

EXAMINING THE FUTURE OF RECREATION.GOV

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE INTERIOR
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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EXAMINING THE FUTURE OF RECREATION.GOV

Tuesday, May 24, 2016

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:54 p.m., in Room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Cynthia Lummis [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Lummis, Gosar, Buck, and Lawrence.

Mrs. LUMMIS. The Subcommittee on the Interior will come to order. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

Good afternoon. Thanks for your patience with our voting schedule today, which always seems to crop up when we have a hearing scheduled. Today, we are going to be examining the future of Recreation.gov.

Now, launched under President George W. Bush, the Recreation Web portal was created to make it easier for citizens and agencies to access recreational services, whether under the National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or one of nearly a dozen other Federal agencies.

Today, Recreation.gov serves as the booking portal for reservations at 60,000 facilities and activities on Federal lands, including national parks and forests, wildlife refuges, waterways, and recreation areas. This portal is a key hub for park visitors and concessionaires.

For the past 10 years, Recreation.gov has maintained exclusive control over real-time reservation data. Real-time reservation data is the information that a park, cabin, or tour, for example, has been booked by someone. This information is important when there are multiple booking sites so that no one facility or activity is booked by two different people.

Multiple reservation sites need real-time reservation data-sharing, but the only place to reserve a facility or activity has been the Recreation.gov Web site. This exclusive model would appear to be contrary to recent business trends that promote open data-sharing and competition. The competition for customers between these sites benefits the consumer.

This is the final year of the 10-year Web site management contract for Recreation.gov. In 2014, the Forest Service released the first draft of a request for proposals for the Recreation.gov management contract. After numerous comments, congressional letters,

and even some media coverage, the government extended the comment period twice and even called for an industry day to bring together stakeholders for a productive discussion.

Initial concerns with the request for proposals revolved around open data requirements and third-party commission language that could eventually make its way into the vendor contract. Though President Obama's administration has placed a priority on open data, some felt the language in the early drafts of the RFP were not strong enough to encourage the open sharing of data that could promote a healthy competition among reservation sites.

The government was responsive to these concerns and did make some changes to these areas in successive drafts and the final solicitation, but some ambiguity remained. The government awarded the new Recreation.gov contract on Friday, May 13, to Booz Allen Hamilton.

I have some questions, and it relates to my time in State government, and I will tell you my story. Wyoming entered into a contract with a big-name company to create a statewide platform to conduct a wide variety of transactions from government permits to driver's license renewals to event reservations. The State chose a big-name company, but they did not have a lot of experience in the field of creating these platforms. And later, the contract was canceled, there was a big dispute, we had no platform. It was a mess. And so I hope we are not traveling down this same road here.

Today, we hope to examine the future of Recreation.gov. In the context of the new vendor contract just awarded, we anticipate an open discussion about some of the challenges the Web site has faced over the past 10 years and how the government plans on addressing these issues moving forward. We also plan to explore some of the ways the Forest Service and Park Service will use this updated site to get more visits to our Federal lands.

Mrs. LUMMIS. With that, I would like to thank the witnesses in advance for their testimony.

I now recognize Mrs. Lawrence, ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Interior, for her opening statement.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Madam Chairman, thank you for holding this meeting.

Today, we will discuss the future of Recreation.gov, a trip-planning reservation and information-sharing platform. The national park and recreational opportunity Web site is managed by the Department of Agriculture Forest Service on behalf of 12 participating agencies.

Today's discussion will not be possible to have without acknowledging the information technology initiatives and goals of the current administration. In 2014, in an effort to develop a customer-focused government through smarter information technology, President Obama created the U.S. Digital Services, which in turn produces what is known as the U.S. Digital Services Playbook.

This document, included as an attachment to the newly awarded Recreation.gov contract, is comprised of 13 key strategies or plays drawn from successful practices in the public and private sectors that would help government build effective online services. All of the administration plays are part of the new Recreation.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 Web site are using modern secure technologies. Chief among those plays is the concept of making sure Recreation.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 the 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 Web sites like AccuWeather, Foursquare, and Zillow.

As the U.S. Forest Service prepares for the future of Recreation.gov, it is clear that the agency recognizes the benefits that the administration's Digital Services 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 in the future of Recreation.gov and will offer opportunities for all stakeholders.

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

Mrs. LUMMIS. I thank the ranking member.

I will hold the record open for 5 legislative days for any member who would like to submit a written statement.

I will now recognize our panel of witnesses. I am pleased to welcome Mr. Joe Meade, director of Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources of the National Forest System; and Mr. Rick DeLappe, program manager of Recreation One-Stop at the U.S. Forest Service. We welcome you both.

Pursuant to committee rules, witnesses will be sworn in before they testify. Now, I understand, Mr. Meade, that you will be providing testimony and Mr. DeLappe responding to questions —

Mr. MEADE. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. LUMMIS.—am I correct? Very good.

If you would please rise and raise your right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mrs. LUMMIS. Thank you. Please be seated. Let the record reflect that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Now, in order to allow time for discussion, please limit your oral testimony to 5 minutes, and your entire statement will be made part of the record.

Mr. Meade, welcome. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JOE MEADE

Mr. MEADE. Thank you. Chairman Lummis, Ranking Member Lawrence, and members of the committee, it truly is an honor to be able to be here today to be able to highlight for you our Recreation.gov Recreation One-Stop programs, and I also I want to personally thank you for your context that you have set up in your opening remarks this morning—or this afternoon as well.

I'm Joe Meade. As you noted, I'm the director for Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources with the U.S. Forest Service and help to oversee the contractual process for a number of agencies with our Recreation.gov contract that's now underway.

As was noted, joining me shortly also will be Rick DeLappe, our program manager for Recreation One-Stop and as we move into our question-and-answer dialogue.

As you know, our nation Federal—our nation's Federal lands and waters holds a rich legacy for our nation, a rich heritage. From our iconic national parks that enculturate and curate our nation's history, our culture, and our most precious landscapes to our system of wildlife refuges that ensure that migratory water fowl have the ability to stretch across the continent and conserve their habitat to the landscape conservation units of the Bureau of Land Management that help steward these special places to our nation's waterways under the stewardship of the Army Corps of Engineers, which, by the way, is our largest provider of outdoor recreation in the Nation, and of course the multiple-use and community benefits of our standing nation's national forests, a rich legacy that we have.

And in fact, in 2012, outdoor recreation has paid more than 1 billion visits to our nation's public lands and waters, a very important statistic, spending more than \$51 billion and stimulating local economies and supporting almost 900,000 jobs, a very important contribution to the Nation's GDP.

Alongside our service providers, our partners, and our volunteers, this is an array of outdoor recreation opportunities that's unparalleled across the world. It is truly a precious resource, a precious asset that we have here in our nation.

Think about downhill skiing or whitewater rafting to lodging or staying in a historic fire lookout, a visit to one of our iconic national parks, one of our unique wildlife refuges, or maybe it is just a hike on one of our nation's historic or scenic trails or a stroll down the mall, you know, these are all opportunities and benefits that we have afforded to us in this rich legacy.

For the Forest Service, today, outdoor experiences are the most important contribution we bring to our nation's GDP generating over \$13 billion and generating more than 200,000 jobs. Today, that's actually tripled that of some of our traditional multiple uses as an agency. So we're an agency in transformation as we lean into and value how it is that our citizens connect with us for those outdoor experiences that they look to connect through as they enjoy their nation's national forests.

Today, our top leadership is placing a high priority around this connection to our communities. We're modernizing our recreation special-uses program so that rather than regulating use, we're enhancing and inviting visitor services through our service providers. We're focusing on enhancing our connection with communities through stewardship and volunteers, leveraging individuals' ability to share in that stewardship of their public lands.

We're focused on being responsive to the changing demographics in our nation to help be relevant to this next generation, and we're focused on really advancing technological contributions and connection in this digital age that we live.

So as I conclude, let me highlight the future in front of us in today's topic for the hearing today, and that's with Recreation One-Stop. Imagine with me if you will digging your toes in the sand as the sunset is going down from your beach, say, on the Oregon coast. Now, imagine while you're enjoying this incredible moment in time, this experience, you're able to pick up your smart device and be able to check on your Recreation.gov account, upload your favorite pictures of the day, those fun family shots that you were able to take. Rate your experience at the campground. Was it a good day, was it a—what was it like? Or maybe even make that reservation for the next recreation event or activity that you want to go do.

This is truly a new era for Recreation.gov, and that's really where today we're positioning this technology to continue to serve a great asset to the customers and citizens we serve.

So a contemporary platform, that, is designed to focus on the user experience first, fostering a delightful and intuitive experience, not a bureaucratic one, designed to be agile, working closely with our developers to be sure that it's designed to be responsive in the moment in time and fostering a dynamic platform that continues to change into the future as we see changes in technology, service, and interest, designed as open data, again, taking advantage of modern—the activity today such as our application programming interfaces to ensure that we can connect with third-party interests and really leverage the bout of energy and interest that we have in outdoor activity.

Designed with an important geo-facial features as well, which those of us would go out without our GPS loaded in our car to be able to have that digital connection in our trip planning, and again, designed with very important, robust security components within it. Over the past decade, we've enjoyed a very secure platform and we really continue to have that level of security designed into the system into the future.

So with that, I'd like to again welcome Rick DeLappe, our program manager, to assist me in answering any questions that you may have, as is appropriate. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Meade follows:]

**STATEMENTS OF
JOE MEADE, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION, HERITAGE, AND VOLUNTEER
RESOURCES, NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM
AND
RICK DELAPPE, PROGRAM MANAGER, RECREATION ONE STOP
FOREST SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BEFORE THE
INTERIOR SUBCOMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
REGARDING
THE FUTURE OF RECREATION.GOV
May 24, 2016**

Chair Lummis and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide information the future of Recreation.gov. We are honored to speak before you today on how this program supports the mission of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (Forest Service) and other federal agencies in delivering outstanding outdoor recreation services to the American people. We are Joe Meade, Director of Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources, National Forest System and Rick DeLappe, Recreation One Stop Program Manager.

Now, more than ever, federal agencies must connect with urban, suburban, and rural populations and encourage outdoor stewardship and remain relevant in our ever-changing world. We know the benefits of outdoor recreational experiences on physical and mental health. We know the demand for access to outdoor settings and outdoor recreational experiences are increasing at a rapid pace, and we know that federal land and water management agencies, assisted by partners and service providers, host the largest and most diverse array of outdoor recreation opportunities in the world.

Outdoor recreation is an essential part of our American culture. Thousands of rural and urban communities benefit from recreation on federal lands. When Americans play outside during outings or overnight trips, their spending directly supports outdoor-oriented industries such as outfitting and guiding, lodging, and concessions, many of which are small businesses, and many more. In 2012, outdoor recreationists made more than 938 million visits to federal lands and waterways, spending \$51 billion and supporting 880,000 jobs. Many of these jobs are located in rural communities and are associated with numerous outdoor industries and small businesses. For the Forest Service, outdoor recreational experiences are the single largest contribution to the

gross domestic product and local economies, generating over 13 billion dollars in revenue and supporting approximately 205,000 jobs.

The federal lands and waters reservation system, Recreation One Stop, and the interagency website Recreation.gov are critical components of providing these services.

Background on Recreation One Stop

Recreation One Stop (RIS) is an interagency partnership among federal agencies to provide reservation services, sharable data, and recreation trip-planning tools for federal lands and waters across the United States. RIS was created as one of the Quicksilver e-government initiatives under the Bush administration in 2002 with the primary goal of reducing redundancy by combining the online reservation services of the Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Park Service.

At that time, the program was focused primarily on providing advanced reservations through the Recreation.gov website for developed campgrounds and tickets for a few locations such as the Washington Monument and Mammoth Cave. RIS also provided a rudimentary data-sharing tool, which allowed third parties access to a single bulk download of all recreation data. The software design, provided by contracted services, was simple and easily supported these activities. Since its inception in 2002, the program has changed and grown significantly.

Today, millions of visitors use Recreation.gov to plan, reserve, and share their federal land recreational experiences in national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and national waterways. In 2015, there were more than 22.3 million sessions, 12 million visitors, and 220 million page views to Recreation.gov, which represents a 31 percent increase in visitation over 2014. Currently, Recreation.gov hosts more than 3,200 individual facilities, with more than 90,000 campsites, 12 ticketed tours or events, and 26 high-demand locations accessed by permit or lottery.

The Recreation.gov contract provides for comprehensive web services, database management, and customer support. RIS program manager works closely with the contractor to deliver the entire suite of services. Recreation.gov hosts a range of sites that allow visitors to reserve a campsite, secure a whitewater rafting permit, schedule a ranger-led cave tour, or reserve their spot on a boat tour. They can use the Build a Trip tool to map a route for their next trip and then see dozens of federal recreation options along the way. If they need help, call center agents offer assistance over the telephone, through live chat, or by e-mail.

Contractor-furnished infrastructure for Recreation.gov also includes:

- a complex security system for protecting personally identifiable information and processing payment card industry-certified financial transactions;
- customer support across six time zones;
- training and business reporting;
- web-based field management tools and internal support for over 500 field locations;
- maintenance of a complex and dynamic data platform;

- on-the-ground implementation support for dozens of new facilities each year; and
- marketing and communications to promote outdoor recreation.

The agencies that use RIS reservation services through Recreation.gov are the Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and the National Archives and Records Administration. Collectively, the 5-year average annual return for these agencies in recreation fees collected through Recreation.gov is \$90.5 million, as shown in the table below. These fees are used to provide visitor services and improve the visitor experience at recreation sites.

Agency	Reservation Fees Returned to Agencies Annually (5-year average, in \$)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	67,444
National Park Service	17,567,369
Bureau of Land Management	331,992
Bureau of Reclamation	496,590
Forest Service	33,582,946
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	38,451,628*

*The fees collected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are returned to the General Treasury, not the agency.

Recreation.gov and the Recreation Information Database (RIDB)

Recreation.gov is a trip planning and reservation service portal. Information about specific facilities and activities that can be reserved in advance, including information about the site such as driveway length, electric hookup information, and other amenities such as fire pits and picnic tables, is collected directly on the website and input into the reservation database by the contractor. .

In contrast, RIDB was created in the late 1990s as a stand-alone database capable of sharing data with anyone who wanted access to federal recreation data for any purpose. RIDB does not contain any personally identifiable information. The information in RIDB is populated both manually and through the use of automated web services by the participating agencies. RIDB contains over 120,000 recreation area records for 12 different government agencies. Each agency assigns data stewards to ensure its data are updated and correct. The type of data available in RIDB includes facility type, detailed descriptions, mapping coordinates, address, and, depending on the type of site, details such as maximum occupancy, event details, and permit type. We also require strict security measures to ensure the data are protected and maintain their integrity.

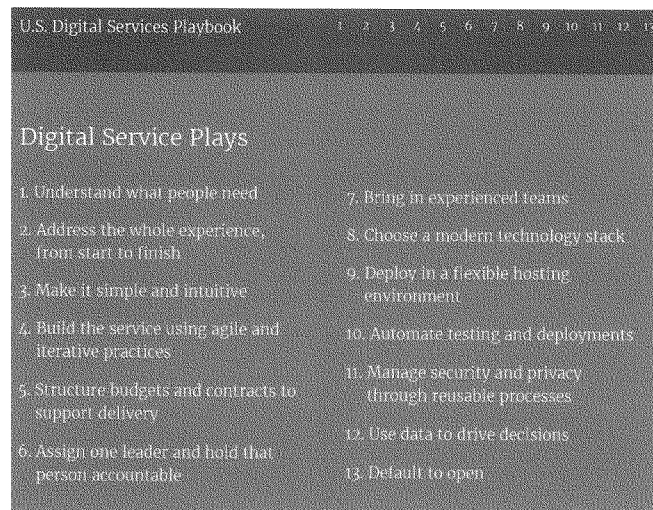
With award of a 10-year contract to Reserve America (now ACTIVE Network) in 2006, oversight of both programs, Recreation.gov and RIDB, was consolidated under the RIS Program. To provide more comprehensive recreation information to those making reservations, the information from RIDB was also included in Recreation.gov.

