MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE: REVIEW OF THE USER PILOT PROGRAM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

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MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE: REVIEW OF THE USER PILOT PROGRAM

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1997

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT,
Conway, NH.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 8 a.m., in Kennett High School, Conway, NH, Hon. Stephen Horn (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Horn and Sununu.

Also present: Representatives Moran of Kansas and Bass; and State Representative Richard Cooney.

Staff present: J. Russell George, staff director and chief counsel; Mark Brasher, senior policy director; John Hynes, professional staff member; Andrea Miller, clerk; and Matthew Ebert, staff assistant.

Mr. HORN. The Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology will come to order. I am Stephen Horn, Congressman from California. I will open the hearing and then call on Mr. Sununu.

Today we will examine a pilot program of fees set for various portions of the national forests. Obviously, like any ideas, this proposition has its supporters and its detractors. A number of citizens representing varying perspectives will shed some light on this approach.

We are pleased to be hosted by Congressman John Sununu, a very capable and conscientious member of this subcommittee, one of the faithful attenders. So we are delighted to come to this district and are impressed by what we have seen yesterday and a few days earlier. Yesterday some of us had an opportunity to look around, and, John, you have chosen a beautiful site in your State.

John will be presiding over this hearing as soon as I finish the opening statement. I am going to keep it brief, to leave as much time as possible for questioning witnesses. And we will welcome a number of citizens to comment after we are done with formal panels.

Before we move on, however, I do want to describe one situation which I believe has some relevance to this hearing. Last Thursday, in California, the subcommittee examined various funding allocations for the U.S. Customs Service. The Customs Service performs numerous functions ranging from law enforcement, including build-

ing cases against drug kingpins and money launderers; promoting trade through assessing the correct duty on imports; inspecting passengers at airports; and ferreting out intellectual property and trade fraud, such as fake luxury goods imported from China and other developing countries and economies. As you can imagine, the challenges faced by the Customs Service are enormous, given the rapid increases in world trade in recent years.

In virtually every area, the Customs Service is reducing resources as the threat has been increasing, with one exception. In the past few years, inspectors at airports have increased by 20 to 30 percent in California and elsewhere. Meanwhile, special agents in law enforcement and trade agents at the seaports have been reduced by 20 percent. Has tourism in the airports increased at a faster rate than shipping containers? The answer is no. Rather, there is a dedicated funding source for inspectors at the airports. Namely, the passengers pay a fee.

As the balanced budget takes effect, it will be ever more difficult to provide additional resources to functions needing attention in many parts of the Federal Government. So this debate in New Hampshire is being played out in the Federal Government and in State and local governments across the United States.

This is an investigative committee. All witnesses, except the Members of Congress, will affirm an oath that the information they provide us is the truth. The statements that each of the formal witnesses will make in the various panels that we have, roughly four panels, plus citizen input after that, the minute we introduce them, their full biography and their full statement will automatically be put in the record. We ask them to brief us with a summary of their statement in 5 minutes. Sometimes the Chair, and that is up to Mr. Sununu, will let it go a little longer depending on the witness and the background provided by the witness. That is so we can have questions as members of the committee.

It is now a great pleasure for me to ask Representative Sununu to chair these hearings, because I will enjoy the opportunity to be a questioner. So, John, if you will take over, they are all yours, including the oath and thanking everybody for helping us on this.

I would like to say, since we are at Kennett High School and the junior high school is related, I was delighted to read in this morning's paper that they had 90 percent voting turnout for the student election. I just wish the United States of America was the same.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Stephen Horn follows:]

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"Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program"

October 20, 1997

OPENING STATEMENT
REPRESENTATIVE STEPHEN HORN (R-CA)

Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology

Today we will examine a pilot program of fees set for various portions of the national forests. Obviously, like any idea, this proposition has its supporters and detractors. We will hear from a number of citizens from widely varying perspectives to shed some light on this matter.

I am pleased to be hosted by Congressman John Sununu, a capable member of the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology. Yesterday, some of us had a chance to look around, and you have chosen a beautiful site in New Hampshire for us.

I will keep my opening statement brief in order to leave as much time as possible for questioning witnesses. Before we get on, however, I do want to describe one situation which, I believe, has some relevance to this hearing.

Last Thursday, the Subcommittee examined various funding allocations for the U.S. Customs Service. The Customs Service performs numerous functions ranging from law enforcement, including building cases against drug kingpins and money launderers; promoting trade through assessing the correct duty on imports; inspecting passengers at airports; and ferreting out trade fraud, such as fake luxury goods imported from China and other developing economies. As you can imagine, the challenges faced by the Customs Service are enormous, given the rapid increases in world trade in recent years.

In virtually every area, the Customs Service is reducing resources as the threat has been increasing, with one exception. In the past few years, inspectors at airports have increased by 20 to 30 percent in California and elsewhere. Meanwhile, special agents in law enforcement and trade agents at the seaports have been reduced by 20 percent. Has tourism in the airports increased at a faster rate than shipping containers? The answer is no. Rather, there is a dedicated funding source for inspectors at the airports -- passengers pay a fee.

As the balanced budget takes effect, it will be ever more difficult to provide additional resources to functions needing attention. So this debate in New Hampshire is being played out in government across the United States.

Mr. SUNUNU [presiding]. Thank you very much. Good morning everyone and thank you very much for being here this morning. I would like to begin just by giving a quick picture of how we are going to proceed today.

As Chairman Horn mentioned, we have four panels. We are going to begin with testimony from Congressman Bass, and then I would ask the Congressman to join us as we listen to the other witnesses talking about the impact and cost benefits of the forest plan. We have a 5-minute rule for witnesses, and you will see lights. Green means go, red means your time is up, and we will try and obey that fairly strictly. At the same time, we want to make sure we get everyone's thoughts and comments.

I would like to mention at the outset, in order to maximize the amount of input that we receive as part of this hearing process, Selectman Gene Chandler was good enough to organize a public session last night. We went for over 2 hours, heard from a few dozen public citizens, and we also heard from the Forest Service a little bit. That was a terrific forum. I am asking Gene to provide us with either a summary or written testimony of those that had any notes or information that came out of that session, so that we can provide it as part of the public record of this hearing process.

Again, I am thankful for all those that participated last night and especially for Gene and Dave for helping to put that together.

I would also like to mention at the outset, we are joined by a representative from Senator Gregg's office, who continues to take an avid interest in this effort. We are also joined by a number of State representatives, including probably the one that has traveled farthest, Dick Cooney from my hometown of Salem, NH. Welcome.

It is a pleasure to be here in Conway, as always, and I am very grateful to Chairman Steve Horn and all the staff of the Government Management, Information, and Technology Subcommittee for helping to put this hearing together this morning. Thanks also to the witnesses for agreeing to provide their valuable time and thoughts regarding what is, I think, recognized by everyone here in the north country as a very important issue. Your testimony will help us understand the problems associated with this program, the strengths of this program, and input that will make sure we have the best information available as we move forward and have the opportunity to change this demonstration.

Finally, my thanks to all the members of the public that have taken the time to be here today to listen to the testimony. Clearly, the White Mountain National Forest is a tremendous resource. That was one of the strongest points made over and over last night. The people of New Hampshire are proud of that terrific national heritage that we all share.

Our main goal today is to gather information that will better enable us to understand the costs, benefits, and impacts of the National Forest System Recreation Fee Demonstration Program, as it is formally known. The user fee program has been implemented here in the White Mountain National Forest and in over 40 locations nationwide. There are sites from Alaska to Florida and from New Hampshire to California. They are employing different fee structures, different methods for collection, all in an effort to sup-

port the national forest system, enhance visitor services, and protect the wildlife.

We will hear a little bit about the different methods that are being used, again, as we try to identify what works, what doesn't work, and how the system might be improved or changed. In developing the fee system, however, I think it is important that we keep three factors in mind.

First and foremost, fairness. Although many people agree that charging fees commensurate with the use of a resource may be an appropriate way to raise money, we need to make sure that the fees do not result in extracting disproportionate payments from specific groups to the exclusion of other groups. For example, as was raised last night, hunters and fishermen are already paying fees, some in the guise of Federal excise taxes, to help support the resources that they use. We want to make sure that multiple user fees are not necessarily being imposed to achieve the same goals.

Similarly, there is a continuing issue about the Federal Government's role and responsibility in supporting those cities and towns that possess a large amount of Federal land that is taken off the tax rolls and has a financial impact on those communities. Those communities are paying for various services, roads, bridges, security, fire, and in some cases search and rescue support. All of that needs to be taken into consideration in putting together the fairest possible program.

Second, preservation. The ultimate goal of any user fee system must be to preserve and sustain the resource. Such resource preservation has traditionally been the top priority of administrators here in the White Mountain National Forest, and it is important that the forest fee system support their efforts to preserve and sustain the resource.

Moreover, user fees should not be used to offset what is our current budgeted funding. The maintenance of the forest system should be shared, at least in part, by all Americans, and the funds that are generated should provide a supplement to the operating revenues or operating levels that we are seeing historically, and should be reinvested locally for maintenance and infrastructure.

And third, we need to ensure practicality. When developing a new program that will be administered at the Federal level, we cannot overemphasize the importance of common sense. Here in New Hampshire we are fortunate to have a forest management team that is willing to try to implement whatever Washington is willing to devise. It is essential that we structure a fee system that will minimize inconvenience but must also allow for reasonable enforcement, if that is appropriate.

The goal of the demonstration program is to provide information and establish the foundation for continued improvement. The suggestions and recommendations we have collected during the past months, and will continue to collect today and moving forward, will help provide the forest staff with the tools that they need to continue to give us an unparalleled management of the Forest Service and to preserve the White Mountain National Forest.

Specifically, the comments offered today should provide answers to a number of key questions: How much revenue has been raised through the demonstration program? What rate of compliance have

we seen and can we expect in the future? What assurance do we have that operating funds for the areas in the pilot program will not be penalized because they are part of the pilot program? What options are available to compensate local residents for the costs that they continue to incur for local services and revenues that are lost because they happen to have the lands in their city or town? What fee structure and enforcement policies maximize both revenue collection and compliance, but at the same time optimally ensure that we do not have a negative impact on traveling and tourism to the State?

Clearly, the national forest here in New Hampshire is one of our greatest treasures. It attracts visitors from all around the world on a year-round basis. Seventy-five percent of the visitors are coming from out-of-State. Over 15 percent of the visitors are coming from out of this country. It is a resource that is enjoyed by hikers, campers, hunters, and fishermen. It supports hundreds of businesses that range from scenic sites and hotels to tour guides, timber firms, ski resorts, and equipment retailers. We need to respect and protect the long-term value of this resource.

New Hampshire has long recognized the importance of a cooperative approach in managing this resource with the development of its 10-year forest plan. I believe that this model for an inclusive and common sense planning approach to the environment must be the basis for a successful national policy, as well. I know we will hear testimony today presented in just such a spirit, and again I thank the Members of Congress that have taken the time to join us, as well as all of our participants. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Hon. John E. Sununu follows:]

JOHN E. SUNUNU
1st District, New Hampshire

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Statement of
HON. JOHN E. SUNUNU
Member of Congress

before the
Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology
United States House of Representatives

"Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program"
A field hearing in Conway, New Hampshire

October 20, 1997

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here in Conway today, as always. I want to begin by thanking Chairman Steve Horn and the staff of the Government Management Information and Technology Subcommittee for all of their effort in helping to put this hearing together. I also want to thank each of today's witnesses for taking the time to provide us with your views and concerns regarding this important issue. Your testimony will help ensure that any changes to the current demonstration program will be made with the best information available. And finally, my thanks to all of those that have taken time to be here today to listen as we discuss the past and future of the White Mountain National Forest. This topic is of great importance to everyone in New Hampshire, a state that is proud of its unparalleled natural heritage.

Our main objective today is to gather information that will enable us to better understand the impact, costs, and benefits of the National Forest System Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. This user fee program has been implemented here in the White Mountain National Forest and in over forty other locations across the country. These sites, from Alaska, to Florida, and from California to New Hampshire, employ different fee structures and collection procedures to raise revenues that will support our National Forest System, enhance visitor services, and protect wildlife habitats.

In developing a successful fee system it is essential that we keep several factors clearly in mind:

First and foremost, fairness. Although many people may agree that charging fees commensurate with resource use is an effective and appropriate method for raising revenues, we must work to ensure that fees do not result in disproportionate payments from unique groups to the exclusion of others. For example, hunters and fishermen currently pay license fees in addition to excise taxes on equipment. We must consider whether or not multiple user fees are being imposed on the same groups to achieve the same ends.

Second, preservation. The ultimate goal of any user fee system must be to preserve and sustain the resource. Such resource preservation has traditionally been the top priority of administrators in the White Mountain National Forest, and it is important that the pilot system support rather than hinder their efforts. Moreover, user fees should not be used to offset currently budgeted federal funding. The maintenance of our National Forest System should be shared, in part, by all Americans. Funds generated should provide a supplement to historic operating fund levels and should be reinvested in local infrastructure and maintenance.

And third, practicality. When developing a new program that will be administered at the federal level, we cannot overemphasize the importance of common sense. Here in New Hampshire we are fortunate to have a forest management team willing and able to implement whatever Washington devises.

It is essential that the fee system be structured to minimize inconvenience, but must also allow for reasonable enforcement. The goal of a demonstration program is to provide valuable information and establish a foundation for continued improvement. The suggestions and recommendations collected during these past months and offered today will be taken up by a Forest staff whose goal is to provide unparalleled resource management and service to the visitors of the White Mountain National Forest.

Specifically, the comments offered will help provide answers to the many questions regarding the pilot's success --

- How much revenue has been raised through the demonstration program?
- What rate of compliance have we seen, and can we expect in the future?
- What assurance do we have that operating funds for those in the pilot will not be penalized?

- What options are available to compensate local residents for costs incurred for local services and revenues lost due to federal land ownership?

- What fee structure and enforcement policies will maximize both revenue collection and compliance?

- How can we ensure a minimal impact to tourism and the local economy?

The White Mountain National Forest is one of New Hampshire's greatest treasures attracting visitors from all over the world on a year-round basis. The forest receives nearly seven million visitors each year. Seventy five percent of these visitors come from out of state and approximately fifteen percent come from foreign countries. It is a resource enjoyed by hikers, campers, hunters, and fishermen, and one that provides economic support to hundreds of businesses ranging from restaurants, scenic sites, and hotels, to tour guides, timber firms, ski resorts, and equipment retailers.

New Hampshire has long recognized the importance of cooperative efforts in managing this resource through the development of its Ten-Year Forest Plan. I believe that this model for an inclusive and common sense approach to environmental planning must be the basis for successful national policy as well. I know we will hear testimony today presented in just such a spirit, and again I thank the Members of Congress visiting with us and all of our participants.

Mr. SUNUNU. With that, I believe we are ready to begin. We will move right to the testimony of Congressman Bass and then reserve 5 minutes for each of our members to question the witnesses.

Chairman Steve Horn has taken the time to introduce himself. Steve is somewhat of an unsung hero in Congress. This subcommittee has had more hearings on key matters of oversight and Government operations and quality Government management than any subcommittee in Congress this year, and he has done a stalwart job in ensuring that record of performance.

We are also joined by Jerry Moran, Congressman of the First District of Kansas, home to national grassland, who has taken the time to be with us to better understand the importance of the program. I would like to give Congressman Moran a full 5 minutes for an opening statement if he would like, and he can take any portion of that.

Mr. MORAN. Congressman Sununu, thank you for the full 5 minutes. I will not take that. I am delighted to be here with you in your district here in New Hampshire. This is my first visit to this State. The quality of your trees is exceeded only by their numbers.

I live in a district that is very rural, 62,000 square miles, 66 counties for agriculture and prairie. We still observe trees and their beauty, but one at a time, they are so rare. So as I go down the highway, I will point out to my 7-year-old or 9-year-old, "What a beautiful tree," something that you probably get to talk about in the broader sense than I do.

I do not serve on this subcommittee, but I am very interested in this subject. I do serve on the Agriculture Committee and am involved in the Forestry, Conservation, and Research Subcommittee. I appreciate Chairman Horn allowing me to join his subcommittee here today in New Hampshire.

I am here, in large part, because of the degree of respect I hold for your Congressman, John Sununu. I want to have the knowledge and information necessary to assist him and Congressman Bass in their efforts to address this issue which appears to be very important to the people in New Hampshire, and particularly this part of New Hampshire.

I understand the importance of trying to preserve some of the qualities of the environment. For years, before I was in the State legislature, I was the chairman of the Governor's Commission on Travel and Tourism. He had a lot more to work with—I cannot say that, I guess, I might get quoted. We have a lot to share in Kansas and New Hampshire as we try to make our States desirable for those tourists and travelers to visit.

Again, I thank you for your hospitality. I appreciate Mr. Sununu and Mr. Bass allowing me to be in New Hampshire and Chairman Horn allowing me to join the subcommittee. I look forward to your testimony. Thank you very much.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you, Jerry.

Congressman Bass, good morning, and thank you for coming to the First District.

Mr. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here. I have a statement that I would like to submit for the record, if I could. I will use my 5 minutes to talk extemporaneously about this subject.

Mr. SUNUNU. Without objection, we will include it all in the record.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES F. BASS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, ACCOMPANIED BY STATE REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD COONEY, SALEM, NH

Mr. BASS. Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to be here today. I would like to share the podium, if I could, with a very good friend and constituent of mine, Representative Cooney from Salem. Fortunately, he comes from your former hometown. If he came from your real hometown, he would be from your district, but Salem, I am glad to say, is an important part of the Second Congressional District. And he, as a State representative, may want to make some remarks when I'm through.

I would also like to thank Congressman Moran for being here today. We have a soft spot in New Hampshire for individuals from the State of Kansas. We know one in particular who spent quite a bit of his career up here, Senator Dole, and he had no problems adapting to the climate, as well as the trees.

I would also like to recognize former Congressman Bill Zeliff, who I have had the pleasure of working with in my first term in the 104th Congress. He served his district with tremendous distinction during the 6 years that he represented the First District of New Hampshire in Washington.

The reason why my name tag is high tech or fancy or whatever, is that I used to serve on the GMIT Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. And I want to thank Congressman Horn for acting as my subcommittee chairman during the 2 years that I was on that subcommittee, as well as being willing to move this subcommittee up here for this field hearing on this very important issue.

I am not here to testify in opposition to user fees. That is not the reason I am here. I am here to make some observations, many of which were very articulately presented by Congressman Sununu in his opening statement, about the importance of Congress and the executive carefully monitoring the implementation of this user fee pilot program.

As we all know, or most of us know, the park system in this country has always charged admission fees ever since it was established in the early 20th century, but the effort to expand this fee system into the national forest is very new. As we complete the first season, at least the first summer season, of the implementation of this pilot program, I think it is very important and timely that we hear from the general public and those of us who have access to the general public and are able to gather their remarks, so that we can adequately determine where we go in the next fiscal year.

Let me point out or let me say, if I could, that I have three observations. The first is that, as we implement the pilot user fee program, we take into account the fact that there are certain residents of this State and other States over the country that are already making a significant contribution to support the forest system and

the national forest. Those are the individuals that live in counties where forest land is located.

As Congressman Sununu mentioned in his opening statement, I introduced a bill, House bill 1843, which would exempt the residents of counties that currently have outstanding obligations from the Federal Government in the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program from having to pay these user fees until such time as those payments in lieu of taxes are fully funded.

I also introduced an amendment on the floor of the House this year, introduced by Congressman Sanders of Vermont, which would increase funding in the appropriations bill to more fully reflect the obligations that the Federal Government has had to property owners in the counties in which national forests are located. I believe that this should be a very serious priority of this Congress and also the Forest Service, to reflect upon whether citizens in counties with national forests should be obligated to pay more than all the other citizens of this country in order to use the resources of the national forests.

I would point out, as has been pointed out last night and will be today, that the towns have to provide fire, education, and all sorts of other services—police, law enforcement and so forth—to the areas which are covered by the national forest, and they ought to be compensated for providing those services.

Second, I would like to suggest that an arrangement needs to be worked out between the State Fish and Game Department and other State departments for the providing of services in the national forest that are now provided free of charge by the State. There may be representatives from the State that will testify to this point. But I want to point out that we sell hunting licenses in this State, that we stock rivers and streams in the national forest, and State wardens, State foresters provide services that are very important for the White Mountain National Forest. They do so free of charge, and the State would not receive any compensation or any portion of the user fees that are being charged.

Last, I want to make an observation that the resources that are to be collected from the user fee should be allocated to improvements in the forest. We know that 80 percent of the user fee receipts are supposed to be allocated to that forest. However, I think we ought to look at the real numbers and assure that that really happens. We want to see improvements in the White Mountain National Forest and in all the other national forests around the country, and not have these funds simply offset budget reductions to the general fund contribution to that national forest that would occur as a result of the collection of these fees.

These are the issues that we ought to be attentive to as we review this pilot program and move forward into 1998. With that, I will terminate my prepared remarks and turn the podium over to my colleague, Representative Cooney from Salem, if that is OK with the chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Charles F. Bass follows:]

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Statement of
HON. CHARLES F. BASS
Member of Congress

before the
Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology
United States House of Representatives

"Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program"
A field hearing in Conway, New Hampshire

October 20, 1997

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank you and the members of your subcommittee for making the trip to North Conway in order to hold this very important hearing. I would also like to thank Congressman Sununu for hosting this meeting and for bringing the user fee pilot program to the attention of the subcommittee.

I am pleased that the subcommittee has decided to review the pilot program being run on the White Mountain National Forest. As a former member of the Subcommittee, I am well aware of Chairman Horn's commitment to objectively ensuring that our federal programs operate fairly and efficiently, and I look forward to working with him on this issue.

As the members of the subcommittee may know, I have introduced legislation that would exempt local residents from the fees of the pilot program. The bill, H.R. 1843, extends this exemption to any resident of a town or county which hosts U.S. Forest Service land until the PILT program is fully funded.

Because a community or county cannot tax federal land, they must either make up for this lost revenue by raising local taxes or by cutting local services. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, known as PILT, compensates units of local government for the lost revenue they experience because of the federal ownership of land.

In New Hampshire, where communities fund their schools, police and fire departments, and all other basic services with revenue from local property taxes, the underfunding of PILT payments is a significant problem. Residents of Carroll, Coos, and Grafton counties, which all host the White Mountain National Forest, are forced to make up the gap in local budgets created

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by the combined forces of federal land ownership and an underfunded PILT program. It can be easily argued that local residents are already subsidizing the forest when they cover a large portion of the federal government's share of local property taxes. Therefore, it is only fair to allow these local residents an exemption from the user fees.

Congress created the PILT program to help communities avoid this situation, but the payments are currently being funded at about half of the authorized level. Unfortunately, an amendment I offered to increase PILT funding fell a few votes short in the House this year. The result is that the residents of the towns and counties receiving PILT payments are currently forced to pay higher taxes or forgo important local services. Until this situation is rectified, asking these same residents to pay the new user fee amounts to a form of double taxation that only they are subjected to.

The main concern that I have heard about my bill is that it will affect the Forest Service's ability to generate revenue. While I acknowledge that it may cost the Forest Service a few thousand dollars a year to create the exemption, I do not think that it will adversely impact the pilot program, which relies on the millions of tourists who visit Northern New Hampshire each year. Therefore, I would ask the subcommittee to consider my argument carefully and support the effort to make the fees more equitable by encouraging the Forest Service to exempt local residents.

I am sure that today's hearing will include a discussion of how the Forest Service intends to spend the funds they generate from the program. Another topic of discussion may be the need for this type of program in a time of declining federal budgets. While I am sympathetic to the argument that decreased federal funds may make the user fee program attractive, I would like to point out that funding for the operations and maintenance of the national forests will increase significantly under this year's Interior Appropriations bill. The House version of the Interior Appropriations bill, which contains funding for the Forest Service, included an increase of $86,304,000 over last year's level for the Forest Service.

In closing, I would like to again thank the subcommittee for visiting New Hampshire. I look forward to the rest of this hearing and its examination of the user fee pilot program.

Mr. SUNUNU. Without objection.

Mr. COONEY. Thank you Congressman Bass and Congressman Sununu for letting me join you up here.

Mr. SUNUNU. Welcome.

Mr. COONEY. It is nice to see that little kid that used to live down the street doing such a great job in Washington.

Mr. BASS. If the gentleman would yield, I would just like to say that Representative Cooney is at 1 Samoset Drive, and the Sununu family lives where?

Mr. SUNUNU. At 24. Our families have been neighbors for 27 years.

Mr. COONEY. That is a long time.

Anyhow, my comments are from someone that lives in Salem, which is as about as far as you can get away from here in New Hampshire, and from somebody who values the national parks enough that I spent my 8 months in a vacation home up here, including much time spent around the corner in the town of Albany. So I would like to see the national forest flourish.

I am a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, where that membership also contributes to what they help do in the national forest. I also support the Inlands and Outdoor Club, which does a lot of good work on the trails of the national forest. So there is a lot of voluntarism from people in this area and from as far away as Salem who help the national forest.

From that perspective, I think it is a shame that we have to have a user fee which I think is pretty inefficient and hard to collect. All to generate what I think is, in terms of the national budget, a modest amount of money. So I would like to see no user fee and leave it like it used to be. Let us hike the trails and live free.

In any case, if the powers that be decide that a user fee is necessary to keep the national forests in good shape, I, for one, feel it would be a mistake to give exemptions to certain towns based on their proximity to it. Salem is not very close to it, and I know our town would be glad to see a national forest on our borders. We would provide these services free of charge if you would take over our adjacent towns and make a national forest of them. People from Salem like to come here on occasion, maybe once or twice a year, and they would have to purchase the $20 parking permit and maybe get 1 or 2 days' use of it over the course of the year, where natives would get to use it much more often.

Also, from a vacation home perspective, if you exempt residents, I do not qualify as a resident. Yet I pay all the property taxes that my neighbor who is a resident pays, yet will not get that exemption, so there is a certain amount of unfairness about it. So, while I agree that national parks should pay the towns for the services they require, and I think they are trying to do that, I think they fall short.

So I am impressed by all these people from around the country that come up here in New Hampshire to contribute to the maintaining of the national parks. I also want to mention, I serve on the Resources Recreation Development Committee in the State, and we are struggling with similar problems in our State parks and historic sites and the fees we charge, trying to balance our

books in that regard. So my committee and I have spoken on similar issues that you people in Washington are struggling with.

Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much, Representative, and neighbor.

Just a few questions, primarily for Congressman Bass. You mentioned Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program, and that is one that may not be familiar to some of the folks here, but I think it is an important point to emphasize. It came up a number of times in our broad public forum last night. Could you describe what PILT, Payment in Lieu of Taxes, is all about, and describe the amount of money we are talking about, both nationally appropriated and authorized, and the disparity, and then what kind of funds are coming into New Hampshire?

Mr. BASS. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes system was established, I would guess, about a decade ago—there may be others that know the exact time of its establishment—in an effort to provide a mechanism whereby cities and towns, and in most of the country it would be counties, could be compensated for the services that they provide for property that is in Federal ownership in national forests.

New Hampshire is somewhat unique in that I believe 18 percent of the State is a national forest. That is unique to the Northeast. There are States in the West where a significant percentage of the total land area is in Federal ownerships. So this is a very important issue and a very important program.

But like many programs at the Federal level as well, and by the way, the same thing is true on a State basis as well, these programs are subject to appropriation, not entitlements. The PILT program has only been funded on an annual basis at a level of approximately 60 percent of what is actually owed, so the result there is a significant deficit. This can tally up to as much as a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year in funds that are not remitted to the communities, yet they still maintain the obligations that they must provide.

This is obviously a type of unfunded Federal mandate. Even though it is not an operating mandate, it is an ownership mandate. But we really should, in my opinion, strive to fully fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. That issue, notwithstanding the issue of whether or not these counties should be obligated to pay user fees on top of that, given the fact that they are already supporting through the back door more than anybody else is in this country with the maintenance and operation of these national forests, I think is unjust.

Mr. SUNUNU. Have there ever been any increases in the amount appropriated for the payments over the last few years?

Mr. BASS. I proposed an amendment with Congressman Sanders to try to fund PILT payments at the 1994 levels. It is my understanding that the Senate version, which does do that, the Interior appropriations bill, did prevail in committee conference. So, in effect, our position prevailed ultimately, but the fact is that even that position does not fully fund at 100 percent the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program, which I believe should be our ultimate objective.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. I was pleased to lend a modest amount of support on the floor of the House for that bill and pleased that it prevailed in main conference.

To be clear, though, that takes us back to 1994 levels?

Mr. BASS. That is correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. Still a long way to go.

Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. Just to my colleague from New Hampshire, Charlie, I am curious, did you look into the history of the aid to education based on the number of Federal employees, particularly military, that live on and off the base? That goes back 50 years.

Now, there might not be the critical mass provided by Forest Service personnel in an area to really generate much revenue. When you have a base of, say, 30,000 people, that is substantial, and was that history in tying your idea into that legislation? Every President, from Eisenhower up, has tried to kill it or reduce it, and Congress consistently, from that time on, has always supported it.

Mr. BASS. And I know, as a Representative from a district that has had in the past and may still continue to have a significant issue with education of the military, there is definitely a parallel. However, there is a significant difference in that national forests generally tend to be in very sparsely populated parts of the country. The issue is a combination of not only educational burden, but most importantly, fire control, rescue operations, maintenance of roads, plowing, and all that sort of thing, which are very expensive to towns in the Northeastern counties and elsewhere in the country.

I think this program, generally, is perhaps more broad because of the nature of the type of services that are required in towns or counties that have national forests property versus those areas that may be developed around a military installation.

Mr. HORN. Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you, Congressman. I appreciate your time. Congressman, I hope you will be able to join us for the balance of the session.

Our next witnesses are Donna Hepp, the forest supervisor, White Mountain National Forest, and Ned Therrien, who is a former public affairs officer for the White Mountain National Forest. Please step forward and join us.

Joining Donna is Lyle Laverty, who is joining us from Washington. He is the director of recreation, heritage, and wilderness for the entire National Forest Service. Welcome, Lyle, as well.

If you could just stand and take the oath for me.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SUNUNU. Good morning, and thank you again for taking the time. If we could just move right forward with the testimony, and Lyle and Donna, thank you for joining us last night, as well. We will begin with you, Donna. Thank you for coming and welcome.

STATEMENTS OF DONNA HEPP, FOREST SUPERVISOR, WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST, ACCOMPANIED BY LYLE LAVERTY, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION, HERITAGE AND WILDERNESS RESOURCES, U.S. FOREST SERVICE; AND NED THERRIEN, FORMER PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER, WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

Ms. HEPP. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, good morning. I'm Donna Hepp, forest supervisor for the White Mountain National Forest. Assisting me today is Lyle Laverty, as was introduced earlier, the director of recreation, heritage and wilderness resources for the Forest Service. He is here to cover any aspects of our national recreation fee program.

I want to thank you for inviting me to be with you here today to talk about how the White Mountain National Forest is using the authority granted through the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. This program brings to focus a major issue in managing public lands today: What recreation services should be provided, and how should the cost be shared?

The act was created to explore how recreation users can assist in addressing the large maintenance backlog that has accumulated for recreation facilities. That is what we have been testing through our recreation fee pilot on the White Mountain National Forest.

After being selected as one of the first 50 Forest Service projects in the Nation, we began to refine our project. We talked with many local people for approximately a year prior to selecting the approach that we've taken. Implementation began around Memorial Day this year. In the last 5 months we've learned a great deal and certainly made improvements based on public feedback.

Overall, we feel the project test, this initial section of the test on the White Mountain National Forest, has been a success. At the same time, we do recognize that there is a significant amount of concern and controversy related to this project, and we've been listening hard to what people have to say.

Our program asks that all people leaving an unattended vehicle on forest land purchase a passport, similar to these, and with the $5 passport for 7 days or a $20 passport annually. The passports are available at Forest Service offices in New Hampshire and Maine, as well as 45 local businesses. Visitors can also obtain a passport through the mail. Our decision to use the vehicle passport system was made after personal contact with the local towns and recreation user groups and comments from local citizens at public meetings.

The White Mountain Forest is very fortunate to have so many partners willing to donate their time to help care for the White Mountain National Forest. Our passport program recognizes the contributions that volunteers make, and offers the opportunity for people that donate 16 hours or more to have complimentary annual passports.

Since the passport program was started, we've been monitoring compliance. As expected, early compliance rates were relatively low but have steadily increased as the program has progressed. We reached a compliance rate of approximately 50 percent just after Labor Day. As of the end of last week, we've collected about

$386,000 with this program, so more than 20,000 passports have been purchased or donated to volunteers.

Our enforcement program efforts have been deliberately light-handed with this first season in the demonstration program. Our emphasis has really been on education. What we've done is leave information on windshields of cars when the passport isn't displayed. That shares information about the program and also gives people an opportunity to give us some feedback about the program.

In the survey forms that we've distributed when people purchase a passport or when we leave the information, we've asked several questions. One is: "Do you support the collection of user fees on White Mountain National Forest?" Another question we've asked is: "Are the fees reasonable?" The responses that we've gotten, to date 3,068 individual responses, indicate 70 percent of those responding support the idea of recreation user fees and 73 percent felt that the fees that were requested, the level of funding for the fee, was reasonable.

Although we view this positive response as some indication of success for the program, we recognize the depth of some people's concerns. So to some people, the user fee is a way to support the services they enjoy; to others, it is just another tax; and to still others, it is a consideration related to just the freedom to use public lands, and it is a concern to them for that reason.

We feel that the debate is healthy. The challenge that we face is how to provide the best possible services to the public on their national forest. We are continuing to seek public involvement and ideas to help us improve the passport program and prioritize how receipts should be used.

The White Mountain National Forest has an identified backlog of recreation facility needs of over $6 million. During this past season, we've made a significant dent in some of that backlog. I have over 8 pages of identified improvements that we've made during that period based on that program. And we are very excited about the opportunity that is given us to address long-term backlog and trail needs and a number of other real critical areas.

In summary, we have learned a great deal over the last 5 months, and we want to do the very best job we can providing services to the people who use and enjoy the White Mountain National Forest. Tourism is the second largest sector of New Hampshire's economy, and the White Mountain Forest is the most popular designation for visitors to the State. It's important that we continue to provide quality recreation opportunities and safe facilities, and the passport program has helped us do just that.

In our effort to provide these services, we listen and respond to the public. If there are changes in our current passport program that should be made, we are hopeful that the results of this field hearing will aid us in that effort.

Under the law authorizing this program, the Forest Service and other participating agencies will be reporting to Congress on the overall program upon completion in September 1999. Our experiences with this and other projects will be provided for use in congressional deliberations concerning the future of the use of this fee authority.

We have asked the public to work with us and give the passport program a good test. We are eager to continue working with people to try as hard as we can to make it work and to provide Congress with meaningful data about this program.

This concludes my statement. Lyle and I will be happy to respond to any questions that you have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hepp follows:]

Testimony of
Donna Hepp, Forest Supervisor
White Mountain National Forest
Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Before the

Subcommittee on Government Management, Information & Technology
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

Concerning

Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service:
Review of the Recreation Demonstration User Fee Pilot Program

Conway, New Hampshire

October 20, 1997

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Good morning, I am Donna Hepp, Forest Supervisor of the White Mountain National Forest since March of 1996. Assisting me today is Lyle Laverty, Director of Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources for the Forest Service, to cover any aspects of the national recreation fee demonstration program.

Thank you for inviting me to be here today to talk about how the White Mountain National Forest is using the authority granted through the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (P.L. 104-134, as amended).

The recreation fee demonstration program brings focus to a major issue in managing recreation activities on public lands today: What recreation services should be provided and how should the costs be shared? The Act was created to explore how recreation users can assist in answering these questions and addressing the large maintenance backlog that has accumulated for recreation facilities. That's what we have been testing through our user fee pilot project on the White Mountain National Forest.

After being selected as one of the first 50 Forest Service projects in the Nation, we began to refine a proposal to implement a fee system. We talked with many local people and groups for almost a year in an effort to understand and address people's concerns before finalizing the approach we have taken. Actual implementation of the program began just before Memorial Day this year. In the five months we have worked with the pilot project, we learned a great deal and made improvements based on public feedback.

Overall, we feel the project on the White Mountain National Forest has been a success.

We call our project a "recreation passport." Our objective was to use funds collected from the demonstration project to maintain recreation facilities and address the significant backlog of recreation projects on the Forest. I will refer to the "passport" for the remainder of my testimony.

First, allow me to explain the passport system. Our passport program asks that all people leaving an unattended vehicle on the Forest purchase a passport. There are two kinds of passports: a seven-day passport for $5 and an annual passport for $20. These can be purchased at any Forest Service office in New Hampshire and Maine or at 45 private businesses and organizations near the National Forest. Visitors can also purchase passports through the mail.

Our decision to use a vehicle passport system was made after personal contacts with local towns and recreation user groups and comments from citizens at public sessions held in January and February of 1997. We consulted with Boards of Selectmen for all towns with land within the White Mountain National Forest before we made this decision.

We felt the focus on vehicles was most fair for several reasons:

1. Vehicles on the Forest are stationary and easily monitored, helping to keep administration costs low.

2. Any negative effect of having someone personally contacted to verify your participation in the passport program is avoided. Most people come to enjoy the White Mountains to relax and have fun. Checking for a passport can detract from that experience.

3. Followup is relatively easy and not costly. License plate numbers can be tracked and addresses obtained without interfering with our visitors' recreation experience.

The White Mountain National Forest is fortunate to have so many partners who willingly donate their time to help take care of the land and facilities they enjoy. Our passport program recognizes the value of their contributions by providing an option where individuals who donate at least 16 hours of their time doing volunteer labor on the Forest receive a complimentary annual passport for their effort. It doesn't surprise me that although this option is available, many of our volunteers purchase a passport anyway because they recognize the tremendous need to support this program and are excited about seeing the funds come back directly to the White Mountain National Forest.

Since the passport program started, we have been monitoring compliance. As we expected, early compliance rates were low but steadily improved as the program progressed. We reached a compliance rate of over 50% just after Labor Day. As of the end of September, through this program, we have collected over $360,000.

Our enforcement efforts have been deliberately light handed in this first season of the demonstration program. We got a late start and knew that most people coming to visit the White Mountain National Forest this year might be caught by surprise. We developed an information packet which we leave on windshields of vehicles that do not display the passport. This packet contains information about the program and provides a slip of paper to be mailed to our Laconia office with their personal check for $5 or $20 to purchase the passport of their choice. We also ask several questions about the program such as "Do you support the collection of fees for use of the White Mountain National Forest," and "Are the fees reasonable?" The 3,068 individual responses received as of September 30 indicate that 70% support the program and 73% believe the fees are reasonable.

Although we view this positive response as an indication of success for the program, we realize the depth of some people's concerns. Supporters see the fee system as a way for recreation users to pay for the services they enjoy. Other people have told us the passport system is merely another form of tax,since the National Forest is already funded by taxes. Still others say that these lands were meant to be open and free. We feel this debate is healthy because the National Forest is for all people, yet the challenge we face is to provide the best service we can to all the people. Part of the information we have been leaving on windshields provides visitors an opportunity to indicate their preferred use for the passport receipts. We also plan to continue to seek public involvement to help us improve the passport program and prioritize how receipts should be used to reduce the backlog of maintenance needs.

The White Mountain National Forest has an identified backlog of recreation facility needs of over six million dollars. These needs were identified in detail in the business plan we prepared when seeking approval for our participation in the National Program. During this past field season, we used a little over $250,000 of the passport receipts to begin making a dent in that backlog. All the trail maintenance done on the Forest this year was supported with these funds. Additionally, half of the people working in our visitor centers were funded by passport receipts.

Examples of sites maintained because of the availability of these funds include 360 miles of trail that needed blowdowns removed, waterbars repaired, signs replaced or repaired, and side brushing done; the construction of bog bridges near Nancy Pond; and repainting the fire tower on Kearsarge North to help preserve this part of of our local history. A winter education program for local school children will begin at the Lincoln Woods Visitor Center in December which will feature moonlight ski or showshoe trips and story telling.

In summary, we have learned much this past five months. We will continue to learn more about the utility of user fees as we work with the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. We want to do the

best job we can to provide service to people who use and enjoy the White Mountain National Forest. Tourism is the second largest sector of New Hampshire's economy and the White Mountains are the most popular destination for visitors to the state. It is important that we continue to provide quality recreation opportunities and safe facilities, and the passport program has helped us do that.

In our effort to provide these services, we listen and respond to the public. If there are changes in our current passport program that should be made, we are hopeful that the results of this field hearing will aid us in that effort.

Under the law authorizing the program, the Forest Service and other participating land management agencies will be reporting to the Congress on the overall program upon the completion of the pilot program in September, 1999. Our experiences with this and other projects will be provided for use in congressional deliberations concerning the future of fee authority for recreation programs.

We have asked the public to work with us to give the passport program a good test. We are eager to continue working with people to try as hard as we can to make it work and provide Congress with meaningful data about the program.

This concludes my statement. Lyle and I will be happy to respond to your questions.

Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. Let me move to Ned for comments, and then we will have questions. Thank you for coming, Ned.

Mr. THERRIEN. My name is Ned Therrien. Thank you for inviting me here this morning. I am a professional photographer. I live in Gilford, NH. Prior to owning my own business, I was the public and legislative affairs officer of the White Mountain National Forest for 25 years. During that period of time, I handled the public involvement for two forest plans, Blue Mountain Ski area, and a number of other issues on forests. I worked with many of those agents, some of which are here today, in trying to understand how and why they used these public lands.

I support the current parking fee experiment on the White Mountain National Forest because it will provide needed funds for maintaining facilities and continuation of some essential programs during a period of declining budgets. However, the main benefit of this experiment is that it brings the attention of the public to the funding predicament that this national forest faces. And the very fact that we're having this hearing here this morning I think is indicative of this.

The national forests have traditionally been open to hikers, backpackers, hunters, bird watchers, and snowmobilers without direct cost. In a very complicated world, the national forests are still places where people can go and get away from it all and find some freedom. To many, the parking fees are an intrusion on that freedom.

The public lands belong to all of us and over the long run, whether we use them directly or not, they should be largely public funded. And I guess my concern here is that we collect fees and, basically, now the fees will go to recreation uses. There are many uses of the national forest, all of which are important. And I am concerned about the amount of money we collect and the balance of the funding, and to where and how those funds are used.

This Nation's public lands are our crown jewels. They are the vestiges of the wilderness from which our character was formed, and they are a resource which we are literally loving to death. I think that anyone who has noticed the predicament of the national parks understands that we are, in fact, loving them to death. This is also true of the national forests, although most people aren't aware of the predicament; the fact that there is more recreation use that takes place on the national forests than on the national parks.

I was the one that, I think everybody seems to be quoting this now, said that there is more use on this national forest than there is in Yosemite and Yellowstone combined. So we face a real dilemma here. Without proper management, the American public will lose a valuable resource and an emotional and economic resource.

In 1911 Congress passed the Weeks Act, named after John Weeks, a native of New Hampshire and Congressman from Massachusetts. A coalition of New England organizations, formed under the auspices of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, fought for 10 years to pass that legislation, the Weeks Law. Then Speaker of the House Joe Cannon, the main protagonist, rallied his forces against using public funds for creating na-

tional forests in the East by ranting, "Not one cent for scenery." Savvy New Englanders had their way, and that scenery is drawing millions of visitors here each year.

If you were hiking over the national forest over the last 2 weekends, like I was, you would realize how valuable this scenic resource is. I spent all last weekend, the last 2 weekends, in and around Franconia Notch, and the parking there was up and down the highway in every available spot. By the way, we are not collecting fees, I don't believe, for the people who are parking there, so that's another problem that needs to be worked out.

The White Mountain National Forest is here because people want it here. The land had been cut over and burned over, literally lands that nobody wanted. The foresight of the Weeks Law has led to the eastern national forest system of 50 national forests encompassing 25 million acres in the East, all located east of the Mississippi River except a few in Texas. Although most of these other forests aren't under the intense people pressures that we have here in the White Mountains, they all suffer from declining budgets and staff. The fee pilot program is a symptom of our inability to adequately fund the protection and management of our public lands.

I just want to digress here a second. National forests in the West were created by Presidents signing a law that created them out of the public domain. There were no public lands in the East. Every acre on the White Mountain National Forest was acquired, willing seller, willing buyer. So we acquired these lands in the East that were cut over, burned over, grazed over. Nobody wanted them.

And now what do we have? We have gems that millions and millions of people are using. So I think that if we look back, the historic nature of what the people in New England saw, and now we have a 50-million acre resource as a result of that, and it shows us what people in New England can do if they put their minds to it.

The public was supportive of the White Mountain National Forest from the beginning, and my experience is that they are still supportive. That coalition of organizations that helped pass the Weeks Law in 1911 is still working to support the White Mountain National Forest and is anxious to find a solution to this funding problem. This is New Hampshire, not Idaho, Montana, or Utah—and we don't forget easily. The sooner we get on with addressing workable solutions, the better off we will all be.

Managing a national forest is a complex business. The Forest Service in New Hampshire and Maine deals with 89 different towns, over 7 million visitors a year, more than 125 interested organizations, ski areas, timber harvest, wilderness, campgrounds, diverse wildlife populations, and almost 800,000 acres of forest, rivers, and lakes. The people that work for the Forest Service in New England are a dedicated group, but the organization is dying from reduced staffing and increased workloads. The lion's share of the funding is currently going to national forests in the Western States. My understanding is that that is probably not going to change anytime soon.

Cooperating private and nonprofit organizations have been working with the Forest Service to supplement existing funds for a variety of projects. An example of this cooperative funding is the re-

quirement the Forest Service has to monitor wildlife populations. The New Hampshire Audubon Society is providing staff, training, and dollars to the Forest Service to ensure that the monitoring of bird life is being carried out in a systematic manner as required in the National Forest Management Act.

These co-op dollars come from private foundations and contributions, but even the future of these projects are in doubt because the Forest Service is unable to hold up its end of the bargain. Forest Service staff is unavailable to coordinate, and adequate matching funds have not been allocated to these projects. Needless to say, organizations providing support under these circumstances tend to lose interest. I am not hitting on the Forest Service necessarily because of this, because they are in a very difficult position of trying to fund for a big variety of projects.

In summary, although the fee pilot may, in the case of the White Mountain National Forest, raise substantial amounts of money, it will be an inadequate substitute for balanced funding for all the resources of national forests, especially where recreation national use is heavy. The Forest Service budget is biased toward the western national forests. That situation needs to be changed.

If we expect cooperating organizations to continue their efforts to support natural resource management, then those groups need to be assured that their efforts will not go to waste. The White Mountain National Forest needs to have its forest plan systematically funded. The White Mountain National Forest is a special place. It is a citizens' forest. We need your help to continue the stewardship of these resources.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Therrien follows:]

Testimony of Ned Therrien before the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology on Monday, October 20, 1997 related to the user-fee pilot program on the White Mountain National Forest.

I support the current parking fee experiment on the White Mountain National Forest because it will provide needed funds for maintaining facilities and continuation of some essential programs during a period of declining budgets. However, the main benefit of this experiment is that it brings the attention of the public to the funding predicament that this National Forest faces.

The national forests have traditionally been open to hikers, backpackers, hunters, bird watchers, and snowmobilers without direct cost. In a very complicated world the National Forests are still places where people can go to get away from it all and find some freedom. To many the parking fees are an intrusion on that freedom.

The public lands belong to all of us and over the long run, whether we use them directly or not, they should be largely publicly funded. This nations public lands are our crown jewels, they are the vestiges of the wilderness from which our character was formed and they are a resource which we are literally loving to death. Without proper management the American public will lose a valuable economic and emotional resource.

In 1911 Congress passed the Weeks Law, named after John Weeks a native of New Hampshire and congressman from Massachusetts. A coalition of New England organizations formed under the auspices of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests fought for ten years to pass that legislation. Then speaker of the House Joe Cannon, the main protagonist, rallied his forces against using public funds for creating National Forests in the East by ranting "Not one cent for scenery". The savvy New Englanders had their way and that scenery is drawing millions of visitors here each year.

The White Mountain National Forest is here because people wanted it here. The land had been cut over and burned over, literally "lands that nobody wanted". The foresight of the Weeks Law has led to the Eastern National Forest System of fifty National forests encompassing twenty five million acres. Although most of these other forests aren't under the intense people pressures we have here in the White Mountains they all suffer from declining budgets and staff. The fee pilot is a symptom of our inability to adequately fund the protection and management of our public lands.

The public was supportive of the White Mountain NF from the beginning and my experience is that they are still supportive. That coalition of organizations that helped pass the Weeks Law in 1911, is still working to support the White Mountain National Forest and is anxious to find a solution to the funding problem. This is New Hampshire and Maine not Idaho, Montana or Utah and we don't forget easily. The sooner we get on with addressing workable solutions the better off we will all be.

Managing a National Forest is a complex business. The Forest Service in NH and Maine deals with 89 different towns, over seven million visitors a year (more than Yellowstone and Yosemite combined), more than a hundred and twenty five interested organizations, ski areas, timber harvest, wilderness, campgrounds, diverse wildlife populations and almost eight hundred thousand acres of forests, rivers and lakes.

The people that work for the Forest Service in New England are a dedicated group but the organization is dying from reduced staffing and increased workloads. The lions share of the funding is currently going to National Forests in the western states.

Cooperating private and nonprofit organizations have been working with the Forest Service to supplement existing funds for a variety of projects. An example of this cooperative funding is the requirement the Forest Service has to monitor wildlife populations. The New Hampshire Audubon Society is providing staff, training and dollars to the Forest Service to insure that the monitoring of bird life is being carried on in a systematic manner as required in the National Forest Management Act. These coop dollars come from private contributions and foundations. But even the future of these projects are in doubt because the Forest Service is unable to hold up its end of the bargain. Forest Service staff is unavailable to coordinate and adequate matching funds have not been allocated to these projects. Needless to say, organizations providing support under these circumstances tend to lose interest.

In summary, although the fee pilot may, in the case of the White Mountain National Forest, raise substantial amounts of money it will be an inadequate substitute for balanced funding for all the resources of national forests, especially where recreational use is heavy. The Forest Service budget is biased towards the western National Forests. That situation needs to be changed.

If we expect cooperating organizations to continue their efforts to support natural resource management then those groups need to be assured that their efforts will not go to waste. The White Mountain National Forest needs to have its Forest Plan systematically funded. The White Mountain National Forest is a special place, it is a citizens forest, and we need your help to continue the cooperative stewardship of these resources.

Thank you.

END

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you, Ned. Let me begin the questioning for any of the panelists with Congressman Bass.

Mr. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief, very. I just have a couple of clarifying questions to ask.

What is your title, by the way?

Ms. HEPP. Forest supervisor.

Mr. BASS. Sorry. I was trying to figure out from your testimony. I was wondering if you could tell me how many total passport applications, if you want to call it that, were distributed this year?

Ms. HEPP. I don't have that exact number.

Mr. BASS. Any idea?

I'll go on to the next question, then. How many individuals responded this year?

Ms. HEPP. We've sold approximately 20,000 passports.

Mr. BASS. So the bulk of them that you collected, 386,000, were the $20 variety. So that comes to about $18,000, is $18 apiece, is the average received?

Ms. HEPP. Right. I think the average is closer to about one-third are annual passports and two-thirds are weekly passports.

Mr. BASS. So you received 3,068 responses, which is about what percent of 20,000—15 percent, which isn't a bad return, actually, assuming it's voluntary.

Did they have to mail it, or did they drop it in a box, or how did you collect it?

Ms. HEPP. They mailed it in. Not all of them included a payment. Some of them said, "I'm not going to pay."

Mr. BASS. Why did you not want to place any kind of demographic questions on your questionnaire? I note you have "use" and you have "support" and "don't support." Did you consider at all trying to find out whether any of these respondents lived in New Hampshire versus out-of-State?

Ms. HEPP. We have addresses and license numbers for the folks that purchase passports.

Mr. BASS. And what percent is in-State versus out-of-State?

Ms. HEPP. We have not finalized the figures on that yet.

Mr. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Chairman, may I suggest on the questions that are not fully answered, there be a space left in the record at this point where you will answer it in a formal letter to the committee.

Ms. HEPP. I will be glad to do that.

Mr. HORN. On all questions. I have a whole series of questions.

[The information referred to follows:]

United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Washington Office | 14th & Independence SW
P. O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

File Code: 1510

Date: DEC 22 1997

Honorable Steve Horn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Management,
Information, and Technology
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
B-373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Horn:

Enclosed are responses to the questions asked by subcommittee members at the October 20, 1997, field hearing entitled "Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program."

The Forest Service offers no additional typographical or grammatical corrections.

We do offer, however, a number of clarifications below, separate from the enclosed answers to questions.

Regarding road construction related to timber harvest (P45, L970), over the past three years (1995-1997), an average of 0.75 mile of new road was constructed on the White Mountain National Forest, along with an average of 4.0 miles of road reconstruction.

While the Forest Service makes no determination of industry dependence on national forest products (P47, L1008), we acknowledge that many industries and communities in New Hampshire received a variety of benefits from the national forest, as detailed in the response to Mr. Horn's question at P47, L1010.

The income from ski areas on the White Mountain National Forest (P50, L1083; P52, L1128) for 1995/1996 is approximately $565,000.

The statement by Ms. Hepp on Line 1222 should read "...it has, basically, covered 60% of all the trails...." Please insert the 60% number.

Also note that the White Mountain National Forest Recreation Fee Demonstration Project Fact Sheet distributed at the hearing has been significantly revised to allow comparison of revenues and costs between consistent timeframes.

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Thank you for the opportunity to further respond to the Subcommittee and to clarify for the record the testimony given by the Forest Service at that time.

Please call Thelma Strong at 202-205-0580 if you have further questions on this information.

Sincerely,

TIM DE COSTER
Director
Legislative Affairs

December 19, 1997

Followup Questions and Answers to the October 20, 1997 Hearing on the House Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

"Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program"
October 20, 1997
Conway, New Hampshire
(Questions taken from transcript for the above-referenced hearing)

Rep. Bass

1. P41, L883: "...I was wondering if you could tell me how many total passport applications...were distributed this year?"

FS Response: From the beginning of the program last May through November 15, 46,169 passes have been issued. See Table 1, below, for more detail.

2. P42, L905 "Why did you not want to place any kind of demographic questions on your questionnaire?...Did you consider at all trying to find out whether any of these respondents lived in New Hampshire versus out-of-state?"

FS Response: We used the comment form that was approved by OMB; it did not include any demographic questions. To modify the form would require a review process which typically requires several months to complete.

3. P42, L912 "And what percent is in-State versus out-of-state"?

FS Response: Table 1, below, illustrates the national distribution of purchasers of recreation passes on the White Mountain National Forest. The table was compiled using a half dozen sources, all written and maintained by different collection officers, but since the overall totals closely approximate our fiscal records, we are satisfied with the accuracy of the data. New Hampshire residents represent 48.9% of the annual passes purchased, and 20.3% of the weekly passes.

Table 1 -- Pass Purchasers' States of Residence
(Numbers as of November 15, 1997)

State	Annual	Weekly
Alabama	0	32
Alaska	0	4
Arizona	10	52
Arkansas	1	23
California	23	444
Colorado	3	98
Connecticut	465	1,616
Delaware	0	63
Washington, DC	4	46
Florida	76	398
Georgia	3	67
Hawaii	0	7
Idaho	0	14
Illinois	2	179
Indiana	3	87
Iowa	3	25
Kansas	0	10
Kentucky	1	32
Louisiana	0	21
Maine	1,110	1,678
Maryland	19	390
Massachusetts	3,983	11,501
Michigan	0	143
Minnesota	22	154
Mississippi	0	91
Missouri	0	0
Montana	0	72
Nebraska	0	23
Nevada	1	27
New Hampshire	6,483	6,672
New Jersey	95	934
New Mexico	4	11
New York	118	1,655
North Carolina	3	129
North Dakota	0	1
Ohio	30	360
Oklahoma	0	24
Oregon	1	35
Pennsylvania	62	753

Rhode Island	311	1,274
South Carolina	1	42
South Dakota	0	5
Tennessee	3	72
Texas	3	217
Utah	0	3
Vermont	290	735
Virginia	22	268
Washington	5	69
West Virginia	3	46
Wisconsin	1	103
Wyoming	4	8
Canada	68	1,124
Other*		963
Unknown**	18	115
Totals	13,254	32,915

*Includes Europe, Africa, Caribbean, Middle East, and Far East
**Purchaser may not have left license plate or it was illegible

Rep. Horn

4. P45, L950 "Do you know what percent of the forest is being logged at any one time? I don't know how you work that out, but I would like to get a feel for the percent of annual lumber sales, timber sales by the forest and the percent, whether that is national policy as to percent or whether the eastern forests put their own policy on it. If you could give us a little paragraph on that, we would be most grateful.

FS Response: Since 1987, the White Mountain NF has averaged approximately 4,000 acres/year in harvest activities. This amounts to one half of one percent of the Forest acres. There is no national, regional, or forest policy dictating a percentage to be harvested.

5. P45, L971 "What I'd like is roughly the figures of what was sold, how much did it bring in, what was the cost to the Forest Service of accessing that timber in both personnel, road building, anything else."

FS Response: These timber program details are documented in the Timber Sale Revenues and Expenses tables of the annual TSPIRS Reports, for which fiscal years 1993 through 1996 are available. On average, during this time period, 23.6 MMBF was sold and 22.3 MMBF was harvested. Timber revenues averaged $1,096,029, while timber expenses were

$2,131,004. A very detailed breakdown of timber volume harvested, revenues, and expenses for FY93-96 is attached. A further explanation of these can be provided on request.

Table 2 -- Timber Sale Program Information Reporting System (TSPIRS)
White Mountain National Forest

Million Board Feet (MMBF):	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
Timber Volume Sold	27.3	23.7	25.1	18.2
Timber Volume Harvested	27.8	23.1	19.9	18.5
Timnber Program Revenues ($)	1,274,402	1,098.25	1,032,000	979,460
Timber Program Expenses ($)	1,926,084	1,939.84	2,088,259	2,569,831
Net Gain or Loss ($)	(651,682)	(841,950)	(1,056.26)	(1,590,373)

6. **P49, L1053 "...what is the biggest intaker of money? Is it strictly the timber sales, or is it fees for camping? How does that match out in the typical forest and particularly your forest?**
7. **P49, L1059 "Well, can you separate them out for us? What is the largest, then? Is it the timber receipts that are larger than the recreation receipts?"**
8. **P49, L1063 "Please check it and get it for the record. Thank you very much."**

FS Response: The data below is drawn from the annual National Forest Statement of Receipts, ASR-12-1, documenting receipts from which the 25% Fund payments to states are calculated.

Table 3 -- National Forest Statement of Receipts
White Mountain National Forest
(Thousands)

	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
Timber	882	735	651	584
Grazing	0	1	0	0
Land Uses	6	10	10	10
Recreation Special Uses	678	448	504	442
Power	5	5	5	5
Minerals	0	0	0	0
Recreation User Fees	567	492	557	736
Total NFF	2,520	2,055	2,073	2,180

9. P50, L1090 "To what degree is there clearcutting in the WMNF?"

FS Response: Since 1992, The White Mountain NF has averaged around 400 acres of clearcuts each year.

Rep. Sununu

10. P51, L1108 "As I understand it, allowing only 50 percent of the national forest to be made available for timber purposes is actually relatively, compared to other national forests, a very small amount of land; is that correct? It is a low value. To put 50 percent of the land out of the region of timber is a high amount of acreage relative to other natural forests?

FS Response: The area of a national forest suitable for timber harvest is determined in the forest planning process, through public involvement by a variety of interest groups, consideration of legal restrictions, and evaluation of the sustainability of the resource. The percent of a forest found suitable for timber harvest varies widely among forests. On the White Mountain National Forest, 345,000 acres of the 751,000 acres available were found suitable for timber harvest. Other forests in the Eastern Region are very different -- only 22.1% of the Shawnee National Forest in Illinois is suitable, but 76.4% of the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri is suitable.

11. P51, L1122 "And of the 22 million board feet that were taken off the national forest, roughly how many acres does that translate into?"

FS Response: Using an average 5500 board foot removal per acre, 22 million board feet translates to harvest activities on 4,000 acres.

12. P52, L1145 "...give us a breakdown of the amount for each of the special permit uses that are going back to the Treasury."

FS Response: The fees for outfitter guides and communication sites go back to the Treasury. Some permits, like those to other government agencies, are free. Fees for a few of the special use permits on the White Mountain National Forest stay on the Forest.

Some important examples of fees that stay on the Forest are:

Campground Concession Permits. These are designed so that revenues from the campground pay the permit holder to operate the campground. This was a new program for the White Mountain NF in FY97. The fee paid the Forest is based on the bid amount (usually a percent of gross revenue, which is at least equal to minimum fair market value for use of land and facilities), but this fee goes toward maintenance and reconditioning of these federally owned campground facilities to prolong the life of the property. The estimated revenue from the three concessions in FY97 is approximately $90,000, which will be spent on these facilities. So, in effect, this money stays on the Forest instead of going to Treasury.

Appalachian Mountain Club. Historically, AMC was given a fee waiver (1939-1995) by the Secretary of Agriculture for its Special Use Permit, but beginning in 1996, AMC has been issued a Special Use Permit without waiver of determined fees. The existing Special Use Permit is structured in such a way that "work in lieu of payment of fees," including yearly trail maintenance and visitor information services performed on the White Mountain National Forest, are evaluated as valuable public benefits credited toward annual assessed fees. The Boy Scouts of America Organization camp permits are also operated under a "work in lieu of fee" system. Our authority for use of "work in lieu of fee" is limited.

Revenues from the permit fees listed below are returned to the Treasury and are the base from which the 25% Fund payments are made to local units of government.

Table 4 -- FY96 Summary of Permits on the White Mountain National Forest
(Based on the Forest Land Use Reporting (FLUR) system)

3 organization camp permits	Work in lieu of free
7 backcountry shelters	Free
10 cabins	$2,750
5 recreation or group events (temporary permits that vary by year)	$195
114 outfitter guide permits (temporary permits that vary by year)	$33,178
2 vendor peddler (firewood permits at campgrounds)	$675
6 winter recreation resorts (alpine)	$565,000
2 winter recreation resorts (nordic)	$10,000
2 orchards (maple sap)	$50
1 fish hatchery	Free
10 monuments and markers	Free
2 signs	$25
14 pipelines	$300
1 site survey and testing (temporary permit for geophysical testing for WV Pond EIS)	$25
6 research and experimental	Free
1 weather station	Free
2 military training permits	Free
6 commercial still photography, motion picture and/or television (temporary permits that vary by year)	$1,600
3 sand and gravel sales permits	$25
68 powerline, utilities	$6,573
1 designated communication site	$3,733
5 communication uses (small facilities located on existing towers)	$6,585
7 dam, reservoir	Free
14 miscellaneous (wells, springs, storage yard, etc.)	$2,195

13. P53, L1154 "And I would ask and ensure that it [fact sheet on the White Mountain National Forest rec fee demo program] be included as part of the record."

FS Response: The fact sheet made available at the hearing has been

revised to clarify the various reporting periods used in developing revenues and costs. The revised fact sheet is attached.

14. P55, L1203 "Is it a list of the types of projects that it has been spent on or the specific projects?
15. L1207 "If you could provide that to the committee for the record, though, that will be helpful."

FS Response:
Table 5 - Accomplished With Rec Fee Demo Revenues

I. **Androscoggin Ranger District Accomplishments**

***Facilities:** Basic shelter maintenance at nine district shelters/tent sites, including removal of hazard trees at or near facilities.
*Maintained composting toilet at Spruce Brook Shelter.
*Made improvements to outhouse at Blue Brook Shelter and removed hazard trees.
*Piers and abutments on 19 Mile Bridge were reconstructed or repaired. This included drilling cable into ledge so the bridge will be protected from washing down stream during high water.
*The Great Gulf Suspension Bridge needed cable maintenance and erosion control work, as well as brush and tree removal.
*Dozens of puncheon/bog bridges were installed on numerous district trails to provide safer travel for trail users as well as resource protection in wet areas.
*Three first aid caches were reconditioned in both the Gulf of Slides, Huntington Ravine, and Tuckerman Ravine. They were stained, new roofs installed, and new piering built.

***Trails:** Maintained district trail signs, with 20 new signs made and installed.
*402 miles of district trails were maintained by the district crew or through a Challenge Cost Share with the AMC trail crew using Fee Demo dollars.
*Six trails were logged for proposed work for the next fiscal year. This includes assessing what work the trail needs and what it will cost to complete.
*A new inventory system was developed to track the trail inventory on the district more efficiently. This will allow easier tracking of trails needing re-construction and basic maintenance needs.
*Implemented the National Recreation Use Monitoring program in Evans Notch. Seasonal employees doing sample monitoring and interviews.
*All district trail tools were reconditioned, providing a

supply of tools to be used by volunteers working on Forest trails.

***Dispersed Camping Sites:** Camp sites along the Bog Dam Loop road were maintained and cleaned on a regular basis.

***Backcountry:** Fee Demo funded the activities of 3 backcountry patrollers, one specifically assigned to the Tuckerman Ravine area.

***Visitor Center Services:** Information and assistance were provided by fee demo information staff at the Androscoggin and Evans Notch offices to 16,255 visitors.

Community events were partially funded by the demo. These include: Fourth of July parade, Mollyockett Day parade and booth, Appalachian Trail Conference booth, Common Ground Country Fair, and a session at the College of Lifelong Learning. Approximately 10,000 people were contacted through these events.

II. Saco Ranger District Accomplishments

***Trails:** Over 400 miles of foot and cross country ski trails were completed by the district trail crew this season.
*New benches were built along the Rail and River Trail to replace the old ones that were rotting away, the bridge near the river was rebuilt and re-directed, as well as part of the trail being reworked. Erosion had resulted in part of the trail being washed away, also many hazard trees were removed along the trail.
*A section of the Attitash Trail was repaired. Rock structures were built to improve and stabilize a section of trail that had become badly eroded over a period of time. This work stabilizes the trail, provides for public safety, and helps protect the environment.
*Over 26 trail signs were replaced, these signs were either damaged or missing, 14 signs were stained or painted, and 10 new sign posts were installed.

***Facilities:** Six cross country ski trail bridges on the Lower Nanamocomuck were repaired.
*Two cross country ski trail bridges were were totally replaced to provide for public safety.
*The Mountain Pond Shelter was repaired to provide for public safety.
*The Kearsarge Fire Tower was painted, and repairs were made on the shed and outhouse.
*The Camp Penacook Shelter was repaired, replaced floor

boards that were burnt through, due to a visitor building a fire inside the shelter over the winter.
*The Sawyer Pond Shelter and Platforms were stained, the shelter needed work done on the roof to repair leaks and replace part of the structural supports. New boards were put on the platforms, fire rings were reset, and signing replaced.
*The Rocky Branch #1 Shelter was repaired, damaged boards were replaced, the shelter was stained again and graffiti removed. The outhouse needed major repair; a new door was built and installed, the structure was leveled, stained, and toilet seat replaced. The platforms were leveled, new boards were put in place in the deck surface, and new under structure components were installed on two platforms.
*4th Iron and Baldface Shelter are two of the composter sites on the district; 4th Iron was partially operated using the crew funded by fee pilot money, and Baldface Shelter composter was operated entirely by this crew.
*Russell Colbath Homestead was maintained by a seasonal crew working dispersed recreation, and the developed recreation crew did work to maintain this facility.

***Developed Recreation:** A new bumper rail was installed in the Cold River Overlook parking lot. The old bumper rail had deteriorated and was a public hazard.
*Upkeep of toilet facilities, picnic facilities, day use areas, sign maintenance, supervision of 20 community service people who spent time working on the district in day use areas.

***Visitor Center Services:** More than 56,000 visitors were met by knowledgable information assistants at the Saco Visitor Center. They were assisted as they planned day trips, hikes, and scenic drives.
*A costumed interpreter met almost 6,000 visitors at the historic Russell Colbath Homestead, located on the Kancamagus Scenic Byway. Without funding from the program this important site would have been closed this year.
*Coordination of the Forest-wide campfire program was possible this year because the front desk was handled by fee demo seasonals. The district specialist was then able to work on other programs benefitting the visitor.
*The Saco office would have been closed at least one day per week without the program. Historically, it has been a 7-day operation.

III. North Half - Ammonoosuc/Pemigewasset Ranger District

Basic Maintenance:
319 miles hiking trails

13.2 miles cross country ski trails

Heavy Maintenance/Reconstruction: Heavy Maintenance includes brushing to standard, waterbar replacement or new installation, installation of rock steps, stepstones, turnpiking, puncheons and cribbing:
2.9 miles North Twin Trail
1.4 miles Gail River Trail
1.5 miles Little East Pond
1.0 miles Donkey Hill Cut-Off
1.2 miles Carr Mountain
0.8 miles Blueberry Mountain
0.5 miles Hubbard Brook Trail
0.5 miles Three Ponds Trail
9.8 miles; and Maintained 36 trailheads.

Facilities: Removal of a 38-foot native stringer bridge.
(Deteriorated to an unsafe condition)
Replaced gate on Zealand Road

Developed Recreation: Restained picnic tables at Beaver Brook
Maintained 15 picnic sites (toilets, trash, mowing, and bulletin boards)

IV. South Half - Ammonoosuc/Pemigewasset Ranger District

***Developed Recreation:** Employed two seasonals, maximizing their effectiveness through the use of volunteers. The two seasonal employees supervised a total of 9.6 years of volunteer time.
*(Constructed and erected fee demo signs at 54 locations (many of which were vandalized or stolen as many as 15 times each).
*Mowed and performed daily care on 23 day use areas
*Major entrance and information sign areas, parking lots, and turnouts.
*Cleaned restrooms daily at major trailhead parking lots.
*Replaced 16 picnic tables

***Facilities:** Maintained two large water systems.
*Maintained 91 district roadside recreation sign areas and fire caches.
*Maintained the district gate program
*Dispersed Recreation Areas:
*Administered heavy roadside dispersed recreation use areas
Sandwich Notch Road
North South Road
Route 118
Elbow Pond
Brown Brook Falls
Forest Protection Areas on the Kancamagus

Route 49

***Visitor Information Services:** Hired two employees to work in Visitor Information, these two employees also supervised volunteers (4.3 YEARS of volunteer time).
*A total of 32,315 visitors were contacted at the Lincoln Woods Visitor Center; 40,726 at White Mountain Attractions,
*11,200 at Waterville Valley Chamber of Commerce, 1,688 at the
*Pemigewasset District office, and 9,571 at two mobile VIS stations.

IV. Summary

These direct services were provided to the public by the 40 employees hired to answer telephones, help plan hikes, clean toilets, maintain trails, and sell passports.

* 9 were working behind front desks, answering telephone calls, filling information requests, and helping visitors plan their trip. Some in Forest Service offices, others working alongside partners at their facility.

* 11 were working in day use and picnic areas cleaning toilets and picking up trash.

* 9 were patrolling trails and Forest Protection Areas, and

* 11 were working on trail crews.

16. P59, L1267 "...provide the committee with a clear a summary as you can long-term, you know, what is enforcement going to consist of?"

FS Response: The White Mountain National Forest collection system is unique from other national forests participating in the fee demonstration program. The plan provides three opportunities for a Forest visitor to purchase a pass before the public would be in violation of the fee demonstration public law.

1. Passport Purchase: The visitor can purchase a pass in advance by stopping at a vendor, Forest Service office or Visitor Center, or through the mail.

2. Notice To Pay: Prior to violation of PL 104-134, placing information packets (notices to pay) on vehicles not displaying a passport is a nominal program cost. This facet is a normal operating procedure conducted by Forest personnel on their routine daily duties; therefore, costs to the program are contained within the 80% fund that provides for seasonal hiring

to implement projects on the ground and provide visitor services. There is an administrative cost to scan license plates if a person chooses not to participate or respond to the 14-day purchase grace period described in the notice to pay. This process is done with assistance from local law enforcement officials. The cost is $16.00/100 license plates.

3. Non-Compliance/Follow-up Letter: The vehicle owner has the opportunity to decide to purchase an annual passport or, choose to ignore the notice to pay and take a risk that a a violation notice (non-compliance letter) will be issued. Purchasing an annual passport provides the Forest the benefit of using the fees for on-the-ground projects. Costs to issue the non-compliance letter would be minor. This facet requires some administrative time to prepare the envelope for mailing; and query the database for addresses and deleting data from the noncompliance database after responding with payment. These costs would be contained within the 15% administration fund.

If the owner of a vehicle chooses not to comply, a violation notice (contained within the non-compliance letter) could be sent; and a $100.00 fine assessed (collateral forfeiture). The Forest sent five non-compliance letters in 97; therefore, costs were nominal associated with this facet.

Court appearance by a USFS law enforcement officer could result if the person wishes to contest it in court; but the person has the opportunity to avoid a court appearance and "pay" the ticket through the mail. In this case, revenue from tickets would go to the Treasury rather than provide revenue to the Forest. Costs associated with this facet requires postage and personnel time to prepare the envelope. Currently, this cost is nominal because of the very small number (5) of citations issued in FY97. Annual enforcement costs were projected in the Business Plan at $8,000. This cost would be contained within the 15% administration fund assuming an annual return of $500,000 generated from the fee demo program.

Summary: Our experience indicates that the costs to administer the compliance facet of the program and providing the invitation to pay may be nominal and may be less than the estimated costs projected in the Business Plan. Our experience indicates that people are generally willing to comply. The Forest is generating a 70% compliance rate from respondents to the invitation to pay from a short test period conducted by the Forest. This high rate of compliance offsets the small administrative costs associated with these facets; and may indicate a small need to issue noncompliance letters if the Forest can communicate understanding of program benefits.

17. P59, L1281 "...what percentage [of responses to the comment cards] roughly were from people that didn't pay"?

18. P59, L1284 "Could you give us, for the record, a summary of the responses?"

FS Response: The comment analysis process was not designed to record whether the respondent was paying the fee or not. We are still entering data into the computer and will have a complete summary of all comments, now over 5,000 received, after the first of the year.

Mr. SUNUNU. That will be very helpful. Thank you, Mr. Horn. In fact, why don't I turn to Mr. Horn for questioning, and then I'll follow up.

Mr. HORN. What is the Forest Service budget for the White Mountain National Forest?

Ms. HEPP. For the previous fiscal year it was $7.4 million.

Mr. HORN. That is fiscal year 1997. That ended September 30th at midnight.

Ms. HEPP. That's correct. We don't have a final budget.

Mr. HORN. And what is the figure on that?

Ms. HEPP. $7.4 million.

Mr. HORN. $7.4 million. And that covers all of the Forest Service staff assigned to the forest?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. HORN. And also equipment and roads, the whole operation?

Ms. HEPP. Correct, construction.

Mr. HORN. Now, are there sales of timber made from the White Mountain National Forest?

Ms. HEPP. Yes, there are.

Mr. HORN. What do you bring in in sales in a given fiscal year?

Ms. HEPP. I'll have to get that figure for you.

Mr. HORN. We'll leave the record open for that.

Do you know what percent of the forest is being logged at any one time? I don't know how you work that out, but I would like to get a feel for the percent of annual lumber sales, timber sales by the forest and the percent, whether that is a national policy as to percent or whether the eastern forests put their own policy on it. If could you give us a little paragraph on that, we would be most grateful.

And what is the sales from the timber? What does that amount to?

Ms. HEPP. The sales vary from year to year. I'll have to give you the figures.

Mr. HORN. Well, give us the latest just as a sample, and then give us a 5-year spread.

Ms. HEPP. I'd have to check that figure for you. We sold approximately 22 million board feet of timber last year.

Mr. HORN. Did you build any roads to get in to the timber last year?

Ms. HEPP. Yes. Normally, there is some reconstruction work and some new construction. Normally, it is on the order of about 3 miles of new road a year.

Mr. HORN. What I'd like is roughly the figures of what was sold, how much did it bring in, what was the cost to the Forest Service of accessing that timber in both personnel, road building, and anything else.

My understanding is that—and I don't know if this is true yet because we haven't had the national hearings, we're going to hold about seven of these hearings—my understanding is that it is basically a lost item within the Forest Service. You spend more to get the timber than you earn from the timber.

Ms. HEPP. That's correct. We are a below-cost timber forest.

Mr. THERRIEN. Could I respond to that, Mr. Chairman? I am not a Forest Service employee, so I think maybe—I dealt with this

question a lot when I worked with the Forest Service. Basically, my feeling is that the Forest Service has received a lot of bad publicity about the below-cost timber sale issue. I think in many cases it is bogus, because I think the Forest Service does a tremendous job of harvesting timber. The fact that we had 7 million visitors a year here coming to view the scenery means that somebody is doing something right, and the fact that this forest was cut over and burned over at the turn of the century.

Mr. HORN. Well, we don't disagree with a lot of that. I must get my questions out. I am limited by a 5-minute rule. I'll be glad for any extension you want to make to that for the record.

What percent of the lumber and timber in New Hampshire comes from the national forest as opposed to private forests? Do we have those figures?

Ms. HEPP. It is approximate. It is 5 percent or less.

Mr. HORN. The national forests, 5 percent. So if you no longer did timber sales, how much of an impact would that be on lumber mills in New Hampshire? Has anybody figured that?

Ms. HEPP. Well, I think it is not just the amount that we provide but the types of products provided by the national forest, and there are a number of industries that are dependent on that.

Mr. HORN. Fine. I'd like that, if you would, to broaden that answer out for the record.

Has the Forest Service made a profit at all in any operations within the forest? You say they don't make them on timber. Do they make any profit where more money goes back to the Treasury than is spent, let's say, on Forest Service personnel? Let's take the recreation forest services. Is that a money-maker, a break-even, or a loss?

Ms. HEPP. It's a loss.

Mr. LAVERTY. Mr. Horn, the ski area program generates significant increase in terms of revenue versus actual expenses in terms of the administration, multiple returns in terms of values that go back to the Treasury versus what it costs to actually administer the permits.

Mr. HORN. Again, I think we ought to distinguish between the Treasury versus further use by the Forest Service.

Mr. LAVERTY. That's correct. But that is a very significant part of this discussion. As we've been working with the Appropriations Committee exploring expanded authorities, in terms of how some of those receipts may come back to help the forest in terms of the administration of some of the programs, that is a very possible and viable option for us in the future.

Mr. HORN. Well, I happen to be a strong advocate of that. We should give the agencies authority to reuse that money in certain areas.

Now, has the Forest Service with these pilot projects taken a look at what their budget might be if they did no timber sales, if they devoted the national forest to be essentially what the national parks are, recreation, scenery, this type of thing? Has anybody looked at the numbers on that, what the impact would be on the Forest Service?

Ms. HEPP. Well, we are funded at various levels based on doing particular work. So the funding that is available for timber man-

agement is focused toward that. We haven't looked at what opportunities might be available if that funding was available for other uses.

Mr. HORN. I am going to use a lousy analogy for the next question, but I have spent part of my life at it. Most people say in intercollegiate athletics that football pays all the bills for the other athletic programs. The truth is that only 10 percent of the football powers make a profit, 90 percent is money. But using that analogy, what is the biggest intaker of money? Is it strictly the timber sales, or is it fees for camping? How does that match out in the typical forest and particularly your forest?

Ms. HEPP. I think the largest income would be from fees paid by the ski areas and from timber receipts currently.

Mr. HORN. Well, can you separate them out for us? What is the largest, then? Is it the timber receipts that are larger than the recreation receipts?

Ms. HEPP. I would have to check that.

Mr. HORN. Please check it and get it for the record. Thank you very much.

Mr. LAVERTY. Mr. Horn, on a national basis, timber receipts still continue to be the largest single receipt element that we have. We have a number of other areas that are rapidly approaching that. As Donna mentioned, the ski areas are the significant generator of revenue and recreation receipts. But probably the most rising element is communication sites, electronic sites across the country, just as you're familiar with some of the areas in southern California. Those are going to be the ones in the future that will generate more than anything else.

Mr. HORN. What I am obviously interested in is the Forest Service looking at different types of model forests where they don't really have higher timber sales and if they used them as a recreation site, there might be even greater employment, to put it positively?

Mr. LAVERTY. That's correct.

Ms. HEPP. Chairman Horn, I think it is a complex issue to respond to you in a short period of time. The income, I believe, from the ski areas is around $200,000 a year. So that, the timber receipts are significantly higher than that. Our timber program is based on many benefits to wildlife habitat as well as to recreational activities, so just looking at it in isolation doesn't really reflect the integration of our program for the forest.

Mr. HORN. OK. Mr. Chairman, if I might give them a last question, which is clear-cutting: To what degree is there clear-cutting in the White Mountain National Forest?

Ms. HEPP. Clear-cutting is one of a number of timber practices that we have on the forest. Approximately half of the land on the forest is available for some type of timber management. The majority of our timber activity is on even-aged management. But clear-cutting is still an important point in our program. Based on our forest plan, it is tied to our wildlife management strategy to create openings in the forest, and that is a key component of our wildlife strategy for the forest.

Mr. HORN. And you're replacing them with yearling trees or letting nature do it?

Ms. HEPP. In most cases it is natural regeneration. Trees resprout here very rapidly.

Mr. HORN. Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Horn.

If I could ask a few questions now and maybe pick up on that, just for clarification. As I understand it, allowing only 50 percent of the national forest to be made available for timber purposes is actually relatively, compared to other national forests, a very small amount of land; is that correct? It is a low value. To put 50 percent of the land out of the region of timber is a high amount of acreage relative to other natural forests?

Ms. HEPP. Well, I think it depends on the forest. In many cases it is based on the suitability as well as the scheduled management areas.

Mr. SUNUNU. And correct me if I'm wrong, but there are roughly 750,000 acres in the White Mountain National Forest, correct?

Ms. HEPP. 774,000.

Mr. SUNUNU. And of the 22 million board feet that were taken off the national forest land, roughly how many acres does that translate into?

Ms. HEPP. I'd have to check on that figure to give you an accurate figure.

Mr. SUNUNU. The special permits, skiing, you mentioned, is roughly $200,000. Now, that goes to the Treasury, correct? You don't see that money?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. The revenues from timber are something over $200,000?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. Is that money put under your control?

Mr. LAVERTY. It goes into the Treasury.

Mr. SUNUNU. What other incomes from special permits are there in addition to the ski industry?

Mr. LAVERTY. We have income from outfitter guide permits. Additionally, we have income from communications site permits for use of national forests across the country; I'm not sure specifically on the White Mountain. But those are examples of other permits that are issued.

Mr. SUNUNU. All go back to the Treasury?

Mr. LAVERTY. All go back to the Treasury right now.

Mr. SUNUNU. Then I would request that you give us a breakdown of the amount for each of the special permit uses that are going back to the Treasury. I think that would be helpful to get a good feel for the value of the resource and the various activities that are ongoing there.

Ms. Supervisor, you provided a fact sheet of the summary of the program, I know, for members of the committee. Was that provided as part of the record?

Ms. HEPP. Yes.

Mr. SUNUNU. And I would ask and ensure that that is included as part of the record. It talks about the various revenues. I want to ask some specific questions about the facts and figures that are included in it.

[The fact sheet referred to follows:]

White Mountain National Forest
Fact Sheet
Recreation Fee Demonstration Project
Implemented - May 1997

Finances

Total passport fees collected as of 10/16/97	$385,945.22
Anticipated Collections first year (May 1, 1997 through April 30, 1998)	$500,000.00
Anticipated Revenue in 1998	$1,000,000.00

1997 Program start up costs as shown in Business Plan:

Start Up	$ 80,000.00
Annual Operations and Maintenance	$ 83,500.00
Actual Spending (9/30/97)	$175,852.00

Examples of start up activities:

- Printing of passports
- Development of educational materials
- Printing of signs
- Public involvement activities
- Program planning and development

$ Collected from the Fee	*$385,945.22 (100% of collection to date)
Spent on (Maintenance and Visitor Services)	$211,262.00 (55%)
15% Administration and Processing	$ 34,643.00 (9%)
5% Return to Regional Office	$ 19,297.26 (5%)
Capital Investments Planned (not yet accomplished)	$120,742.96 (31%)

*Does not include actual start up cost of $175,852 provided by the Regional and Washington Offices. This money may need to be paid back from receipts, or it may be possible to repay the start up from the 5% fund.

White Mountain National Forest
Fact Sheet
Recreation Fee Demonstration Project
Implemented - May 1997
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Examples of Administration Activities:
- Vendor payments
- Office administration for sale of passports
- Data entry and management.

