



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

July 24, 2000

H.R. 3661 **Backcountry Landing Strip Access Act**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on June 20, 2000

SUMMARY

H.R. 3661 would establish new requirements related to aircraft landing strips on federal lands managed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior. It would prohibit the secretaries from closing certain aircraft landing strips for more than 180 days a year without the approval of the head of the aviation department of the state in which the landing strip is located. The bill also would require the secretaries to maintain those landing strips in consultation with state aviation departments and other interested parties and would authorize them to enter into cooperative agreements for that purpose. Finally, the bill would direct the secretaries to develop a national policy for managing certain landing strips under their jurisdiction.

Based on information from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Forest Service, CBO estimates that implementing this legislation would cost about \$59 million over the 2001-2005 period, assuming the availability of appropriated funds. H.R. 3661 would not affect direct spending or receipts; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply.

H.R. 3661 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would benefit state and local governments by ensuring that they are consulted about the maintenance and potential closure of federally owned landing strips. Any costs that such governments would incur to consult with federal agencies or to approve the closing of a landing strip would not be significant.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 3661 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005

CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION

Estimated Authorization Level	0	6	10	14	15	15
Estimated Outlays	0	5	10	14	15	15

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For the purposes of this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 3661 will be enacted by the end of fiscal year 2000 and that the amounts estimated to be necessary will be provided at the start of each fiscal year. Estimates of outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar activities.

According to the DOI and the Forest Service, thousands of aircraft landing strips exist or have existed on federal lands, and only a portion of them have been identified. Under current law, only a fraction of those landing strips are maintained routinely, resulting in a significant backlog of maintenance projects. Based on information from DOI and the Forest Service, CBO estimates that the land management agencies currently spend about \$2 million annually to perform some maintenance on roughly 400 landing strips on federal land.

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 3661 would increase federal costs for two reasons. First, we expect that states and interested parties would ask federal agencies to maintain hundreds of landing strips that receive little, if any, maintenance under current law. Second, we expect that states would require the agencies to keep some airstrips open for longer periods of time, which would increase the costs of maintaining the affected sites.

For this estimate, CBO assumes that the consultation and planning process outlined in the bill would take about two years. Thus, the estimated cost in the initial years primarily reflects added administrative expenses and increased spending for readily identifiable projects. Once the consultation process is completed, we estimate that additional maintenance costs would be \$14 million in 2003, and would grow in subsequent years with inflation. We assume that, under H.R. 3661, the agencies would maintain a total of about 1,400 high-priority airstrips and that the average annual cost to meet the new standards would range between \$1,000 and \$35,000 per airstrip, averaging about \$12,000. We also assume that the agencies would not spend significant amounts on other, lower-priority airstrips on federal lands.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS: None.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

H.R. 3661 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA, and would benefit state and local governments by ensuring that they are consulted about the maintenance and potential closure of federally owned landing strips. Any costs incurred to consult with federal agencies or to approve the closing of a landing strip would not be significant.

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