

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2729

To authorize the designation of National Environmental Research Parks by the Secretary of Energy, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 4, 2009

Mr. LUJÁN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Science and Technology

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## A BILL

To authorize the designation of National Environmental Research Parks by the Secretary of Energy, 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. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) The National Environmental Research  
6 Parks are unique outdoor laboratories that provide  
7 opportunities for environmental studies on protected  
8 lands around Department of Energy facilities.

1           (2) In 1972, the Atomic Energy Commission  
2 established its first official environmental research  
3 park at the Savannah River site in South Carolina.

4           (3) In 1976, the Department of Energy defined  
5 the mission for the research parks in accordance  
6 with the recommendations of the multiagency review  
7 team for environmental research activities at the Sa-  
8 vannah River site.

9           (4) The mission of the research parks is to—

10           (A) conduct research and education activi-  
11 ties to assess and document environmental ef-  
12 fects associated with energy and weapons use;

13           (B) explore methods for eliminating or  
14 minimizing adverse effects of energy develop-  
15 ment and nuclear materials on the environment;

16           (C) train people in ecological and environ-  
17 mental sciences; and

18           (D) educate the public.

19           (5) The seven National Environmental Re-  
20 search Parks are located within six major ecological  
21 regions of the United States, covering more than  
22 half of the Nation.

23           (6) The parks are especially valuable research  
24 sites because within their borders they provide se-

1       cure settings for scientists to conduct long-term re-  
2       search on a broad range of subjects including—

- 3               (A) plant succession;
- 4               (B) biomass production;
- 5               (C) population ecology;
- 6               (D) radioecology;
- 7               (E) ecological restoration; and
- 8               (F) thermal effects on freshwater eco-  
9       systems.

10           (7) The parks maintain several long-term data  
11       sets that are available nowhere else in the United  
12       States or in the world on amphibian populations,  
13       bird populations, and soil moisture and plant water  
14       stress. These data sets are uniquely valuable for the  
15       detection of long-term shifts in climate.

16           (8) The maintenance of these parks by the De-  
17       partment of Energy is consistent with statutory obli-  
18       gations to promote sound environmental stewardship  
19       of Federal lands and to safeguard sites containing  
20       cultural and archeological resources.

21           (9) Public education and outreach activities car-  
22       ried out on these sites provide unique learning op-  
23       portunities, promote a stronger connection between  
24       these Federal facilities and the surrounding commu-  
25       nities, and enhance public confidence that the De-

1       partment of Energy is fulfilling its environmental  
2       stewardship responsibilities.

3       **SEC. 2. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PARKS.**

4       (a) DESIGNATION.—The Secretary of Energy shall  
5       designate the seven National Environmental Research  
6       Parks located on Department of Energy sites, including—

7               (1) the Savannah River National Environ-  
8       mental Research Park;

9               (2) the Idaho National Environmental Research  
10      Park;

11              (3) the Los Alamos National Environmental  
12      Research Park;

13              (4) the Fermi Lab National Environmental Re-  
14      search Park;

15              (5) the Hanford National Environmental Re-  
16      search Park;

17              (6) the Oak Ridge National Environmental Re-  
18      search Park; and

19              (7) the Nevada National Environmental Re-  
20      search Park,

21      as permanent protected outdoor research reserves for the  
22      purposes of conducting long-term environmental research  
23      on the impacts of human activities on the natural environ-  
24      ment.

1 (b) PURPOSES.—Each site shall support environ-  
2 mental research and monitoring activities as well as public  
3 outreach and education activities to characterize and mon-  
4 itor present and future site conditions, and serve as con-  
5 trol areas for comparison with environmental impacts of  
6 Department of Energy land management, energy tech-  
7 nology development, remediation, and other site activities  
8 outside the National Environmental Research Park areas.  
9 Areas of research and monitoring on the sites shall in-  
10 clude—

- 11 (1) ecology of the site and the region;
- 12 (2) population biology and ecology;
- 13 (3) radioecology;
- 14 (4) ecosystem science;
- 15 (5) pollution fate and transport research;
- 16 (6) surface and groundwater modeling; and
- 17 (7) undergraduate and graduate student train-  
18 ing.

19 (c) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.—To ensure the inde-  
20 pendence of the research, monitoring, public education,  
21 and outreach activities conducted on each site, the Sec-  
22 retary shall enter into a cooperative agreement with a uni-  
23 versity or consortium of universities with expertise in ecol-  
24 ogy and environmental science of the region in which the  
25 National Environmental Research Park is located.

1 (d) ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUT-  
2 REACH.—Each site shall support an outreach program to  
3 inform the public of the diverse ecological activities con-  
4 ducted at the park and to educate students at various lev-  
5 els in environmental science. Program activities shall in-  
6 clude—

7 (1) on-site and in-classroom education pro-  
8 grams for elementary and secondary students;

9 (2) presentations to school, civic, and profes-  
10 sional groups;

11 (3) exhibits at local and regional events;

12 (4) development of educational projects and  
13 materials for students at all levels;

14 (5) undergraduate internship and graduate re-  
15 search opportunities; and

16 (6) regularly scheduled public tours.

17 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
18 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of En-  
19 ergy for carrying out this section \$35,000,000, including  
20 \$5,000,000 for each National Environmental Research  
21 Park, for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014.

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