

National Parks Conservation Association * Coalition of National Park Service Retirees

Please Oppose H.R. 2954

**Keep Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks' rivers and streams
protected for visitors and wildlife**

Yellowstone National Park is known the world over for its natural wonders, including geysers and waterfalls, and its teeming wildlife including bison, grizzly bears, wolves, cutthroat trout, trumpeter swans, and much more. Grand Teton National Park is renowned for its soaring peaks and backcountry solitude. These parks serve as the ecological core of the larger 18 million acre Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. One hundred and forty years after Yellowstone's establishment, the National Park Service successfully manages Yellowstone and Grand Teton's backcountry to preserve its truly pristine rivers and streams. This is quite an accomplishment.

H.R. 2954 mandates that the National Park Service change its boating regulations on rivers and streams in three years or leave non-motorized boating unregulated on roughly 7,500 miles of rivers and streams in Yellowstone and Grand Teton -- more total miles than the Mississippi, Columbia, Ohio, Colorado and Missouri rivers combined.

Yellowstone hosts over 3 million visitors a year. These visitors travel to America's first national park to enjoy watching bison, grizzly bears, and wolves, to fish the parks legendary rivers and streams, to backpack and hike, watch Old Faithful erupt, and paddle Yellowstone's lakes. Grand Teton visitors come to climb, hike, and paddle on the Snake River or the park's many lakes. For decades these parks have appropriately balanced user group access with conservation. Allowing boats and other "hand-propelled vessels" through additional park rivers and streams will significantly alter the visitor experience in these special places. This is why the National Park Service would need to undertake a thorough review in Yellowstone and Grand Teton of potential impacts to wildlife habitat, conflicts with other visitors, public safety, search and rescue response and expense, intrusion of invasive species and many other issues. An analysis of these issues will be costly and time intensive for national parks that are already financially-starved. The bill fails to provide additional funding to conduct these studies.

Boating is currently allowed in many locations within Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. Of the 168 lakes within Yellowstone, only five are closed to boating, so the parks already allow ample opportunities for paddling, while also providing opportunities to experience lakes in a pristine natural state. Yellowstone issues an average of over 2,000 permits per year for non-motorized boating vessels. In Grand Teton, the 26 mile stretch of the Snake River through the park hosts 60,000 paddlers each year. In addition, there are countless extraordinary whitewater paddling opportunities in the rivers and streams within the nearly 15 million acres of public lands surrounding Yellowstone and Grand Teton.

In conclusion, this bill could unnecessarily result in a predictable loss of wildlife viewing opportunities and negatively impact other existing uses which are highly valued by millions of park visitors, without adequate environmental review. HR 2954 attempts to elevate the wishes of one user group over others

who visit and appreciate Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks as well as seeks to direct an outcome without regard to sound scientific analysis and cost. Please oppose H.R. 2954.

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