As data demands increased, the RIDB data-sharing tools needed to be updated. In response, RIS upgraded its data-sharing capability to the industry standard and launched a Representational State Transfer application programming interface (RESTful API) in March 2015, providing the latest recreation data through machine-readable formats. To date, RIDB has received over 1.4 million API requests since that technology was made available.

Lessons Learned and Future Plans

The efforts — both successes and challenges — to build and implement RIS have provided valuable lessons that shape the way forward. What began as an online camping reservation tool has grown into a valued modern and comprehensive travel planning and recreation reservation service. Recreation.gov now provides services for a variety of recreational activities, all of which require different business rules and software solutions. The current platform was designed in the late 1990s as a campground reservation service. Over the years, it has adapted to accommodate new facility types and expanded as demand has increased. As we look to a new era of services, we recognize the need to continually innovate as technology evolves and to be nimble enough to meet public expectations for online services.

RIS has adopted the principles of the U.S. Digital Service’s Playbook to keep pace with technology and to meet visitor expectations and needs. RIS consulted with U.S. Digital Services representatives in developing the RIS Request for Proposals, which helped RIS stay true to tenets described in the Playbook. As stated by the U.S. Digital Services: “We created a playbook of 13 key ‘plays’ drawn from successful practices from the private sector and government that, if followed together, will help government build effective digital services.”



Rather than prescribing solutions that are likely to change over time, we have required outcomes — which generally remain the same throughout the life of a contract — to provide the public with an easy-to-use and enjoyable experience. We let the vendor choose the appropriate technology to succeed. As technology changes and public expectations evolve, so does the solution.

End-user feedback from all types of stakeholders will drive design, navigation, and system functionality. Agile development processes will allow the government to work side-by-side with those writing the code so that solutions can be tested and deployed continuously and large-scale failures can be avoided. Our default position will be to ensure recreation data are as open and available as possible for many different types of uses and can fuel innovation and entrepreneurship.

The R1S reservation service contract was awarded with a Contract Line Item Number (CLIN) commission/payment structure, where the contractor earns a payment based on each reservation transaction. The payment schedule varies based on what is reserved and which sales channel is used. Industry standards establish variation in pricing based on customer convenience. For example, call center CLINs are typically more expensive than web-based CLINs.

The Forest Service financial management office sets aside funds collected for each reservation to pay a monthly invoice for the Contract Line Item CLINs.

Several agencies have built the cost of the reservation contract CLIN into their nightly fees for camping and ticket prices. The Forest Service and BLM cover these costs by charging a non-refundable reservation fee separate from the actual site fee.

Our experience over the past 10 years has reinforced the importance of listening to our customers and continually innovating and updating. At the heart of the new system is an absolute priority on the user experience. Every design element, every aspect of functionality, all of the navigational features, the various workflows, are designed to create a simple, intuitive experience. One of the keys to creating a user-centric experience is to include users in the design and development of the solution. From the family planner to the campground manager to the leader of a land management agency, we will rely on these user perspectives to create a system that works well at every level.

On day one of the new contract, we will embark on an agile development process. Private sector best practices focus on continuous improvement, flexibility, user input and quality product delivery. This approach will produce an infrastructure that can more easily adapt to emerging technology and a service platform that meets the needs of visitors today and in the future.

Interaction with Third-Party Sites

In today's online world, there are many sources that provide information about recreation destinations and activities. Data-sharing allows real-time data from one site to display on many other relevant sites. Through the use of API, we are able to share data with different providers so

that the public can interact with federal recreation information from a variety of interfaces. We will seek opportunities to provide sharing services that expand the reach of our recreation programs and encourage more people to get outdoors. Entrepreneurs will have access to data that allow them to create new tools to reach users in a dynamic, mobile-friendly environment.

Concessions

There are 71 concessionaires operating 1,107 campgrounds with reservable inventory in Recreation.gov. In 2015, \$26.3 million was distributed to these concessionaires for the customer services they provide.

Federal concessionaires have access to a full range of data associated with the campgrounds they operate and the guests who make reservations for these campgrounds. This information is included in daily arrival reports identifying reservation holder information. This information is not shared outside of the program or with other concessionaires and is releasable to the extent allowed by law.

Providing the public with a full menu of travel planning choices is a primary goal. We recognize that everyone does not want to camp and that finding lodging information is critical to planning a trip. We also recognize that there are many activities on federal lands that would not be possible for an average visitor without the services of authorized outfitters and guides. We will be incorporating these services into the design and navigation planning so that visitors will be able to find all kinds of federally managed and concession-supported activities and facilities in the future.

Data Security

Protecting the privacy of our visitor's information is one of our top priorities. The RIS contractor must comply with all requirements of the Federal Information Security Management Act, the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP), Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 199, and the Federal Information System Controls Audit Manual, as applicable, throughout the contract term. Because the system is owned by the contractor, authorization to operate from the federal government is also required under FIPS 199. Because the data system is cloud-based, the system and hosting environment must comply with all FedRAMP Moderate Requirements. All credit card processing must comply with the highest level of payment card industry data security standards.

In addition, the contractor and all subcontractors must report any breach or potential breach of data and information, including network or asset breaches and loss of control, compromise, unauthorized disclosure, unauthorized acquisition, and unauthorized access of data, to the Contracting Officer and the Contracting Officer's Representative within 30 minutes of becoming aware of the breach or potential breach, regardless of the time or day of the week.

Conclusion

The Forest Service is focusing on strengthening connections with the public through outdoor recreational experiences. The agency has initiated a national effort to modernize its recreation concession program, enhance community service and volunteer programs, increase the diversity of visitors to the National Forest System, and implement technological innovations to provide even better public service. RIS is a key initiative for all federal land and water management agencies to provide the latest information and inspiration to a new generation of visitors wherever they are, whether they are on their smart phones and tablets, in their home, or on the road.

We would like to thank this subcommittee for its support of RIS, which is critical to the missions of the Forest Service and other federal land and water management agencies in providing outdoor recreational experiences to the American public. We would be happy to answer any questions you have at the appropriate time.

Mrs. LUMMIS. I thank the gentleman for his testimony. And we will now begin questions.

And Mrs. Lawrence, who is the ranking member of this committee, has another commitment and so I am going to recognize her first for 5 minutes. And, Mrs. Lawrence, please direct your questions to Mr. DeLappe.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. DeLappe, do you see outside expertise from places like the U.S. Digital Services when we talk about jumping to Play 7, title "Bring in Experienced Teams," do you seek outside expertise?

Mr. DELAPPE. Thank you for the question. Absolutely we do seek outside expertise. We worked with the U.S. Digital Service in crafting language for the RFP to help us to find requirements that would deliver modern technology. We also—it ties in with Play 1 as well, that we seek out end-user guidance so that you're—we're building a system that meets not only our needs but first and foremost meets the needs of the public and the visitors that are using is.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. The new Recreation.gov contract states, "Whenever applicable, the contractor shall embrace the principles and practices defined in the U.S. Digital Services Playbook." And it continues with all 13 priorities of the U.S. Digital Services Playbook applied to this program. Several principles directly reflect areas of specific emphasis on the R1S support services procurement. So my question to you is Play 1 is titled "Understand What People Need."

So, Mr. DeLappe, when the contract was being developed did you seek public and private industry input to understand the needs?

Mr. DELAPPE. Yes, absolutely we did. We—when we began thinking about creating an RFP for a follow-on contract, we started thinking about it back in 2011, and we began with 10 different touch points with the public, including industry days and private sessions with various vendors, and responding to their inquiries. So for 3 years we've worked —

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Three years?

Mr. DELAPPE.—the public to identify what they were looking for and also worked with the vending community to look for new technologies and new approaches to help deliver that new experience.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Is this the first Forest Service's contract to incorporate the principles from the Digital Services Playbook?

Mr. DELAPPE. To the best of knowledge, yes, it is.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Okay. Well, thank you. I'm going to—I did imagine myself being in a national park and dipping my toes in the water. That was a good place to go today. I just want you to know that the technology piece is critical as we want to bring more people into our national parks and to our amazing reserves in this country and wildlife. And so incorporating this and as we continue to ensure all the principles of good procurement and contracting, this is absolutely going in the right direction. I thank you.

Mr. DELAPPE. Thank you.

Mrs. LUMMIS. The gentlelady yields back and —

Mrs. LAWRENCE. I yield back.

Mrs. LUMMIS. And I thank you very much —

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Thank you.

Mrs. LUMMIS.—for your remarks.

I now recognize myself for as much time as I wish to consume. How is that?

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. As I mentioned in my opening statement, when I was in State government we had tried to design a highly tailored product to provide customer service to all kinds of Wyoming users to save them from standing in lines in public when it would be just as easy for them to do things at home on their time schedule. And I assume that is true as well with preparing for a trip to our great national treasures for you.

What we did wrong when we did this is we chose not to look at what off-the-shelf products were available. We went with something that was specifically designed and tailored towards what we wanted. We, through an RFP process, retained a very large company with a good reputation but not necessarily a reputation to build these unique portals. It was a disaster. And when I look at all of the travel sites out there that are extremely successful that are allowing people to do comparison shopping, availability shopping, and have the kind of data available that makes multiple Web sites even provide alternatives, gee, if this campsite is booked, there is a campsite, you know, just 60 miles away that you could get a reservation at. You know, so you get all this information. They are marvelous and they are already made.

So my question is, is this product that Booz Hamilton has been retained to produce a custom product with custom software or is it going to borrow from already-proven software out there?

Mr. MEADE. Would you like to —

Mr. DELAPPE. Sure. So in our request for proposals—well, let me step back. As we began researching the new technology that we would need to bring Recreation.gov into the future, we recognized that there was a lot of new technology and a lot of companies that perhaps did not provide the full-scale service all—unto themselves. And we wanted to broaden the competition and be exposed to more opportunities to embrace those different types of technology. We encourage teaming between different vendors so they can bring best-of-breed together to provide that service.