Expected future annual operations costs and maintenance costs (15% fund)	$ 83,500.00

1997 Compliance and Enforcement	
Estimated Costs	$33,000.00
Citations (violation notices issued)	5

Compliance activities:
- Sign placement
- Invitations to Pay placed on cars
- Follow-up notices and Citations

Compliance Rate:
- 39% of cars parked displayed passes
- Approximately half of cars receiving invitations to pay returned the invitation with payment.
- Total compliance is approximately 70%

Actual dollars collected and returned to field projects:

Planned:	$237,959
Spent (9/30/97):	$211,262

How many **employee days** worked on project: 4,070
643 permanent (295 technician) (348 professional)
3,427 seasonal

Total passes issued: (pass sale records are from September)	7-Day	13,093
	Annual	5,471
	Volunteer	300
	Spotter	72
	Golden Age (7-day)	389
	Golden Age (Annual)	572

White Mountain National Forest
Fact Sheet
Recreation Fee Demonstration Project
Implemented - May 1997

Project Examples:

14 Shelters maintained or repaired

12 Bridges repaired or replaced
1 Bridge removed for safety reasons

1,144 miles of trail maintained/reconstructed

3 first aid caches repaired

Kearsarge Lookout Tower repaired

Russell Colbath Homestead and adjacent Rail and River trail maintained

167,755 visitors were met with a smiling face at both Forest Service and partner visitor centers.

FACT SHEET
White Mountain National Forest
Recreation Fee Demonstration Project
Implemented May 1997
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What have we learned?

We are dealing with basic values and how people relate to their experiences on the National Forest. Many feel that they should pay for the joy they receive when they visit. Others feel they have already paid through their tax dollars. We have learned that communication about the program is a high priority.

There is a great deal of acceptance once the benefits of the program are explained.

We've learned that we need to make the purchase of the passport easier.

What will we change?

We need to increase our marketing efforts so there are fewer surprises.

Information at parking lots needs to define the program and explain that obtaining a pass need not interfere with a visitor's trip.

Technical aspects of the program may change. For example, we are evaluating a parking sticker instead of the current card sized passport.

Need to improve our management and general operations. We did not anticipate all aspects of the program, but we learned as the program developed.

We need to become more efficient and streamline the process for returning the invitations to pay.

We need to develop a compliance system to maximize compliance with the program meeting the intent of PL 104-134.

Mr. SUNUNU. First, on the top of the first page you identify $83,500 used for annual operations and maintenance but include that under the category of startup costs. My question is, are those startup costs or are those costs that are anticipated to be incurred annually on an ongoing basis?

Ms. HEPP. These were what we anticipated that would be the level for an ongoing basis.

Mr. SUNUNU. So they are just not true startup costs, correct?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. OK. Let's see, you show 5 percent return to the regional office down below. Now, it was my understanding that you would have to send 20 percent back to the region. Why do you only show 5 percent?

Ms. HEPP. The way our program has been set up, 80 percent must be in direct services on the ground, 15 percent can be used for administrative purposes on the White Mountain National Forest, and 5 percent is to be shared with other pilot programs within our region of Forest Service.

Mr. SUNUNU. So you're sending 5 percent back to the regional headquarters, and then 15 percent of that is covering some of the administrative costs. Are those being controlled by you, so to speak?

Ms. HEPP. Yes.

Mr. SUNUNU. And are they being spent on administrative costs that are being incurred right here in New Hampshire?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. Now, I guess that is the 15 percent administration and processing category, correct?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. But you only show 9 percent being spent on administration and processing. Is that just a sign of your efficiency?

Ms. HEPP. That's what we're working toward.

Mr. SUNUNU. Nothing wrong with taking credit for that. You show $211,000 spent on maintenance and visitors services. Could you give us a little bit more detail of what you spent that $211,000 on?

Ms. HEPP. Yes, we can. There is about an 8-page summary of some of the types of projects that that has gone toward. I could also identify what level funding approximately was involved with each of those projects.

Mr. SUNUNU. I appreciate that money is fungible; if you spend it here, you don't have to spend it there. Is it a list of the types of projects that it has been spent on or the specific projects?

Ms. HEPP. The specific projects.

Mr. SUNUNU. If you could provide that to the committee for the record, though, that will be helpful.

Ms. HEPP. I would be glad to.

Mr. SUNUNU. Can you give a little description, though? Are these maintenance? How much of it is staff and how much of it is infrastructure maintenance?

Ms. HEPP. A good bit of it is seasonal staff, because that's the way we deliver the services. It is three back-country rangers. It is ensuring half of our visitor center staff. Our seasonal visitor center staff this year is funded by the recreational fee pilot. It is trail

crews that are doing maintenance work, that wouldn't be out there without the fee pilot. So it has covered a significant amount. It has, basically, covered all the trails work that we did this summer; a lot of our day-use maintenance and cleanup, about 75 percent of that work; and a tremendous amount of work on everything from historic sites to just the cleanup work.

Mr. SUNUNU. $120,000 is shown as "capital investments planned but not yet accomplished." Where is that money being held now?

Ms. HEPP. We have that money available to us, and that's one of the areas that is an opportunity for us to work with the public on how those funds should be distributed.

From our survey information, we know the types of activities that the people, the 3,000 folks that give us input, we know where those interests were. Eight percent was related to wildlife. About 60 percent was related to hiking. Those are factors that we can look at as we start to look at how those funds should be allocated.

Mr. SUNUNU. Is that an accurate description, though? The $120,000 is held by you now; it is sort of cash on hand, as it were?

Ms. HEPP. That's correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. Enforcement, you describe that you've been fairly lax on enforcement. There was some discussion earlier on whether tickets had been issued. You've issued five citations, correct?

Ms. HEPP. Correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. But your enforcement costs, I would guess because the cost of issuing citations has not been very high, what do you anticipate the long-range cost of enforcement will be for the program, either in dollar terms or on percent-of-revenue terms?

Ms. HEPP. I think it is tied in with that administrative cost that we projected. I can work on some figures to separate out what part of that would be the compliance itself.

Mr. SUNUNU. Do you think it will be no more than 15 percent if it is included in that administrative portion?

Ms. HEPP. It will be included within that 15 percent.

Mr. SUNUNU. So less than 15 percent.

Ms. HEPP. It will be part of that 15 percent.

Mr. SUNUNU. But if it's part of 15 percent, it can't be more than 15 percent, because that would be part of 16 percent or whatever.

Ms. HEPP. No, I don't know what percentage of the 15 percent would be included.

Mr. SUNUNU. I think it would be helpful to provide the committee with as clear a summary as you can long term, you know, what is enforcement going to consist of? Is it full time? Are you going to be pulling part time off of a back-country ranger to do this part of the time?

Ms. HEPP. I think right now at this point we're evaluating. We haven't made a final decision and we are going to take a look at what the response was today and see what kinds of enforcement program we wanted to take from here.

Mr. SUNUNU. Speaking of responses, you got over 3,000 responses back. You said some of those responses were not from the people that paid the fee.

Ms. HEPP. That's correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. I guess my question would be, what percentage roughly were from people that didn't pay?

Ms. HEPP. I would have to check on that.

Mr. SUNUNU. Could you give us, for the record, a summary of the responses?

Ms. HEPP. I would be glad to.

[The comment form summary referred to follows:]

COMMENT FORM

Welcome to the White Mountain National Forest. Answers to the following questions will help us determine where to allocate money collected from the WMNF Fee Pilot Program. Please check the box beside the 3 main activities you enjoy on the National Forest.

(Numbers represent percent distribution on returned questionaires)

12.3 camping
2.5 fishing
.6 hunting
6.7 sightseeing
3.1 picnicking
3.4 driving for pleasure
1.1 family gathering
2.4 canoeing/kayaking on flat water
.1 canoeing/kayaking on white water
.5 rafting on white water
.2 motorboating
3.9 wildlife observation/photography
.5 other nature study _____

22.8 day hiking
4.1 walking for pleasure
13.8 backpacking
.9 running/jogging
3.4 mountain biking
.8 other biking
5.0 skiing downhill
5.7 skiing, cross country
1.2 visit historic sites.
.4 snowmobiling
.7 interpretation and education
.8 visitor information services
.1 four wheel drive ATV
2.0 other _____

I support the collection of fees for recreation use in the White Mountain National Forest and the on-site retention of these fees.

Yes - 2413 (72%) No - 507 (15%) Undecided - 416 (13%)

(Yes to No ratio: 83% Yes to 17% No)

The $20 annual pass and $5 weekly pass is a reasonable fee for recreation on the White Mountain National Forest.

Yes - 2527 (77%) No - 483 (15%) Undecided - 278 (8%)

(Yes to No ratio: 84% Yes to 16% No)

Additional Comments: As of October 12, 1997, we had checked 44,223 cars, 17,415 displayed passports (39%). Notices to pay were placed on 26,808 cars parked without a pass. The package also included the Comment Form and a self addressed envelope. Very few Comment Forms were given out at Forest Service offices. Of the 26,808 notices placed, approximately half were returned. When these paid notices are added to the cars with passes, we estimate the compliance at approximately 70%.

As of October 16, 1997, a total of $385,949.22 has been deposited. Passports have been sold from approximately 70 locations. Money has been collected from these vendors on a monthly basis.

Mr. SUNUNU. I can't imagine it would be much super private information, even if you didn't want to include names, but the detail about how many responses you're getting through the mail, the pros and cons, and the nature of the concerns. And I would emphasize the point that Congressman Bass made about the demographics: How many local residents are paying or not paying, not willing to support the fee system, and again, how many out-of-Staters are willing to support it.

Ned, you mentioned hunting and fishing, and I think someone mentioned that maybe 3 percent of the respondents or users of the forest were hunters and fishermen. And my question is, given that fact, if there were an exemption provided for those hunting or fishing on forest land with a valid State license, if an exemption were provided in the program, would you believe that would create a significant financial impact?

Ms. HEPP. At this point, from the surveys that we have, it is about 8 percent of those surveyed that focused in on either wildlife observation—not necessarily hunting licenses. It is a little difficult because we're just getting into hunting season now. That level will be higher.

Mr. SUNUNU. Good point.

Does the Forest Service have the flexibility, if you chose today, to say, well, one way that we would want to restructure this is to provide an exemption for anyone who was hunting or fishing on the Federal forest land with a valid State license? Would you have the authority to make that kind of a change under the way the demonstration project is currently structured?

Mr. LAVERTY. Congressman, I think we would have the flexibility to do that, but the question would come in how you would facilitate the implementation of the fee. Making that kind of an exemption could add costs in terms of how you actually implement the program. So we would need to look at that, I guess, in that broader context, but the answer is yes.

Mr. SUNUNU. Clearly, any change in the program, for good or for ill, is obviously subject to the law of unintended consequences. But you do have, under the current law, the 3-year demonstration program, the flexibility to make a change to that?

Mr. LAVERTY. That's correct.

Mr. SUNUNU. What about providing an exemption for residents, residents of towns with forest land or residents of a county that includes national forest land? Do you have the authority to make an exemption on a residential basis?

Mr. LAVERTY. I think the fact that it is a demonstration project, we have a lot of latitude. As we work with the appropriations in both the House and the Senate to implement this, we have the opportunity to do that.

I think the other part of it is, as we listen to the committee in terms of their intentions and directions, we are viewing this as a test of how can we begin to generate some receipts that can help us provide the type of quality services and facilities that people are looking for.

I've listened with interest last night and again today about the strong desire for travel and tourism, and I can tell you that one of the factors supporting the industry is going to be quality facilities.

The reason that we have the fee demonstration program is that both the House and Senate appropriations folks recognized that they are not able to deal with the level of funding that Forest Supervisor Hepp needs to take care of the facilities we have. This is one tool to help out on that.

I think it is the same situation, Congressman, that relates to the discussion that Congress is having with PILT payments, we know there is a level that we would like to see, but just as the Congress has to make choices in terms of how are we going to use these limited resources, we are going to do that, as well. So this is one tool that we are considering.

So, to answer your question, I think the authority is there, but we also need to look at the intent and how can we make that work so that we are returning some of the receipts to do some of the things that make the attractions the way they are.

Mr. SUNUNU. Finally, do you have the authority to make it a volunteer program?

Mr. LAVERTY. We were talking about that on the way up this morning. I think there are some things that we can do without going back to the Appropriations Committee. There may be some flexibility on how to do that. We need to press that one back.

Mr. SUNUNU. It is my understanding, though, at least what was offered as a concern previously was that the Forest Service cannot solicit contributions, and that this would violate either that rule or law. Is that a valid concern, or do you think we could work around that?

Ms. HEPP. We can take donations. The Forest Service can accept donations, but it can't ask for specific dollar amounts. It can request a particular level of funding for a service as a donation.

Mr. SUNUNU. Well, thank you. The committee members and you have been very generous in letting me ask more than 5 minutes' worth of questions. But I think what you have had to offer is important. Obviously, the committee will follow up with some of the questions we've left open, and I appreciate your time.

Mr. LAVERTY. Congressman, just one last comment. We're working right now with both the Senate and the House Appropriations Committee to develop an interim report that is going to be due back January 1. I have a set of the questions, that we're getting ready to go out in the field and ask some of these questions that you've asked.

I would be happy to share that information with you so that if you have some additional questions that would be available to you, we can include those in there.

Mr. SUNUNU. If you could offer it to the committee as soon as possible, I'd appreciate it.

Thank you.

Our next panel consists of a number of State and local officials, as well as some residents from nearby or from Albany, not from the town of Conway, where we are now. But I would like to call them forward. Please make yourselves comfortable.

Executive Councilor Ray Burton, who represents the largest executive council district in the State, encompassing most of New Hampshire and certainly the north country and the national forest areas; Henry Mock, a State Representative from the town of Jack-

son; Gene Chandler, a selectman from the town of Bartlett, who helped us put together the forum last night; and Frank and Ann Wolfe, two residents from the town of Albany who, if I am correct in remembering their information, 86 percent of the town is comprised of national forest land.

If you would. I hope we have enough room. And please make yourselves comfortable. If you would just stand and I'll offer the oath for you.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you all again for coming. Let's begin with each of your testimony, and then if we have any questions, the Members will ask them.

Councilor Burton, widely recognized as the hardest working executive councilor in the State of New Hampshire. I took great pleasure in getting to know Ray over the past year. He is ubiquitous; and many would argue, under the word "ubiquitous" in the dictionary is a picture of Councilor Burton, and I think any of his constituents will agree.

Thanks for coming. Thanks for your time, and I appreciate your comments.

STATEMENTS OF RAYMOND S. BURTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE COUNCILOR; HENRY MOCK, NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE SENATOR; GENE CHANDLER, NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE REPRESENTATIVE; AND FRANK WOLFE AND ANN WOLFE, ALBANY, NH

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Congressman Sununu, Congressman Bass, and members of the panel. I appear here as one of the elected officials representing 98 towns and 4 cities, basically everything north of Concord, which encompasses all of the White Mountain National Forest. I also serve as a county commissioner in the county of Grafton, and we from time to time participate in the PILT program. My associate county commissioner, Mr. Paboulas, traveled to Washington to appear before your committee, Congressman Bass.

The White Mountain National Forest is here to stay. It has a lot to offer to the economy, the tourism industry, and the timber industry. It is within a few hours' drive of 70 million people here in the Northeast. And many million, 7 or 8 million, set foot in the national forest in the course of a 12-month period.

Due to the cutbacks in the forestry budget, the local supervisor was allowed to put in place a user fee to make up for lost revenues. In our case, in my opinion, Donna Hepp had no choice but to do something if services were to continue at an acceptable level.

As I'm sure you are very aware, there is strong local opposition to this parking fee or user fee from local people. We feel we're being taxed twice even for the peace and quiet of going into the national forest during the lunch hour to enjoy a quiet moment from work.

I have four recommendations to the committee. First of all, you Members of Congress, in my opinion, should stop giving the U.S. military money for projects they don't even request or don't even want. If you want to do anything for the U.S. military system, you should fully fund the veterans' hospitals and benefits up here in

the Northeast, Maine, Manchester, and Vermont. You should restore the U.S. Forestry Department budget at least to its former level of $13 million.

Third, you should allow local exceptions for local citizens, as outlined in Congressman Bass's bill. However, keeping the user fee concept in some form so that people can participate in this user fee if they so desire is essential.

The fourth recommendation is, I would like to invite anyone in and around your panel and your staff to spend a day with our Commissioner of Resources and Economic Development, Rob Thompson, Park Director, Rich McCloud, and State Forester, Phil Bryce. In the past I'd say 2 or 3 years here, under the leadership of former Commissioner Bartlett, he came in under the direction of the Governor and executive council and was told to make the park and forestry system a profitable system. And they've done it, and it is interesting to note that those parks that are located in or around or near the White Mountain National Forest are some of our most profitable ones.

Those are my four recommendations. And Congressman Sununu and the other Congressmen, we here in the Northeast and northern New Hampshire appreciate your taking the time to come and listen to our points of view.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burton follows:]

Raymond S. Burton *Executive Councilor, District One*

RFD #1, Woodsville, NH 03785 Tel. (603) 747-3662
Car Phone: (603) 481-0863

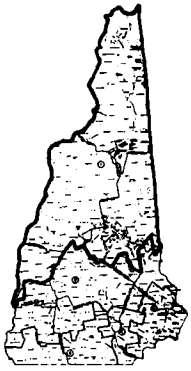
Statement of Ray Burton --- October 20, 1997 before Sub Committee of U.S. Congress hosted by Cong. John E. Sununu.

The White Mt. National Forest is here to stay, It and all it has to offer is within a few hours drive of over 70 million people and indeed several million set foot in the some 770,000 acres every twelve months.

Due to cut backs in the U.S. Forestry Budget, the local Supervisors were allowed to put in place a user fee to make up for lost revenues. In our case, Donna Hepp had no choice but to do something if services were to continue at an acceptable level. As you know, there is strong local objection to these user fees from local people. We feel we are being taxed twice, even for the peace of going into the forest during lunch hour to enjoy a quiet moment at noon time.

Some recommendations:

1. Stop giving the U.S. Military money for projects they themselves didn't request and don't want.
2. Restore the U.S. Forestry Dept. Budget to at least it's former level of $13million.
3. Allow local exceptions for local citizens as outlind in Cong. Bass' bill, but keep the user fee concept in some form for those who want to pay to use the forests.
4. Spend a day with NH DRED Comm Robb Thomson and NH Parks Director Rich McLeod, and our State Forester Phil Bryce. Their Depts. operate (after cutting bureacracy) a profit making public park and forest system!



Towns in Council District #1

CARROLL COUNTY:
Albany, Bartlett, Brookfield, Chatham, Conway, Eaton, Effingham, Freedom, Harts Loc., Jackson, Madison, Moultonborough, Ossipee, Sandwich, Tamworth, Tuftonboro, Wakefield, Wolfeboro

GRAFTON COUNTY:
Alexandria, Ashland, Bath, Benton, Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Bristol, Campton, Canaan, Dorchester, Easton, Ellsworth, Enfield, Franconia, Grafton, Groton, Hanover, Haverhill, Hebron, Holderness, Landaff, Lebanon, Lincoln, Lisbon, Livermore, Littleton, Lyman, Lyme, Monroe, Orange, Orford, Piermont, Plymouth, Rumney, Sugar Hill, Thornton, Warren, Waterville Valley, Wentworth, Woodstock

BELKNAP COUNTY:
Alton, Belmont, Center Harbor, Gilford, Gilmanton, Laconia, Meredith, New Hampton, Sanbornton, Tilton

COOS COUNTY:
Berlin, Carroll, Clarksville, Colebrook, Columbia, Dalton, Dixville, Drummer, Errol, Gorham, Jefferson, Lancaster, Millan, Millsfield, Northumberland, Pittsburg, Randolph, Shelburne, Stewartstown, Stark, Stratford, Whitefield

SULLIVAN COUNTY:
Charlestown, Claremont, Cornish, Croydon, Grantham, Newport, Plainfield, Springfield, Sunapee

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much, Councilor.

Representative Henry Mock of Jackson. I am going to scramble your credentials, I'm sure. But former head of law enforcement for the Fish and Game Department, I believe, and long-time activist and supporter of the State's natural resource system, Mr. Mock.

Mr. MOCK. That is true. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Henry Mock. I have resided in this Mt. Washington Valley for the past 32 years. I was employed for 26½ years as a New Hampshire conservation officer, which followed a brief career as a high school biology teacher.

During half of my law enforcement career, I was closely allied with and worked within the White Mountain National Forest. I later served the last half of my career as the chief of law enforcement for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, as well as its legislative liaison. Consequently, I've been involved in government, a sort of mini bureaucrat all of my life, and I think that means a lot to what I have to say today.

Following my retirement, I have served in the New Hampshire House of Representatives, representing most all the towns of the Mt. Washington Valley. Presently, I am chairman of the Wildlife and Marine Resources Committee. And I want to tell you right up front, in public, Donna, I do not have my permit yet, but I do promise that I will have one before November 12th, the opening day of deer season. And I have stayed out of the forest. I haven't parked.

Because of these various positions I've been involved in, most of the forest plans—and I want to state for the record that I am an enthusiastic supporter of the White Mountain National Forest and its employees. However, just as emphatically, I must take exception to what I consider to be an ill-conceived concept of a parking fee.

I heard people today sit here on both sides of the aisle and talk about a user fee. This is not a user fee. This is a parking fee. We have 7 million users, and so far we have sold 20,000 parking permits. So a bus with 40 people parks for $5. It takes some people $20 to park one car, at least for a year.

I oppose the fee concept for basically three reasons and I would not sit here today and give you any opposition to this if I didn't have what I think is a solution which is in my last paragraph. So let me give you my first three real reasons for opposing this thing.

First, the program just sort of appeared. I know there were meetings held here and meetings held there. And everything I read in the newspaper said a volunteer parking fee being proposed. Well, that seemed fairly reasonable if, in fact, it helped with Washington's fiscal troubles.

What we, the public, should have been made to understand is that the only volunteering being done was volunteering by the administrators of the forest to accept this assignment of testing this concept. The next thing I knew, the program was in place. Because we thought it was voluntary, we didn't get too excited about it. I do have to commend supervisor Donna Hepp and her associates for the way that they have tried to convince us and tried to handle this program, because it is a touchy one.

Second, I oppose it because for the Government to ask the taxpayers of these towns located in the White Mountain National Forest to pay a tax to use the land or park their vehicle, when the

landowner hasn't paid its taxes to us, it is absolutely hypocritical. I wonder just how long the town of Conway, the town of Jackson, and the town of Bartlett would get away with not sending their Federal tax dollars that they have to pay on their employees and et cetera to Washington, how long would that go?

At this point I must tell you that, and I know I am in the minority here, that I did not support Congressman Bass's proposal to exempt the people of the three northern counties. First of all, who is a resident and who isn't? And I defy any one of you to prove who is a resident and who isn't very well. I can think of Massachusetts people running around with New Hampshire license plates, et cetera. Plus, what about the towns in the county that have no national forests? Why should someone in Wolfeboro, Effingham, Tuftonboro, Ossipee, and I can go on with the other towns in the southern part of the county, they are not affected by this PILT tax at all. This forest belongs to everyone in America. This forest belongs to someone in Philadelphia just as much as it belongs to me. Find the money somewhere else. I've got the solution in the last paragraph.

Here is my third reason for opposing this. I think it is the most serious one, and it is one I haven't heard much about. I oppose it because this concept is bringing to the Northeast a dangerous concept of land use which we in New Hampshire have been working hard to prevent, and that is land user fees.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and Department of Resources and Economic Development have long encouraged private owners of lands to allow their lands to be used for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and many other recreational pursuits. This has been accomplished by cooperative posting programs and tax-reduced benefits.

What kind of an illustration does this show our huge land owners in Coos County, the paper companies? If you can do it, meaning the Federal Government, why can't they do it? I'm afraid that hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling land use may become a pursuit only for the wealthy. And look who is setting the example.

In an editorial to the press from the rangers of the three districts in this forest, the second paragraph began with, "Please remember that the passport system is a test." That being the case, I would have to conclude that the system has failed the test of public relations.

In conclusion, here it is: I would propose that Congress raise and appropriate all the funds necessary to adequately operate this forest and all national forests and parks across this country. Depending who is speaking and who we are listening to and what factsheet you are looking at, we are looking at about $3 million for the White Mountain National Forest, $3 million. That is a pittance in Washington. And I think we're looking at $250, $300 million for the whole forest system.

Please, in the name of good common sense, take a look at our foreign aid budget, for instance. Transfer that money out of that foreign aid to the national forest parks and you will all go down in history. When I read that one country in the Middle East receives $4 million of our tax money annually and its neighbor right to its

south receives $3.4 or $3.5 billion a year, it makes me and my constituents wonder just where Congress's priorities really lie.

America is not known for its crown jewels that are packed away somewhere. But, rather, it is a million times blessed with crown jewels of all of the jewels, our beautiful public forests and our parks. Please don't let a million here and a million there erode our most precious possessions.

Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you.

Selectman Gene Chandler of Bartlett. I thank you again for working to maximize the amount of public comment that we've received through this process. And please begin.

Mr. CHANDLER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Gene Chandler. I'm a selectman in the town of Bartlett and have been a selectman in the town of Bartlett for 24 years. I am also a member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, where I spent 7 years as chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Highways and a little over a year as the deputy majority leader in the house of representatives.

I have lived in this valley my whole life surrounded by the national forest. I have always been a strong supporter of and continue to be a strong supporter of the national forest. It is essential that we have and maintain the national forest in this area. It is absolutely essential.

But I do take issue with—and while I have gotten along very well over the years with all of the local Forest Service people, I think, and we've had some discussions on different matters—but when I heard Supervisor Hepp declare that in her opinion so far this fee system would be qualified, as a success, I must tell you in all honesty it is a disaster and it has been a disaster from the beginning. I feel very strongly about that, and I'm sure that if you talk to the local people up here, there is no question they would concur with that.

Some of the problems have been that when it was implemented there really was not enough knowledge on where these parking fees could be collected. Consequently, some of the major places, like the Appalachian Mountain Club parking lot—through no fault of Appalachian Mountain Club, believe me, it is not their problem—a lot of the State right-of-ways, Crawford Notch, Pinkham Notch, State lands that access Federal lands, these parking permits were not able to be put out. So they have to pull back from that.

Scenic overlooks, places that are not trailheads, which the original goal of this, apparently, was to put these at trailheads, just scenic overlooks, some of them without even a picnic table, for heaven's sake, have signs up. I will give credit, when this was brought to the attention of at least the local forest officials here, some of those have been removed, but that problem existed. Some of them are just swimming areas. I think it is very objectionable that the tourists even beside the road to go swimming, the law follows the subject of this.

Motorcycles; I've had two people call me, and these are direct responses from the White Mountain National Forest, that they are not enforcing this for motorcycles. If someone pulls a car in with one person in it, they are going to get a parking ticket. If someone

pulls in on a motorbike and parks with two people on it beside that car, they are not getting one. The response of the people that contacted me, they were told they thought it would be too difficult to enforce and this year they were not going to do that.

So I think these are some of the problems that have come about from this fee where if, as Representative Mock had said, we had gone on a voluntary basis to begin with, some of these kinks could have been worked out.

We've been told, those of us that have been working on this for some time, that one leading reason against the voluntary fee system was that the Forest Service couldn't solicit private funds for programs. That I guess was addressed a little differently today.

But yet, at the same time we talked about what I consider to be a public relations disaster. At the same time we're charging these fees to supposedly upgrade these programs because the Forest Service doesn't have enough money, we get a fancy brochure and letters on the Kanc campaign, which is being funded through private organizations with a conduit, using that to go to the Forest Service for new programs. A $300,000 campaign. And we've gotten letters asking us to help contribute to build interpretive sites and things like that.

Well, now, on one hand we can't maintain or we've been told we can't maintain the infrastructure we have, so we need a parking system, and we can't solicit funds to help that privately. Yet, on the other hand, we have a private organization working in concert with the Forest Service to promote new programs.

Not only that, someone spent a considerable amount of money promoting this festival and, on top of that, hired a public relations person to promote it. Now you get to the worst part. We're going to have all these people come, hopefully, which I guess the turnout wasn't that great, to this Kanc festival, so the Forest Service waives its own fee, so you don't have to pay the fee that weekend to park.

Now, I think we would have a little bit of a problem if those of us that are public officials out there said, well, perhaps on Labor Day weekend we want to encourage a lot of tourists to come, so we'll just waive our traffic laws that weekend. I can't understand how they can get away with waiving their own fee. So from a public relations standpoint, I think that is really a problem. I will tell you, as I say, the biggest reason I think it has happened is because of this program.

