

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Opening Statement

**Ranking Member Brenda Lawrence (MI-14)**

**Subcommittee on the Interior**

***Examining the Future of Recreation.gov***

**May 24, 2016**

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for holding this important hearing.

Today, we will discuss the future of Recreation-dot-GOV—a trip-planning, reservation, and information sharing platform for the nation's parks and recreational opportunities. The website is managed by the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service on behalf of 12 participating agencies.

Today's discussion would not be possible to have without acknowledging the Information Technology initiatives and goals of the current Administration.

In 2014, in an effort to deliver a customer-focused government through smarter Information Technology, President Obama created the U.S. Digital Services, which in turn produced what is known as the U.S. Digital Services Playbook.

This document—included as an attachment to the newly awarded Recreation-dot-GOV contract—is comprised of 13 key strategies, or “plays,” drawn from successful practices in the public and private sectors that will help government build effective online services.

All of the Administration's “plays” are part of the new Recreation-dot-GOV contract, and are intended to promote an understanding of what people need, using data to drive business decisions, and to ensure that the technologies powering the website are using modern, secure technology.

Chief among those “plays” is the concept of making sure the Recreation-dot-GOV sources of data follows the goal of making the data widely available to the public and private industry.

Even beyond the Digital Services Playbook, the Administration has a guiding principle that government agencies must make more government-generated data open to the public and to private industry.

According to the Administration, providing easy access to government data delivers more efficient and effective services to the public, and contributes to economic growth by fueling entrepreneurship and innovation.

There are numerous examples of private companies that now use open-government data in the products and services they provide, including websites like AccuWeather, Foursquare, and Zillow.

As the U.S. Forest Service prepares for the future of Recreation-dot-GOV, it is clear that the agency recognized the benefits that the Administration's Digital Service's Playbook and open data policies could bring to the nation's centralized information source for recreational opportunities on federal lands.

I remain hopeful that the next contractor will embrace these principles, and the future of Recreation-dot-GOV will offer opportunity for all stakeholders.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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