This solution that we have awarded to is very much custom-built from Booz Allen Hamilton. It—but it—it's a little bit different than what we have seen in the past. So what they've proposed is kind of an API, application programming interface-centric platform that allows—really allows them and us to add and change technology along the way because one of the key goals of this is to be able to keep up with technology throughout the life of a contract. As we know, technology changes so quickly that the solution of today may not be—meet the expectations of people a year or 2 years from now. So want a very flexible system, and what they have provided us does appear to provide that to the government.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Is this a 10-year contract?

Mr. DELAPPE. It's a 5-year base with five 1-year award terms that they can earn through, you know, quality performance throughout the years.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Specialized software frequently calls for specialized in-house maintenance and augmentation. Is that going to be—at a very high price. Is that also part of this?

Mr. DELAPPE. If I understand the question correctly that we would anticipate developing the program continuously throughout the life of the contract, including providing maintenance and adding new functionality, configuring existing functionality so that we can provide the broadest range of services to the agencies.

Mrs. LUMMIS. What sort of off-the-shelf products or existing technologies were part of the RFP process that you chose against because they didn't have features that you were looking for? You don't have to name companies —

Mr. DELAPPE. Yes.

Mrs. LUMMIS.—that didn't get the bid, but I am just curious about were there sort of off-the-shelf products that could be easily adapted but they didn't have applications that you want?

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay. First—I guess I should note that—so the award was—we announced the award on May 13, and we did receive a protest in GAO yesterday.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Okay.

Mr. DELAPPE. And if I could just refer with my contracting officer representative to make sure I don't cross that line.

Mrs. LUMMIS. I understand. I have been in your shoes.

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay.

Mrs. LUMMIS. I was State treasurer and bid out all kinds of investment management services, and I had the same thing happen to me so I know where you are coming from.

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay.

Mr. MEADE. And if I might, as Rick is concurring—conferring for some insight and advice, I'd like to also kind of offer a frame from our program leadership perspective. As I tried to note in some of my opening remarks and as you'll see in our written testimony, we've been able to very much rely on innovation and insight in technology and application, so a very active expectation of open data so that we're not in a closed environment. This is open data. It's not going to be proprietary. It's open data that ensures that a variety of third parties can engage with the platform through the application programming interfaces. It'll be an agile development process that's required of the contractor so that we're ensuring that we're keeping pace with modern technology and changing interests by our recreationists.

The bundle of that ensures that we're requiring the service provider at the price bid to really step up and provide the extensive set of contemporary items outlined in the request for proposal that they have submitted their proposal towards.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Mr. DeLappe, further comment?

Mr. DELAPPE. Well, it's—I—it would be improper for me right now to discuss any specific types of software or that were proposed in the proprietary nature in the RFP.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Okay. Let me then switch gears a little bit.

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Will there be any type of gap between when Active Network's contract ends and when the Booz Allen provided service comes online?

Mr. DELAPPE. Well, you bring up a situation which is admittedly risky in any situation to transition data from one system to another. I will tell you that the bulk of static inventory information

that is currently available for public sharing, as proposed by Booz Allen Hamilton, has already been imported into their system, doing testing, and they were able to demonstrate how some of that would work in their new system. That's a part of the data.

Of course, the riskier part, the more challenging part is mapping data that's more in a dynamic state. Perhaps you made a reservation in the old system but you won't be arriving until the new system is in place. Booz Allen Hamilton has proposed very comprehensive data mapping plan to move that data and to first test that with sample data.

So we do anticipate some kind of gap. In the past, it's been as much as a couple of weeks. We don't anticipate that at this time, but again, it is a very—it's a—it's the most important step because we have people's vacations in our hands. We want to make sure that we get it right.

Mrs. LUMMIS. And when will that gap, if it occurs, when will it occur? During the height of the summer tourist season or is it going to occur in a less-busy season?

Mr. DELAPPE. So our plan, which because we're in a protest right now and knowing that GAO has until August 31st to adjudicate that, that puts our transition plan kind of on hold. In our contract we have allowed up to 15 months for development, testing, and deployment of a new solution. So originally, 15 months from now would be right at the right time for us, the best time. Recognizing, you know, that there are something that we won't have control over, we will be evaluating the progress of the solution and the testing of it to make sure it's ready to go and the timing. You are right. It's not—it won't be desirable to try to do this during the height of reservations season, but we will evaluate that when we get closer.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Okay. Now, switching gears again, what data from the recreation Web portal is available to the public?

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay. So currently—and this evolved over time—in the late 1990s the agencies got together to aggregate data into what was then called Recreation.gov. It wasn't the reservation service; it was standalone, and it shared data through just an XML download, which is basically take everything and parse it out yourself once you get it. And that existed on its own until Recreation One-Stop program came into effect in about 2002. And that's when we pulled the National Park Service reservation system together with the Army Corps and Forest Service reservation system and the information that was stored in Recreation.gov. And together, we called them Recreation.gov because the name made the most sense.

Again, that data remained available for open-data sharing through an XML download until 2014 when we launched an API on that to provide a more modern approach to data-sharing and different machine-readable languages that independent innovators and developers use nowadays to pull that data and create tools, apps, games, you name it.

So right now, it's the static data, it's all the information data about a park, about a forest, you know, description, photos, directions, et cetera. As we move forward, we look to take that to the next step so that we can provide those third parties tools that they

can help their visitors, people who are already on their sites, find that information without having to transfer around. So real-time availability is important. If you're looking for a campsite, you want to say, hey, it is open right now; I might want to book that.

