square foot entrance station that will cost \$400,000. Pam Lichtman of the Jackson Hole conservation alliance stated "We thought (fee) money would go toward a backlog of maintenance jobs, not more development. We don't need to build just because we have the (fee) money."
- The Mono Lake visitors center plan was to charge 116,000 annual visitors at the entrance to a natural history film and the visitors center and kiosk. First-year receipts were projected at \$364,741. In the first year of operations, the program brought in only \$87,000. The visitors skipped the interpretive displays and sidestepped the fees. Visitor center director Deanna Dulen stated "The pay to go to museums, they pay to go to art exhibits. You would think people would pay to go to a beautiful visitors center." Former wilderness ranger Gary Guenther commented "Such meager returns hardly justify overdeveloping places like this. People come here primarily for the natural wonders, not the amenities."
- The Forest Service spent 1.6 million (appropriated) dollars on a toilet near the Maroon Bells Wilderness, a Fee Demo area. More than half the fees collected (\$65,256) went to paying the salaries of Forest Service personnel that work there. The cost of fee collection is estimated at \$47,812, or approximately 38% of the fees collected. With fee collection costs eliminated, the remaining maintenance and administrative costs would be \$31, 444. The \$1.6 million would have paid for the management of the area for almost half a century.
- Near Ouray, the Forest Service is renovating the Amphitheater Campground to the tune of \$600,000 for its 31 sites (\$19,354 per site), using appropriated dollars. Yet a quarter mile away, they claim not to have sufficient funds to manage the Canyon Creek area, and have instituted a fee there. The \$600,000 would pay for seasonal ranger patrols in Canyon Creek for about 20 years. Meanwhile, the local district's recreation budget has been cut by almost 50%, despite a budget increase for other districts on the Uncompahgre National Forest.
- Designed by six architects and engineers employed by the NPS, Glacier National Park built a \$1 million, two-story, four-hole outhouse that will serve only a few thousand visitors each year. A second \$1 million outhouse is planned for another remote area of the park. The agency has already spent \$860,000 for design and construction supervision teams. In all the job could end up costing taxpayers more than \$6 million.

Park Service officials admit they could put the money to better use but say they had little choice: Montana's three-member congressional delegation directed them to undertake the project. Glacier's superintendent David Mihalic stated "We have far greater needs. If somebody

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 handed me \$2.5 million and asked 'where would you best put it?' this would be far down the list. The problem is, no one did it that way. Congress handed us \$3.3 million and said 'put it here.'"

□ The General Accounting Office recently completed a study of the Fee Demo program. The study noted that most agencies collecting the fees do not prioritize maintenance projects, so there is no way to make certain that the money is going to meet the most pressing needs.

□ The NPS reported spending \$330,000 on an outhouse in a remote area of the Delaware Gap National Recreation Area in Pennsylvania. The TV show 20/20 ran a story on this and found the \$330,000 outhouse really cost the taxpayers a whopping \$784,000.

□ In Thomas Stone National Historic Site, a tiny park on a Potomac River cove south of Washington DC, there is a six-hole outhouse which cost taxpayers \$420,000.

□ The Fee Demo program at Idaho's Sawtooth National Recreation Area raises about \$30,000 per year. The SNRA's annual recreation budget is near \$700,000. There are 34 designated sites in the 800,000-acre recreation area. Patrolling those sites for fee violators is like spending dollars to collect dimes. It hardly seems worth the trouble.

□ USFS figures show that more than half the fees collected in 1997 and most of the money collected in 1996 went to pay overhead or to pay for the cost of collecting the fees. In 1997 several of the Forest Service's (then) 40 fee demo projects spent more money collecting fees than they collected.

□ In FY2001 the Deschutes National Forest spent \$87,501 fee dollars to collect \$297,782 at Lava Lands Visitor Center, or about 29% of the money collected. When an additional \$18,007 Congress appropriated for fee collection in factored in Deschutes officials actually spent \$105,508, or 35% of the revenue collected. Compared to FY2000 collections of \$327,695, the amount collected dropped by \$29,913 in FY2001. Recreation program manager Mark Christiansen said "taking the money from the tubes is expensive and reducing the costs of collecting fees is difficult." Federal law requires two people to be present when collecting money, in part because USFS fee collector Linda Holmes was convicted of stealing \$17,400 from Arizona's Roosevelt Lake fee demo site, and a Coronado National Forest employee was convicted of stealing \$3,900 at the Mount Lemmon (Arizona) fee demo site.

□ On the Deschutes National Forest, 26,922 day passes and 3,876 annual passes were sold in FY2001. Recreation program manager Mark Christiansen estimates visitation is about 6 million. If there are 6 million visitors and only about 30,000 passes sold, it suggests an extraordinary amount of non-compliance. The report to Congress said 71 percent of forest visitors bought passes.

