

Calendar No. 626

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION**S. 4451**

To require the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to carry out a study on reservation systems for Federal land.

 IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 4, 2024

Mr. PADILLA introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

NOVEMBER 21, 2024

Reported by Mr. MANCHIN, with an amendment

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

A BILL

To require the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to carry out a study on reservation systems for Federal land.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Review and Evaluation
5 of Strategies for Equal Reservations for Visitor Experi-

1 ences Federal Land Act” or the “RESERVE Federal
2 Land Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) **BOOKING WINDOW.**—The term “booking
6 window”, with respect to a reservation system,
7 means the time period during which a reservation or
8 lottery entry is available to the public.

9 (2) **FEDERAL LAND.**—The term “Federal land”
10 means—

11 (A) public lands (as defined in section 103
12 of the Federal Land Policy and Management
13 Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1702));

14 (B) National Forest System land;

15 (C) units of the National Park System;

16 (D) units of the National Wildlife Refuge
17 System;

18 (E) sites administered by the Bureau of
19 Reclamation; and

20 (F) sites administered by the Corps of En-
21 gineers.

22 (3) **RECREATION ACTIVITY.**—The term “recre-
23 ation activity” includes camping, backpacking,
24 climbing, fishing, hiking, driving, and other rec-
25 reational opportunities.

1 (4) RESERVATION SYSTEM.—

2 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “reservation
3 system” means any platform or method used by
4 managers of Federal land to ration recreation
5 activities.

6 (B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “reservation
7 system” includes reservation, lottery, metering,
8 pricing, merit-based, and other similar rationing
9 methods via online, telephone, paper, in-person,
10 or other methods.

11 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
12 the Secretary of the Interior.

13 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES STUDY OF RES-**
14 **ERVATION SYSTEMS FOR RECREATION AC-**
15 **TIVITIES ON FEDERAL LAND.**

16 (a) STUDY.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in coordina-
18 tion with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Sec-
19 retary of the Army, acting through the Chief of En-
20 gineers, shall, not later than 60 days after the date
21 of enactment of this Act, enter into an agreement
22 with the National Academy of Sciences to carry out
23 a study of reservation systems for recreation activi-
24 ties on Federal land.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out the study under paragraph (1), the National Academy of Sciences shall carry out the following:

(A) A comprehensive review of the history of reservation systems, such as recreation.gov, including a review of—

(i) the studies that led to the establishment of the applicable reservation system;

(ii) the iterations of the applicable reservation system over time to meet the needs of the applicable Federal agency; and

(iii) any visitor feedback provided with respect to the applicable reservation system.

(B) Based on available data and existing research, answer the following questions:

(i) What are the benefits and challenges of implementing reservation systems for visitor management and conservation goals for Federal land?

(ii) What data are available to understand demand for recreation on Federal land? How can the data be used to balance

1 visitor management and conservation
2 goals?

3 (iii) What information is available re-
4 garding Federal land users and reservation
5 system users? What information is avail-
6 able or needs to be collected regarding de-
7 mographics and characteristics of success-
8 ful applicants using the reservation sys-
9 tems?

10 (iv) What best practices should guide
11 reservation system design, including diver-
12 sity of rationing mechanisms and booking
13 windows, and would promote equal access
14 to recreation activities? What metrics can
15 be used to record outcomes of reservation
16 system design?

17 (v) How have fees been collected for
18 reservation systems over time to meet the
19 needs of the applicable Federal agency?
20 How are the revenues from fees for res-
21 ervation systems split between, and spent
22 by, Federal land units, Federal agencies,
23 and third-party contractors? How is the
24 fee structure disseminated to users? How

could dissemination of information with respect to the fee structure be improved?

(vi) What are the odds of success with respect to securing a reservation under reservation systems? How are the odds of success disseminated to users? How could dissemination of information with respect to the odds of success be improved?

(vii) How are data, including data collected by contractors, on reservation systems shared with Federal land managers, researchers, and the public? How can transparency be improved to inform the decisionmaking of users of reservation systems?

(b) REPORT.—The agreement entered into under subsection (a)(1) shall include a requirement that, not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the National Academy of Sciences shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that describes the results of the study carried out under subsection (a)(1).

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Review and Evaluation of Strategies for Equitable Reservations for Visitor Experi-

ences *Federal Land Act*” or the “*RESERVE Federal Land Act*”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) *BOOKING WINDOW*.—The term “booking window”, with respect to a Federal reservation system, means the time period during which a reservation or lottery entry is available to the public.

(2) *FEDERAL LAND*.—The term “Federal land” means—

(A) public lands (as defined in section 103 of the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976* (43 U.S.C. 1702));

(B) *National Forest System land*;

(C) *units of the National Park System*;

(D) *units of the National Wildlife Refuge System*;

(E) *sites administered by the Bureau of Reclamation*; and

(F) *sites administered by the Corps of Engineers*.

