

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8002

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS, JANUARY 29, 1993

Brief Description: Requesting the national park service increase resource protection programs.

SPONSORS: Senators Talmadge, Owen and Fraser

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8002 be substituted therefor, and the substitute joint memorial do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chairman; Deccio, McCaslin, Moore, Sutherland, and Talmadge.

Staff: Cathy Baker (786-7708)

Hearing Dates: January 27, 1993; January 29, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Washington State is home to three major national parks which attract millions of visitors each year. Tourism is an important component of the state's economy and is sustained, in part, by these national parks and the unique scenic and ecological resources they contain.

Recent studies indicate that national park resources are increasingly threatened. Growing numbers of visitors threaten many park resources and put a strain on park facilities. Park resources are also stressed by problems, including air and water pollution, that originate outside park boundaries.

The Office of the Inspector General within the U.S. Department of the Interior recently released a report concluding that the National Park Service "did not ensure that known threats to natural resources were addressed or corrected on a timely basis, did not have a complete natural resources inventory to identify potential threats, and did not have a monitoring program sufficient to assist park managers in managing their natural resources." The Park Service has a backlog of more than 4700 resource protection projects costing about \$477 million. In fiscal year 1992, the Park Service allocated only 10 percent of its operating budget to natural resource management.

It is suggested that national park resource protection and visitor service programs serve to protect public investments and create an economic stimulus in the area in which the programs are undertaken.

SUMMARY:

The Memorial requests that the President and the Congress increase natural resource protection programs and reduce the backlog of visitor service, repair, and rehabilitation projects in the national park system.

The Memorial supports additional funding for updating and completing resource management plans for each of the major national parks; enhancement of Park Service science programs; cooperative programs among federal, state and local governments, tribes and private landowners to ensure that land use activities in or near national parks do not damage park resources; and the use of volunteer programs and youth conservation corps programs to meet the resource protection needs of parks while creating jobs and contributing to the economic development of adjacent communities.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

Language dealing with the request for funding and completing resource protection projects is clarified.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none

TESTIMONY FOR:

National parks are important to Washington's tourism industry. Each of the three major national parks in the state are facing budget cuts that will negatively impact park resources and visitor services. In order for the parks to continue to attract tourists, resource protection and visitor service programs must be adequately funded.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Sally Soest; Polly Dyer; Kevin Herrick (pro)