

While the U.S. Forest Service looks for private enterprise to help make ends meet at Mount St. Helens, Congress provides 80 percent of Mount Rainier's budgetary needs. Out of an annual budget of just over \$10 million, Ueberuaga said Congress provides all but about \$1.9 million.

In contrast, the \$2.25 million recreation budget at Mount St. Helens is supported roughly 50-50 by direct allocations from the Federal government and fees generated by visitors. Even with that, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest has had to jockey with other forests for a \$400,000 boost from the Forest Service's regional office in Portland this year and last.

"It makes it very difficult on Mount St. Helens to have a viable operation," Ueberuaga said.

For some, the proximity of Mount Rainier offers one tantalizing solution to the chronic funding woes at Mount St. Helens.

"I think the possibility of it being folded into the Park Service or redesignated as a national park has never been greater," said Sean Smith, regional director of the National Parks Conservation Association in Seattle.

A NEW NATIONAL PARK?

Mount Rainier and other national parks receive direct appropriations from Congress.

Mount St. Helens, on the other hand, receives its share of recreation funding only after it filters through three distinct layers of administrative overhead from national headquarters, through the regional office in Portland, and, finally, through the Gifford Pinchot forest headquarters in Vancouver. At each level, the monument must compete with other recreation programs operated by the Forest Service.

"That's what the park service doesn't have," said Cliff Ligons, monument manager at Mount St. Helens for the past 5 years.

Ligons added that the Forest Service had ample money and resources to operate in the years after Congress established the 110,000-acre monument in 1982.

Times have changed since then, beginning with a precipitous decline in timber revenue since the 1980s. Since the Forest Service opened the last of three visitor centers at Mount St. Helens in 1997, direct appropriations for recreation have dwindled.

"The money to fight wars and to fight terrorism comes from someplace, especially when you cut taxes," Ligons said. "Where do you think that's coming from? It comes from government programs. Mount St. Helens is one of many areas in the Forest Service that's currently struggling."

Ted Stubblefield, who retired as Gifford Pinchot forest supervisor in 1999, said Congress ought to establish a budget for national monuments such as Mount St. Helens as they do for national parks. He said it made sense for the Forest Service to hang onto Mount St. Helens once the monument was established, partly because national parks tend to employ more people with higher salaries.

"Our guess is it would have been somewhere between two to four times as expensive to operate it," he said.

Stubblefield and another former Gifford Pinchot forest supervisor, Bob Tokarczyk, blasted members of Washington's congressional delegation for failing to adequately fund the monument in a guest opinion piece published by *The Columbian* on Oct. 28. Although Stubblefield said the monument is suffering from budgetary neglect, he doesn't believe the solution is to simply fold it into the National Park Service.

Instead, he said the volcano should be treated less like a wayside and more like Mount Rainier, Liberty Island or Mount Rushmore.

"Congress should do the same thing with monuments that the Forest Service manages," he said. "The monuments are really owned by the public in a more deeply held manner, in my mind. They're like our national treasures."

BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES

Were it not for a new system of collecting fees on public lands authorized by Congress in 1997, the Mount St. Helens recreation program would have run out of money long ago.

The Forest Service collected about \$1.1 million in visitor fees for the volcano last year. Now, the agency is looking for more help from private enterprise.

In a 150-page prospectus issued last month, the Forest Service solicited proposals from private businesses willing to pay the government to operate helicopter tours, mobile food stands, RV sites, or other amenities around the erupting volcano. Forest Service officials said the outreach may help to improve the monument's bottom line, but it also would "broaden visitor opportunities" around Mount St. Helens.

"The government doesn't run gift shops," said Steve Nelson, recreation planner for the Gifford Pinchot.

Ueberuaga said Mount Rainier also has private concessions, including two overnight lodges, gift shops, a store for campers and three services providing guided climbs to the top of the 14,410-foot peak. He acknowledged, however, that people generally expect a national park to have a limited range of commercial opportunities.

"So there are no off-road vehicles at Mount Rainier, and yet on the forest there's appropriate places for that," he said.

Snowmobile tours are one of the potential opportunities suggested in the prospectus offered by the Forest Service at Mount St. Helens. Ueberuaga said he will be interested to see how the Forest Service strikes a balance between new recreational opportunities while protecting the unique environment surrounding the most active volcano in the Cascade Range.

"I think the Forest Service has a great opportunity there to demonstrate their recreation and visitor experience," he said. "They just need a little more funds to take some of the pressure off."

LEGISLATION TO MAKE SOUTH KOREA A VISA WAIVER PROGRAM COUNTRY

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2005

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, the Republic of Korea has long been a staunch ally and friend of the United States. In the last few years, South Koreans have been one of our strongest partners in the global war on terror. They have shown their commitment by supporting continued operations in Afghanistan. In line with the U.S. and Great Britain, South Korea committed the 3rd largest number of troops to support the efforts of our Armed Forces in Iraq. Korea has also adopted economic policies that have helped them become the world's eleventh largest economy, the United States' seventh largest trading partner, and the fifth largest market for United States agricultural products.

In recognition of this steadfast friendship and unique relationship our nation has with the Republic of Korea, I am introducing legis-

lation to make South Korea a Visa Waiver Program country. Under the Visa Waiver Program, a traveler to the United States, either for business or pleasure, can enter the country for up to ninety days without obtaining a visa. This courtesy has already been extended to United States citizens by the South Korean government. Currently, twenty-seven countries are on the visa waiver list, ranging from France and Japan to Brunei and Slovenia.

The United States is home to over two million people of Korean heritage. By placing South Korea on the Visa Waiver Program list, we would make it easier friends and family the opportunity to visit our country and strengthen relationships with their loved ones. Currently, if a friend or family member wants to visit someone in the U.S. they must apply for a visa at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, requiring travel to the capital city where the process often takes up to two weeks to complete. For many family and friends the process is too expensive and onerous to complete. Allowing the Republic of Korea into the waiver program will streamline this process, granting our South Korean friends the same opportunity to visit our country as people from our other allied nations.

Placing Korea on the visa waiver country list would have a positive impact on our economy. More than 626,000 Korean citizens visit the United States each year. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, overall tourism dollars spent in the U.S. by tourists from the Republic of Korea exceeded \$1 billion in fiscal year 2004. Visitation and tourism dollars are bound to grow if South Korea is allowed to be a part of the Visa Waiver Program.

To curb any potential abuses, the South Korean government is taking aggressive steps to comply with post 9/11 security requirements to combat visa fraud. South Korea has already invested in state of the art technology and currently issues secure machine readable passports with digitalized photographs that are difficult to counterfeit. By 2007, e-passports will be introduced with biometric identifiers in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization standards.

Economically, militarily and politically, the U.S. and South Korean share a vision of freedom and democracy that has made our nations solid friends and allies. In recognition of this friendship and our shared history, it is time to ease the restrictions Korean citizens encounter when they attempt to visit our nation, which has strong cultural ties to the people of Korea.

IN RECOGNITION OF ALL VETERANS WHO HAVE SERVED

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2005

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, this week we honor our Nation's veterans—not just the thousands who have risked their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the millions more who over the years have answered the call to arms and served as a member of the United States Armed Forces.

Since the founding of this Nation, Americans have battled courageously to protect the helpless, defeat despots and spread the cause of freedom to every corner of the globe. Most of