

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHJM 4011

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, March 22, 2007

Brief Description: Requesting federal legislation to preserve the use and access of pack and saddle stock animals on public lands.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kessler, Warnick, Haler, Kretz, Hinkle, Orcutt, Newhouse, Lantz, McCune, Kristiansen, Haigh, B. Sullivan and Dunn).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/13/07, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 3/22/07 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Morton and Shin.

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Legislation seeking to preserve access of pack and saddle stock animals on certain federal land has been introduced in Congress.

The National Environmental Policy Act applies to federal agencies and programs they fund. Essentially, it requires that prior to taking any major action significantly affecting the environment, an agency must consider the environmental impacts of that action.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill: Congress is requested to enact legislation that:

- preserves use and access of pack and saddle stock animals on public lands administered by the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, or Forest Service where there is a historical tradition of access;
- directs, as a general rule, that all trails, routes, and areas used by pack and saddle stock animals remain open and accessible for such use; and
- allows agencies to implement a proposed reduction in use and access of pack and saddle stock animals only after complying with full National Environmental Policy Act review.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Advocates of this joint memorial are not seeking new trails or access to all trails rather, they want to be able to continue to ride on trails to which they have historically had access. Members of Backcountry Horsemen of Washington have contributed many thousands of hours of volunteer work to trail maintenance and construction and are committed to low-impact use of trails. Recent actions by federal agencies have restricted access.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Kessler, prime sponsor; Representative Warnick, co-sponsor; Robert Brooke, Darrell Wallace, Mike Reedy, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington.