



September 14, 2017

America Outdoors Association Bulletin

Fires in the West and Hurricane Irma Wreak Havoc

Hurricane Irma disrupted outfitter operations throughout Florida and threatened to leave parts of the state without power for weeks. Some hard hit areas will take months, if not years, to recover. AOA's Executive Director Julie Kahlfeldt, who lives in Gainesville, Florida, reports from there: "My thoughts and prayers go out to those who endured the strong winds and rains of Hurricane Irma and its devastating aftermath. While my family was safe, no part of Florida was untouched by this storm and it will take a lot of time and resources to rebuild businesses and homes. I encourage those of you who can help to go to [How to Help](#)"

Meanwhile, fires in the Northwest were creating havoc among outfitters in those states. Smoke from fires filled the air in many states in the Northwest. As of September 14th, the entire state of Montana was under an air quality alert. Over 1 million acres have burned in Montana this fire season. Parts of Glacier National Park have been closed. Fires burned out Jack Rich's hunting camp of 60 years and two alternate camps subsequently assigned to him. He is on his fourth camp as the hunting season starts. Oregon and parts of Washington state have also been hard hit. It's been a struggle for many outfitters serving guests among the constant threat of fires, evacuations and Forest closures. Fortunately, rain and snow are moving into the Northern Rockies today with up to a foot expected in the higher elevations of Montana.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our members and the people of those affected areas.

The GO Act Marked Up Again

The GO Act, which reauthorizes the BLM and the Forest Service to issue permits to outfitters, was attached to the Sportsman Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act (SHARE) and marked up in the House Resources Committee on September 13th. The center piece of the SHARE Act boosts planning for fishing and hunting activities on public lands.

Different versions of the SHARE Act passed both the House and Senate in the last Congress and will likely pass both bodies in this one. If so, that will lead to a conference to reconcile the differences with the GO Act provisions in play.

AOA Submits Whitepaper on Forest Service Permit Modernization

As you may know, demand for permits has pushed the Forest Service to implement a permit modernization project. The Forest Service focus for this effort is to provide more access to youth and underserved groups. However,

the agency is also looking at ways to streamline other portions of their permitting processes to lower the costs of issuing new permits or renewing existing ones. Needs assessments, capacity analyses, and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act are among the issues being addressed.

AOA has analyzed the project and some of the strategies suggested by the Forest Service. To read the paper go to [America Outdoors Association Policy Statement on Forest Service Special Uses Modernization](#)

I Didn't Know About That! Legislation and Regulations That Impact Your Bottom Line

In this session at the AOA conference, David Brown, AOA's Vice President for Government Affairs, will be discussing the latest issues and legislation that have the potential to impact your bottom line. There'll be time for questions and answers. His presentation will be followed by Tinelle Bustam PhD, National Assistant Director, Recreation, Tourism, and Public Services at the Forest Service.

Among the issues addressed in this session include the following.

- The Forest Service Special Uses Permit Modernization Project. What does it mean to your operation?
- Where is the GO Act headed? H.R. 289 renews and streamlines Forest Service and BLM permitting authorities.
- The Outdoor Recreation Enhancement Act, H.R. 2771, which restores the seasonal recreational establishment exemption in the FLSA for outfitters with federal permits, as well as for those with traveling camps.
- What is in the Recreation Not Red-tape Act and what's its status in Congress?
- What is the status of the higher minimum wage for federal contractors?
- What happened to former President Obama's Executive Order to expand overtime to some previously exempt EAP employees? The Courts have it on hold for now and DOL is reconsidering what to do.
- The status of the SHARE Act.
- Implementation for the National Forest Trails Stewardship Act. Which areas are high priority for trail maintenance and how is the pilot project authorizing fee credits for trail clearing by outfitters going to be implemented?
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration updates.
- And more as issues emerge.

Register today for AOA's Marketing & Management Conference, Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, December 4 – 7, 2017

[Click here to register for the AOA Marketing and Management Conference in Reno](#)

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