The communities that have dealt with the national forest and White Mountain National Forest for years have a tremendous trust in the national forest and the spirit of cooperation. We have had disagreements. We sat down with the various rangers over the years and we've worked them all out. We've been supportive of their programs. But White Mountain National Forest simply cannot exist without the support of the local communities. We're providing the fire protection. We're providing the police protection. We're providing the ambulance and search and rescue protection. We're providing, in most cases, the access to the timber sales over our town roads. They can't exist without us.

Other national forests may be different. The White Mountain National Forest is unique. And without the support of the local people

and the local communities, it can't continue to operate the way it has been. This has caused a serious rift with the citizens of this area, and I am afraid that the support is not going to be there. It is going to take time to get the trust back. When you look at what services are provided by the communities and what could be withheld, and what I see coming will be withheld by votes at different town meetings on different services, it is going to cause a real problem.

We need a voluntary fee system. I think it will work. The Appalachian Mountain Club has long promoted the voluntary fee system. Just rough figures, it would seem like even if you collected a third of the money voluntarily without the cost associated, the net result would be the same.

I support cuts. We need to balance the Federal budget. But I think the Forest Service can continue and it should be a voluntary type system.

With that, I will conclude. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chandler follows:]

Gene G. Chandler
Chairman
Leon Calawa, Jr.
Vice Chairman

State of New Hampshire

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Legislative Office Building, 33 North State Street
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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

October 19, 1997

Subcommittee on Government, Management Information and Technology;

Thank you for listening to our concerns regarding the recently imposed fee system on the White Mountain Forest.

While our efforts are to eliminate this fee, I think some comment should be given on the process of it's implementation and the embarrassment to the Forest Service and congress for allowing such a poorly planned effort. Even if one were to agree with the fee system it's implementation has been a disaster from a public relations stand point and can be considered nothing less than a very embarrassing situation for those involved.

Starting from the beginning we can see the credibility of the program in jeopardy, since while the local forest officials were meeting with local governments and taking "public comment regarding a proposal fee system", the decision to implement a mandatory, not voluntary, program had already been made at higher levels. Good start!

Next, some of our State Officials correctly pointed out that many of the parking areas, The AMC parking lot, Crawford & Pinkham Notch parking areas. The largest lots in the area were owned by or were in State of NH right of way and the "tickets" could not be placed on vehicles in these areas. OOPS! Didn't think about that.

Promotions for the fee system touted the fact that only vehicles at trailheads were going to be ticketed. Then we find signs and permit information at scenic overlooks with no trailheads, telling people that parking requires a $5 or $20 fee. What to do now! Well, remove some of the signs was the decision.

In searching throughout the north country we find many paid parking only signs at many picnic areas, pullouts, swimming holes etc.. that are neither at or near any trailheads, well? Why? This seems to be deemed acceptable, presumably as an attempt to bolster slumping permit fees.

Motorcycles. If a car with one person parks at the Lower Falls swimming and picnic area, (no trailhead) they will get a ticket. If a motorcycle with two people on board pulls into a spot next to the car they will not. Forest service explanation; we didn't think it would be easy to enforce.

One leading reason given as a Forest Service argument against a voluntary fee system was that the Forest Service could not solicit or accept private funds for programs. Yet, a recently launched $300,000 campaign to save the Kanc was announced, and it is being funded through private sources. Forest Service answer - The private origination is a conduit for these funds. Uh-oh - conduit, private funds.

Even if legitimate, couldn't, the same thing have been set up for the fee system? Why should the Forest Service undertake a $300,000 campaign for new programs and sites on the Kanc when by admission they need more money to fund existing needs. needs. Charge the public a fee to use, their land for upgrading existing infrastructure, then go into partnerships to conduit funds for new programs. Unfortunately typical government, but bad idea.

Now the worst, especially from a public relations stand point. Here we have the forest service implementing a mandatory fee system on our citizens, yet when the Forest Service holds it's own weekend festival to attract tourists etc.. to promote new programs, they not only are thousands wasted in promotions, a publicity director is hired, and the Forest Service waives their own fees, a Federal Law. It is now OK for towns and or state to waive certain promotion weekends. Bad, bad, bad..

These types of stories go on and on, but the point is this has been a terrible embarrassment to the Forest Service, and to a degree, Congress who gave the authority but forgot to check on how the beauracrats at the Forest Service desks were going about implementation. One thing the Forest Service higher ups were not doing was listening to their own local folks or I believe the program would have been vastly different.

Hard as it may seem after reading this, I am not a Forest Service basher, in fact I am a strong supporter of the National Forest. However I am a supporter of what it stands for and how it should operate and this insidious fee system is not a shinning example of Forest Service or government action.

The fee system is bad enough but it's implementation, have left the credibility of any future co-operation between local governments and citizens in grave danger.

Please rethink this issue, direct the Forest Service to reprioritize it's goals and a voluntary system or none at all will allow the White Mtn National Forest and our local Forest Service personal to restore their luster to former heights.

Sincerely,

Gene G. Chandler

Gene G. Chandler
Deputy Majority Leader and Chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Highways
NH House of Representations

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much, Gene, and to all the panelists, you should be aware that you should feel free to submit any additional information.

Welcome Frank and Ann Wolfe, residents of Albany. Please feel free to begin, and thank you for being here.

Mr. WOLFE. Representative Horn, Representative Sununu, members of the hearing committee, and distinguished State, County, and municipal officials, I am Frank Wolfe from Albany, NH. Thank you for the privilege of testifying at this hearing.

First, let me say thanks to the Forest Service personnel. They deserve the Purple Heart for all their efforts in implementing the fee pilot program under heavy fire. My wife, Ann, and I have been following the fee pilot program since January. As we understood it at the public hearing in February, the original intent of the program was to be a user fee. Unfortunately, it has become a parking permit system.

My main concern is that the program as written is not fair because it does not include all the real users of the forest, such as hikers and skiers. These users can hike or ski from the Appalachian Mountain Club parking lot in Pinkham Notch, one of the most used trailheads in the White Mountain National Forest, and pay nothing, although I have learned that passes are available at the Appalachian Mountain Club huts. Hikers can hike from many of the larger parking lots in the forest and pay nothing because the lots are State or privately owned. Trail traffic is very heavy from many of these lots.

I question whether or not this system can be monitored and administered fairly. Because the Forest is 770,000 acres in size, users have hundreds of points of entry, and the Forest Service head count is down to bare bones.

Another one of my concerns is the message being sent to tourists. As tourism is a major source of income in the north country, tourists should be able to park at any scenic outlook or on any State or town road, such as the Kancamagus Highway or Bear Notch Road, to take pictures, stretch their legs, and enjoy the scenic beauty without being subject to parking fees.

In my opinion, it is unfair to charge this fee to campers who already pay $14 a night to use the campgrounds, and to sportsmen who already pay a hefty fee for a license to enjoy their sport.

Changes were made. Parking signs are no longer posted at overlooks. Hikers who want to leave a car at each end of a long trail can now purchase a second pass at a reduced rate.

One bright spot of the program is that 80 percent of the parking fees that were collected stayed on the forest. The implementation of the fee pilot program is simply the straw that has broken the camel's back.

Let's look at the bigger picture. The Forest Service budget cuts are heavily impacting the economy of the 37 White Mountain National Forest host towns and 14 grants/locations. Taxpayers of these communities are paying more than their fair share to subsidize the use of forest lands within their boundaries. They lose revenue from property taxes on land that was acquired by the forest. PILT, payment in lieu of taxes, was established at a rate of 75

cents per acre in 1976 to offset this loss. In 1976 that was a good rate of return; in 1997, it is not.

In May 1993, New Hampshire passed legislation enabling the State to take advantage of an existing provision in the Federal law that would increase PILT payments. Albany received the first increase in 1995. Congress failed to fully fund the program in 1997, and in 1998 only 69 percent is proposed to be funded.

At the same time that the fee pilot program was implemented, the national forest contracted with concessionaires to operate and manage their campgrounds because the campgrounds needed significant reconditioning to bring them up to and maintain acceptable standards. Towns with campgrounds received a payment from the forest reserve fund, referred to as the 25 percent fund, based on campground "camper nights," a major source of revenue for this fund.

Albany is one of the smaller and probably one of the most heavily impacted host towns. Eighty-six percent of its land belongs to the national forest. There are four campgrounds in Albany. Because of this change, Albany selectmen were informed that the town would lose an estimated $7,000 in 1997 from the 25 percent fund and that they could no longer depend on their source of income. Albany and other host towns will be forced to raise their taxes again to offset this loss.

Why can't the ranger districts use the "camper night" fees to manage the campgrounds, the same as the concessionaires will, so that these towns do not lose this revenue? In my opinion, this is a breach of contract between the Federal Government and the host towns. What would happen to me if I didn't honor a contract or pay my taxes?

Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you.

Mrs. Wolfe.

Mrs. WOLFE. Representative Sununu and members of the hearing committee, I am Ann Wolfe of Albany. I am a private citizen. Thank you for allowing me to testify at the hearing. Since I can't ad-lib, please excuse me for following my notes.

I, too, wish to applaud the Forest Service personnel for persevering through this very difficult year while at the same time maintaining their composure. My deepest concern is for the preservation of the White Mountain National Forest so that my great-grandchildren will be able to enjoy the same scenic beauty that I have enjoyed.

Now, Frank and I worked as a team and collaborated on this, so let me pick up from where he left off. I question the wisdom of Congress authorizing $2 million for an assessment study to enhance the experience of travelers along the Kancamagus Highway, while at the same time cutting the Forest Service budget. It makes little sense to me to tackle new projects that will require more maintenance when present maintenance is sorely being neglected.

Proposed enhancements are to be paid for by partnerships, grants, and/or other funding. I wondered how that would work, and then I found out. Congress created the National Forest Foundation as the official nonprofit partner of the Forest Service. Its purpose

is to raise money for national forest projects that might otherwise fall prey to budget cuts.

I feel that donations solicited by this foundation for funding these projects are unethical. It is another form of taxation. The forest is overused and abused already. The more enhancements, the more use. The forest should be maintained as a semi-wilderness recreational area for those who truly appreciate the great outdoors and prefer the rustic experience. Only basic needs should be provided. For those who desire more creature comforts, let them patronize the private campgrounds, motels, and resorts in the Mt. Washington Valley.

Now, we hear that Congress has a conference-approved bill to provide $2.65 million to buy 2,400 acres of land surrounding Lake Tarleton and Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge and that this land is to be added to the White Mountain National Forest. In addition, Congress is considering the purchase of Mt. Dinsmore in the Sandwich Range. How can Congress, in good conscience, purchase more land for the national forest while continuing to cut their budget? How can you no longer accept the responsibility for providing the funds necessary for the maintenance of the lands Congress has already acquired as a result of the Weeks Act in 1911?

In closing, Frank and I ask that you, our Representatives in Congress, consider the following: First, save the forest. Restore the Forest Service budget to $13 million so that experienced Forest Service personnel can manage the forests. Second, assure that all funds collected during this fee pilot program will be used to maintain the White Mountain National Forest in its present condition only, not to enhance it.

Three, fully fund PILT, including all increases promised since 1993. Do not discontinue these payments because of the fee pilot program, and four, reexamine the necessity for concessionaire management of campgrounds, and compensate towns for their lost revenue from the 1997 forest reserve fund.

Five, rewrite the fee pilot program so that it is fair and so that it includes all users, and six, permanently exempt the taxpayers, not just the residents, of the host towns in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton County from any type of user fee program now or in the future.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. and Mrs. Wolfe follows:]

Enclosed are comments from two Albany residents who live surrounded by the White Mountain National Forest.

Although the impact of the Fee Pilot Program and other forest-related issues vary from town to town, their opinions offer a good insight into one small community's trials and tribulations while trying to co-exist with the White Mountain National Forest.

Representative Horn, Representative Sununu, members of the hearing committee and distinguished state, county and municipal officials. I am Frank Wolfe from Albany, NH. Thank you for the privilege of testifying at this hearing.

First, let me say thanks to the Forest Service personnel. They deserve the purple heart for all their efforts in implementing the Fee Pilot Program under heavy fire.

My wife, Ann, and I have been following the Fee Pilot Program since January. As we understood it at the Public Hearing in February, the original intent of the program was to be a user fee. Unfortunately, it has become a parking permit system.

My main concern is that the program, as written, is not **FAIR** because it does not include **ALL** the real users of the forest such as hikers and skiers. These users can hike or ski from the AMC parking lot in Pinkham Notch, one of the most used trailheads in the WMNF, and pay nothing -- although, I understand, passes are available at the AMC huts. They can hike from many of the larger parking lots in the forest and pay nothing because the lots are state or privately owned. Trail traffic is very heavy from these lots.

I question whether or not this system can be monitored and administered **FAIRLY** because the forest is 770,000 acres in size, users have hundreds of points of entry and the forest service head count is down to bare bones.

Another of my concerns is the message being sent to tourists. As tourism is a major source of income in the North Country, tourists should be able to park at any scenic outlook or on any state or town road, such as the Kancamagus Highway or Bear Notch Road, to take pictures, stretch their legs and take a few minutes to enjoy the scenic beauty, without being subject to parking fees!!!

In my opinion it is unfair to charge this fee to campers who already pay $14.00 per night to use the campgrounds, and to sportsmen who already pay a hefty fee for a license to enjoy their sport.

Changes were made. Parking signs are no longer posted at overlooks. Hikers who want to leave a car at each end of a long trail can now purchase a second pass at a reduced rate.

One bright spot of the program is that 80% of the fees collected stay on the forest.

The implementation of the "fee pilot" program is simply the straw that broke the camel's back. Let's look at **THE BIGGER PICTURE**.

The forest service budget cuts are heavily impacting the economy of the 37 White Mountain National Forest "host" towns and 14 Grants/Locations. Taxpayers of these towns are paying more than their fair share to subsidize the use of forest lands within their boundaries. They lose revenue from property taxes on town land that was acquired by the Forest. PILT (Payment in lieu of taxes) was established in 1976 to offset this loss but there has been no increase in PILT payments since its inception. In 1976, 75¢ per acre was a good rate of return, in 1997 it is not.

In May 1993, New Hampshire passed enabling legislation so that the state could take advantage of **"an existing provision in the federal law"** that would increase PILT

payments. But, **"Congress failed to fully fund the program"** in 1997. And, in 1998 only 69% is proposed to be funded!!!

At the same time the fee pilot program was implemented, the National Forest contracted with concessionaires to operate their campgrounds because the campgrounds needed significant reconditioning to bring them up to, and maintain, "acceptable standards".

Towns with campgrounds received a payment from the Forest Reserve Fund (referred to as the 25% fund) based on campground "camper nights", a major source of revenue for this Fund. Albany is one of the smaller and probably one of the most heavily impacted "host" towns. 86% of its land belongs to the National Forest and there are 4 campgrounds in Albany!! Because of this change, Albany Selectmen were informed that the town would lose an estimated $7,000 in 1997 from the "25%" Fund and that they could no longer depend on this source of income. Albany, and other "host" towns, will be forced to raise their taxes, again, to offset this loss. Why can't the ranger districts use the "camper night" fees to manage the campgrounds the same as concessionaires so that these towns do not lose this revenue?

In my opinion, this is a breach of contract between the Federal Government and the "host" towns. What would happen to **ME** if I didn't honor a contract or pay my taxes!!!

Thank You.

Frank Wolfe

Representative Horn, Representative Sununu, members of the hearing committee and distinguished state, county and municipal officials. I am Ann Wolfe of Albany. Thank you for allowing **ME** to testify at this hearing.

I add my accolades to the Forest Service for persevering through this Fee Pilot Program, also.

I question the wisdom of Congress authorizing the expenditure of $2M for an assessment study "to enhance the experience of travelers along the Kancamagus Highway" at the same time the forest service budget was cut!! It makes little sense to me to tackle new projects that will require more maintenance when present maintenance is being sorely neglected.

Proposed "enhancements" are to be paid for by partnerships, grants and/or other funding. I wondered how that would work and I found out!! **Congress created the National Forest Foundation** as the official non-profit **partner** of the US Forest Service. Its purpose is to raise money for National Forest projects that might otherwise fall prey to budget cuts. I feel that donations solicited by this Foundation for funding these projects is **unethical**. It is another form of taxation.

The forest is overused and abused already. The more enhancements, the more use. The forest should be maintained as a semi-wilderness recreational area for those who truly appreciate the great outdoors and prefer the "rustic" experience. Only basic needs should be provided. For those who desire more "creature comforts", let

them patronize the private campgrounds, motels and resorts in the Mount Washington Valley.

Now, we find out that Congress has a "conference approved" bill to provide $2.65 million to buy 2,400 acres of land surrounding Lake Tarleton and Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge which is to be added to the WMNF. Reportedly, also, the purchase of Mt. Dinsmore in the Sandwich Range is being considered. How can Congress, in good conscience, purchase more land for the National Forest while continuing to cut their budget??? How can you no longer accept the responsibility for providing the funds necessary for the maintenance of the lands already acquired as a result of the Weeks Act in 1911!!!

In closing, Frank and I ask that you, our Representatives in Congress, consider the following:

(1) restore the Forest Service budget to $13M.

(2) assure that all funds collected on the National Forest during this fee pilot program will be used to maintain this forest in its present condition **ONLY**; not to enhance it.

(3) fully fund PILT, including all increases promised since 1993; **do not** discontinue these payments because of the Fee Pilot Program.

(4) re-examine the concessionaire management of campgrounds

(5) **COMPENSATE TOWNS** for lost revenue in the Forest Reserve Fund due to concessionaire management **NOW**.

(6) re-write the fee pilot program so that it includes all users.

(7) **PERMANENTLY EXEMPT** the taxpayers (not just the residents) of the "host" towns in Carroll, Coos and Grafton County from any type of user fee program, now or in the future.

(8) Look into positive methods of reducing timber sale costs and re-instate the full timber harvest quota in the National Forest.

(9) **STOP** playing games. **STOP** trying to fool the American taxpayers!!! Someone has to pay for these programs either through federal, state or local taxes.

Thank You.

Ann Stage

FRANK & ANN WOLFE
P.O. BOX 2292
CONWAY, NH 03818-2292

November 18, 1997

Representative Stephen Horn
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Representative Horn:

We are returning our subcommittee statements which you sent us for review. We have marked a few corrections in red as requested.

Thank you for inviting Frank and I to testify at your field hearing entitled, "Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program", held on October 20th.

We respectfully submit that **Congress bought the responsibility** to fund the WMNF. The WEEKS ACT, passed in 1911, authorized the federal government to purchase lands east of the Mississippi; it provided government a way to protect New Hampshire's mountains and waterways from erosion, sedimentation and run-off damage.

In 1976, payment in lieu of taxes, PILT, was legislated by Congress to alleviate the problem of WMNF "host" towns losing revenue from property taxes on land **that was acquired by the Forest**. From 1976 to 1995, PILT towns were receiving $0.75 an acre. There has been no allowance for inflation since 1976!!!

On March 11, 1994, S. 455, a Congressional amendment to Title 31, United States Code, to increase Federal payments to units of general local government for entitlement lands, and for other purposes, became effective. Since that time **PILT payments to the "host" towns have been going DOWN not UP!!!!** And, of course, now we know that, in 1998, PILT will be only 69% funded. These towns need this money!!!

Rep. Horn, you zeroed in on the cost effectiveness of timbering in the WMNF. We submit that there are many side benefits to timbering that are not being recognized such as the creation of wildlife habitat, the construction of fire roads and hiking trails.

Further, something needs to be done to control special interest groups such as RESTORE and radical environmentalists. They blatantly state that their main purpose is to put the national forests out of the timbering business. The major goals of the various environmental groups that sprang up in the 1960s & 70s have been largely met. Now these groups appear to be casting about for new fields to conquer.

Is the cost of timber sale appeals by these special interest groups being factored into the bottom line cost, the alleged deficit, of the timber sales? If so, in our opinion, this is not fair. Court costs should not be charged against timber sales and Forest Service man-hours required for preparing the documentation for these appeals should be accounted for separately.

We have just read RSA 219, the New Hampshire regulations on Public Forest Lands. Although we realize Congress is not obliged to abide by state laws, we think that the following might be considered by Congress when deliberating the fee pilot program and other national forest/park-related issues:

219:6 Donation of Funds. The state treasurer is hereby authorized to receive at any time such sums of money as may be donated for the purpose of purchasing, maintaining, and improving state forests or state reservations and buildings thereon, or any other forestry project, and **money so received shall be converted into a continuous fund or funds** from which payments shall be made in accordance with the stipulations of the donor upon warrant of the governor for such purposes as are approved by the department of resources and economic development.

219:14 Forest Improvement Fund.

I. All revenue derived from rentals and sales of forest products from federal lands placed under the jurisdiction of the department of resources and economic development **shall be kept by the state treasurer in a separate account as a continuous fund** to be known as the forest improvement fund from which the expenses of forest management and silvicultural operations on these federal lands may be paid. Such funds may be used interchangeably between the various federal lands under the jurisdiction of the department, with the approval of the concerned federal agency or agencies.

III. At the close of each fiscal year the unexpended balance of moneys in the forest improvement fund shall **not lapse** but shall be carried forward and be made available for use in subsequent years for said purposes.

The activities on the WMNF generate income from timber harvesting and recreation. Perhaps some of the restrictive federal regulations on the forest service should be relaxed so that, as suggested in RSA 219:14, the money earned on the forest is kept on the forest and not turned into the general fund of the federal government.

There is no need for the National Forest Foundation!! It's just another Foundation competing for taxpayers money!! The NFF is now in direct competition with the many existing foundations that could provide funds for special projects on the national forest. We still question whether or not the creation of this Foundation by Congress for the purpose of soliciting funds for the national forest is ethical. If Congress can create a Foundation to solicit funds for projects on the national forest, why can't Forest Service personnel solicit funds themselves?? They are familiar with the various foundations and know their immediate needs!!

Perhaps Congress should look at the rationale for their own spending in various areas such as $330,000 on a "state-of-the-art" composting outhouse in a remote area of

the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area along the New Jersey-Pennsylvania border; the $1,000 ruler; spending $2M on the Kancamagus Highway Enhancement Assessment, which, obviously, the forest can't afford since they don't have the money to maintain the facilities they already have; the 2400 acres recently acquired around Lake Tarleton and the Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge in Warren, NH; and the proposed purchase of the Mt. Dinsmore area. This is ludicrous!!! Congress cuts the Forest Service budget, then purchases more land or adds enhancements for them to operate and maintain.

Mr. Horn, thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Hopefully, it will provide you with additional insight into forest-related problems in the North Country.

Sincerely,

Ann Wolfe

Frank Wolfe

cc: Rep. John Sununu and Rep. Charles Bass
Sen. Judd Gregg and Sen. Robert Smith
Ms. Donna Hepp, Forest Supervisor
Mr. Terry Clark, Saco District Ranger, WMNF
Governor Jeanne Shaheen and District 1, Executive Councilor, Ray Burton
Albany and Bartlett Board of Selectmen
Preston Gilbert, North Country Council

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. We are running just a little short on time, so I would ask the Members to keep their questioning period brief. We want to retain at least a half an hour at the end of our session for comments from the general public. But for the questioning of this panel, we'll begin with Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Let me just briefly inquire about your State parks, perhaps to the member of the State legislature.

Do you have experiences here that would be helpful to the Federal Government, of how you finance your State parks, that you utilize, as we grapple with the idea of funding national parks and national forests?

Mr. BURTON. Yes, I will respond to that, Congressman. The governor's council brought in I guess you could say a very hard-nosed business person who understood how State government works, the person of Bill Bartlett, and immediately cut the bureaucracy, fewer people at the home office or the State office, and got more people out into the field servicing the parks.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Do you have a user fee? How do you fund your parks?

Mr. BURTON. Yes, user fees, people that come in the parks, in the campgrounds.

Mr. CHANDLER. I think that is one of the distinctions I would like to make, if I may. We certainly do, in the State of New Hampshire, do a good job of managing them. We do charge in our State parks to camp there. That is the difference, is some of the distinction we've been trying to make. This is not a park. We have State parks. There is no charge to go on those. I think people expect to pay in the national parks. That is the system. Traditionally we have not paid to use State forests or the national forests.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Thank you very much. I appreciate the distinction.

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. Horn.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Chandler, I'm just curious, since you made the distinction, if it quacks like a duck, why don't we treat it like a duck? In other words, if the national forest serves the national park purpose and the State park serves the State park purpose, why don't we charge them? We charge one.

Mr. CHANDLER. We don't charge in the State forest. We charge in our State parks.

Mr. HORN. But you charge in the State parks. The use of the State forest or the national forest is the same as it might be in a national park or State park.

I'm willing to pay the fee. I guess the fee is about the price of a movie or two or three movies, maybe not in New Hampshire but I'll tell you, that's what they will soak you in New York and southern California. And for a play in New York, you can go to the forest for about 4 years for one night at the play.

Mr. CHANDLER. I think the system, if you want to change, and I certainly don't encourage this, the national forest, and you in Congress's wisdom would like to make it a national park, I guess we would pay. This was set up under the Weeks Act years ago; it was set up as a national forest. The land was taken off tax rolls

to provide for this forest. I as a taxpayer support what goes on in the infrastructure in the national forest.

I'm sure you have an idea, so I am not telling you anything, what it would cost, what the Forest Service budget would have to be if the communities didn't provide all the support services to the national forest. As I stated before, they couldn't exist, so I think that is the tradeoff. We are providing those, and taxpayers throughout the country are providing the services on the national forest. That's why we shouldn't charge.

Mr. HORN. Let me ask you, are any of you members of the local chamber of commerce of the city in which you live? Have any of you ever been president of the chamber of commerce?

Mr. CHANDLER. I have been a member but never a president.

Mr. HORN. Is anybody going to testify on behalf of the chamber of commerce that sat up here? It seems to me, having been active in our chamber of commerce in Long Beach, CA, that we would be taking great pride in the national forest and what it brings into the town in terms of people that eat in the restaurants and people that stay overnight in the motels to see the beauty of the area. People come up here for all sorts of recreational purposes.

I am just wondering if any of you have ever seen an impact statement the chamber has made as to what this forest means to the community.

Mr. CHANDLER. I have not seen an actual impact statement, but I can tell you it is probably the single most important part of our tourism network out here, without question.

Mr. HORN. I agree. That's why I think we should to look at that both ways. I don't want to see services to cities and counties not paid for. I think they should be paid for. But, on the other hand, I think this is a major asset, just as Yosemite is for its area and national parks throughout California.

As the point was made earlier by the chairman, if you get to the bottom you've got 90 percent of the State is owned by the Federal Government, and that is true in most of the western States. Even California has a substantial amount of acreage, millions of acres, because it was under the Treaty of Guadalupe, that that became all Federal land that was parcelled out. Much of that is now devoted to recreation, not just feeding and grazing cows and sheep and all the rest of the things that public land was doing. So I think we ought to look at it as to the impact favorably, as you agree, with the surrounding towns.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. Thank you to all the panelists. I appreciate your patience and your testimony very much.

Mr. CHANDLER. I am not going to read because I know you are late, but I want to bring up two important points. Unfortunately, two of our, I think, most critical people that we would have had here today could not make it for personal reasons. That's former District Ranger Verland Ohlson, who has been a district ranger here for 30 years, who has submitted a written comment, certainly very much opposed to this fee system; and also Paul Doherty, a well-respected writer from the north, who wrote the article "A Northwoodsman Mad As Hell." Both those people couldn't be here.

Mr. SUNUNU. Their comments will be included in the record, as will that of Mary Shriver from the New Hampshire Wildlife Federation, who couldn't be here.

[The prepared statements of Mr. Ohlson, Mr. Doherty, and Ms. Shriver follow:]

THE WMNF USER FEE SYSTEM

I was employed by the United States Forest Service for thirty years and have nothing but respect for the White Mountain National Forest.

I am opposed to the White Mountain National Forest User Fee System for a number of reasons. I was Forest Administrator of the Saco District of the White Mountain National Forest from 1957 to 1980. I was responsible for two hundred thousand acres of multiple use management that included timber management, recreation, fire, water management, wildlife trail management, search and rescue and personnel and finance. We operated returning a profit to the Federal government.

The pattern of ownership of the Forest makes it difficult to enforce. Just to park and have to pay to walk on National Forest land destroys the reason the forests were acquired. Thousands of tourists stop for a short stay at Rocky Gorge, Lower Falls, and other locations and have to pay just to walk down to Swift River to view the sites.

