

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 30, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we request that you prohibit funding or instruct the National Park Service (NPS) to modify two recent policy proposals in relation to park entry fees and Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) requirements and permit fees.

The National Park Service (NPS) is in the process of implementing two significant policy changes — One in relation to park entry fees and another in relation to Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) requirements and permit fees.

Small businesses from the tour, travel and motorcoach industries have raised concerns that NPS' new commercial tour requirements and significant CUA permit fees increases are overly burdensome and will impose excessive reporting requirements that are impractical in real world scenarios.

The new CUA requirements and permit fees are scheduled to go into effect October 1, 2019. However, parks throughout the country are already starting to implement some of the policy changes in order to ensure compliance. As a result of the CUA policy changes, a road-based tour operator will be required to apply for and obtain a CUA for each NPS park in which it operates and file an annual report accounting for all the passengers that visited each individual park. To obtain a CUA permit, the operator will have to pay exorbitant fees under the new process.

For example, Gettysburg National Military Park is located in the town of Gettysburg. Currently, there is no admission fee to enter the park or to drive down the streets of the town. However, under the new NPS structure, each tour group visiting Gettysburg will pay a \$300 CUA permit fee, levy a \$5 per passenger administrative fee, pay a \$250 fee for a motorcoach of visitors and pay \$130 per hour for a licensed battlefield guide. 80 percent of bus operators are small businesses and they simply can't absorb these types of costs.

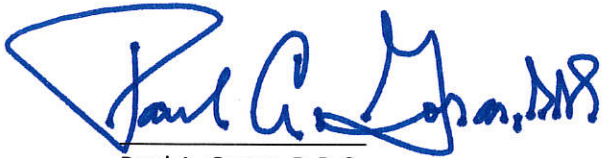
No comments in relation to these proposed policy changes were published on the federal docket. Accordingly, the agency did not publicly respond to concerns and comments raised about these significant policy changes.

On October 17, 2017, NPS announced a proposal to increase “fees at highly visited national parks during peak seasons.” Due to public scrutiny, the initial park entry fee proposal changed from a new per vehicle fee to an increase in per head fees. While the per head fee increases are being sold as a modest increase of \$5 per person on top of current park entry fees, in actuality park entry fees will increase significantly with some individual fees tripling at certain parks due to tier system pricing and phased increases.

For example, Everglades National Park raised its entrance fees in January of 2019 and will raise them again in a second phase in January of 2020 as a result of the new policy. During the first phase, a seven-day vehicle pass raised from \$25 to 30, a seven-day motorcycle pass is raised from \$20 to \$25; a seven-day pedestrian pass is raised from \$8 to \$15; and an annual pass is raised from \$40 to \$55. The second phase will increase all seven-day passes an additional \$5 and the annual pass will increase an additional \$15.

Affected operators and tourists support addressing the NPS maintenance backlog and are not opposed to all fees. However, the new NPS’s park entry fees and CUA program changes and permit fees are flawed and have lacked transparency. Accordingly, we request that you prohibit funding or instruct NPS to modify these two recent policy changes.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



Mark Meadows
Member of Congress



Scott R. Tipton
Member of Congress