

April 27, 2023

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND), member of the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, and Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM), member of the Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee, introduced the *Lake Access Keeping Economies Strong (LAKES) Act*. This bipartisan bill would improve outdoor recreation facilities in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)-managed areas, provide new opportunities for public-private investments, and give local districts more flexibility to reinvest their resources.

*“Because of discrepancies in federal law, managers of some of North Dakotans’ favorite outdoor recreation sites have to get approval from Washington to initiate operations and maintenance projects. And, unlike every other federal land management agency, the Army Corps cannot retain recreation fees at the sites where they’re collected,” said Senator Cramer. “This makes no sense. Our bipartisan bill would keep resources and decision-making closer to home, while providing new opportunities for private investment in our recreation facilities.”*

*“This bipartisan legislation will make it possible for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to enter joint management partnerships with Tribes and nonprofits, and it ensures that recreation fees collected at Army Corps lakes stay in the community and actually go toward improving those facilities. These reforms will make a difference to New Mexican families enjoying a cookout at Santa Rosa Lake. They are critical to Abiquiu Lake’s role in managing our Rio Chama water. And they are essential to building partnerships with Tribes and nonprofits as we care for our federal outdoor spaces together,” said Senator Heinrich.*

The USACE is one of the nation's largest federal outdoor recreation providers, managing nearly 257,000 facilities across 43 states. Under existing law, local USACE managers cannot retain recreation fee revenues collected onsite, an authority afforded to the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Parks Service.

The Challenge Cost Sharing Cooperative Management Program was created for participating agencies to split operation and management (O&M) expenses and responsibilities with eligible outside groups. However, the USACE is limited to partnering with non-federal public entities, despite most interest coming from private and nonprofit organizations.

To correct these issues, the *LAKES Act* would allow the USACE to:

- Retain 80% of recreation fees collected onsite for O&M at that location.
- Enter into cooperative agreements with local nonprofits.
- Handle partner-collected fees and return them to the partner jointly managing the recreation facility to reinvest onsite.

Click the respective links for [bill text](#) and a [one-pager](#).