The Forest Service needs to sharpen up its whole operation so it would only require a small amount of the Federal government to operate. Legislation is needed to make it harder for environmental groups to hold up and prevent timber harvest on the National Forest, the one way the Forest can show a profit.

The Forest Service operated for 150 years without a fee system. The amount of money returned to the Forest from the fee system is only a small amount after the cost of collection. We pay enough taxes that there should be some beneficial returns. The White Mountain National Forest volunteered for the pilot fee program and we should do all we can so that it does not become a permanent program. It would destroy the feeling of freedom on the National Forest as well as the tradition of freedom in New Hampshire. Tourists are not using the Forest as much as a result of the fee system and the method of collection leaves them with regrets.

The proposed cuts in the Forest Service budget will make the Forest more efficient and streamlining the organization facilities will make it more efficient and economical and less need for a fee system.

Verland Ohlson
Conway, NH

Gorham, NH
October 14, 1997

Congress of the United States
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

My name is Paul T. Doherty, a lifelong resident, except during the years of World War II, and employee of the the state of New Hampshire, now retired.

During the many years of service to the state of New Hampshire I served as a chief Conservation Officer, first chief of the States ~~Trail~~ Fish Bureau and finally as Director of the State Division of Parks. During these many years, and roles, I was involved in many ways with the White Mountain National Forest. Because of this long association with this National Forest I wish to comment on the User Pilot Program.

Due to the White Mountain National Forest's location and easy accessibility and wide range of uses I do not feel a special permit should be required. Not easy to enforce and not popular with those who live around the forest and enjoy it's landscape.

I am well aware that we now live in a "user fee" society, and that Congress has ordered a User Pilot Program, even though many of us feel it's unnecessary. Having said that allow me to indicate what I find wrong with that has taken place.

What should have been a "User Fee" turned out to be a "Parking Permit" policy, and the way it has been managed leaves much to be desired.

Signs have been placed at the many trail heads and parking lots advising the requirement of a parking permit. I find in my travels no clear policy as to where you park for free and where you must obtain a permit. Allow me to site a few prime examples of what I refer to.

In Pinkham Notch at the AMC Headquarters in the large parking lot no signs were placed. This is the highest used trail head on the WMNF. Thousands of people, year round, park here and enter the forest. When I ask why no permit is necessary I am told because the parking lot is State property, yet the State does not plow or maintain this lot.

Not far away is found a parking lot for the 19 Mile Brook Trail. This parking area was built by the State and is plowed in the winter by the State. Here, however, one finds the signs that indicate a permit is necessary. Not far away is found the Imp Trail Head, here hikers park on the side of the highway, Route 16, within the road right of way, and are required to possess a permit.

In Randolph one finds trails parking, another high use area with hikers. A large parking lot was constructed by the State and is plowed by the State. No signs are found here, hundreds park for free and step onto the National Forest from their cars.

Throughout the White Mountain National Forest there are m
many, many, cases like those that I have mentioned. Something is wrong and must be corrected. If Congress is to require all who use this forest to possess a permit I suggest the US Forest Service develop a policy that is fair to all forest users.

The Conway Daily Sun • Friday, September 5, 1997

outdoors
NORTHWOODSMAN

A Northwoodsman Mad As Hell

by Paul Doherty

The National Forest fee system has a long way to go towards equity

If you are an outdoor person, especially if you like to hike, fish or otherwise use the White Mountain National Forest, you are aware of the new Passport or Recreational Parking Permit now in force. Under this new policy if you park and use U.S. Forest land you are required to have a parking permit that costs $5 for seven days or $20 for the season. This new way of raising funds for the WMNF has caused much comment, concern and opposition.

In this column, and I have been writing for some 45 years, I very seldom become involved in issues that are controversial, preferring to keep my own opinions to myself. Because this new parking permit policy has made me mad as hell I have decided to put my two cents worth in.

I am so upset about the fee because we are forced to pay for just about everything these days, as I am about the way it's being carried out.

Throughout the national forest, signs have been placed at just about every trailhead, every parking lot and other places where people would park and enter the national forest. This new policy of charging a fee is really for using the forest but somehow got turned into a parking lot fee instead. The problem as I see it, is that the charge to park when you go fishing, for example, is not being carried out in a fair way. And this is the point where I have strong feelings.

OK, so you park in a parking lot built and maintained by the US Forest Service and pay the fee and take your hike. You may not like the idea of paying to use what the government calls your public land but Congress has said you will.

Now for the issue that has my Irish up. In Pinkham Notch, in connection with the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Pinkham Notch Camp, is found the most major trailhead in the White Mountain National Forest. More people use this trailhead to climb Mount Washington than any other trail in the White Mountains. And what about the thousands of people who hike into and ski Tuckerman Ravine every spring? I don't know if the AMC has figures for the numbers of people year-round, but if they do, it has to be in the thousands.

You know what? If you're one of those thousands and you park at the AMC location you won't find any sign that reads, "Parked Vehicles must possess Recreational Parking Permit" So you park free!

When I ask, "how come?" the answer if either, (it depends who you ask) "Oh that's a state parking lot." or "That parking lot is under lease to the AMC".

So let's go down the road toward Gorham from Pinkham Notch. At the 19-Mile Brook trailhead is a parking lot built when the state improved Route 16. There you will find a USFS sign advising you need a parking permit. Go a bit further on Route 16 to the Imp Face (there are two) and you find the same kind of signs. If you park there to hike the Imp Trail, you car will be within the state highway right of way but you pay.

What about the trout fishermen that parks along side the Peabody River? Dolly Copp, sometimes called the Pinkham B Road, is signed but it's a state road.

Now that I have mentioned Dolly Copp, there is a fine picnic area alongside Route 16 south of Gorham. In fact, there are two picnic areas not far apart in that general location. Both have parking permit signs. (I am not speaking about the famous Dolly Copp campground that is apart from these two picnic areas.) This is a tourist area, hundreds of people stop and eat lunch at these spots. Are we now telling such people they must pay $5 to eat their lunch?

Another point of contention. The Glen Ellis Falls are visited by thousands of tourists every summer. Drive into were you park to walk to see the falls and you will find one of the USFS parking fee signs. Five bucks to view the falls, come on!. Something is wrong.

Another point I would like to call attention to. In Randolph alongside Route 2 is a parking lot called Trails Parking. Trails here lead in several directions up Mt. Madison and Adams. This is another of the high use trailheads on the WMNF. No sign here, just like at Pinkham Notch. The answer, "Oh that's a state parking lot".

I guess the point I am trying to make is that you are expected to pay to park in hundreds of places yet at some of the most heaviest used trails you park for free. Is this a fair policy?

I have made it a point to drive around and check out the various places where people park and enter the national forest. I can say one thing, the USFS may be hard up for cash but they have had a lot of signs made. And they have placed them everywhere. I had to smile at one location where one of these signs is found. There isn't a trailhead there but it's in a spot often used by lovers. Pay to spoon?

I am not trying to pick a fight with the US Forest Service. I have had a close relationship with people on the WMNF for years and hope to continue a good relationship.

I do, however, feel this policy needs to be reviewed. If we all are expected to pay a fee when we hike, ski, fish or hunt on forest land, so we all pay. As long as those who park at the AMC lot in Pinkham Notch go for free, I am going to be mad as hell!

Paul Doherty, a north country resident, is author of 'Smoke from a Thousand Campfires.'

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New Hampshire Wildlife Federation
Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation
Post Office Box 239, Concord, N.H. 03302
(603) 224-5953
Fax: (603) 228-0423

October 20, 1997

I am sorry that I cannot be here in person to address this hearing. Thank you for taking the time to come here and listen to everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to present my written comments.

New Hampshire Wildlife Federation was established in 1933 as a non-profit organization that represents active outdoors people. We have 7,000 members, many of whom hunt, fish and trap in the White Mountain National Forest.

All of these people, of course, have purchased a New Hampshire hunting, fishing or trapping license. All of these people, by virtue of participating in their outdoor pursuits have contributed to the Federal Pittman-Robertson and/or Dingell-Johnson funds. In fact, we have been paying into the Pittman-Robertson fund (the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act) for 60 years. All of our members who register boats or off-highway-recreational-vehicles in New Hampshire contributs to the state's search and rescue fund—a program often called upon to rescue non-contributing hikers and climbers in the White Mountain National Forest.

Sportsmen and women have always been in the forefront when asked to pay for the use and conservation of natural resources. It is the consensus feeling among New Hampshire Wildlife Federation members that they have supported and will continue to support the national forest. Our license dollars and federal excise tax money paid over many, many years should allow the use of federal lands. These are payments that passive recreational users do not share.

It is the position of New Hampshire Wildlife Federation that sportsmen and women who are hunting, fishing or trapping in the White Mountain National Forest with valid licenses for these activities be exempt from paying any further user fees. We will continue to buy licenses and equipment; we will continue to pay for search and rescue. Please do not ask us to pay to park our vehicles.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Mary Shriver

Mary Shriver
Executive Director

Mr. SUNUNU. Would the next panel please come up to the table. We welcome Mr. Carroll Pineo, chairman of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission; Walter Graff, director, New Hampshire Appalachian Mountain Club; and Charles Niebling, senior policy director, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

I'd ask that you please speak as close to the microphone as possible and do your best to remain within the 5-minute rule so that we can retain time for public comments at the end. Thank you very much for coming and for your time, and I will begin with Mr. Pineo.

STATEMENTS OF CARROLL PINEO, CHAIRMAN, NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME COMMISSION; WALTER GRAFF, DIRECTOR, NEW HAMPSHIRE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB; AND CHARLES NIEBLING, SENIOR POLICY DIRECTOR, SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FORESTS

Mr. PINEO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Carroll B. Pineo. I'm chairman of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission. The fish and game commission is composed of 11 members, 1 from each county of the State and an extra 1 from the marine and coastal interests. The commission is an oversight body that sets the fish and game department policies and, among other things, determines which legislative initiatives will be supported or opposed. I serve as the chairman. I have been the chairman for 3½ years. We serve a 5-year term, without compensation.

The members of the fish and game commission have not acted officially on this initiative. At the time the subject was brought up last April or May, the commission decided on a wait-and-see policy to determine how this initiative was going to work. In preparation for this hearing, I did conduct a poll of the commission, and currently the majority of the commission, if they voted today, would oppose this initiative. I will give you the reasons in a short statement here.

Members of the fish and game commission, as well as the sporting, hunting, and fishing community, have all indicated to me their strenuous objection to this user fee on Federal lands. Their major objection is that of parking access for entry for their hunting, fishing, and trapping grounds, which have been traditionally used only for that purpose by these user groups.

They feel that the wildlife restoration, management, and fish stocking on these lands located within State boundaries have been supported by the State of New Hampshire hunting and fishing license fees and by taxes and fees on guns, ammunition, and other sporting goods for over 60 years under the Pitman-Robertson Act. They feel they have been paying their fair share for many years, and the simple possession of a hunting, fishing, or trapping license should exempt them from any additional fee for access or parking at Federal land locations anywhere within the State.

Private landowners within New Hampshire have allowed access and parking on their land from the beginning without fee. Most State access and parking locations are without fee. Snowmobile and other off-highway recreational vehicles have many of their own

free parking areas and access points on private and public land, and registration fees for these vehicles provide maintenance funds as well as those for rescue and law enforcement.

All these user groups pay their fair share and should not be charged again by Federal regulations on Federal public lands regarding access and parking. Most of these users do not use trails on Federal lands except incidentally during access to hunting and fishing areas. They do not hunt and fish from the trails. When they occasionally do use parking areas on Federal lands for access, it is during seasons when hiking trail use is at a minimum and there has been no conflict due to congestion that I'm aware of. This situation is sort of traditional here in this part of the country. The only thing new is the parking fee for these user groups.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pineo follows:]

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE: REVIEW OF THE PILOT PROGRAM

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY CARROLL B. PINEO
NH FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Members of the Fish and Game Commission, sporting, clubs, hunting and fishing community have all indicated to me their strenuous objection to a user fee on Federal Lands. The main objection is a fee charged for access to parking for entry to fishing and hunting grounds which are and have been traditionally used only for that purpose by these user groups. Wildlife management and fish stocking on these lands located within state boundaries have been supported by the State of New Hampshire hunting and fishing license fees and by taxes and fees on guns, ammunition and other sporting goods for over sixty years under the Pitman-Robertson Act. These sportsmen and sportswomen feel that they have been paying their fair share for many years and the simple possession of a hunting, fishing or trapping license should exempt them from any additional fee for access or parking at Federal land locations anywhere within the state. Private land owners within New Hampshire have allowed access and parking on their lands from the beginning without fee. Most state access and parking locations are without charge. Snowmobile and other Off Highway Recreation Vehicles have many of their own free parking and access points on private and public land and registration fees for these vehicles provide maintenance funds as well as those for rescue and law enforcement. All these user groups pay their fair share and should not be charged again by Federal regulations on Federal public lands regarding access and parking. Most of these users do not use trails on Federal lands except incidentally during access to hunting and fishing areas. They do not hunt and fish from the trails. When they occasionally do use parking areas on Federal lands for access it is during seasons when hiking trail use is at a minimum and there has been no conflict due to congestion. This is not a new situation it has been traditional. The only thing new is a fee being charged to these user groups who have paid their way for a hundred years.

Carroll B Pineo 10/15/97

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much.

Mr. Graff.

Mr. GRAFF. Thank you all for inviting me here today. I am deputy director of the Appalachian Mountain Club based out of our Pinkham Notch office. The Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest and most active recreation organization in the United States. With more than 74,000 members, the nonprofit Appalachian Mountain Club promotes the protection, enjoyment, and the wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Northeast. We believe that successful long-term conservation depends upon firsthand enjoyment of the natural world. We recognize as an organization that stewardship of our national land is important.

The Appalachian Mountain Club itself and its many members maintain a lot of the trails on the White Mountain National Forest. We believe that along with the stewardship responsibility comes a physical responsibility. We have been disturbed by the free-fall in the budget of the White Mountain National Forest in the last several years.

This concurrent free-fall of budgeting has been matched by increased use among the visitors. There is now an additional 1 million visitors in the last 10 years to the White Mountain National Forest. The forest itself has sites that are completely full. The campgrounds are completely full. Miles of trails that they maintain are in disrepair. They have virtually a nonexistent environmental education program. Their wilderness oversight is minimal at best. These are not to put the Forest Service at fault. We believe this is a funding issue.

I brought a large chart which I left up by my seat, but the large chart shows how the use of our shelter sites alone in the last 10 years has doubled from 5,000 to 10,000 people. That is a big and concomitant increase in day use. It is important to note that with this loss in the Federal dollars here on this White Mountain National Forest, it is our understanding that the Western forests, the national budget—and we tried to get these figures but it is very difficult to find them—the national budget for the forests has increased over the several years or at least remained stable; whereas the Eastern forests' numbers have dropped significantly.

We think we need to look differently now at how we budget for the national forest. The Appalachian Mountain Club and the Society for the Protection of the National Forest and other groups that work with the national forest are very concerned about the future of this land and particularly, from the Appalachian Mountain Club point of view, the degradation to the forest that may happen with overuse.

We play our part in attracting people to the White Mountain National Forest. We want to do our share of that work. But we also feel the Federal Government has to live up to its commitment, as well. We believe the American people have shown time and time again that public land is important. Congress needs to take a harder look at our forests, especially here in the East.

One of the suggestions that has been mulled around by some of the conservation leaders in this State and among others is that perhaps we should separate out the Eastern forests. These are the forests that were built on large citizen involvement, very different

from the Western forests, as mentioned this morning. Maybe we should separate out the Weeks area forests and fund them very differently. Fund them for their high ecological value, high recreational value, and the high economic value to these communities in the East.

Another alternative, and I met recently about—and I don't know, Congressman Horn, if it's from your area, but the forests in San Bernardino Valley are crying also for recreational funds. They are urban forests and there are 14 designated urban forests around the United States. Maybe we should look at urban forests. White Mountain National Forest is one of those forests.

Maybe we should look at different funding mechanisms. Maybe recreation is a much higher value. The scarce land here in the East, the scarce public lands we have here, it is clear to everyone I think sitting in this room the numbers of people who visit these national forests, particularly this one here in the White Mountain. We need to take a look at that.

And finally as we mentioned time and time again here this morning, the Congress needs to come across and support the PILT payments. It is important for these communities. It breeds distrust right now. We want the Government to be on the high plateau, the high moral ground on this. Because we can't do our work, the Appalachian Mountain Club can't do its work on this national forest without having a strong partner, and our strong partner is the White Mountain National Forest. They have been with us since 1911. We predated them. We've been around since 1876, but we have a strong partnership. We want them to be able to perform the task of protecting and managing this land and dealing with the recreational uses.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Graff follows:]

Information for testimony for the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight.

"Management Practices of the US Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program"

Biographical Sketch

Walter S. Graff, Deputy Director, Appalachian Mountain Club

Walter S. Graff was appointed Deputy Director of the Appalachian Mountain Club in January, 1995. Prior to that he was the Club's Education Director for ten years. During his 23 year career with the AMC he has served on numerous boards and committees throughout the region. During the last White Mountain National Forest planning process in 1980, he chaired the WMNF the North Country advisory group for the draft Forest Plan. Walter serves as the Club's chief liaison with the WMNF and is AMC's senior staff person in northern New England. The AMC has 74,000 members, with 11 chapters stretching from Washington, D. C. to Maine. The AMC was instrumental in forming the Eastern National Forest System in 1911.

Appalachian Mountain Club

Fee Pilot Hearing
Conway, NH
Oct. 20, 1997

Statement of
Walter S. Graff
Deputy Director, Appalachian Mountain Club

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on this issue of critical importance to the Northeast, to the nation, and to every citizen who cherishes our precious public lands.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest and most active conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With more than 74,000 members, the non-profit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Northeast. We believe that successful, long-term conservation depends upon first-hand enjoyment of the natural world.

After more than 20 years of introducing people to the outdoors, and to the White Mountain National Forest, in my work as Education Director and, more recently, as Deputy Director, of the Appalachian Mountain Club, I've learned that many who explore this wonderful forest take home with them a profound appreciation for this magnificent landscape, and a willingness to support it.

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Mt. Greylock Visitor Center & Bascom Lodge • [illegible] 413-442-0011 or 413-743-1591 FAX 413-442-9010

I think most people recognize that we all share the responsibility of stewardship. With that responsibility comes a fiscal responsibility, too. Stewardship comes with a cost, but stewardship of our national forests--protecting natural resources, providing educational programming, information services, and recreational opportunities--is a cost to which we must be firmly committed.

We face a predicament in the WMNF. Funds available to the forest have been in freefall, while use of the land has been steadily climbing.

--Today, the WMNF is visited by approximately 7 million visitors--about a million more per year than a decade ago.
--The 900 sites in WMNF campgrounds are consistently full, especially on summer weekends.
--Many miles of trails maintained by the USFS are in disrepair.
--Forest Service environmental education is virtually non-existent.
--Wilderness oversight and protection is minimal.
--Overnight use at backcountry shelter sites has doubled in the past decade.
(See chart.)

I think I can safely say that day use by of the national forest has increased to an even greater degree, as day hikers have traditionally outnumbered overnight visitors by a significant margin.

Yet there's been a concurrent drop in appropriations for the WMNF. And that is deeply troubling.

Appropriations for the WMNF have plummeted from $10.1 million in 1993 to $7.3 million in 1997. Even more frightening is the dismal state of the recreation budget on the White Mountain National Forest, which has been slashed to nearly half of its fiscal 1993 levels, following four years of steady decline.

The WMNF recreation budget appropriations, including construction, for FY '97 are $2.765 million--only about 55% of the FY '93 budget of slightly more than $5 million. Meanwhile, the total WMNF budget is down nearly 30% from '93 levels, and is expected to fall another 15% in the coming year.

On the national level, our understanding is that the budget for the national forest system has increased, but that funds for the forests in the East have been disproportionately cut. Given the enormous popularity of the WMNF, which, we understand, is the second most heavily used national forest in the country for recreation, that balance needs to change. We must take a hard look at the way budget criteria are developed.

The solution of the moment is the fee pilot program. As the nation's oldest and most active conservation and recreation organization, we at the AMC recognize the role users of national forests can play in helping to fund the continued stewardship of these lands. We called for a voluntary approach, and we're disappointed that the Forest Service was forced to make the fee mandatory.

Together with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and other concerned citizens, the AMC was among the first to call for the creation of the White Mountain National Forest. Our trail-building and map-making laid the foundation for the enormous citizen effort that helped create the Eastern national

forest system in 1911. The WMNF is here because of the tremendous amount of citizen support that helped create it. Given the long history of volunteer commitment in this forest, we believe a voluntary user fee program could provide a model for public lands throughout the country.

Many hikers are willing to contribute to trail maintenance and backcountry management, and many of them do by performing volunteer trail work in the national forest. AMC members and volunteers contribute more than 30,000 hours a year toward trail maintenance in the WMNF, along with many thousands of hours providing informational services to forest visitors.

Many are willing to pay a user fee, too, as long as those funds are directly applied toward the protection of natural resources.

As with most residents and forest visitors, our members are confused over the inconsistencies in the administration of this program.

We want to be sure that any fees collected are used directly for the management of recreational lands and are not siphoned off for other non-relevant uses. In addition, we want to ensure that imposition of a fee system does not deny people of limited means with access to the outdoors, and does not tamper with the feeling of freedom one enjoys during a hike into the backcountry.

If those principles are upheld, and if people are made to feel that their support is critical to the continued health of the national forest, we believe they will wholeheartedly step up and voluntarily support the forest with their dollars. This may have the added benefit of building a positive constituency for the forest.

But let's not kid ourselves--user fees alone aren't likely to solve the budget dilemma. There are at least two more pieces to that puzzle:

--The need for volunteer stewardship from recreation and conservation organizations, such as the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Randolph Mountain Club, the Dartmouth Outing Club, and others, will continue to grow.

The AMC and the US Forest Service have enjoyed a productive partnership for decades. It's a partnership that ultimately benefits the land and the users of the national forest, and we intend to continue and increase our commitment to help provide needed services to national forest visitors at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer--a service we are happy and proud to provide as a nonprofit public service organization operating in a model public-private partnership.

--The other part of the solution lies in making sure Congress allocates adequate funding, and ensures the appropriate use of funding, for management of public lands in the first place.

Based on our personal contact with tens of thousands of WMNF visitors every year, we do not believe the American people want to cut the federal budget at the expense of these public lands. And we do not believe taxpayers should be forced to pay a fee to enjoy public lands to which they have already contributed their hard-earned tax dollars.

In addition, we believe it is imperative that Congress fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program at the full level promised so that towns containing national forest

lands receive the full amount due them. By shortchanging the communities that rely on those funds for tax relief and critical public services, Congress is unwittingly breeding distrust--and doing nothing to build needed support for our national forests. Congress must fulfill its contractual obligations to local communities.

At the same time, the Forest Service needs to rebuild its base of citizen support in the White Mountains. Adequate funding will allow the service to work with partners and non-profits to care for these lands and build public support.

The American people have shown, time and time again, that public land is important. Congress needs to take a harder look at funding for our forests. Are there other options? Should we separate out the Eastern forests created under the Weeks Act and develop a new funding mechanism that recognizes the importance of recreation and the value of scarce public lands in the East? Or should we look at urban forests--those near large population centers--and fund them differently, considering such factors as quality of life for urban populations rather than basing budget decisions simply on raw acreage?

The AMC has a long history of partnership with the national forest. We want that partnership to continue well into the next century, but we need an agency that is strong, vital, and able to serve the land and the people.

Thank you.

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Appalachian Mountain Club
1997 Government Grants and Contracts
(through 10/16/97)

Agency	Number	Type	Purpose	Amount
USDA	R9-WM-97-026	Challenge Cost Share	Osgood Trail work	2600
NPS	1600-4-9003	Cooperative Agreement	Community Outreach	3300
USDA	R9-WM-97-013	Challenge Cost Share	NH Trails Day	500
USDA	R9-WM-97-021	Challenge Cost Share	Mahoosuc Trail Relocation	870
USDA	R9-WM-97-014	Challenge Cost Share	Trail Maintenance Androscoggin District	1000
USDA	R9-WM-97-011	Challenge Cost Share	Visibility Perception Study	2000
USDA	R9-WM-97-010	Challenge Cost Share	Air Quality Monitoring	10000
USDA	R9-WM-97-009	Challenge Cost Share	Potentilla robbinsiana Recovery Plan	2000
USDA	23-052-A2	Challenge Cost Share	Evaluation of Acidic Deposition Impacts	7000
NPS	1443CA170992001	Cooperative Agreement	Basic Agreement	0
NPS	1443CA170992001	Cooperative Agreement	Amend. 1 Cooperative Research, Education and Trail Rehabilitation Program	17407
NPS	1600-4-9003	Cooperative Agreement	Community outreach	67000
USDA	None	Consignment Sale Agree.	Sale of WMNF Parking Permits	0

Appalachian Mountain Club
1996 Government Grants and Contracts

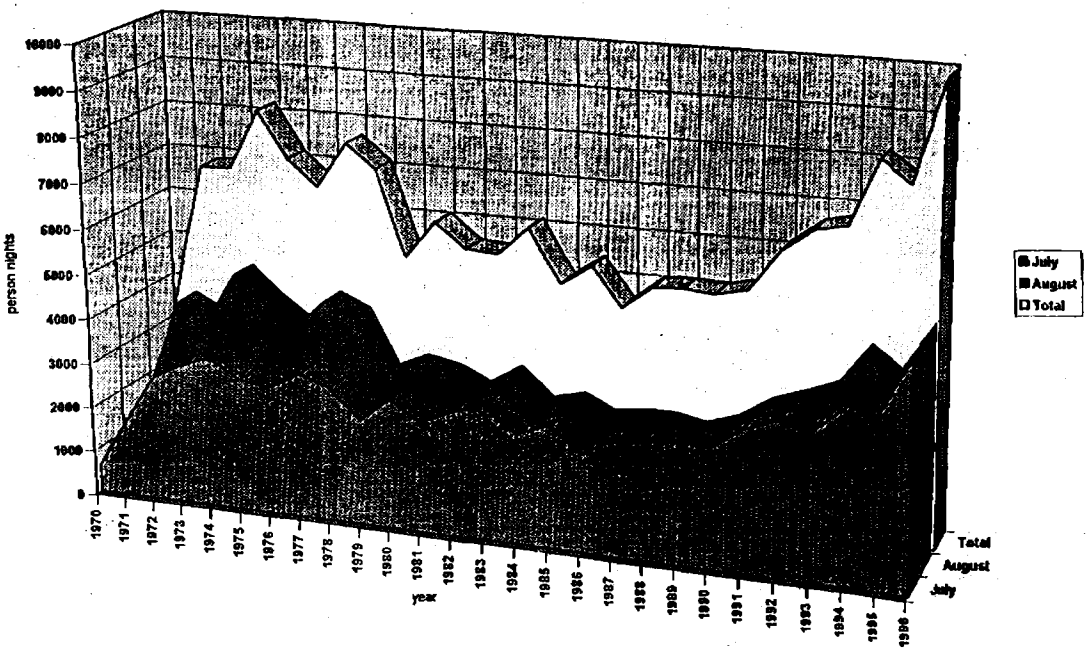
Agency	Number	Type	Purpose	Amount
NPS	1600-4-9003	Coop Agree.	Rivers, trails, conservation asst.	30500
USFS		Challenge cs	Shoal Pond trail	5000
USFS	R9-WM-96-026	Challenge cs	Alpine Garden Trail	5062
USFS	R9-WM-96-027	Challenge cs	Potentilla	2500
NPS	CA-4000-4-3023	Coop Agree	Buttermilk Falls Trail	13024
USFS	R9-WM-95-028	Challenge cs	Air Quality	3000
USFS	R9-WM-96-029	Challenge cs	Air Quality	10000
USFS	R9-WM-96-024	Challenge cs	NH Trails Day	600
USFS	R9-WM-96-022	Challenge cs	Old Jackson Road Trail	4315
USFS	R9-WM-96-021	Challenge cs	Lions Head and Tuckermans trail	10000
USFS	23-052	Coop Agree	Evaluation of acidic deposits	5000
NPS	1600-4-9003	Coop Agree	Rivers, trails, conservation asst.	55000
NPS	CA1700-2-9001	Coop Agree	Acid NP work	15000
				159001

Appalachian Mountain Club
1995 Government Funding

Agency	Date	Number	Purpose	Amount	Type	Comments
USDA	4/25/95	23-052	Acid rain in wilderness areas	10000	Co-op Agreement	
USDA	6/9/95		Mahoosuc Trail work	8000	Challenge Cost Share	No cost records required
USDA	6/9/95	R9-WM-WL-95-019	Potentilla recovery plan	2700	Challenge Cost Share	
USDA	6/27/95		Service trip	1200	Challenge Cost Share	
USDA	7/7/95	R9-WM-95-020	Ammo Dist. Trail Work	16000	Challenge Cost Share	
USDA	7/13/95	R9-WM-95-026	NH Trail Day	600	Challenge Cost Share	
NPS	2/3/95	1600-4-9003 #4	Community Outreach	58000	Co-op Agreement	
NPS	2/3/95	1600-4-9003 #5	Rivers Report	15000	Co-op Agreement	
NPS	9/20/95	1600-4-9003 #7	Community Outreach	15000	Co-op Agreement	
NPS	6/30/95	CA1700-2-9001 #4	Arcadia	18400	Co-op Agreement	
Total				142900		

July and August Chart Chart 1

AMC White Mountain Shelter Program
July and August Caretaker Site Use Totals 1970-1996



Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much.

