

Border Lands Conservation Act

Background: The Biden administration's open border policy created numerous crises. One of these was the damage to federal lands. Illegal immigration creates significant resource damage to federal public lands and endangers border communities. This resource damage harms visitor safety and limits access to federal lands, including National Parks, National Forests, and National Wildlife Refuges. Some of these impacts are:

- **Trash Accumulation:** By conservative estimates, tens of thousands of tons of trash are left behind at federal public lands each year. This creates significant resource impacts as the trash degrades slowly over time, and it diverts resources. For example, at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge alone, more than 3000 hours of volunteer time are diverted annually to trash cleanup.
- **Abandoned Vehicles:** Hundreds of vehicles are abandoned and require removal from federal public lands due to illegal immigrant activity. These vehicles are often abandoned in areas that are not easily accessible, creating resource damage and forcing land management agencies to expend valuable resources otherwise used for law enforcement.
- **Illegal Roads and Trails:** Thousands of miles of illegal trails and roads have been created by illegal immigrants using federal public lands. This damages the landscape by creating stripped vegetation, erosive gullying, and wildlife disturbance.
- **Human Waste:** As illegal aliens move through federal public lands, they leave behind human feces and toilet paper that litters the landscape, impacts visitor health, and compromises water safety.
- **Cattle Trespassing:** Illegal aliens often damage or cut fences and leave gates open, which allows cattle to leave ranches. Illegal aliens often allow cattle to trespass from Mexico, which elevates the risk of infectious diseases entering the U.S.
- **Wildfire:** Several wildfires occur each year due to illegal aliens. These are often unattended fires that eventually escape.

Overview of Legislation: For the above reasons, Chairman Lee has drafted the Border Lands Conservation Act. This legislation provides the needed authorities and steps to secure the border, conserve land that is ravaged by illegal immigration, and stop the environmental destruction caused by unlawful entry.

The Border Lands Conservation Act:

- Requires DOI and FS to work with DHS to inventory existing roads and install navigable road infrastructure to deter illegal southern or northern border entry and to gain operational control of the border;
- Amends the Wilderness Act to authorize DHS to conduct necessary operations in wilderness areas to secure the border;
- Requires an inventory by DOI and FS of all roads and trails created by illegal immigration and then subsequently requires DOI and FS to work with DHS to use these roads to deter illegal entry into the United States and gain operational control of the southern and northern border;
- Establishes the Border Fuels Management Initiative to address the risk of wildland fire along the southern and northern border;
- Requires DOI, FS, and GAO to report on visitor safety issues and loss of access to federal land due to illegal immigration;
- Prohibits the Biden Administration practice of housing illegal immigrants on Federal lands.