

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8022

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Ecology & Parks, January 24, 1996

Brief Description: Opposing national park closures.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Hale, Fairley, Winsley, Haugen, Sheldon, McCaslin, Rasmussen, Spanel and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ecology & Parks: 1/17/96, 1/24/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8022 be substituted therefor, and the substitute joint memorial do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Hochstatter, McAuliffe, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: Nationwide attendance at national parks and forests continues to increase, while federal funding to operate and maintain the facilities has remained substantially the same. The budget reconciliation discussions before Congress have included options for resolving funding shortfalls ranging from creating a National Park Closure Commission to recommending closure of some parks, to a reform act that would allow the National Park Service to raise more money from concessionaires operating in the parks.

The temporary closures of national park and national forest centers in Washington during federal government shut-downs may have a negative impact on local economies and regional tourism. Due to limited federal funding, some facilities, such as the Mt. St. Helens Visitor Center, are reducing seasonal hours of operation permanently.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Congress is asked to provide adequate funding for a diversity of natural, cultural, and historical park and forest units by the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

Congress is asked not to reduce park or forest service center hours of operation, even on a temporary basis, and not to consider any national park closures.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve and San Juan Historic Park are added to the list of national parks in Washington State.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: National parks in Washington State are being threatened by funding cuts and potential closures. The recent federal government shutdown demonstrated how important these national parks are. This memorial will send a strong message of support for our national parks to Congress.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Terri Pauly, National Parks and Conservation Association (pro).