

## Tim Hogan: Privatization of our public lands

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Having just returned from a splendid autumn backpack in the Hunter Fryingpan Wilderness in Colorado, I was particularly discomfited by the recent article on privatization of our public lands (Feds push for privatization of U.S. forest campgrounds, Sept. 28).

While claims of American exceptionalism are often over-blown during an election, it is fair to say our public lands in western North America are an exceptional legacy of our cultural heritage. For some of us, the shameless rush to cash in on their bounty is reminiscent of the money changers in the temples.

These dealings are tied up with those who know the price of everything, but the value of nothing. Congress has been bleeding dry our public land agencies since the days of Ronald Reagan. These privatization agendas in the name of efficiency are a ruse to inject our commons with a dose of capital from the highest bidders and reward them with healthy profits.

The American Recreation Coalition, cited in the article as the umbrella group poised to unveil a dozen such programs, gives a list of members ranging from the Association of International Snowmobile Manufacturers to the Walt Disney Corporation. House Republicans recently passed the Sportsmen's Heritage Act, a bill thinly disguised to gut the 1964 Wilderness Act, and supported by the Romney/Ryan ticket. The ski industry in Colorado, largely harbored on public lands, has rarely seen an uncut slope not in their sights for expansion so as to "remain competitive."

Amory Lovins, a man who has thought long and hard about the plight of the planet and the role of markets once said, "Markets are meant to be greedy, not fair. Efficient, not sufficient. They're very good at short-term allocation of scarce resources, but that's all they're good at. They were never meant to tell you how much is enough or how to fulfill the higher purpose of a human being." And here may lie the greatest tragedy. The temples are not for sale.

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