

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2604

To amend the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 to provide grants for outdoor recreation projects to spur economic development, with a focus on rural communities, and to provide training for rural communities on funding opportunities for outdoor recreation, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 27, 2023

Mr. BENNET (for himself and Mr. SCHUMER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To amend the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 to provide grants for outdoor recreation projects to spur economic development, with a focus on rural communities, and to provide training for rural communities on funding opportunities for outdoor recreation, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Outdoor Invest-
5 ment Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANTS.**

2 Title II of the Public Works and Economic Develop-
3 ment Act of 1965 is amended by inserting after section
4 207 (42 U.S.C. 3147) the following:

5 **“SEC. 208. OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANTS.**

6 “(a) DEFINITION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION.—In
7 this section, the term ‘outdoor recreation’ means all rec-
8 reational activities undertaken for pleasure that—

9 “(1) generally involve some level of intentional
10 physical exertion; and

11 “(2) occur in nature-based environments out-
12 doors.

13 “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall make
14 grants to eligible recipients for outdoor recreation projects
15 to spur economic development, with a focus on rural com-
16 munities.

17 “(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
18 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary for
19 each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028—

20 “(1) \$30,000,000 for grants under section 201
21 for outdoor recreation projects to spur economic de-
22 velopment, with a focus on rural communities;

23 “(2) \$5,000,000 for grants under section 203
24 for outdoor recreation projects to spur economic de-
25 velopment, with a focus on rural communities; and

1 “(3) \$2,500,000 for grants under section 207
2 for outdoor recreation projects to spur economic de-
3 velopment, with a focus on rural communities.”.

4 **SEC. 3. TRAINING FOR RURAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**
5 **FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION.**

6 Beginning not later than 180 days after the date of
7 enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary of Com-
8 merce for Economic Development, in consultation with the
9 Administrator of the Small Business Administration and
10 the Secretary of Agriculture, shall develop a partnership
11 agreement—

12 (1) to provide for the development of—

13 (A) basic training, including in-person or
14 modular training sessions, for small business
15 concerns (as defined in section 3 of the Small
16 Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632)) and rural com-
17 munities relating to existing funding opportuni-
18 ties for outdoor recreation, including funding
19 opportunities for—

20 (i) business development;

21 (ii) community planning;

22 (iii) infrastructure investment;

23 (iv) community capacity building; and

24 (v) marketing and communications;

1 (B) informational materials relating to ex-
 2 isting funding opportunities described in sub-
 3 paragraph (A); and

4 (C) opportunities to coordinate among
 5 Federal departments and agencies to share the
 6 basic training and informational materials de-
 7 veloped under subparagraphs (A) and (B) with
 8 those departments and agencies and relevant
 9 nongovernmental organizations;

10 (2) to provide the basic training and informa-
 11 tional materials developed under paragraph (1)—

12 (A) through electronic formats, including
 13 internet-based webinars; and

14 (B) at physical locations, including offices
 15 of the rural development mission area; and

16 (3) to make the basic training and informa-
 17 tional materials developed under paragraph (1)
 18 available to rural business development entities that
 19 partner with programs of the rural development mis-
 20 sion area, including institutions of higher education,
 21 nonprofit organizations, business incubators, and
 22 business accelerators.

23 **SEC. 4. RECREATION ECONOMY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES.**

24 (a) DEFINITION OF PROGRAM.—In this section, the
 25 term “program” means the Recreation Economy for Rural

1 Communities planning assistance program sponsored by
2 the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Under
3 Secretary for Rural Development, the Administrator of
4 the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Secretary
5 of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest
6 Service.

7 (b) PARTNERSHIPS.—To build on the program, the
8 Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Under Sec-
9 retary for Rural Development, in partnership with the Ad-
10 ministrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and
11 the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of
12 the Forest Service, shall develop partnerships to connect
13 the program to—

14 (1) the Economic Development Administration
15 and the Small Business Administration; and

16 (2) the basic training and informational mate-
17 rials described in section 3.

18 (c) GRANTS.—The Secretary of Agriculture, acting
19 through the Under Secretary for Rural Development, in
20 partnership with the Administrator of the Environmental
21 Protection Agency and the Secretary of Agriculture, act-
22 ing through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall carry
23 out a competitive grant program to assist entities other-
24 wise eligible to receive assistance under the program in
25 carrying out an action plan developed under the program.

1 (d) CONSULTATION.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—On request of a regional
3 commission described in paragraph (2), the entities
4 carrying out the program shall consult with the re-
5 questing regional commission in carrying out the
6 program.

7 (2) REGIONAL COMMISSIONS DESCRIBED.—A
8 regional commission referred to in paragraph (1) is
9 any of the following:

10 (A) The Appalachian Regional Commission
11 established by section 14301(a) of title 40,
12 United States Code.

13 (B) The Delta Regional Authority estab-
14 lished under subtitle F of the Consolidated
15 Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
16 2009aa et seq.).

17 (C) The Denali Commission established
18 under the Denali Commission Act of 1998 (42
19 U.S.C. 3121 note; title III of division C of Pub-
20 lic Law 105–277).

21 (D) The Great Lakes Authority established
22 by section 15301(a)(4) of title 40, United
23 States Code.

1 (E) The Northern Border Regional Com-
2 mission established by section 15301(a)(3) of
3 title 40, United States Code.

4 (F) The Northern Great Plains Regional
5 Authority established under subtitle G of the
6 Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act
7 (7 U.S.C. 2009bb et seq.).

8 (G) The Southeast Crescent Regional
9 Commission established by section 15301(a)(1)
10 of title 40, United States Code.

11 (H) The Southwest Border Regional Com-
12 mission established by section 15301(a)(2) of
13 title 40, United States Code.

14 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
16 appropriated to carry out the program \$12,500,000
17 for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

18 (2) GRANTS.—Beginning with fiscal year 2025,
19 of the funds made available under paragraph (1) for
20 each fiscal year, not less than 50 percent shall be
21 used to carry out the grant program under sub-
22 section (c).

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