The "Great American Outdoors Act 250": U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee Field Hearing - June 12th/Hot Springs, Arkansas



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The United States House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee ("Committee") held a field hearing on the "Great American Outdoors Act 250" ("Act") in Hot Springs, Arkansas on June 12th.

Congressman Bruce Westerman, who serves as Chairman of the Committee and is a Congressman for Arkansas' Fourth District, chaired the field hearing.

Congress Westerman and Committee ranking member Jared Huffman (CA) were the original sponsors of the Act.

The focus of the field hearing was the Act (H.R. 9250).

The Act is described as proposing to invest $1.9 billion in the United States' national parks, public lands, and Bureau of Indian Education facilities over the next five years. These activities are stated to be funded by:

- Private donations.
- Onshore energy revenue.
- New foreign visitor fees.

The Act is also described as:

- Targeting high-priority deferred maintenance projects within each federal land management agency and the Bureau of Indian Education.
- Restoring campgrounds, trails, boat ramps, hunting and fishing sites, and other recreational infrastructure to unleash new outdoor recreation opportunities for sportsmen and women and improve visitor experiences.
- Support 72,500 jobs across the country in $26.4 billion in revenue for rural gateway communities neighboring United States national parks, forests, wildlife refuge, and public lands.
- Promoting transparency and accountability by streamlining contracting and procurement, expediting project reviews, and requiring regular reporting.
- Does not allow for new federal land acquisition.

- Creates new, sustainable funding sources through foreign visitor fees and incentivizing private donations.

Witnesses at the field hearing included:

- Ms. Katherine Andrews -Director, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, Little Rock, AR.
- Mr. Kevin Costner - Actor/Director, West Hollywood, CA.
- The Honorable Chris French - Associate Chief, U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C.
- The Honorable Katharine Macgregor - Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.
- Mr. Cole McCaskill - Interim President & CEO, The Greater Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, Hot Springs, AR.
- Mr. Mike Ward - The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, Edwardsville, IL.

A link to the field hearing testimony and a copy of the Act can be found here.