Western Slope No-Fee Coalition

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Western Slope No-Fee Coalition Announces Rally and Toilet Paper Drive To Support Public Lands

Four corners-area Fee Demo opponents will rally in Durango’s Santa Rita Park on June 15 to show support for public lands that they claim is lacking in Congress.

A toilet paper drive will be held in conjunction with the rally. Donated rolls of toilet paper will be sent to Representative Jim Hansen (R-UT), chairman of the House Resources Committee. The rolls are intended to highlight Congress’s failure to provide funds for basic maintenance such as toilet cleaning and garbage collection, forcing the Forest Service and other federal land agencies to rely on entry fees to meet their day-to-day land management needs.

“Congress budgets millions of dollars to build new toilets, but only pennies to maintain them,” said Coalition co-founder Kitty Benzar. “We want the land managers to know that the people think they should have the tools they need to do their jobs. If Congress won’t supply them, the people will.”

The House Resources Committee is expected to hold hearings this summer to examine the Fee Demo program and consider making it permanent. Hansen was an original sponsor of Fee Demo and is one of its strongest supporters in Washington.

The June 15 rally is part of the National Day of Action, when anti-fee groups across the country will hold events to raise public awareness about the program. On the Front Range, opponents will gather to protest the fee area at Mt Evans, where the Forest Service charges a $10 toll to drive on State Highway 5 to the summit of the mountain.

In Durango, toilet paper donors can drop off their rolls at Santa Rita Park between 9 AM and noon. The rally will commence at 10 AM with speakers including State Representative Kay Alexander and State Senator Jim Isgar, who recently co-sponsored a successful resolution opposing Fee Demo in the Colorado legislature.

Originally a two-year test program, Fee Demo has been extended three times and is currently due to end in 2004 unless renewed by Congress.