

**West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Resolution Favoring Sufficient Funding of  
Public Land Recreation and Against Recreation Fees  
Adopted by the Board of Directors, April 29, 2005**

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, H.R. 3283, which was passed by the US Congress in November 2004, allows federal land management agencies to charge access fees for recreational use by the general public on federally owned public lands. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is opposed to the Act and feels it should be repealed because:

- The concept of paying new recreation fees to use public lands is contrary to the founding idea that public lands belong to the American people and are places where everyone is freely welcomed.
- National forests and other public lands should provide the greatest good for the greatest number of Americans. The Act will impose an economic hardship on low-income people wishing to access their own public lands. A high proportion of people living in rural areas, including those near the national forests, are low-income citizens. A disproportionate number of people who engage in physically demanding, low-impact forms of recreation are young people with limited incomes.
- Tourism is an important and growing sector of the West Virginia economy. The Act will discourage visitation to public lands and have a negative impact on the state and local economies that rely on these visitors.
- H.R. 3283 fundamentally changes the way recreation on America's public lands is funded and managed. It puts in place an ecologically destructive incentive to support large-scale, environmentally destructive recreation areas on public lands in order to increase their operating revenue.
- Imposition of fees for recreational activities and entrance fees for federal lands (other than national parks) is a major step towards the privatization of recreation on public lands. Private corporations will be contracted to build and manage facilities and to collect the fees. Resorts, ski runs, ATV and snowmobile trails, highly developed campgrounds for RV users, and marinas would be out of reach to many low-income people. Further, these highly developed facilities will have an unfair advantage over already existing facilities on private land located near public land that are owned and managed by small businesses.
- Public lands access fees are highly controversial and are opposed by hundreds of organizations, county governments, state legislatures, and by millions of rural Americans.
- H.R. 3283 was never approved by the U.S. House of Representatives and was never introduced, never had hearings, and was never approved by the U.S. Senate but was instead attached to an omnibus spending bill as an appropriations rider.

Thus, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy pledges to defend West Virginians' right to freely access their public lands and to work towards both repealing the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and advocating sufficient funding for public land recreation.