□ In the early 1990s, Diana Pietrasanta had eight to 10 seasonal rangers in her district on the Inyo National Forest. In FY2000, the entire wilderness-management budget of approximately \$450,000 was siphoned off for management staff and region-wide projects. Instead of giving her a budget large enough to pay rangers, Pietrasanta's supervisors asked her to start charging wilderness area visitors a fee under Fee Demo. "The frustration is, I don't have a business background," says Pietrasanta.

□ On the Deschutes National Forest in Oregon, the congressionally appropriated wilderness budget dropped 48% in real terms between 1995 and 2000.

□ For the past three years, the number of visitors to the National Parks has been roughly static. The number of people who stayed overnight in cabins and hotels within the parks is down about 15 percent from the peak in 1992. The number of recreational vehicles has declined to barely 2.5 million. Many parks saw visits peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s, before gate fees became widespread.

□ When a hearing on forest fees was held in Ketchum in 1998, one of the first questions asked was "How much will fee collection and enforcement cost?" A surprised public listened as a USFS spokesman said the Forest Service has done no cost projections on collection, enforcement, or prosecution. Subsequently, U.S. Attorney Betty Richardson charged that the Forest Service had shifted the cost of prosecutions to her office without her agreement, and that

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her office would not prosecute people ticketed for not paying fees because the prosecutions cost too much.

George Dutenski

CAN'T SEE THE FOREST FOR THE FEEES

**PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LANDS
REPEAL FEE DEMO**



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Dear Elected Official:

Congress established the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program ("Fee Demo") as a rider on an appropriations bill in 1996. Under Fee Demo, publicly owned roads, hiking trails, picnic areas, fishing waters, and recreation sites that have historically been free are now charging access fees to recreational users.

User fees are being used to replace tax dollars as the main financial support for public lands. This is a fundamental change in public policy, yet it was accomplished without congressional debate or public hearings.

On its face, it certainly appears reasonable that we help federal land managers do their jobs. But the issue is much more complicated than that. The Forests, Wildlife Refuges, BLM Lands and National Parks that Americans have entrusted to federal agencies to manage are being developed, packaged, and sold back to us as a product. Gone is the concept of nature for nature's sake. Gone is the concept of public ownership of public lands. Fee-based funding constitutes double taxation, discriminates against lower-income citizens, and is a violation of the great American heritage of equal access to public lands.

Eight years into Fee Demo we find that simple, rustic campgrounds have been transformed into paved RV parks. People must pay a fee to leave their vehicles at trailheads or drive scenic backcountry roads. Low income Americans are excluded from enjoying nature on the same terms as the affluent. Under Fee Demo, Forest Rangers are no longer civil servants and stewards of the land. They are now cops on the lookout for "trespassers" without the proper pass to be there. Some entire National Forests are now off limits unless you purchase an entry pass. Simply put, we are no longer the owners of the land, we are "customers."

Our public spaces were not set aside by the people of the United States to fund the private gain of either corporations or non-elected bureaucracies. Treating the beauty of public lands as a "product" changes their very nature. Instead of an end, they become a means. Instead of existing for their own right, they become commodities, to be marketed and sold.

In the West, where many counties are comprised of 80% or more federal lands, Fee Demo has been implemented with little or no consultation with state or local elected bodies, or with the general public. Despite widespread controversy and increasing opposition, the federal agencies continue to tout the program as a success. They count every dollar collected and every pass sold as evidence of the program's popularity, even though failure to pay results in a federal citation. Those who don't want a ticket and don't want to pay a fee are forced to go elsewhere, damaging local economies that depend on tourism.

Eight years into a failed program, Americans are beginning to speak out and be heard. The Western Slope No-Fee Coalition is one of over 200 grassroots citizens groups nationwide working to repeal Fee Demo. Our members include conservatives and liberals, motorized recreationists and wilderness hikers, senior citizens and youngsters. Although we

WESTERN SLOPE NO-FEE COALITION

disagree on many aspects of public land use, we all agree that we want Congress to restore adequate appropriations for public lands management from existing tax dollars. We are saying *no!* to heavy-handed, heritage-robbing and discriminatory entrance fees.

We are requesting that your jurisdiction join counties and municipalities throughout the West, and the state legislatures of Colorado, Oregon, New Hampshire, and California by passing a resolution opposing the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. Please send a strong signal to Congress that your citizens want the 200-year tradition of equal access to public lands to continue.

A sample resolution follows for your consideration, along with examples of resolutions already passed by other elected bodies and background information about this issue. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Western Slope No-Fee Coalition

President Robert Funkhouser (Norwood)

Vice President Jan Holt (Durango)

Secretary Skip Edwards (Crawford)

Treasurer Kitty Benzar (Durango)