Mrs. LUMMIS. So you have information that is tremendously valuable to visitors to our public lands. It is also valuable to gateway communities to those public lands. It is also valuable to people who are helping book the remainder of a travel experience to and from the public land experience. And the industry has been trending towards standardization and interoperability. So it makes things like Kayak and other comparison tools possible. So when someone leaves that campsite, where are they going to stay en route to their next destination off public lands and giving them real-time opportunities to make those kinds of comparisons. Are those going to be possible without a standardized interoperable product or will you have a standardized interoperable product that can interface with third-party providers?

Mr. DELAPPE. Sure. I think—there's a number of kind of tiers of data-sharing you can do, I think. The static data is very simply, particularly because it doesn't change frequently enough to worry about overuse, which might, you know, be detrimental to performance. So if you have a third party that is calling your API frequently, you'll either need to increase your server capacity at an additional expense and monitor that and provide additional support but—so tier 1 I look at as the static data, not usually a problem. In the middle you have real-time availability, which we have required access to, and that's not a problem.

When you get to purchasing or conducting a transaction, say, on Kayak or on a different Web site, it kind of increases the technical requirements of that API to process that. Part of that is because, you know, in the Federal Government there are a lot of business rules that apply to staying at a campground. It may be, you know, the RV length or the length of stay that you can do, and those need to be incorporated into the API so that you can enforce those while they're making the reservation there.

Furthermore, the transaction processing and the financial processing has to be built in a way that the revenue or the funds from that recreation fees are deposited not into the account at Orbitz or Kayak but into the U.S. Treasury. That's one of our requirements. If they're due a commission or they earn an affiliate fee, then it would come back in the other direction. We never—we don't allow third parties to hang onto government money and pay us later. We do it the other way around. Does that make sense?

Mrs. LUMMIS. Yes.

Mr. DELAPPE. So that part requires, you know, an additional level of development on the API to provide that. And that's very possible, but as we do that, then we look for ways of managing that and setting up agreements with those parties so that everyone is on the same page.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Is the decision not to allow third parties to hold that money statutory or is that just a rule, an in-house rule?

Mr. DELAPPE. To the best of my knowledge it is a Treasury requirement. I cannot—I'm not sure if it's statutory or—but we could get back to you with an answer to that.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Okay. I am curious about that —

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay.

Mrs. LUMMIS.—because it may be that there are impediments to easing the access of third parties who have wonderful travel products online by easing up some Federal regulations that maybe were created for another purpose that maybe don't fit recreation access very well. And we want, as recreation is accessed online, to make it as easy as possible for people to use public lands. So I would love to have that information.

Mr. DELAPPE. Okay.

Mrs. LUMMIS. The comment period initially after the initial draft of the RFP was released in October of 2014, the comment period was extended a couple times before the solicitation was put out in the summer of 2014. Why was the release delayed then?

Mr. DELAPPE. In October 2014 we had released a draft final, which caught the attention of folks that I will call the open-data community, third-party entrepreneurs, and they recognized that the language that was in there—well, they recognized two things, that the language in there did not totally support where they thought we should be going. The second thing is that we—it's a performance-based contract, and one thing we try to avoid is prescribing specific solutions. We would prefer to have industry give us the approach, we give the outcomes and they find a way to get there.

And very specifically, what they wanted us to require was an API. And I—we were in that—I don't know, my contract dilemma there was do I prescribe this knowing that this is the solution or do I—or do we continue with our outcome-based requirements so that if APIs change in the next 10 years to something else, we haven't locked ourselves in.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Yes.

Mr. DELAPPE. So that was the hard part to—you know, to come up with that. And it didn't satisfy everybody, but we—you know, basically, APIs are the solution, and that is the outcome that we got.

So to continue then, so because of that, we hosted an industry day in Golden, Colorado, to hear directly from the third—or the open-data community and the vending community and let them discuss amongst themselves in a public forum, you know, the pros and cons to this. Subsequent to that, we did extend it a couple of weeks to allow for more comments to come in and released a final draft late—early the next year.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Local and State travel and tourism officials tell us they have had difficulty working with Recreation.gov, and that is a big part of Wyoming's economy. It just became our second-largest economic sector passing agriculture, which is my industry. Outfitters and guides and private businesses also benefit from visitors to our Federal lands. What does Recreation.gov need to do to improve collaboration with local gateway communities and tourism agencies?

And I commend to your attention the tourism agency in my State of Wyoming, it is excellent. And of course, you will find others that are as well and use public lands, national parks, forests, recreation areas as a draw to their States for also off-public-land recreational

opportunities. So your Web site and the success of your Web site and the ability of our States and gateway communities to interface with your product is really important to us. Hence, today's hearing.

So what can I tell my State travel agency?

Mr. DELAPPE. Sure. Thank you for that question. I have actually worked with your State agency in the past a few times to share videos. Your State tourism office has a wealth of some good videos that I was able to use a few years ago for Recreation.gov. I was not aware that they were experiencing a challenge coordinating with us. However, what I think we're looking for going forward here is how can we ensure that Recreation.gov is able to connect with State tourism agencies and share valuable information to support the recreation economies of the States.

