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(S.D.)-Thune Questions Wind Cave Campground Closing

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 03/12/2013 06:55 AM

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) - U.S. Sen. John Thune is questioning a decision to close a campground at Wind Cave National Park in southwestern South Dakota due to automatic federal spending cuts that took effect March 1.

The South Dakota Republican sent a letter to National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis questioning whether the agency is intentionally trying to make the cuts more visible to the public.

Thune says spending cuts should target wasteful spending. He says closing the Elk Mountain Campground and reducing visitor center hours will cut park revenue.

Wind Cave Superintendent Vidal Davila said in a statement that a 5 percent budget cut forced the park to close the campground to eliminate the need for two summer maintenance workers to provide upkeep. Evening campfire programs presented by rangers also have been cut.

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