

COMER,

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A large group attended a House Oversight Committee Hearing held Thursday at the Lake Cumberland State Resort Park.

The event addressed “concerns centered on the often excessive, inconsistent, and inadequately justified nature of the fees, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the regulatory landscape governing infrastructure on Corps managed property, such as Lake Cumberland,” the Congressman said.

Comer said in his nearly eight years in Congress, last week’s hearing was only the second of its type for him.

“We don’t do many of these,” he said, explaining how the hearing came about.

“The small business owners in this region have shared the exorbitant and seemingly trivial fee demand they have received from the Corps,” Comer said. “Small business

owners have received \$500 administrative fees for tasks such as obtaining an approval letter, approving a lease, and approving an event. Others have received \$22,000 fees for review of a \$5,000 total cost action, and \$9,500 for review of a marina expansion.”

“One received a whopping \$20,000 fee for a review of a marina development,” the congressman said.

Congressman Comer questioned if such feeds are “normal” or “acceptable.”

Chairman Comer said information obtained by the Oversight Committee-along with a study conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO)-shows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been levying “inconsistent, unexpected, and

exorbitant fees” against small business owners.

He noted unclear fees pushed by the Corps can cripple small businesses-particularly local marina operators in Kentucky-and hurt further investment in recreational infrastructure locally and nationwide.

Marina owners from both Kentucky and Tennessee were among the many attendees at last week’s hearing held at the Lake Cumberland State Resort Park.

Chairman Comer highlighted the MARINA Act, legislation he introduced to address the alleged lack of transparency and unclear fee policies, and concluded Congress must continue to explore solutions to ensure the Corps is issuing all fees consistently and fairly.

“The findings in the GAO report really underscore the need for greater transparency, consistency and accountability in fee-setting practices, and that’s why we had this field hearing today,” the congressman explained. “We’re going to continue working closely with the Corps (and) with local officials and marina owners from both Kentucky and Tennessee.”

“Our Committee works to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in federal programs and to ensure taxpayer funds are being used appropriately,” he said. “The economy of the First Congressional district, like many other districts across the country, is heavily dependent on the tourism industry that lakes and other forms of outdoor recreation provide.”

Steeped in research, Comer illustrated in 2022, Lake Cumberland hosted over 2.5 million visitors, “and stands as one of the crown jewels of our state’s tourism industry.”

“Lake Cumberland was ranked the number one lake spot by USA Today in 2023-out-ranking places like Lake Superior and Lake Havasu,” the congressman said. “The number of economic benefits this amount of tourism provides to this area is incredible.

Within 30 miles of this lake, the economic impact is over 1,100 jobs, over \$164 million in visitor spending, \$107 million in sales, and over \$33 million in labor income. It is vital for the economic health of Kentucky for businesses that contribute to the tourism industry operate freely and without burden from bureaucratic intervention.”

But Comer stressed “beneath the surface of Lake Cumberland’s scenic beauty lies a matter of concern that warrants our attention-the impact of real estate administrative fees imposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.”

The Corps, as a component of the Department of Defense plays a role in managing water resource projects across the nation, and imposes these fees on those who utilize its managed real estate, including privately operated marinas on the lakes, such as Lake Cumberland,” Comer said. “These fees, intended to cover administrative expenses incurred by the Corps, have raised significant apprehensions among stakeholders. As a result, the Committee on Oversight and Accountability asked the Government Accountability Office to examine the complexities surrounding the Corps’ management of these fees.”

The GAO, the congressman said, is the investigative arm of Congress and serves as a watchdog to improve the performance of the federal government.

“(The) GAO’s examination revealed discrepancies in the Corps’ practices across different divisions and districts, raising questions about the uniformity of fee-setting criteria and the adequacy of information provided to fee payers,” Comer said.

After nearly an hour of discussion, corrective actions are accountability were mentioned as possible solutions to the present dilemma.

“Quicker answers” to inquiries-especially regarding proposed expansion, and “more transparency...and consistency in the fees process” was suggested by the Congressman.

“We’re going to be watching this very closely,” Comer said. “Hopefully we will get something very productive out of this very quickly.”

“We are all on the same team,” the congressman said. “We all want to see growth and economic expansion of the lakes.”

“I just think there are some bureaucratic hurdles that can be overcome for our marina owners,” Comer said.

PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION

WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE RUSSELL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ON APRIL 10TH, 17TH & 24TH FROM 9 - 4 EACH OF THOSE DATES.

THIS IS FOR CHILDREN THAT WILL BE 4 BY AUGUST 1, 2024 AND MEET INCOME GUIDELINES OR A CHILD WHO WILL BE 3 YRS. OLD BY AUGUST 1, 2024 AND A DISABILITY IS SUSPECTED.

PLEASE BRING THE FOLLOWING WITH YOU:

- CERTIFIED BIRTH CERTIFICATE
- IMMUNIZATIONS CERTIFICATE
- PHYSICAL
- EYE EXAM
- PROOF OF INCOME (this years tax paperwork)

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POR FAVOR TRAIGAN LOS SIGUIENTES DOCUMENTOS CON USTED:

- ACTA DE NACIMIENTO
- CERTIFICADOD E VACUNAS
- EXAMEN FISICO
- EXAMEN DE LA VISTA
- PRUEBA DE INGRESOS (taxes de este año)

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