(3) *FEDERAL RESERVATION SYSTEM*.—

(A) *IN GENERAL*.—The term “Federal reservation system” means any platform or method used by managers of Federal land to manage the

1 *quantity, type, distribution, and timing of rec-*
 2 *reational activities.*

3 (B) *INCLUSIONS.*—*The term “Federal res-*
 4 *ervation system” includes reservation, permit,*
 5 *lottery, metering, pricing, merit-based, and other*
 6 *similar management methods via online, tele-*
 7 *phone, paper, in-person, or other methods.*

8 (4) *RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY.*—*The term “rec-*
 9 *reational activity” includes camping, backpacking,*
 10 *climbing, paddling sports, fishing, hiking, driving,*
 11 *and other recreational opportunities.*

12 (5) *SECRETARIES.*—*The term “Secretaries”*
 13 *means—*

14 (A) *the Secretary of the Interior;*

15 (B) *the Secretary of Agriculture; and*

16 (C) *the Secretary of the Army, acting*
 17 *through the Chief of Engineers.*

18 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES STUDY OF FED-**
 19 **ERAL RESERVATION SYSTEMS FOR REC-**
 20 **REATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON FEDERAL LAND.**

21 (a) *STUDY.*—

22 (1) *IN GENERAL.*—*The Secretaries, acting joint-*
 23 *ly, shall, not later than 60 days after the date of en-*
 24 *actment of this Act, enter into an agreement with the*
 25 *National Academy of Sciences to carry out a study of*

1 *Federal reservation systems for recreational activities*
 2 *on Federal land.*

3 (2) *REQUIREMENTS.*—*In carrying out the study*
 4 *under paragraph (1), the National Academy of*
 5 *Sciences shall consult with the Secretaries to carry*
 6 *out the following:*

7 (A) *A review of the history of Federal res-*
 8 *ervation systems, such as recreation.gov, includ-*
 9 *ing a review of—*

10 (i) *the considerations, including data,*
 11 *that led to the establishment of the applica-*
 12 *ble Federal reservation system;*

13 (ii) *the iterations of the applicable*
 14 *Federal reservation system over time to*
 15 *meet the needs of the applicable Federal*
 16 *agency;*

17 (iii) *any visitor feedback provided with*
 18 *respect to the applicable Federal reservation*
 19 *system; and*

20 (iv) *scientific literature or studies ex-*
 21 *amining the efficacy of Federal reservation*
 22 *systems, including user preferences with re-*
 23 *spect to Federal reservation system design*
 24 *and implementation.*

1 *(B) Based on available data and existing*
2 *research, answer the following questions:*

3 *(i) What are the benefits and chal-*
4 *lenges of implementing Federal reservation*
5 *systems to achieve management goals for*
6 *Federal land, including resource protection,*
7 *enjoyable visitor experiences, and sustain-*
8 *able operations and facility use?*

9 *(ii) What data are available, and what*
10 *additional data are needed, to understand*
11 *demand for recreation on Federal land?*
12 *How can the data be used to balance visitor*
13 *management and conservation goals?*

14 *(iii) What information is available re-*
15 *garding Federal land users and Federal res-*
16 *ervation system users? What information is*
17 *available or needs to be collected regarding*
18 *demographics and characteristics of success-*
19 *ful and unsuccessful applicants using the*
20 *Federal reservation systems?*

21 *(iv) Do Federal reservation systems*
22 *pose a barrier for certain communities, in-*
23 *cluding international communities, and*
24 *user groups to access appropriate recreation*

opportunities on Federal land? If so, what is the nature of any barriers identified?

(v) What best practices should be considered in Federal reservation system design, including visitation management system options and booking windows, options to respond to the needs specific to individual Federal land management units, and equitable access to recreational activities? What metrics can be used to record outcomes of Federal reservation system design?

(vi) How have fees been collected for Federal reservation systems over time to meet the needs of the applicable Federal agency? How are the revenues from fees for Federal reservation systems split between, and spent by, Federal land units, Federal agencies, and third-party contractors? How is the fee structure disseminated to users? How could dissemination of information with respect to the fee structure be improved?

(vii) What are the odds of success with respect to securing a reservation under Federal reservation systems? How are the odds

1 *of success disseminated to users? How could*
 2 *dissemination of information with respect*
 3 *to the odds of success be improved?*

4 *(viii) How are data, including data*
 5 *collected by contractors, on Federal reserva-*
 6 *tion systems shared with Federal land man-*
 7 *agers, researchers, and the public? How can*
 8 *transparency be improved to inform the de-*
 9 *cisionmaking of users of Federal reservation*
 10 *systems?*

11 *(ix) How are Federal reservation sys-*
 12 *tems incorporating and adapting to emerg-*
 13 *ing technologies, such as geofencing, bots, or*
 14 *third-party websites monitoring and resell-*
 15 *ing reservations? Are Federal reservation*
 16 *systems resilient to cyber threats?*

17 *(x) How can Federal reservation sys-*
 18 *tems be improved to reduce “no shows” and*
 19 *ensure that recreation sites are being used*
 20 *during periods of high demand? Would an*
 21 *increase in first-come, first-served opportu-*
 22 *nities increase equitable access to outdoor*
 23 *recreation on Federal land?*

24 *(b) REPORT.—The agreement entered into under sub-*
 25 *section (a)(1) shall include a requirement that, not later*

1 *than 18 months after the date on which the agreement is*
2 *entered into, the National Academy of Sciences shall submit*
3 *to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that de-*
4 *scribes the results of the study carried out under that sub-*
5 *section.*

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To require the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to carry out a study on reservation systems for Federal land.

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