Modernizing Access to our Public Land (MAPLand) ACT

A bipartisan bill designed to enhance outdoor recreation on public lands.

THE PROBLEM

Digital mapping and GPS technologies have revolutionized the ways in which sportsmen and women navigate public lands. By pinpointing a user’s real-time location on the landscape, handheld GPS units and smartphone applications allow sportsmen and women to know exactly where they stand relative to property boundaries and other key landmarks.

Unfortunately, incomplete and inconsistent mapping data prevents hunters and anglers as well as land management agencies—including the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Army Corps of Engineers—from utilizing the full benefit of these technologies.

Millions of acres of federal public lands across the country have restricted access, particularly in areas with mixed public and private landownership. In many places traditional access to public lands across private property is being lost and the public is unaware of legal access opportunities that have been secured through recorded easements.

Many of the agencies’ records of access easements across private lands are still held on paper files at local offices and cannot be easily accessed or reviewed. The Forest Service alone has an estimated 37,000 recorded easements, but only 5,000 have been digitized and uploaded into an electronic database.

Currently, the federal land management agencies lack the resources and capacity to digitize and standardize these records.

THE SOLUTION

Introduced by Senators Martha McSally (R-AZ) and Angus King (I-ME) and Representatives Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Russ Fulcher (R-ID), the MAPLand Act directs federal land management agencies to digitize and standardize their mapping records so that:

- Hunters, anglers, and millions of other Americans can use modern technology to reference essential information about public land access opportunities
- Land management agencies can fulfill their mission to identify public lands with limited or nonexistent public access, and take proactive steps in cooperation with private landowners to open those lands to the public

The bill also requires the agencies to produce digital mapping data showing:

- Seasonal allowances and restrictions for vehicle use on public roads and trails
- Boundaries of areas where hunting or recreational shooting is regulated or closed
- Portions of rivers and lakes on federal land that are closed to entry, closed to watercraft, or have horsepower limitations for watercraft.

"By modernizing and standardizing public lands access information, the MAPLand Act will benefit businesses and rural communities across the country by investing in the future of an outdoor recreation economy worth more than $778 billion annually." - Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO