

LAW MATTERS

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If half of what we read hear and is forecast, sequestration will inevitably affect most Airstream life styles. I would urge all members to pay attention to your surrounding areas both National and State, how this may affect your future plans, and any Wally Byam rallies or caravans. Items I have read include the delay of opening both the north and south rim of the **Grand Canyon** and reducing operating hours of their visitor centers, reducing education programs in many parks, closing half of the visitor centers on the **Blue Ridge Parkway**, closing one visitor center on **Mt. Rainer**, and delaying the opening of the **Going to The Sun Road in Glacier National Park**. Campgrounds will be closed in **The Great Smoky National Park**, and a visitor center in the **Grand Tetons**.

Curtailing the National Park services means the concessioners will also suffer. With fewer visitors, services will be reduced. Not only does this affect the park concessioners, but also the services surrounding the parks like motels, restaurants, and service stations.

In other news, our national parks have historically chosen to stay off of the digital grid, being instead a last outpost of ringtone free human solitude. For better or worse, that may soon change as telecommunication companies and park visitors put pressure on the park system to make digital reception possible. Among the arguments for the access is that young people might not visit a park without that accessibility. This then would be a necessary step into the new world and new technology.

Accesses to National Forests are also being curtailed. Part of the cause is the fires that occurred in 2012. The Forest Service has spent so much money fighting the fires that money is not available to repair and maintain roads. A second reason given by the Forest Service is that not having people on some of these roads actually prevents forest fires.

The RV Business has endorsed the nomination of Sally Jewell as the new secretary of the Interior. She is the current CEO of R.E.I. RV Business believes her experience through R.E.I. and the recreation industry makes her uniquely qualified

Has anyone noticed the rise in the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel? I read that the cause is refinery maintenance and rising crude costs because of a larger demand world-wide. But facts show we are paying less per gallon now than we were a year ago. The department of energy has predicted the cost per gallon of regular gas this year to be \$3.44, and \$3.34 in 2014.

In 2009, all domestic pick up truck manufacturers agreed to a set of specifications, SAE J2807 to evaluate a trucks towing ability. But it is not the tests shown in the TV ads. At this point only Toyota has followed the guidelines of the standard. The other big three manufacturers use their own standards which could cause some safety problems when towing larger and heavier loads.

Canadian parks also feel the shortage of funds. They are discussing fee hikes for national parks and historical sites at the same time they are discussing reduced services because the \$55 million dollar proposed budget cuts, will cause the loss of up to 600 jobs in the park service. Patrons of the parks and sites have created a backlash that has caused the park service to reassess the hike.

Arizona State Parks have not received money from the general fund since 2009, and currently works off a \$19.5 million budget. Officials say the state parks have about \$200 million in capital needs. Estimates indicate the parks are responsible for 3,000 direct jobs and generate about \$2 million in revenue.

Four Texas park areas remain closed and undeveloped because park officials do not have the money to open them. The Legislature has not given money to develop new parks in over ten years. An additional 20 parks may have to close unless the Texas Legislature approves \$18.9 million in additional funding. Hurricane Ike nearly wiped out two Texas beachfront parks around Galveston and Sabine Pass. Last years fires have damaged some parks. The proposed budget is estimated to be about \$4.1 million short of the minimum to keep all 91 parks open.

A special agreement in **California**, AB 1478 Match program, will aid 10 California State Parks. \$10 million was appropriated to the parks

department to be used for matching funds by donors to keep the parks open. The multi-million dollar “hidden fund” in California continues in the news. At first no prosecution was expected as there did not appear to be any criminal violations. But now the prosecuting attorney’s office has decided to re-investigate the situation to see if there were indeed criminal violations. In a separate case concerning the park department’s personnel, the deputy director of administrative services has agreed to pay a \$7,000 fine for authorizing an illegal vacation buyout program.

Minnesota state parks are replacing gas guzzling vehicles with electric carts, installing solar panels on buildings and visitor centers and rehabbing old buildings to reduce their carbon footprint. Besides reducing emissions, the proposals will result in an estimated annual savings of \$800,000.

The **Missouri** problem of buying an RV across the border and not paying local sales tax is working through the state legislature even though the governor vetoed the original bill. This political battle will continue, again.

In the **St. James Parish of Louisiana** the city council ordered a moratorium on building RV campgrounds and parks after denying a permit because it did not meet mobile home requirements. The city council will change the language to include overnight RV parks and campgrounds

North Dakota is still struggling with the influx of RVs associated with the recent boom to the economy. As cities grow, they annex formerly country areas that include RV parks. Many towns have ordinances preventing residents from living in RV’s within the city limits. So park owners ask their RV people to move rather than pay possible fines.