

Plans to Privatize National Parks Outlined in Trump Admin Memo, Would Enrich Donors & Special Interests

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Controversial Move Would Cost Park Goers and Help Trump Campaign Donors

WASHINGTON - A new memo from a Department of the Interior's industry-laden "Made in America" Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee proposes recommendations to privatize America's national parks, which would lead to "blackout" dates for seniors, and fee increases. While the move would hurt working Americans, it would fill the pockets of Trump donors who stand to benefit from lucrative contracts. New [reporting](#) from Yahoo News reveals the privatization push by industry and private corporate concessionaires.

"David Bernhardt and President Trump won't quit until the American people are left totally empty-handed, and special interests own our outdoor heritage. Privatizing America's public campgrounds and jacking up national park fees to appease big-business concessionaires

and powerful corporate campaign donors is just the latest egregious attempt to rip public lands out of public hands,” said Jayson O’Neill, Western Values Project Deputy Director.

The memo recommends a number of changes that would benefit private corporate concessioners including:

- Initially privatizing national park campgrounds and then expanding privatization to other agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation;
- regulation exceptions through ‘categorical permissions’ to electrify campgrounds by expanding utilities;
- mobile food trucks and camp stores within park grounds; and
- blackouts and restrictions on senior citizens admission discounts;

The “Made in America” board which was created by the Trump administration and stacked with prominent Trump donors and special interest that would benefit from the privatization effort.

“Trump’s scheme to privatize national parks means one thing: the park-going public’s money will go to connected special interests and campaign donors instead of supporting the parks themselves. Selling out our national parks for Trump’s own pork barrel political gains is something that Americans simply won’t stand for,” said O’Neill.

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Jim Jacobs is Chairman of Delaware North, a food service and concessionaire mega-company that is strongly interested in the private business expansion within national parks. His estimated worth is \$4.2 billion and is ranked the 159th richest person in the world. The Jacobs family has donated at least \$167,700 to Trump’s various campaigns and political committees.

Derrick Crandall is President of the American Recreation Coalition and was the main driver behind the creation of the advisory board. When Interior officials were selecting who would serve on the “Made in America” board, Crandall’s name was color-coded for potential conflicts of interest, due to his ties to private concessionaire interests. Crandall has previously endorsed national park privatization efforts as a way to ‘upgrade’ the camping experience.

Jim Rogers is the former President of Kampgrounds of America (KOA), the largest privately-owned campground system in the world.

Bruce Fears leads ARAMARK, a global giant in food service and concessions. Aramark has continued to work closely with the National Park Service to operate and expand private corporate interests.

A full list of the “Made in America” Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee is available on the National Parks website.

Further Background

The Trump administration’s efforts to privatize national parks are not new. In a covert move by the Trump administration, an attempted bailout of concessionaire business interests in national parks was pursued. Touting an inflated deferred maintenance backlog, Secretary Bernhardt pushed for a \$12 billion investment to meet parks’ maintenance needs. While the intention seems forthright, it was anything but. Only \$1.3 billion of the backlog is considered priority maintenance by the park service and some \$389 million would instead go to private concessionaire corporations operating within national parks.

The Trump administration’s supposed interest in restoring, protecting, and maintaining national parks could be partially addressed by supporting full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which would assist in covering this ‘deferred maintenance backlog.’ However, the Trump administration proposed nearly zeroing out the fund repeatedly

The Trump administration’s latest proposed budget also slashes funding for the National Park Service by \$494 million and fails to provide any funding to make parks whole after the historic government shutdown, which caused untold, lasting damage to both national parks and local economies.

The Trump administration has long been working to take public lands out of public hands. A recent analysis from the Western Values Project detailed Trump’s political appointees to key-Interior positions who are public land transfer and privatization zealots.

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Western Values Project brings accountability to the national conversation about Western public lands and national parks conservation – a space too often dominated by industry lobbyists and their allies in government.

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