

Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation (SOAR) Act

Section by Section Summary

Section 1. Title

Section 2. Definitions

Section 3. Special Recreation Permit and Fee

Expands the authority to issue special recreation permits for outfitting, guiding, recreation events and other group recreational activities on federal lands and waters. Specifies how fees for permits should be calculated and how fee revenue may be used. Requires the agencies publish reports on the use of fee revenue.

Section 4. Permitting Process Improvements

Directs the agencies to simplify the special recreation permitting process. Directs the agencies to consider using programmatic reviews and developing additional categorical exclusions in the National Environmental Policy Act review process. Makes permit applications available online.

Section 5. Permit Flexibility

Allows permit holders to engage in new activities that are substantially similar to those authorized in their permit. Allows permit holders to voluntarily return unused service days. Directs the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to offer temporary permits that may be converted into a long-term permit.

Section 6. Permit Administration

Improves notification of where and when new permits are available. Requires agencies to respond within 60 days of receipt of an application for a special recreation permit.

Section 7. Permits for Multijurisdictional Trips

Authorizes the agencies to issue a single joint special recreation permit for recreation activities that cross multiple agency boundaries.

Section 8. Forest Service Permit Use Reviews

Modifies Forest Service rules regarding permit holder allocation reviews to make them more equitable. Waives allocation reviews for periods when non-use is due to circumstances beyond the permit holder's control.

Section 9. Liability

Allows special recreation permit holders to use liability release forms. Provides an exemption from the indemnification requirement for state or local government entities that are prohibited from providing indemnification.

Section 10. Cost Recovery

Establishes an exemption from cost recovery for the first 50 hours of work to process a special recreation permit application or monitor a special recreation permit authorization.

Section 11. Extension of Special Recreation Permits

Allows the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to grant an extension of an expired long-term special recreation if a permit holder has made a request for renewal but the agency requires additional time to complete the renewal request.