



washington dc update

S-303/ America's Great Outdoors Act of 2010

December 20, 2010

We have promised to keep the WESTCAS membership updated with regard to any attempt to pass a huge public lands omnibus bill. Some observers believed that the withdrawal of the 1,947 page FY11 Appropriations Omnibus last Thursday night pretty much signaled the end of this kind of legislation for the remainder of the 111th Congress.

But then on Friday, Senator Reid and Senator Boxer introduced S. 303, the "America's Great Outdoors Act of 2010." This 1,003 page bill currently includes 110 separate pieces of legislation. Three serious concerns have been raised with regard to this piece of legislation:

- Some of the bills included, such as the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Act could set a precedent for much greater intrusion of the Federal government into regulating watersheds.
- S. 303 could be used as a vehicle for other legislation, most especially S. 787, the "waters of the US" bill stuck at Committee level since summer, 2009.
- Many Members feel that it is simply inappropriate to introduce omnibus legislation that is over 1,000 pages long and give the Congress less than two days to study and debate the measure.

It would seem to us that with Christmas Eve looming that S. 303 doesn't have a good chance of passing. But in the "silly season" of a lame duck session, nothing is over till it's over. Stay tuned. If you share any of the three concerns listed above, this would be a good moment to contact your Senator.

If you would like to review a copy of S. 303 you can't do so by going to the Library of Congress web site. If you do, you will pull up a previous piece of legislation entitled "the Federal Financial Assistance Management Transparency Act of 2009." It seems that Senator Reid simply replaced the wording of this bill with his omnibus public lands bill. To access the public lands bill, go to:

http://www.eenews.net/assets/2010/12/17/document_daily_01.pdf

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