Resolution in Opposition to the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program

A RESOLUTION by the Back Country Horsemen America of urging the United States Congress to abolish the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program on public lands managed by the USDA, Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

WHEREAS, the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program was authorized in 1996 and implemented on selected Public lands throughout the United States to provide an additional source of funding not subject to the Congressional appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, while the National Park Service has a long history of charging entrance fees, an existing collection infrastructure, and a higher level of development and service that the public expects, the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program has proved to be controversial and not cost effective for the USDA, Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service,

WHEREAS, the original intent of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program was to alleviate the backlog of deferred maintenance on public lands and to improve the public lands, public facilities, and visitor services; and

WHEREAS, the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program, after having been extended five times in the past eight years, has failed to materially resolve the backlog of deferred maintenance issues; and

WHEREAS, the fees imposed by the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program are being used to control and limit access to public lands; and

WHEREAS, legislation introduced in the 108th United States Congress (HR 3283) to make the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program permanent allows for the introduction of a costly national pass to access any part of the Public Domain regardless of the extent of development; and

WHEREAS, the concept of paying fees to access public lands is contrary to the notion that public lands belong to the American people as a whole and are places where everyone is granted access, a concept that has been and should remain in place; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the United States pay for the operation and maintenance of public lands through income taxes, the fees imposed by the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program are, in effect, an unwarranted double tax on all users of public lands; and

WHEREAS, the Back Country of America has a long history of striving to preserve access to Public lands for recreational equine use and has gone to great lengths to have recreational pack and saddle stock be recognized as an appropriate and historical use of wilderness; and
WHEREAS, the Back Country Horsemen of America has made public its opposition to user fees on Public lands;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Back Country Horsemen of America, having gone on record opposing curtailments of recreational equine use, or grazing incidental to that use simply because an area is, or has been designated as wilderness, opposes the extension or permanent adoption of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program in any form on the public lands managed by the USDA, Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Back Country Horsemen of America supports and encourages the full funding of the operation and maintenance of the public land of the United State through adequate Congressional appropriations.


Signed:

Steven J Didier
Chairman
Back Country Horsemen of America