



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

NOV 13 2015

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The National Park Service (NPS) is strongly opposed to H.R. 974, the Yellowstone and Grand Teton Paddling Act, which was reported from the House Natural Resources Committee on October 8, 2015. The bill requires the NPS to promulgate regulations to allow the use of hand-propelled vessels, at a minimum, on 50 specific river segments in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, as well as the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway. The bill would diminish the ability of park managers to meet their responsibilities under the NPS Organic Act and other laws to provide for public enjoyment, ensure visitor safety, and address adverse effects to resources at those units and also would set a poor precedent for the NPS.

The areas required to be opened to paddling by H.R. 974 represent some of the most intact, pristine landscapes in the contiguous United States and include rivers such as the Lamar, Yellowstone, and Gros Ventre. There may be no other scenic resource like this in the United States, and possibly the world, where visitors can experience large intact river systems and their environments in a wild, ecologically pristine state. These rivers are sensitive nesting and breeding grounds for wildlife, home to endemic and endangered species, spawning grounds for native cutthroat trout, and some of the last streams in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem for Arctic grayling. Opening these waterways will increase the risk of the transmission of aquatic invasive species like zebra and quagga mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, whirling disease and others.

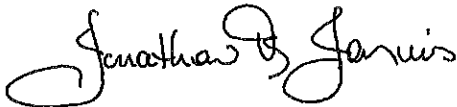
By mandating that the NPS allow paddling on these 50 waterways, the interests of a small group of recreational paddlers would be placed above those of all other Americans and above the protection of these fragile resources. The NPS has a statutory responsibility under the NPS Organic Act to ensure the protection in perpetuity of the fundamental values and resources for which Congress established these parks. By mandating that the NPS open these 50 waterways for the benefit of a very select few, Congress would undermine the ability of professional park managers and the public to determine how best to manage these special places.

Enjoyment of the national parks through a wide variety of appropriate recreational opportunities is a core part of the NPS mission, and one which we fully embrace. In addition to opportunities for hiking, photography, wildlife viewing, scenic touring, camping, bicycling, and many other activities, both Yellowstone and Grand Teton already offer many outstanding places for hand-propelled paddling. In Yellowstone, 163 of the 168 lakes in the park are open for boating and on

average over 2,000 permits are issued annually for non-motorized boating. In Grand Teton, over 60,000 people enjoy floating the iconic 26-mile segment of the Snake River along the Teton Range each year, and many more enjoy paddling on the lakes that are open to paddling, six of which are located entirely in the park's backcountry.

H.R. 974 would set a very poor precedent that would affect the ability of park superintendents to meet their statutory responsibilities to properly manage the use of our national park lands. The NPS believes strongly that the existing authority granted by Congress through the Organic Act is sufficient and appropriate for the proper management of these lands for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan B. Jarvis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director

cc: Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member