Mr. Niebling.

Mr. NIEBLING. Thank you. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Charles Niebling. I'm senior policy director for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, a 10,000-member organization founded in 1901 to protect the State's most important landscapes and promote wise use of its renewable natural resources.

The Forest Society's history is inextricably linked to that of the White Mountain National Forest. The organization was founded to conserve forests and watersheds of the White Mountains, then ravaged by indiscriminate and excessive timber harvesting. Ten years later, the persistent efforts of the Forest Society, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and others led to the passage of the Weeks Act, which as you know authorized the Federal Government to acquire privately owned lands in the Eastern United States for inclusion in the national forest system.

As former Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson remarked at a celebration in New Hampshire of the 75th anniversary of the Weeks Act in 1986, for this persistence, "the rest of the Nation, and particularly those of us in the Forest Service, are thankful and indebted to the people and early conservation leaders here in New England. The roots of the Forest Service and the conservation movement run deep to this part of the country."

Today we have a national forest restored to health, that, while not without its share of occasional controversy, stands as a model of what a national forest is and should be. I really believe that. I think we have done about as well as anyone could do in this part of the country.

The Forest Society has been cautiously supportive of the fee pilot program as a pilot. We articulated two concerns prior to implementation last spring. The first is that we will reserve final judgment on whether the program should become permanent when we can be convinced that the funds raised are, in fact, being used to improve services and protect natural resources on the White Mountain and not just replace budget shortfalls. And second, that a system of fees can be used to better manage the increasing numbers that want to recreate on this forest. Control of recreational use will most certainly be addressed in the upcoming forest plan revision.

Mr. Chairman, my remaining remarks today focus not so much on the mechanics of the fee pilot and the very important local issues and concerns expressed by the previous panel members, but instead on the much larger and more critical nationwide issues that necessitated the fee pilot in the first place.

In the absence of increased Federal funding for our natural forests, the Forest Society is prepared to concede that some form of permanent fee access program is necessary. However, we are not yet willing to concede that the citizens of the United States and their elected Representatives in Congress will not eventually recognize the basic responsibilities of land ownership, which is to be a good neighbor and a good steward. That means providing funds necessary to implement each forest's land and resource management plan and fully fund Payments in Lieu of Taxes.

Our forest plan, adopted in 1986, was a contract with the people of this region. It has been funded at roughly 60 percent of what was envisioned as necessary. The continued inability of Congress to meet this need calls into question the very purpose of forest planning. This should concern your committee and your colleagues in Congress, as the Forest Service is about to ask the citizens of New England to once again invest huge amounts of time in our next forest plan. Many of us have some real apprehension about whether this investment will be worth the time.

If the Congress is unable to meet this essential responsibility through adequate general funding and the solution becomes more local responsibility, then the Congress must be willing to vest more local authority in determining how the local forest will be managed.

Let me conclude with three specific suggestions. First, last year Congress directed the Forest Service to implement a new internal budget allocation process, the net effect of which was to shift funding away from forests with heavy recreation use to forests with high natural resource attributes. Thus, national forests in the heavily populated Northeast, especially the White Mountain, are now anticipating significant percentage reductions in funding for fiscal year 1998 relative to forests in other regions of the country.

I believe Congress and your committee must take a hard look at the Forest Service's internal agency budget allocation process to ensure the allocation is more equitable and to a greater extent reflects the substantial costs incurred by heavy recreation use. If serious consideration is given to this issue, we may find that we do not need a fee pilot program in the White Mountain National Forest.

Second, the fee pilot might have gotten off to a smoother start had the staff of the White Mountain been able to legally convene a local advisory body to assist them in developing the program. The Federal Advisory Committee Act made this extremely difficult. I recommend that your committee consider authorizing fee pilot demonstration forests to consider the establishment of such local advisory bodies to assist and advise the Forest Service if the user fee program moves from pilot to permanent status.

And finally, I believe there may be some real inefficiencies in how the Forest Service, including the White Mountain National Forest, utilizes the funds that it receives. I know these inefficiencies exist in the timber program, and I suspect they do as well in management of recreation use. It may be a useful function of the fee pilot advisory committee, I've suggested, to also periodically critique how the staff of the White Mountain utilizes the funds that it receives? I think some real innovation, savings, and cooperative partnering could be realized from such a process.

My organization's historical role in issues involving the White Mountain has always been and continues to be one of convening interests and facilitating resolution of problems. We look forward to working with the Forest Service and with our congressional delegation on needs and other issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Niebling follows:]

SOCIETY
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Testimony of Charles R. Niebling
Senior Policy Director
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Before the

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology

October 20, 1997

Good Morning. My name is Charles R. Niebling. I am senior policy director for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, a 10,000 member organization founded in 1901 to protect the state's most important landscapes and promote wise use of its renewable natural resources.

The Forest Society's history is inextricably linked to that of the White Mountain National Forest. The organization was founded to conserve the forests and watersheds of the White Mountains, then ravaged by indiscriminate and excessive timber harvesting. Ten years later the persistent efforts of the Forest Society, the Appalachian Mountain Club and others led to the passage of the Weeks Act, which as you know authorized the federal government to acquire privately-owned lands in the eastern United States for inclusion in the national forest system. As former Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson remarked at a celebration in New Hampshire of the 75th anniversary of the Weeks Act in 1986, for this persistence, "the rest of the nation, and particularly those of us in the Forest Service, are thankful and indebted to the people and early conservation leaders here in New England. The roots of the Forest Service and the conservation movement run deep to this part of the country."

Today we have a national forest, restored to health, that, while not without its share of occasional controversy, stands as a model of what a national forest is and should be.

So it is particularly appropriate that your committee has convened here in New Hampshire this morning to hear the views of those of us who care deeply about this forest, on a topic of great interest and concern. I want to especially recognize Congressmen Sununu and Bass, whose efforts led to the scheduling of this hearing.

The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program has sparked much heated and I believe healthy debate. For the nation, the issue boils down to this: How are we going to fund the burgeoning costs of the stewardship and management of our public lands? For the people of this region, and especially the rural communities that include and surround the White Mountain National Forest, the issue is, Can our citizens reasonably be expected to assume additional cost and burden for the right to walk and recreate in their "big back yard?" The connections between the people, these communities, and this forest, run very deep.

Throughout the development and implementation of the fee pilot in New Hampshire, the Forest Society has taken a position neither in strong support, nor vehement opposition to the program. We have been cautiously supportive of the program, as a pilot. We articulated two concerns prior to implementation last spring: First, that we will reserve final judgment on whether the program should become permanent when we can be convinced that the funds raised are in fact being used to improve services and protect natural resources on the White Mountain, and not just replace budget shortfalls. And second, that a system of fees can be used to better manage the increasing numbers that want to recreate on this forest (an estimated seven million visitor-days per year). Dispersion and control of recreational use will most certainly be addressed in the upcoming forest plan revision.

You have already heard considerable testimony from Congressman Bass, the Forest Service and from community leaders. Thus, my remaining comments today will not focus so much on the mechanics of the fee pilot, and the very important local issues and concerns expressed by the previous panel members, but instead on the much larger and more critical nationwide issues that necessitated the fee pilot in the first place.

In the absence of increased federal funding for recreation infrastructure needs on our national forests, the Forest Society is prepared to concede that some form of permanent fee access program is necessary. And, by and large, the program has worked well. However, we're not yet willing to concede that the citizens of the United States and their elected representatives in Congress will not recognize the essential responsibilities of land ownership, and that is to be a good neighbor, and a good steward.

That means providing the funds necessary to implement each forest's land and resource management plan, and fully fund the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes. Our forest plan, adopted in 1986, was a contract with the people of this region. It has been funded at roughly 60% of what was envisioned as necessary. The continued unwillingness of Congress to meet this need calls into question the very purpose of forest planning. This should concern your committee, as the Forest Service is about to ask the citizens of New England to once again invest huge amounts of time in our next forest plan, and many of us have some real apprehension about whether this investment will be worth the time.

If the Congress is unable to meet this essential responsibility through adequate general funding, and the solution becomes more local responsibility, then the Congress

must be willing to vest more local authority in determining how the national forest will be managed.

Let me conclude with three specific suggestions:

1. Last year congress directed the Forest Service to implement a new internal budget allocation process, the net effect of which was to shift funding away from forests with heavy recreation use to forests with high natural resource attributes. Thus national forests in the heavily populated northeast, especially the White Mountain, are now anticipating significant percentage reductions in funding for FY1998, relative to forests in other regions of the country. I believe Congress, and your committee, must take a hard look at the Forest Service's internal agency budget allocation process, to ensure the allocation is more equitable, and to a greater extent reflects the substantial costs incurred by heavy recreation use. If serious consideration is given to this issue, we may find that we do not need a fee pilot program in the White Mountain National Forest.

2. The fee pilot might have gotten off to a smoother start, had the staff of the white Mountain been able to legally convene a local advisory body to assist them in developing the program. The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) made this extremely difficult. I recommend that your committee consider authorizing fee pilot demonstration forests to consider the establishment of such local advisory bodies to assist and advise the Forest Service if the user fee program moves from pilot to permanent status.

3. Finally, I believe that there may be some real inefficiencies in how the Forest Service, including the White Mountain National Forest, utilizes the funds that it receives. I know these inefficiencies exist in the timber program, and I suspect they do as well in management of recreation use. Might it be a useful function of the fee pilot advisory committee I've suggested to also periodically critique how the staff of the White Mountain utilizes the funds that it receives? I think some real innovation, savings and cooperative partnering could be realized from such a process.

The Forest Society's historical role in issues involving the White Mountain National Forest has always been, and continues to be one of convening interests and facilitating resolution of problems. We look forward to working with the Forest Service, and with our Congressional delegation, on this and other issues. I thank you for the opportunity to share my comments with you, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. I have just a couple of questions for Mr. Graff.

There was some discussion or allusion to the various facilities, primarily parking lots, that the Appalachian Mountain Club has and how they utilize them. And I know that the Appalachian Mountain Club has worked a bit with the Forest Service to try and find ways that this current fee system, as it looks today, might be more inclusive, might be used to cover those lots, or at least might not provide as broad an exemption as it currently does.

Could you describe those facilities, how large they are, how much they are used, and the extent to which the Appalachian Mountain Club has worked with the Forest Service to participate in the parking fee program?

Mr. GRAFF. As you know, which I don't think I mentioned in any remarks, we called originally for a voluntary fee program. One of the reasons for that was so it could be equitable across the board, that you could park anywhere and there would be a fee that people could pay voluntarily.

Pinkham Notch falls under a lot of the exemptions, it seems, of the Forest Service. First, is that it is a visitor center and they don't currently charge parking for a visitor center. Second, the lot itself is on State land and they are not allowed to charge. Third, we are currently under a special-use permit, which one of the articles in the use permit says "free and unlimited access." Not unlimited but free access to the forest. So we can't charge a parking fee. Those are three of the reasons. Now, it is very heavily used.

Mr. SUNUNU. Excuse me. What do you pay for the special-use permit?

Mr. GRAFF. The special-use permit, it hasn't been determined. Up until 1995 we did not pay a fee for the special-use permit. Now we are under two extensions. And our last extension, the Forest Service is working out what the fee would be for us to pay based on special use.

Mr. SUNUNU. So you are currently negotiating?

Mr. GRAFF. So we are currently negotiating on that. We have an expectation that the amount of work we do for the forest will offset that fee. We have a parking lot that holds 300 people. I would say from the beginning of July on, it has been full every day this summer. It is in the high thousands of people who use our lot.

We do, however, provide people with purchase passes, but normally they buy those to park somewhere else on that forest. That is the only lot that we currently operate that is free. There is the Appalachian parking lot which is on Route 2, which serves the northern Presidential Range, which is a free lot, but that is not under our control.

Mr. SUNUNU. Do you have the ability to find out how many members of the Appalachian Mountain Club have purchased parking permits?

Mr. GRAFF. I don't think we do, unless we do some survey. But one thing we have found is that we were expecting a large outcry or we thought there might be a large outcry, and there really hasn't been. People have been willing to pay the fee, but we believe it is because the Forest Service has used this light-handed approach. In a sense they've adopted the voluntary approach this

year, where if it becomes a mandatory approach, we're not sure what is going to happen.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you.

Congressman Bass.

Mr. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Two quick questions.

Mr. Graff, I was interested to hear you argue that there is evidence indicating that Western forests have received essentially stable funding and Northeastern forests or Eastern forests may be subject to reductions. I was wondering if you would be kind enough to provide me and/or the committee, if it is interested, the justification or documentation of data that supports that point.

Mr. GRAFF. I would love to be able to do that, but it has been very difficult to find. It is only through personal interviews. I actually asked the Forest Service, even Senator Gregg's office, to provide that data. So that's why I said in my testimony I believe that, because it seems to be a widely held belief that the Eastern region is getting less and less funding.

Mr. BASS. I would suggest, then, that that should be a project that we should work on as a delegation.

Commissioner, one quick question I don't recall you mentioning in your testimony. If you did, I apologize. How much money does the State spend on stocking of our rivers and streams in the White Mountain National Forest? Do you have that information?

Mr. PINEO. Congressman, I don't have that information at hand.

Mr. BASS. If there is some way that the Fish and Game Department might be able to provide that data to the committee, I think it will be helpful to us in determining the level of State support for those who want to fish and hunt in the national forest.

[The information referred to follows:]

State of New Hampshire
Fish and Game Department

2 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301
TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964
(603) 271-3421

Wayne E. Vetter
Executive Director

October 28, 1997

Craig Annis
Legislative Assistant
1229 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Annis:

Carroll Pineo, Chairman of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission, provided testimony pertaining to the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) User Fee Program at a Congressional Meeting held in Conway, New Hampshire on October 20, 1997. In regards to Commissioner Pineo's testimony the question was raised as to what it costs the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) to stock trout in the WMNF.

The NHFG Department stocks approximately 85,300 trout in 52 waters located within the WMNF boundaries. These trout total approximately 21,000 pounds in weight. In 1996, it cost the NHFG Department $3.07 per pound to produce and stock trout. Therefore, the estimated cost to rear and stock trout in the WMNF is approximately $64,470.00.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (603) 271-2501.

Sincerely,

Stephen G. Perry, Chief
Inland Fisheries Division

/sgp

cc: **Carrol Pineo**, Commissioner

Discover Wild New Hampshire

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. Horn.

Mr. HORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just say first to the official reporter of debates, wherever you see "AMC" in the transcript, please put Appalachian Mountain Club. I was sitting here saying, "is that the motor club?" Nobody spelled it out until we got to Mr. Graff's testimony.

Let me say that I agree with you completely, Mr. Graff. We will be holding hearings on urban forests in different regions of the country, to get a feel for what the needs of that region are. As I said at the beginning, we may well have seven or eight hearings over the next year in this area of policy.

As far as the imbalance between West and East—having just come from my Customs hearing, which I mentioned, last Thursday in California, where we have the two largest ports in the United States and they are both in my district, Long Beach is one and Los Angeles is two—what got me on this was tip-offs from Customs that they were getting maybe 5 to 1 resources in the Port of New York, which is not even close to us, and we're trying to change that.

So I will be very glad to be fair, because our westerners, who are usually the ones griping at the Federal Government, if this is true, probably the only benefit they are getting out of the Federal Government is that the Forest Service gets more money in the West than the East. But we will try to help, and since Mr. Moran is on the authorizing committee, we will do something about that, so I'm glad he could attend this hearing.

Let me just ask Mr. Niebling, on the advisory committee suggestion, which I think is a good one, and I think there is a Federal law on that, do you have any advice for us as to how that might be selected and how some people are added to it and others aren't? I mean, we've tried, thanks to Mr. Sununu, to have a very broad spectrum of people at the grassroots who don't like the idea and people who like the idea. That's what we're reaching out for, and that's what the advisory committee ought to reach out for.

So we welcome your suggestions as to how on the law side, which again Mr. Moran's subcommittee can deal with, it would either be the Secretary of Agriculture making that choice or the head of the Forest Service or the delegation down to the supervisor of Forest Service of a particular forest. But it would be good to have some policy guidance as to what the different forces should be on such a committee. Realizing that it is strictly advisory and that ultimately the line officer charged by law with it will have the right to make the decision and he, hopefully, will listen to the advice of the advisory committee.

Mr. NIEBLING. Do you want me to provide you in written form?

Mr. HORN. Now, plus an additional letter if you'd like.

Mr. NIEBLING. I guess I have every confidence that any such advisory group would be inclusive of all the interests that would need to be represented, so long as it is not so large that it becomes unwieldy.

New Hampshire has, I think, a real culture and a long history of ensuring that those kinds of bodies do appropriately represent the interests that should be there. I know, judging from the history of the White Mountains and its working relationship with its var-

ious constituencies, it wouldn't consciously leave anybody out that needs to be there.

As to what constituent groups or interests ought to be represented, I think those of us who are here today can sit down with Congressman Sununu or Bass and write up some language that would probably make sense and really capture everyone who should be there.

Mr. HORN. Well, I thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Sununu.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Horn. And the final questions or comments, the distinguished member of the authorizing committee, Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I have just one question, probably to Mr. Niebling. Talking about the internal budget reallocation process, in your estimation, is that a political decision or is there a legitimate justification for that reallocation, which you describe as shifting funds away from forests with recreation to those with high natural resources? What was the theory?

Mr. NIEBLING. Well, I'm going to share Mr. Graff's indecisiveness in responding to that. This has been described to me, but I have not been able to get my hands on the actual language, the authorizing language, or what it was within the agency that made this determination.

My understanding, however, is that it was principally moved by a strong coalition of Western interests to reconfigure the allocation process in such a way that western natural forests, which tend to have very high, the way I termed it in my testimony, high natural resource attributes. And that is not to suggest that we don't have high natural resource attributes, but that those types of forests got a disproportionately greater percentage of the allocation than they had in previous fiscal years where the allocation was more a line item based on specific programs of management. It is incumbent on us to get that information, and it has proven extremely difficult for a variety of reasons.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. I will try to raise this question when we have Secretary Glickman from the Forest Service.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. Thank you very much to these panelists. I appreciate your testimony and your timeliness. We do have approximately 25 or 30 minutes. I would like to actually take a moment, before we open the floor up to some public comment, to thank some folks who helped put this together so that we don't end up offering our thanks as we are walking out the door.

Foremost, to the staff director and chief counsel for the subcommittee, J. Russell George; Mark Brasher, who is the senior policy director; John Hynes, professional staff member for the committee; Andrea Miller, the clerk of the subcommittee; and Matthew Ebert, who is staff assistant for the committee and has just joined the committee. They were enormously helpful in working with my staff here in New Hampshire and in Washington to make this hearing a success.

To my staff members, Craig Annis, Barbara Riley, Jeff Rose, and Harold Parker, thanks very much, and to Ms. Chamberlain, as well, for her work out of the Dover office.

Our court reporter today is Ryan Jackson, and Mrs. Latham here at Kennett High was extremely helpful in helping find a good location, and I think this worked out tremendously well, so I want to thank everyone here at the high school.

What we would like to do now is open up the floor to public comment. I think it will work best just to have anyone that would like to offer a comment maybe to move over to the wall, and we'll allow you to come sit down and be comfortable. Please do speak into the microphone. I would like to limit comments initially to just 3 minutes, please. I know it is very difficult to get in everything you'd like to say in 3 minutes, But if you have any prepared remarks that you'd like to submit in full, we'd be more than happy to have them. If we can pause just a moment, see if we can arrange the timer.

As you begin, if you would just let us know your name and where you are from. You need not to be from Conway to speak, by any means, or even from New Hampshire for that matter. I know Representative Doug Teschner, who was good enough to join us last night, and I'll be happy to recognize him, of course, for 3 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DOUG TESCHNER, NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. TESCHNER. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity. I had the opportunity to testify in Washington in favor of Congressman Bass' bill, H.R. 1843, and we were very disappointed that that bill hasn't moved forward as of yet.

I'm in the New Hampshire House, and I'm in my fifth term. I have offered some written testimony to the committee. I represent the other side of the mountains, the western side, in Congressman Bass' district, and I can tell you my constituents are very angry about these fees to use their public lands. I think some of the comments that were made earlier: we are off the beaten track; what is the life blood of our country is hunting and fishing; we don't have a lot of amenities; and people have a long tradition of using these public lands.

We are supportive of the White Mountain National Forest. I can say I've traveled throughout the West and I am familiar with the issues around Western lands. People are supportive of the national forest and consider it a great resource. And people understand where there are significant amenities, like campgrounds, where it is perfectly justified to charge people to use them. However, to pay to walk in the woods, to fish a stream, or to launch a canoe simply goes too far.

I think there is a fundamental difference between a national park and a national forest. I think there has been some discussion about that, and I would be happy to, if we have extra time, to talk about that more.

I want to talk about what I think is a critical issue: the economics of this program. This has been billed as something that is going to help save the national forest. Over our way, we don't see a lot of rangers usually, but over the summer we have a surge of ranger presence. Those green trucks are all over the place. We never saw them before.

It is sort of a quiet backwater over there, and all of a sudden, these trucks are there, and their main purpose, of course, has been to leaflet cars. We don't have forest rangers anymore, we have glorified meter maids. That's what these folks have become. This has become their principal function, to go around leafleting cars, and people are pretty angry about it.

If you look at the cost, and I've been asking the national forest for information on the cost of implementing this program, and today I think they have come forward with some real information for the first time, but they are projecting $500,000 in revenue. They are claiming $175,000 has been spent.

If you look on the second page that was provided this morning by the White Mountain National Forest, they spent 4,070 employee days on this program. That is the equivalent of almost 16 full-time employees. If you use $30,000 as the benchmark of county benefits, maybe that is too high, but right there, that is $469,000.

The problem here, folks, is that this just doesn't add up. They are creating a lot of ill will, and they are not bringing the kind of revenue that is going to help the forest, and I think this is the fiscal equivalent of rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*.

People love the national forest. We care about the national forest. But we feel this program is not working, and we feel that this really should be a total study of the national forest and how it operates, whether it should be fund-raising, privatization, contract services, or whatever.

Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much, Representative. And I appreciate you providing your full written testimony, as well, for the committee's record.

I welcome Peter Benson.

STATEMENT OF PETER BENSON, JACKSON, NH

Mr. BENSON. Congressman Sununu, thanks for attending last night. I spoke last night.

I am speaking to voice my strong opposition to the USFS mandatory parking permit fee system. I believe that the current permit system is flawed in its design, implementation, and process for collecting user fees for recreation programs in the White Mountain National Forest. I will briefly address some of the flaws and then offer some possible solutions.

When citizen input was sought last year on how to formulate a permit fee system, there was overwhelming support for a phased-in process that would have at its core a voluntary user fee system. Many questions were asked about the process of the fee system: How much money would be needed to support recreation programs, what would be the administrative costs, how would it be implemented, et cetera. There were no concrete answers from the Forest Service at the planning session that I attended regarding these questions. The only firm answer we received were that "these decisions were being made on a national level." This left very little room for innovative approaches or regional solutions to the funding gap. If this were the case, why hold the public forum on user fees at all? And if this were not the case, why were the overwhelming opinions of the participants not heeded regarding a phased-in, vol-

untary fee system? In any event, the mandated permit fee system was implemented.

As a resident and taxpayer of the town of Jackson, which is 74 percent national forest land, I would like to know how much has been taken in under the current fee system. I keep hearing that almost $400,000 has been collected to date, but I assume that this is the gross figure, not the net. I would like to know what the cost of implementation and enforcement has been. This would bring us to the true net figure.

As a resident taxpayer, I feel that I am paying multiple times for public land. In addition to Federal taxes, my town tax bill is higher because of the failure of the USFS to reimburse my town under the PILT program. The PILT reimbursement would be far more than $20 per resident in my town. Finally, I pay to subsidize for municipal services on the national forest such as fire, police, and ambulance services. All of these services are provided while the payment in lieu of taxes program is delinquent in paying back to the towns.

I oppose the mandatory permit fee system for stronger reasons than delinquent payments and higher taxes. The current system is flawed for many reasons: First, the system is not equitable for all user groups and places an undue burden on car-based travelers. There are many user groups who will not be affected by the permit fee system, and as a result, will not need a permit.

Second, the system is not well publicized. Many visitors do not know or are not capable of obtaining a permit at the last minute or for a very short visit.

Third, the current system seems to be heavy on personnel and enforcement to visit trailheads and parking areas to check permits and ticket noncompliance. How many people, hours, and vehicles, not to mention passes, trail signs, and other administrative duties does it take to enforce this permit? The current system seems extremely heavy on bureaucracy.

Fourth, the current fee system is adversarial in nature. Whenever you mandate a fee, as opposed to making it voluntary or phased in, there is the type of resentment and backlash that many people here tonight are feeling.

Fifth, most importantly, the current fee system speaks against the history that the people of northern New England have shared with their land. In New Hampshire and Maine particularly, unlike many other parts of southern New England and the rest of the country, we have a unique land tradition that all land is considered open until closed. People who live, work, and recreate here may take this for granted, but in other parts of the country there is little access to open space and much of it is posted against public use. There is a unique relationship between owners and users of land that remains open for free public use for recreation and educational purposes.

In other parts of the country, fees are charged for access. By implementing a user fee, the Forest Service has broken this relationship, and as the largest land owner, opened the door for permit fees all over the State. We have a wonderful mosaic and rich history of land ownership here, of public and private land that is both working forest and used for education and recreation purposes. If the

Forest Service continues the mandatory fee system, other large landowners might soon follow.

Imagine an area such as this that relies heavily on tourism, where you need a permit to recreate on national forest, State forest, various paper company lands, and lands held by private conservation groups. As a land manager for an international conservation organization, I am often asked why we do not charge fees to our visitors. It is for just these reasons described above that we do not, and that the Forest Service should repeal the mandatory fee system.

Sixth, I question the right of the Forest Service to rescind its own fees as it sees necessary to raise money for its own programs. The latest example of this was the National Forest Festival. This was a weekend of events to raise money for improvements along the Kancamagus Highway. If the Forest Service cannot maintain recreation facilities and services at their current level, why are they building more improvements that will cost more money to maintain in the future?

The newly created National Forest Foundation is an organization that was founded to raise money for our national forests. As an employee of a nonprofit environmental organization, this puts me in direct competition with the National Forest Foundation to solicit funds and try and raise money from a very limited amount of people and resources. On a local level, I cannot compete with the USFS, whom we are all already paying taxes to. On a national level, organizations should not even have to think of competing with the Federal Government for members and potential funding sources.

Seventh, I would like to know what other National Forests have done with their permit fee system and how it has affected people. Have there been any innovative approaches to raising money for recreation programs, and have the concerns of the local population been taken into account?

I believe that the White Mountain National Forest needs to reopen their thinking on the permit system, and to truly listen to local national forest users. The current mandatory fee system needs to be rescinded and new, innovative thoughts need to be implemented. Some innovations that I think might help the USFS achieve their goal of raising revenue to support recreation programs in the White Mountains with a minimum of administration, personnel, conflict, and cost are: First, establish an advisory board of local elected officials and citizens to advise the White Mountain National Forest with the user permit process, the PILT program, and other public and municipal relations.