The premise of our—one of the premises of our contract is to do just that, is to share data so that entities, very specifically as a State tourism agency, can ingest our information or the portions of it that are important to them by filtering out, you know, only the Wyoming information in this case and sharing that on your own Web site, pulling in that real-time availability if that's the—if that is somewhere they would like to go to show that this campground in the Medicine Bow forest actually is reservable and has sites available, to pull that additional information that shows that if this campground is full there may be another one down the road and suggest an alternative.

So that is exactly where we would like to go to provide that robust travel planning experience not just on Recreation.gov but on any site where the people are already visiting and surfing.

Mrs. LUMMIS. If a State or a local destination has a marketing organization and they are doing a promotional effort for maybe a gateway community's arts festival that is just outside of National Park Service properties, how can Recreation.gov help leverage that additional visitor activity that is being promoted locally?

Mr. DELAPPE. Sure. I understand. The one challenge I think that we face is when it comes to promoting commercial entities, particularly if they're—if we are in a position to promote one commercial entity over another one. What you're describing does not sound like that. It sounds more like a community or a municipal event. And really the challenge we have is just leveraging resources and making the connections to ensure that we are—we have the content and it's—you know, and it works for the local community and on Recreation.gov.

Mrs. LUMMIS. And so will they have links or ways to plus into your product so people can have access to their product? Let's say it is a local arts festival in Jackson, Wyoming?

Mr. DELAPPE. Sure. So currently, what we've done, which is somewhat limited, but if you go on Recreation.gov and you're looking up, let's say, a permit for Grant Teton National Park. On that page you should be able to find direct links to the Wyoming State tourism office, Wyoming's State DOT for road information, et cetera. And so in a similar fashion and probably in a much more elegant fashion in the future we would love to be able to provide that to the level that is pertinent to that location. And I think what you're suggesting sounds perfectly fine and actually a valuable tool for the customer.

Mrs. LUMMIS. And I don't want to imply that my State is the State that had expressed some concern about interfacing, but apparently within the staff here at the committee there have been some expressions of improvements that could be made and if we might be able to match those people up with you.

Mr. DELAPPE. Sure.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Before I finish a hearing, I like to give our witnesses the opportunity to actually make closing statements to say anything that you wish you would have been asked that you didn't get to tell us or to offer any closing comments before I close the hearing.

Mr. Meade, you are recognized if you have any closing comments for today.

Mr. MEADE. Thank you, Chairman. I very much would like to be able to do that. I'd just like to underscore some of your observations, and that is how important our outdoor experiences are to the fabric of our nation's economy as you see in—there in Wyoming, as we see across the Nation how and in what way our citizens can engage in healthful outdoor activities and how that can drive economy satisfaction and many other values, many other benefits in society.

Our goal and interest in a very open-data environment is to use the best of modern technology, to dig your toes in the sand, to do your trip planning, to be the millennial that can do what you want to do on that smart device in your pocket or to not if you just want to get on a pack trip and enjoy a good old-fashioned, you know, pack trip up until the high mountains of the back country.

So what we're looking for here is a dynamic platform, again, that will be designed in a very agile approach working back and forth and enhancing it over time. We're looking to engage users so that they actively are shaping what the tool will be like, and part of that user community is the very tourism folks you've highlighted. We want to infuse that energy and find pathways for these tools to be as maximally beneficial to our tourism domestic organizations and interests to a local scale.

As Rick noted, we need to be careful that we are ethical about that, and that is a driving motive for us and will not be, you know, something that will be put at risk, but we can and do—and will do much to help engage that community, State, and tourism kind of values as we move forward in the product. So thank you.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Thank you, Mr. Meade.

Mr. DeLappe, you are recognized for any closing comments.

Mr. DELAPPE. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Joe covered much of what I would like to say so I will leave that at that.

I would like to say that, you know, Recreation.gov is probably one of the best programs in the government. We get to work with fun, and we love—the people that work on our staff are outdoors folks, are passionate about this job. We want to make it right, and the way we want to do that is we want to engage with the end users, the States, the local communities to make sure that we're building a product that suits their needs, not ours. And so—and I think we're on the right path to do that.

The requirements in this contract, I think, provide us a lot of latitude and power really to harness a lot of energy from technology and from, you know, enthusiastic parties out there that have been following this and really want to build a great product.

So I again thank you for your time.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Well, I thank you both, gentlemen, for being here today and testifying. As we have heard many times in this committee and others, the decline in visitorship by people under the age of 15 to our public lands gives us all concern. This is a population of healthy, energetic people that should be out there enjoying the great outdoors.

And we know that culture has changed and that culture in this country revolves a lot around handheld devices and access to the internet. So our ability to provide a product to them that they can access on their handheld device gives them the tool and the power to plan their next outdoor recreational opportunity, which will return those young people to our public lands so they can learn, just as their parents and grandparents did, about the great outdoor experiences this wonderful country has to offer, and in doing so will imbue in them the stewardship that we all hope comes along with feeling that these treasured places are ours to take care of and to hold in high regard.

So the work you are doing is of tremendous consequence, and we hope to help you make that product, Recreation.gov, the most user-friendly and best opportunity that young people and their families, who they coach on how to use those handheld devices, have at their disposal to make that possible.

With that, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record testimony that was submitted by the Outdoor Industry Association.

Mrs. LUMMIS. And with my gratitude to you, Mr. DeLappe and Mr. Meade, as well as to Skittles and to the others in our audience, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

