

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Markup Memorandum

August 31, 2018

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff— Terry Camp and Holly Baker
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Mark-Up: **H. Res. 418 (Rep. Sean Duffy)**, Urging the Secretary of the Interior to recognize the cultural significance of Rib Mountain by adding it to the National Register of Historic Places.
September 5, 2018, 10:15 am; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

Summary of the Bill

H. Res. 418, introduced by Representative Sean Duffy (R-WI-07), affirms the historical importance of Rib Mountain to Wisconsin's culture and economy, recognizes the legend of Paul Bunyan as the embodiment of the frontier spirit, and requests that the Secretary of the Interior add Rib Mountain to the National Register of Historic Places.

Cosponsors

Rep. Mike Gallagher [R-WI-8]
Rep. Glenn Grothman [R-WI-6]
Rep. Ron Kind [D-WI-3]
Rep. James F. Sensenbrenner, Jr. [R-WI-5]

Background

Rib Mountain, formerly called Rib Hill, is a four-mile-long ridge of ancient rock that peaks at 1,924 feet above sea level, making it the third highest point in Wisconsin.¹ The formation of Rib Mountain began some 1.5 to 2 billion years ago with the violent fusion, through intense heat, of sand into mammoth chunks of quartzite.² Beginning roughly 1.5 billion years ago, the surrounding plains started eroding away; however, the hard quartzite resisted this erosion. Over the succeeding hundreds of millions of years, the rock that remained rose higher and higher over the surrounding area and is now called a “monadnock” by geologists.³

¹ "Rib Mountain State Park History." Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. October 17, 2014. Accessed August 28, 2018. <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/ribmt/history.html>.

² "About Rib Mountain." Friends of Rib Mountain State Park. Accessed August 28, 2018. <http://ribmountain.org/wp/rib-mountain/>.

³ *Id.*

Throughout its history, Rib Mountain has been used in a variety of ways. The Chippewa and earlier tribes likely used Rib Mountain as a lookout and as a landmark for finding their way, as did later European explorers and settlers.⁴ In the late 1800s, hopeful prospectors dug for gold, but found too little ore to make gold mining profitable.⁵ According to local legend, the “ribs” in Rib Mountain denote that it is the burial site of Paul Bunyan. The nearby Mosinee Hill is said to be the grave of Babe the Blue Ox.

As early as 1893, the mountain was used in the manufacture of sandpaper. The Wausau Sandpaper Company was incorporated in 1900 and built a factory. In 1902, Wausau Quartz Company crushed the quartzite for grinding and polishing purposes. The two companies later merged in 1905 to form Wausau Abrasives, which was purchased by Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) in 1929 and operated until the 1990s.⁶

The Wausau Kiwanis Club recognized the mountain's recreational potential and bought 120 acres of land at the top in 1922. The club subsequently deeded the land to the State of Wisconsin and petitioned the Wisconsin Conservation Department to establish Rib Mountain as a state park. The department subsequently accepted a gift of 40 acres in 1923 and Rib Mountain was officially designated as a state park in 1927. Subsequent land donations have expanded the park footprint to its current 1,528 acres.⁷

Rib Mountain remained undeveloped until 1929, when a special committee from the local Chamber of Commerce spearheaded a drive to have a road built to the summit. The road was completed in 1931 and the Kiwanis Club funded a 200-foot entrance right-of-way.⁸

In July 1935, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was set up on the west bank of the Wisconsin River in the town of Rib Mountain. Roughly 250 young men created walking paths, widened the road, developed a campground, and built a picnic area gazebo. Chamber of Commerce leader, Walter Roehl, had convinced the Conservation Department that Rib Mountain would make for a fine winter ski area and the CCC began work on clearing the slopes and installing a T-bar lift. The first ski event was the Central Ski Association Championship in 1938.⁹

The CCC built a shelter house, which opened in December 1939. The shelter is still in use today by Granite Peak Ski Area. In 2006, the upper level of the shelter/chalet was dedicated in honor of the 10th Mountain Alpine Division. The 10th Mountain Alpine Division served in the Italian Alps during WWII. Many of the original members of the Division are from the Wausau area and learned to ski at Rib Mountain.¹⁰

⁴ Lackey, Brenda, Michael Gross, Ron Zimmerman, and Jim Buchholz. Rib Mountain State Park Conceptual Master Plan for an Education and Interpretive Center. Report. College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Stevens Point, WI: Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters, 2009. 18. Accessed August 28, 2018. https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/schmeckle/Documents/Consulting/Rib_Mountain_plan.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 19.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 20.

H. Res. 418 recognizes the unique historic and cultural contributions of Rib Mountain by requesting that the Secretary of the Interior add it to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.¹¹



(Observation tower at Rib Mountain State Park. Photo Credit: Callie Godiska)

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

Administration Position

The Administration's position is currently unknown.

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

None.

¹¹ "What Is the National Register of Historic Places?" National Parks Service. Accessed August 28, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/what-is-the-national-register.htm>.