



Indiana Land Guardian
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November 2023

Fact Sheet: A Summary of Senate Bill 2990: The Benjamin Harrison National Recreational Area and Wilderness Establishment Act of 2023

S.2990 is a bill proposed in the United States Senate, intended to establish the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area and Wilderness in Indiana. This bill, if enacted, would have a significant impact on land management and recreational activities in the state. Here's a summary of its key points:

1. **Establishment of Areas:** The bill proposes to create the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area and Wilderness within Indiana as a subunit of the Hoosier National Forest. This includes a National Recreation Area of approximately 29,382 acres and an addition to the Charles C. Deam Wilderness of about 15,300 acres.
2. **Administration and Management:**
 - The Wilderness addition will be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act, with certain exceptions for trails and roads.
 - The National Recreation Area management aims to protect diverse habitat, water quality, and promote recreational opportunities.
3. **Activities and Usage:**
 - Hunting, fishing, and trapping will generally be allowed, with potential restrictions for public safety, species management, or endangered species protection.
 - Recreational activities such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, and mountain biking will be permitted, with limitations for certain zones and periods for public safety and species management.
4. **Vegetation Management:**
 - In the Wilderness addition, timber removal or management is restricted except for public safety and disease management.



- Vegetation management in the National Recreation Area must align with the Management Plan and Forest Service land management plans.

5. Advisory Committee and Management Plan:

- An advisory committee will be established to advise on managing the National Recreation Area.
- A comprehensive management plan must be developed within five years of the Act's enactment.

6. Funding and Effect:

- No additional funds are authorized for this Act; it must be carried out using existing funds.
- The Act clarifies that it does not affect certain Corps of Engineers activities, the use of motor vessels on Monroe Lake, access to private land, and several other specific rights and operations.

7. Legal and Practical Implications:

- This Act, if passed, will have broad implications for land use, conservation, recreation, and local community engagement in Indiana.
- It aims to balance environmental protection with recreational access and land use, reflecting a collaborative approach to managing these natural resources.

This legislation is an example of how federal and state governments, along with local stakeholders, work together to manage public lands in a way that balances ecological conservation with public use and enjoyment.



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Fact Sheet: A Summary of Differences Between National Forests and National Recreation Areas

National Forests and National Recreation Areas (NRAs) in the United States, both overseen by federal agencies, serve distinct purposes and have different management objectives. Here's a comparison of their benefits and restrictions:

National Forests

Managed By: Primarily the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), part of the Department of Agriculture.

Purpose and Benefits:

1. **Resource Management:** Focus on the sustainable use and conservation of forest resources, including timber, wildlife, and water.
2. **Multiple Uses:** Support a variety of uses such as recreation, grazing, timber harvesting, and habitat conservation.
3. **Recreation:** Offer diverse recreational opportunities like hiking, camping, and fishing, but these are balanced with resource management goals.
4. **Conservation:** Include designated wilderness areas where land is more stringently protected from development.

Restrictions:

1. **Land Use:** While recreation is encouraged, it may be restricted in certain areas to protect resources or manage timber harvesting.
2. **Development Limitations:** Development and commercial activities are regulated to ensure sustainable resource use and environmental protection.



3. Timber Harvesting: Managed in a way that can include logging, subject to environmental impact assessments and sustainable practices.

National Recreation Areas

Managed By: Can be managed by various federal agencies, including the National Park Service (NPS) or the USFS, depending on the specific NRA.

Purpose and Benefits:

1. Recreational Focus: Primarily designated for recreational purposes, offering a wide range of activities like boating, fishing, hiking, and camping.
2. Accessibility and Facilities: Often have enhanced visitor facilities and services compared to National Forests, focusing on visitor experience.
3. Natural and Cultural Preservation: While recreation-focused, NRAs also aim to preserve significant natural and cultural features.

Restrictions:

1. Conservation Balance: Recreational activities are managed to ensure they do not harm the natural and cultural values of the area.
2. Limited Resource Exploitation: Generally, less emphasis on resource extraction (like logging) compared to National Forests.
3. Development Control: Infrastructure and development are controlled to maintain the area's natural character while supporting recreational activities.

Key Differences:

- Primary Objective: National Forests focus on a balance between resource management and recreation, while NRAs are primarily dedicated to recreation and public enjoyment.
- Resource Management: National Forests may allow more varied use of natural resources, including timber harvesting and grazing, under sustainable management practices. NRAs usually have stricter limitations on resource exploitation.



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- **Recreational Facilities and Services:** NRAs typically offer more developed recreational facilities and visitor services than National Forests, reflecting their recreation-centered mission.

In conclusion, National Forests and NRAs both play important roles in public land management in the United States but have different primary focuses. National Forests are multi-use lands with a strong emphasis on resource management, while NRAs are designated primarily for recreation and enjoyment, with a greater emphasis on preserving natural and cultural features.



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Senate Bill 2990, the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area and Wilderness Establishment Act of 2023 and Project 46

Senate Bill 2990, the Benjamin Harrison National Recreation Area and Wilderness Establishment Act of 2023, will contribute to carbon sequestration through the preservation and management of forested areas in the Hoosier National Forest (HNF). Here's how this relates to the goals of Project 46, which focuses on addressing climate change:

Expansion of Protected Forest Areas: S.2990 aims to designate approximately 15,300 acres to expand wilderness areas and about 29,382 acres for a National Recreation Area within the HNF. Forests are natural carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and storing it in biomass (trees and vegetation) and soil. By increasing the area of protected forest, S.2990 enhances the capacity of these lands to sequester carbon.

Management Consistent with USFS Land Management Plan: The bill requires that the new wilderness and recreation areas be managed in a way that promotes vegetation management consistent with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land management plan. Effective forest management can lead to healthier, more robust forests that are better at capturing and storing carbon.

Supporting Project 46's Climate Goals: Project 46 focuses on tracking and reporting greenhouse gas emissions, leveraging funding for climate initiatives, and promoting best practices for climate action. By preserving and managing forest areas, S.2990 supports these goals. Healthier, well-managed forests can play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas concentrations, thus contributing to the regional efforts of climate change mitigation as envisioned by Project 46.



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Benefits to Regional Climate Initiatives: While S.2990 does not explicitly target greenhouse gas emission reductions, the enhanced carbon sequestration resulting from this bill complements the objectives of Project 46. By maintaining and enhancing forested areas, the bill supports the broader regional efforts to mitigate climate change, which is a key focus of Project 46.

In summary, while Senate Bill 2990 and Project 46 operate independently, the environmental benefits of S.2990, particularly in terms of carbon sequestration through forest conservation and management, align well with the climate change mitigation goals of Project 46. By contributing to the health and resilience of Indiana's forests, S.2990 indirectly supports the objectives of Project 46 to combat climate change in the region.