Second, rescind the mandatory car user fee system and replace it with a voluntary system, which I fully support. A voluntary system, coupled with good outreach, can attain some of the financial goals with minimal cost, administration, and resentment. I think that this was the way to begin the permit system as a phased in approach in the first place.

With the cooperation of special use permit holders such as the Appalachian Mountain Club, downhill and cross country ski areas, concessionaires, guide services, et cetera, begin a recreation program fund that would target users of these services and facilities.

The recreation program could be explained on a reservation form or a ski ticket that "One dollar of your hut stay or lift ticket goes to fund recreation programs in the White Mountain National Forest." A $1 fee added to every full service overnight and downhill ski ticket, as well as a 25-cent fee added to cross country tickets, camping overnights and caretaker rates at the Appalachian Mountain Club huts would bring in an estimated $500,000 without the enforcement and administrative costs. This would also eliminate resentment toward the program.

This program, coupled with a voluntary, suggested contribution to the recreation fund by all other user groups, would eliminate the deficit in the recreation fund by targeting the widest range of users. It would also eliminate all enforcement, personnel, and administrative costs. Most importantly, it would continue the legacy of unrestricted open space available to all people that we have all come to treasure and enjoy. The USFS motto is "Land of Many Uses." Rescinding the mandatory fee system and looking toward more innovative alternatives and solutions should allow all of us to preserve our heritage of accessible, open space and enjoy the great gift of the White Mountain National Forest.

Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Benson follows:]

To: Rep. John Sununu
Rep. Charles Bass
Senator Bob Smith
Senator Judd Gregg
State Representative Gene Chandler,
cc: USFS - White Mountain National Forest , Laconia

Dear Representatives, October 19, 1997

I am writing (and speaking) to voice my strong opposition to the USFS mandatory parking permit fee system. I believe that the current permit system is flawed in its design, implementation and process for collecting user fees for recreation programs in the White Mountain National Forest. I will briefly address some of the flaws and then offer some possible solutions.

When citizen input was sought last year on how to formulate a permit fee system, there was overwhelming support for a phased in process that would have at its core a voluntary user fee system. Many questions were asked about the process of the fee system - How much money would be needed to support recreation programs, what would be the administrative costs, how would it be implemented, etc., etc. There were no concrete answers from the Forest Service at the planning session that I attended regarding these questions. The only firm answers we received were that "these decisions were being made on a national level". This left very little room for innovative approaches or regional solutions to the funding gap. If this were the case, why hold the public forum on user fees at all? And if this were not the case, why were the overwhelming opinions of the participants not heeded regarding a phased in, voluntary fee system? In any event, the mandated permit fee system was implemented.

As a resident and taxpayer of the town of Jackson, which is 74% National Forest Land, I would like to know how much has been taken in under the current fee system. I keep hearing that almost $400,000 has been collected to date, but I assume that this is the gross figure, not the net. I would like to know what the cost of implementation and enforcement has been. This would bring us to the true net figure. As a resident taxpayer, I feel that I am paying multiple times for public land. In addition to federal taxes, my town tax bill is higher because of the failure of the USFS to reimburse my town under the PILT program. The PILT reimbursement would be far more than $20 per resident in my town. Finally, I pay to subsidize for municipal services on the National Forest such as fire, police and ambulance services. All of these services are provided while the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program is delinquent in paying back to the towns.

I oppose the mandatory permit fee system for stronger reasons than delinquent payments and higher taxes. The current system is flawed for many reasons:

1. The system is not equitable for all user groups and places an undue burden on car based travelers. There are many user groups who will not be affected by the permit fee system, and as a result, will not need a permit.
2. The system is not well publicized and many visitors do not know or are not capable of obtaining a permit at the last minute or for a very short visit.

3. The current system seems to be heavy on personnel and enforcement to visit trail heads and parking areas to check permits and ticket non-compliance. How many people hours and vehicles, not to mention passes, trail signs and other administrative does it take to enforce this permit? The current system seems extremely heavy on bureaucracy.
4. The current fee system is adversarial in nature. Whenever you mandate a fee, as opposed to making it voluntary or phased in, there is the type of resentment and backlash that many people here tonight are feeling.
5. Most importantly, the current fee system speaks against the history that the people of Northern New England have shared with their land. In New Hampshire and Maine particularly, unlike many other parts of southern New England and the rest of the country, we have a unique land tradition that all land is considered open until closed. People who live, work and recreate here may take this for granted, but in other parts of the country, there is little access to open space and much of it is posted against public use. There is a unique relationship between owners and users of land that it remain open for free public use for recreation and education purposes. In other parts of the country, fees are charged for access. By implementing a user fee, the Forest Service has broken this relationship, and as the largest land owner, opened the door for permit fees all over the state. We have a wonderful mosaic and rich history of land ownership here of public and private land that is both working forest and used for education and recreation purposes. If the Forest Service continues the mandatory fee system, other large land owners might soon follow. Imagine an area, such as this that relies heavily on tourism, where you need a permit to recreate on National Forest, state forest, various paper company lands and lands held by private conservation groups. As a land manager for an international conservation organization, I am often asked why we do not charge fees to our visitors. It is for just these reasons described above that we do not and that the Forest Service should repeal the mandatory fee system.
6. I question the right of the Forest Service to rescind its own fees as it sees necessary to raise money for its own programs. The latest example of this was the National Forest Festival - This was a weekend of events to raise money for improvements along the Kancamaugus Highway. If the Forest Service cannot maintain recreation facilities and services at their current level, why are they building more "improvements" that will cost more money to maintain in the future? The newly created National Forest Foundation is an organization that was founded to raise money for our national forests. As an employee of a non - profit environmental organization, this puts me in direct competition with the National Forest Foundation to solicit funds and try and raise money from a very limited amount of people and resources. On a local level, I cannot compete with the USFS, whom we are all already paying taxes to. On a national level, organizations should not even have to think of competing with the federal government for members and potential funding sources.
7. I would like to know what other National Forest have done with their permit fee system and how it has affected people. Have there been any innovative approaches to raising money for recreation programs and have the concerns of the local population been taken into account?

I believe that the White Mountain National Forest needs to reopen their thinking on the permit system, and to truly listen to local National Forest users. The current mandatory fee system needs to be rescinded and new, innovative thoughts need to be implemented. Some innovations that I think might help the USFS achieve their goal of raising revenue to support recreation programs in the White Mountains with a minimum of administration, personnel, conflict and cost are:

1. Establish an advisory board of local elected officials and citizens to advise the White Mountain National Forest with the user permit process, the PILT program and other public and municipal relations.
2. Rescind the mandatory car user fee system and replace it with a voluntary system, which I fully support. A voluntary system, coupled with good outreach, can attain some of the financial goals with minimal cost, administration and resentment. I think that this was the way to begin the permit system as a "phased in" approach in the first place.
3. With the cooperation of special use permit holders such as the AMC, downhill and cross country ski areas, concessionaires, guide services, etc., begin a recreation program fund that would target users of these services and facilities. The recreation program could be explained on a reservation form or ski ticket that " 1 dollar of your hut stay or lift ticket goes to fund recreation programs in the White Mountain National Forest" A 1 dollar fee added to every full service overnight and downhill ski ticket, as well as a 25 cent fee added to cross country tickets, camping overnights and caretaker rates at the AMC huts would bring in an estimated $500,000 without the enforcement and administrative costs. This would also eliminate resentment toward the program.

This program, coupled with a voluntary, suggested contribution to the recreation fund by all other user groups would eliminate the deficit in the recreation fund by targeting the widest range of users. It would also eliminate all enforcement, personnel and administrative costs. And most importantly, it would continue the legacy of unrestricted open space available to all people that we have all come to treasure and enjoy. The USFS motto is "Land of Many Uses". Rescinding the mandatory fee system and looking toward more innovative alternatives and solutions should allow all of us to preserve our heritage of accessible, open space and enjoy the great gift of the White Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

Peter Benson
Jackson, NH

PO Box 224
Jackson NH 03846
603 - 383-9147

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you.

Obviously, in fairness to all those that would like to speak, I would ask everyone to try and stick to the 3-minute time limit.

STATEMENT OF GLENN D. CLARK, JR., MOULTONBOROUGH SNOWMOBILE CLUB

Mr. CLARK. Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to be here. My name is Glenn D. Clark, Jr. Prior to coming to New Hampshire, I resided 40 years in Hawaii. I am very happy to be here in this great State. I was prompted by Mr. Horn's statement about the chamber of commerce, because I think I have some facts that will describe what we are talking about on the use of the national forest and also the trails and areas of landowners.

We have about 48,000 snowmobilers in New Hampshire State that are registered. Of those about 8,000 are members of the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association. Those 8,000 members donate over 1,000 man-hours every year to maintaining trails on numerous private landowners' property, plus the State and in the White Mountain Forest. There are 30 percent of those 48,000 that are out-of-State. They pay a higher fee. That goes to the State.

The New Hampshire tourism industry has a trickle-down effect, $1.87 for every dollar spent. The ski industry runs it up to about $2.85. The Snowmobile Association hired Dr. Robertson, a University of New Hampshire professor, to do an economic study on this. It was at no cost to the Government; it was at the cost to the Snowmobile Association, and from that fact, we gleaned that the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association and its snowmobilers, besides donating all this time and effort to maintain trails, contributed over $387,000 to the economy of New Hampshire. Most of that was contributed in just a 4- or 5-month period. There are many of our snowmobilers who own second homes from the lake region all the way up to Pittsburg, near the Errol area and so forth.

Besides all this, the other side of the factor is that the Snowmobile Association 27 years ago adopted the Easter Seal Society with respect to maintaining a camp for retarded and mentally unfit persons, mentally retarded persons. The Snowmobile Association last year donated its usual $66,000, and over the 25 or 26 years that we have done so, we have donated $1,017,000 to the Easter Seal Society for the maintenance of this camp.

I do not believe that we need to pay an extra fee to park simply to watch the leaves change, to unload our snowmobiles, or any of those things. I would like to ask you to all read Mr. Burton's comments, because there is a heck of a lot of places in the Government where bureaucracy I think stinks. There are many places in the bureaucracy where $3, $4, or $5 million could be put back into this area without hurting anybody.

I mean, every time I turn around we're bailing around some country, and I spent a lot of time in those countries before I settled in Hawaii. Every time I turn around we are bailing out some country from its own problems, and I don't think we should be the guardian and savior of the whole universe.

Thank you very much.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much.

Welcome.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE ZINK, TAMWORTH, NH, OFFICER OF THE WONALANCET OUTDOOR CLUB

Mr. ZINK. Thank you. My name is George Zink. I'm a resident of Tamworth, NH, and I am an officer of the Wonalancet Outdoor Club, a club similar to the Appalachian Mountain Club but much smaller. We have about 600 members, and we do maintain 55 miles of trails on the White Mountain National Forest and three shelters. The club has maintained those since 1891, many years before there was any White Mountain National Forest.

First, I didn't come prepared to say a thing. This is extemporaneous. I want to say that I was very impressed by the meeting this morning. It gives a balance to the problems which the White Mountain National Forest faces and also, I hope, problems which the U.S. Congress will face. I have been concerned that the newspapers in the north country have given a grave misrepresentation of this whole parking fee project program. There has been an attack on the Forest Service. The Forest Service is the bad guy for imposing this unfair parking fee.

I would like to say that I think that is very misleading. It fails to give credence to what has been said here over and over this morning. The major failure is the failure of Congress to adequately provide the funds which are needed to operate the White Mountain National Forest and other forests and other national parks. I think that for citizens to attack the Forest Service for coming up with a fee to try to operate the facilities at White Mountain National Forest is a great misrepresentation of the problem.

I think it is also important to say that the parking system project is a test. The Forest Service has said from the very beginning that it would welcome comments as to how it can be more equitable in raising funds to support White Mountain National Forest. It is looking for input from the citizens, and the comments made this morning I think were largely very helpful.

Just one last comment. We pride ourselves on the fact that there are 7 million people who enter the White Mountain National Forest a year. Seven million people enter it; then on the basis of $1 per person who enters, there would be plenty of money. When you understand that today this parking fee is raising, what, $300,000, $1 per person would not be great. The Wonalancet Outdoor Club favors some sort of user fee to help the Forest Service and Congress manage our national forests and our national parks more equitably.

Thank you.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Chairman, if I might, based on this testimony, I would ask for what I usually ask for in hearings with particular agencies.

No. 1: have the staff pursue with the chief of Forest Service how much money did they ask for to operate the Forest Service, what did the Secretary of Agriculture recommend to the Office of Management and Budget, which serves as the President's budget arm, and did the Secretary appeal any cuts by the Office of Management and Budget?

No. 2: what did the Office of Management and Budget send to the President, what did he recommend to Congress, and what did

we recommend on both the House, the Senate and ultimately in the proposed law to the President?

So I think you asked a very good question, and we'll get to the answers.

Mr. SUNUNU. We will leave an appropriate space in the record for the committee staff to request that information, which is all very important to our cause. I also think it eliminates the complexity of the process involved in appropriating Federal money, taxpayer money.

[The information referred to follows:]

United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Washington Office | 14th & Independence SW P. O. Box 96090 Washington, DC 20090-6090

File Code: 1510

Date:

Honorable Steve Horn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Government Management,
Information, and Technology
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
B-373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Horn:

Enclosed are responses to the questions that were asked at the October 20, 1997, hearing on "Management Practices of the U.S. Forest Service: Review of the User Pilot Program."

Question:
How much money did the Forest Service ask for to operate the Agency? What did the Secretary of Agriculture recommend to the Office of Management and Budget? Did the Secretary appeal any cuts by the Office of Management and Budget?

Answer:
For Fiscal Year (FY) 1998, the Forest Service requested $2,581,045,000 in discretionary appropriations. The Secretary of Agriculture's FY 1998 request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the Forest Service's discretionary appropriations was $2,437,164,000. The President's FY 1998 Budget for the Forest Service was $2,368,595,000. On behalf of the Forest Service, the Department appealed the OMB Allowance and proposed the following:

1) Restore a $20 million reduction in the Forest and Rangeland Research appropriation;
2) Reduce the General Administration budget line item by $16.6 million; and
3) Reduce the Land Acquisition account by $25.7 million.

Question:
What did the Office of Management and Budget send to the President, what did he recommend to Congress, and what did we recommend on both the House, the Senate, and ultimately in the proposed law to the President?

Answer:
The President's Budget is prepared by OMB with coordination by the Department of Agriculture and the Agency. The President's FY 1998 Budget for the Forest Service's discretionary appropriations was $2,368,595,000. The House recommended a discretionary spending level of $2,634,565,000, while the Senate recommended a spending level of $2,481,199,000 in

discretionary spending. The FY 1998 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act passed by both the House and Senate provided $2,505,468,000 in discretionary appropriations for the Forest Service.

We hope you find this information helpful. If you have additional questions, please contact Thelma Strong of my staff at (202) 205-0580.

Sincerely,

Tim DeCosta

TIM DE COSTER
Director
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

Mr. SUNUNU. Please. Welcome, and good morning.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD EASTMAN

Mr. EASTMAN. I would like to ask the lady up there, the forest trooper, advisor, to come down here and read what it says on that so-called voluntary parking permit.

Would you, please?

Mr. SUNUNU. Well, this really isn't a question-and-answer period.

Mr. EASTMAN. Well, now, I would like people to understand that I don't believe this is voluntary. If you read the whole parking permit, you get a chance to buy this parking permit. If you don't buy it, the user fine goes with it, plus jail time.

Now, is that voluntary? To me it isn't.

Mr. SUNUNU. I think you are correct. And I think the Forest Service has indicated that it is not a voluntary program. Although they have chosen not to move harshly with enforcement, you are correct, it is not a purely voluntary program.

Mr. EASTMAN. Thank you. I would like the people to understand that.

Mr. HORN. Can we get that in the record at this point?

Mr. SUNUNU. We will include the language that is on the parking pass as part of the record, as well.

Welcome.

STATEMENT OF JULIAN CZARNY, BETHLEHEM, NH

Mr. CZARNY. Good morning. My name is Julian Czarny. I reside in Bethlehem, NH with my wife, Nancy, and our dog Crawford. We enjoy the national forest and the public lands immensely. Our property borders the national forest for 600 feet. We take great pride in that. My wife has a fishing license. I have a fishing license from the State of New Hampshire. I also have a hunting license. I pay for the right to enter the national forest and cut my firewood.

It is a tremendous resource. I understand how it draws immense numbers of people who spend money in hotels, in lodging facilities. It is a jewel of the north country. I love it. I hope that I spend the rest of my life here and in my dying hours can look out over its lands. I also, on the car dashboard, have my permit, and I appreciate being able to put my $20 worth in today.

I think in Washington we need to figure out how to manage the money that is sent in by April 15 by everyone here so that we can fund the White Mountain National Forest and its employees to operate the national forest. We're not looking for space-age technology. We're looking for basically, I feel, the bulk of the work. Although there certainly are educative positions that do analysis on the forest and its use, the bulk of the work is labor work, people with grub hoes, axes, and brushing equipment to maintain trails.

We are looking for wood bridges and similar engineering projects. It is funny, you see on the news a $3 billion Stealth fighter basically doing carnival tricks at a town fair falls in pieces in midair, yet we can't manage to prop up a failing program. I feel we pay our user fees every April 15. I would like to abide by the law and pay for the permits that are required by law, so I will keep doing that until that changes.

I think that's all I have to say. I see I'm out of time. Thank you for letting me say what could I get into my mind straight.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much. I appreciate you taking the time to come, and more so, taking the time to speak.

STATEMENT OF BILL BROWNELL, DANBURY, NH, PAST PRESIDENT, TIMBERLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. BROWNELL. Good morning. I'm not going to say gentlemen of the jury because that wouldn't sound very good. I am from Danbury, and I am a New Hampshire hillbilly and native. I own a 3,000-acre tract of land. Lumber has been my business for 40 years. I am also past president of the Timberland Owners Association, which I think you are familiar with. I am also on the board of directors of New Hampshire Land Alliance.

I came up today to tell you that I am for the fee to be paid by the people who use White Mountain National Forest but not the residents of New Hampshire. That is our forest. And what comes into my mind in regard to your problem, the Forest Service, in my opinion, has done a wonderful job over the years in managing the White Mountain National Forest. Now, you picked on them because they have run out of money and you want to sort of balance the books, which you have to do in a business, and they came up with this $5 parking fee. Well, I think that's sort of infantile, personally.

They need money. Congress won't give it to them. One of the reasons I understand that they don't have the money is because of being sued. They pulled out of timber sales. They have been sued, and the sales have been stopped. They are only cutting now about one-third of the timber that they originally cut on the White Mountain National Forest because of suits.

Well, probably that money that they did get from limited timber sales was used to manage the forest and trails and so on, but now they don't have it, but they have got to get money from somewhere if Congress won't appropriate it. To me, the gentleman just said here there are 7 million visitors that come to the forest each year. He said $1 dollar would bring in the money, but I say make them pay a fee of $10 and call it a recreational fee for nonresidents who use the forest. The residents should be exempt. You say you can't do that. Why is that?

The fish and game department over the years, every department in the State has a special fee for nonresident users, snowmobilers, ATV riders, hunting, and fishing. You name it, they pay. The nonresident pays a special fee to use the facilities that we provide in the State of New Hampshire, with the exception of the White Mountain National Forest.

Now, we have only got a population of 1 million people, you tell me. You've got 7 million people. That is 6 million people using the forest every year who can't be residents, or maybe they count them twice. I don't know. But to me it would make good sense to have a recreation fee for nonresidents to use our forest.

Maybe this is out of context, but you have an organization now, the Appalachian Mountain Club, that is running a multimillion-dollar operation on the White Mountain National Forest. They pay a $20 fee to join. Then they have all the benefits of the national forest, which includes the huts up there, and I understand they do

maintain some trails. But if the forest had a fee, they wouldn't have to let a private organization, which also I am a little ugly about, they hide behind the charitable organizations, environmentalists. They all are a so-called charitable organization. Sometimes I think in the lumber business I've been running one, too, but I can't deduct anything.

So for what it's worth to you fellows, I point that out to you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much.

We'll allow these last two speakers, and that should enable us to conclude pretty close to our initially scheduled time.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL DINSMORE, JACKSON, NH

Mr. DINSMORE. My name is Daniel Dinsmore of Jackson. I don't like public speaking. I will keep this short and sweet, but I'm trying to summarize.

If you've got a skin cancer, I don't believe putting a Band-Aid on it to try to get rid of it, unless the roots are so deep that you can't. And that's the way I feel about user fees or mandatory programs for raising money from forests.

I've been a supporter of the volunteer system, and everybody says, well, how are you going to make the voluntary system work? How are you going to collect anything? Well, my idea is so simple, and is without administrative costs, but I don't think it will fly. People in Washington somehow seem to have an aversion, they have got to make things complicated.

My idea is simply this: Put up signs explaining that you need funds to operate the forest, these trailheads where you now have these mandatory parking signs, get a waterproof box, put some franked envelopes in it. It isn't going to cost anybody any postage to mail them. Put down an address there where you want the funds to go to, maybe several different addresses where you want the money to go. People come back from a good day's hiking or whatever and they have had a good time and come back and, in my opinion, they are willing to kick in a few bucks for the experience they've had. They are not being forced, coerced to do something. That rubs me automatically against the grain. It is volunteer. The sign says "Have a good time. How about giving us a few bucks to improve this forest and keep things going so it can continue."

So whoever is there, they pick up the envelope, reach in their pocket, pull out a couple of bucks, put it in the envelope, and then drop it off in the nearest post office. In my way of thinking, that is going to bring in a lot more money from a voluntary, easy-to-manage user fee than it would from any kind of mandatory fees.

Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you very much.

Good morning and welcome.

STATEMENT OF HOWARD HATCH

Mr. HATCH. My name is Howard Hatch. I worked for the Forest Service for 33 years. I was born and brought up right here in this area. The other day I was riding in Gorham and I happened to look around and, say, here, there is your money, Wildcat, Appalachian Mountain Club, Jackson Ski Touring Foundation, go on and on.

The ski areas, I think she mentioned $200,000 in revenue for those areas. That is not anywhere near enough. The amount of revenue that these areas are pulling in should be going back to the general fund. If not the general fund, it should be going back into the White Mountain National Forest.

The timber receipts—I worked there for years, I know what goes on. Every year, maybe not as serious now, but every year they always had a budget problem. I mean, this is something that has been going on for 30-some-odd years and probably went on before that. Come on. The money that is generated on the White Mountain National Forest, keep it here.

I don't think the user fee is the secret. I think you got to get to these people, you got to get these so-called nonprofit organizations. We have ski touring outfits that are making good money, but it is nonprofit. The Forest Service gets very little out of that. I don't know how much, but we couldn't even get the percentage out of her what exactly these nonprofits make.

There is a lot of money out there for these people if your timber receipts could come back to the forest, your recreation receipts, and the same thing with campgrounds. There is a difference between parks. It is parks and the recreations. Campgrounds are very direct and they are paid for. Some parks in New Hampshire are not paid for, but the campgrounds are paid for by State and Federal Government. The Federal Government has put all their campgrounds out to concession. It is someplace between 10 and 20 percent of the take, $200,000. They are not getting much back out of that.

I think that's all I got to say, and I appreciate you letting me speak. Thank you.

Mr. SUNUNU. Thank you. That concludes this hearing. I appreciate everyone's time. Again, I ask those who had a chance to testify to feel free to submit their written testimony to complete the record.

Thanks to Congressman Bass, Congressman Moran, and Chairman Steve Horn for being with us today. I know, having worked on the PILT issue, on the user fee issue on behalf of the citizens of New Hampshire, how important this is to those of you that are here and thousands all over New Hampshire. And I know that Steve Horn and Jerry Moran will take these thoughts and concerns to heart as we try to build a coalition in Congress that will address these issues with a good deal of common sense.

Thank you again.

[Whereupon, at 11:10 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional information submitted for the hearing record follows:]

Iris W. Baird
11 Richardson Street
Lancaster NH 03584

October 13, 1997

To The Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology
Hearing in Conway NH re PL 104-134, and funding for the White Mountain National Forest

Thanks to Rep. John E. Sununu for his invitation to me to attend this hearing. I am identified in his letter as "New Hampshire Fire Lookout Association" but must emphasize that my remarks are not to be taken as the position of that organization, which is not a lobbying entity. However, as Historian for the (national) Forest Fire Lookout Association, the New Hampshire fire lookout historian, and a member and past director of the Weeks State Park Association, I have some knowledge of the work of the USFS and the WMNF and of the history of the Weeks Act and the establishment of the eastern National Forests.

The question Rep. Sununu poses is: Can the National Forest service support itself, and if it can, should we permanently institute a program that will allow it to be self-sufficient?

My answer, at least with respect to the White Mountain National Forest, must be no, it cannot. The reasons for this answer have to do with the costs of operating the forest, and the sources, and potential sources, of revenue. I don't have a copy of the WMNF budget, but my involvement with various forest planning activities leads me to conclude that the WMNF has administrative costs for managing a multi-use forest, including costs related to preservation of endangered ecosystems, timber management, recreational programs, watershed protection, supervision of special use permits for ski areas, the Appalachian Mountain Club system and other users, general safety of persons using the forest, and the usual bureaucratic overhead. Sources of income include Congressional appropriations and some user fees. It is my understanding that the proceeds of timber sales go directly to the federal treasury and not to the Forest, so that the costs appear on the budget, but are not offset by income from the sales.

The beneficiaries of the WMNF programs include recreationists, businesses in neighboring communities, manufacturers of recreational equipment, producers of maps and guidebooks, and downstream communities. (After all, John W. Weeks got Congress to pass the Weeks Act on the grounds that the Forest would protect watersheds and insure a stable and adequate water supply to the communities of southern New England.)

We purchased the "parking pass" or recreational fee when it was first available, and paid the full price even though as senior citizens we were entitled to the 50% discount. I support the concept of a user fee of some sort, but have my doubts as to the effectiveness of this program as a major funding source. A number of the arguments raised against it by local people, including that 'we already pay property taxes', and 'pay for hunting and fishing licenses', are not relevant since none of these taxes go to the WMNF either directly or indirectly; these are state taxes and not federal ones.

The problems I see with the program have to do with the large number of widely scattered places where the fee applies, which must cost the WMNF a substantial amount of time and effort to patrol. In addition, because of the fractured pattern of land ownership, many of the major parking areas at trailheads are not on federal land and the Forest Service cannot legally require a permit for them. (Among these are Pinkham Notch AMC headquarters, Appalachia, and Lafayette Place, all of which are on state land.) It's confusing for people who live in New Hampshire; for visitors from out of state the pattern must be completely baffling. We have had comments from visitors, and from the staff at the state rest area in Canterbury, that people would be glad to pay the fee if they could figure out where to get the pass, and where they needed it.

One of the problems with any kind of an entrance fee for this forest is the fact that five major highways pass through it; of these only the Kankamaugus would be suitable for a toll gate (which I'd favor) though I'm sure local people who use the road would want some kind of exemption or reduced "commuter" pass. (A number of years ago there was an effort to restrict use of certain "wilderness areas" by requiring a free permit. The project failed, primarily because users had no way of getting the permit in a timely and convenient fashion. The district offices were remote from the areas in question and opened too late in the day for most serious hikers.)

A potential source of income to the forest would be a tax on recreational equipment, similar to that now collected on hunting equipment, earmarked for the national forests.

It would perhaps be possible to redirect the timber sales income to the forest, and to increase the number of special use permits and raise the fees for these. In both of these cases there might be a temptation to maximize these uses at the expense of other forest responsibilities, for ecosystem protection, dispersed and low-impact recreation, and watershed protection.

Many businesses and communities benefit financially from proximity to the WMNF. But I know of no way in which these can be assessed directly for the support of the forest. Some communities in and near the forest benefit more than others, and the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program was designed to ameliorate the impact of the forest users on communities which have a large portion of their land in the forest. Congress has not funded this program at the level which these communities had been led to expect, which has produced a negative impact on their budgets and property taxes, and generated a great deal of anger and frustration. These issues can be addressed, and should be addressed by our Congressional delegation.

The businesses which benefit from the WMNF in a variety of ways, whether they are near the Forest and provide goods and services to Forest visitors, or are far away and benefit in less direct and obvious ways, all presumably pay federal taxes. The communities benefit indirectly through collection of property taxes or in other ways. So it doesn't seem unreasonable for the federal government as the recipient of these taxes, and as the agent of the citizens of these communities, to underwrite the costs of maintaining the national forest.

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