

This recognition is long overdue for a man who served his country with distinction and valor during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Dorie Miller is just one example of African-American war heroes and veterans who have gone beyond and above the call of duty to persevere freedom's full measure, although they themselves were denied it in many quarters at home.

As Americans, we owe a debt of gratitude to our veterans. It is our duty to ensure that they receive the support they need from the country they so diligently served.

As we daily witness the courageous and professional efforts of our armed forces engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan and in Southeast Asia, we are all reminded of the tremendous sacrifices our veterans have made on our behalf.

As we celebrate another Veteran's Day this November, we must back up our promises with our meaningful action. We must honor all of our veterans, irrespective of their station in life, their gender, or the color of their skin.

Like Dorie Miller, many have died for the freedom we cherish. Death is not a respecter of persons. Nor should we be.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JOY
RASMUSSEN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an amazing woman from Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Joy Rasmussen, a member of the US Women's National Triathlon team, is set to compete at the International Triathlon Union World Championships in December in Queenstown, New Zealand. Joy is ranked 15th nationally in her division and is eligible to compete in next year's World Championship in Portugal. I rise to pay tribute to Joy today before my colleagues here in the Congress.

Joy took up competing as a way to make new friends, though her athletic prowess in this event appears to come natural to her, which is no easy task. Triathlons encompass a quarter-mile to half-mile swim, a 12 to 18 mile bike ride, and a 3 to 5 mile run. Joy's athletic feats are especially commendable, as she pursues excellence outside of a full-time career. Before putting in a full day as a realtor with the Colorado Group Realty, Joy trains in the early morning and makes longer training runs, rides, or swims on the weekend. Even after a nasty spill last February that sidelined her for five months, Joy has continually driven herself to improve.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you to show my appreciation to Joy Rasmussen for being a beacon of inspiration to Americans who attempt to achieve excellence in their personal and professional endeavors. Joy's accomplishments are extraordinary and I am honored that she will be representing America at the upcoming World Championships in New Zealand.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 269,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPRO-
PRIATIONS ACT, 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the Fiscal Year 2004 Interior appropriations bill conference report for a number of reasons.

I applaud the committee for approving \$400 million to reimburse accounts that the Forest Service borrowed from to fight this past Summer's forest fires. Unfortunately, the Forest Service borrowed \$695 million this year to fight fires. This appropriations bill leaves the public land management accounts that were borrowed from in the hole by nearly \$300 million—and most of these accounts were underfunded to begin with.

Accounts that the Forest Service borrowed from this fire season include the fuel reduction, law enforcement, forest research, recreation, forest jobs programs, fish habitat enhancement, and road and trail maintenance, among many others. These accounts represent some of the most important public lands management programs the federal government funds, and they will be reimbursed at just 57 cents on the dollar.

One of the most important is the fuel reduction account. Even if Congress fully reimburses the fuel reduction account, fuel reduction projects get delayed and pushed to the next year when the accounts are once again robbed. For the safety of our communities and the health of our forests, this cycle cannot continue.

This cycle of robbing other accounts is perpetuated every year by not adequately funding wildland fire suppression. The Forest Service borrowed almost \$700 million this year, in what was a below average fire year. This appropriations bill has a \$289 million increase over last year, but it's not near enough. Regardless of how severe next year's fire season is, this bill guarantees that the Forest Service will have to borrow yet again because Congress is not stepping to the plate and sufficiently funding fire suppression.

In addition to under-funding firefighting, this appropriations bill has a wholly inadequate increase for hazardous fuel reduction projects.

The build-up of hazardous fuels in our national forests is a problem brought about by nearly a century of forest mismanagement. It is a problem with a multi-billion dollar price tag to fix, but so far the President and the Congress have been unwilling to put up the money. This appropriations bill does nothing to rectify the dismal record of under-funding fuel reduction.

The project in the Metolius basin, the location President Bush originally planned to visit during his August trip to Oregon, is an excellent example why restoring forest health will require a substantial investment.

The Metolius project is on relatively flat ground, with sufficient road access, and a substantial amount of large, commercial Ponderosa pine. The project will log more than 20 million boardfeet of timber. Yet, even with that commercial return, it will still cost the Forest Service \$400 an acre to complete the project.

It's clear that even under optimal conditions, with ample commercial timber, it is impossible to clear the large amounts of brush and small trees necessary in successful fuel reduction projects, without spending substantial sums of money.

In contrast, the nearby area where the Davis Butte fire burned is more typical than the Metolius and provides a better picture of the real costs of fuel reduction. Visiting the Davis Butte fire one can see where dense stands of lodge-pole pine provided ladder-fuel for the fire to climb into the crowns of the ponderosa. It is essential that these types of trees be removed, unfortunately, they have little or no commercial value. They may have some value as pulp, mulch, or hog fuel, but most of the vegetation would have to be burned, or chipped and left on-site.

This type of treatment would be in line with the Pacific Northwest Research Station study that was conducted on the Klamath National Forest that estimated cost of fuel reduction at \$1,685 an acre. So not only can we pretend that fuel reduction won't cost anything—as the President has done thus far with his "Healthy Forest Initiative"—we can't pretend that it will be cheap.

There is a multi-billion forest health problem that needs a significant federal investment, but this bill does not make that funding commitment.

Another glaring problem with this appropriations bill is that it includes a fifteen month extension of the Recreational Fee Demonstration program.

This program was created by a rider to the 1996 Interior appropriations, and has been extended numerous times through appropriations riders, without ever having gone through the appropriate authorizing process. It is well past time to end these back-door extensions and allow the Resources Committee to do its job.

Under this program, the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Parks Service can charge citizens fees to recreate on public land, including primitive trails and unimproved campgrounds. Charging citizens a stealth tax for hiking in the woods, walking on the beach, or picnicking with their family is unfair and punitive. It is appropriate to charge a modest fee for campgrounds or boat launches to pay for facilities and upkeep. But to charge a fee to park a car on the side of a logging road or at a trail head turns our public lands into the king's domain.

Beyond my philosophical objections, the mismanagement of the program by the Forest Service is staggering. The program was created to address the maintenance backlog on public land facilities, but only 50 cents of every dollar collected goes toward maintaining or improving our public lands. The rest is eaten up by administrative and collection costs. Fifty percent overhead costs does not make an effective government program.

And a recent investigation by the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that in 2001—the last year for which data is available—the Forest Service erroneously used \$10 million in appropriated funds to bolster the program. The Forest Service did not report these additional costs to Congress in their annual report. Nor did they report \$2.8 million of other administrative and vendor costs. This kind of deceptive representation in the Forest Service's annual report on the effectiveness of the program is disgraceful.