



Wednesday, August 13, 2025

On behalf of the Wyoming Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, we want to thank the Interim Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Joint Committee for considering how, as Wyoming's public land owners, we can also maintain our right to be public land users.

“Corner crossing” is an issue that has concerned Wyoming citizens for decades. Various prosecutions, Attorney General opinions, proposed legislation, and conversation among public land users has kept this issue alive. And when, in 2020, four Missouri hunters were criminally charged for corner crossing, and as the issue continues to be litigated in civil court, the membership of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers stepped up to protect our right to access our public lands. We have been consistent in our position: corner crossing is not a crime, and public land demands public *access*.

Comments on [26LSO-0118 Working Draft 0.5](#)

We appreciate the draft currently under consideration by the committee. It is important to ensure Wyoming's laws reflect the rights public land users already possess. As the Courts have found, state laws that protect the private property of its citizens cannot preclude the public from accessing and using their public land. However, as we have recently seen, criminal trespass charges have been brought against those acting lawfully in accessing those public lands. It is for this reason we strongly encourage passage of legislation that will make clear in state law the rights of public land users, while continuing to ensure the rights of private landowners are upheld.

Two comments on the language of 26LSO-0118 Working Draft 0.5 specifically. First, we have heard in various committee discussions from landowners that the exact boundaries of their property are difficult if not impossible to know without extensive and expensive surveying. For this reason, we feel it is important that the language in the bill specifically states the requirement that public land owners cross “at the corners where two (2) parcels meet.” We are concerned about the potential that an unscrupulous private landowner would use the ambiguity of their property lines as a reason that corner crossing should not be allowed. Because, under this logic, there would be no way to ensure no private land was inadvertently touched.



It is absolutely the case that any private landowner has the right to survey their own property and place a marker of the corner that does not impede public access. But the choice of a private landowner to not do so cannot be used as a reason to keep public land owners off public land. The language in the proposed bill would require public land users to take responsibility for knowing where the corner is, and for crossing at that point. We believe this *is* our responsibility; and, that if we do our part by properly accessing public land at the corner where the two parcels meet, we should not be threatened nor charged with trespass if a toe were to inadvertently touch private land in the process.

Second, we would urge the committee to remove, on page 2 lines 9-11, and page 3 lines 13-14, the language that states: “and without causing damages to any privately owned land adjacent to the two (2) parcels.”

As this bill is written, public access at corners is handled directly in criminal and hunting trespass statutes. By adding property damage into these sections, the Legislature would be conflating property damages with criminal trespass. These are two different crimes, and should likely be handled separately. In the case of property damage, it would be proper to charge an individual with that crime, rather than with trespass.

General Comments

Overall, we feel the language in the proposed draft is a welcome evolution of legislation that has been proposed in the past several years. However, we are not certain that addressing public land access directly in Title 6 and Title 23 is the most effective way to protect our right to access public land. We have spoken with many committee members about the potential for also examining legislation proposed in 2011 by Representative Harshman, which addresses public land access in Title 36. Some of the language regarding crossing at the corners where parcels meet could be easily integrated into the 2011 language.

By addressing public land access in the way currently contemplated, it suggests more of a ‘negative’ right; if you access public land in this way, it is not trespass. The language of the 2011 establishes an ‘affirmative’ right to access, clarifying that Wyoming’s public land users have the right and the ability to access our public land, and then ensures that in doing so we would not be subject to trespass charges when lawfully accessing public land.



We would like to ask the committee to consider drafting legislation reflecting this affirmative right to access, and perhaps allowing discussion of both options at the November interim meeting. Additionally, we may know more information about the Supreme Court's desire to take up the current civil case at that time.

For these reasons, it may be well worth the committee deferring any final action on any corner crossing legislation until November.

On behalf of both our Wyoming and national members,

Buzz Hettick and Peter Kassab

Co-Chairs, Wyoming Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers