

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

June 18, 2019

Rep. Raul Grijalva
Chair, House Natural Resources Committee
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Rob Bishop
Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Full Committee Markup, June 19, 2019

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop:

On behalf of the human powered outdoor recreation community, we write to express our support for H.R. 3195, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act and H.R. 1225, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

H.R. 3195, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act

Outdoor Alliance and the outdoor recreation community strongly support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and we applaud its recent permanent reauthorization through the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. Over the life of the program, however, Congress has not lived up to the program's full promise, and more than \$20 billion collected expressly for LWCF



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purposes have been misdirected. We strongly support H.R. 3195 to ensure that each year, LWCF's full \$900 is applied toward recreation and conservation goals.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is an overwhelmingly successful program for achieving balanced use of public lands by directing a portion of royalties from off-shore oil and gas development toward targeted recreation and conservation projects. Over the life of the program, LWCF has funded critical protections for river corridors in places like West Virginia's Gauley and New Rivers and helped establish public river access points for canoers, kayakers, and rafters in places like Washington's White Salmon River. LWCF has made possible thousands of miles of singletrack for mountain bikers and hikers, including at areas like the world-class trail system at Lory State Park near Fort Collins, Colorado, and Toro Park, California, home to challenging trails and spectacular views of Monterey Bay.

LWCF has funded close-to-home recreation opportunities in all fifty states and every congressional district. According to a recent study by the Trust for Public Land, spending on land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund produces a return on investment for local economies at rate of 4 to 1.¹

We strongly support H.R. 3195 and hope that the committee will advance it expeditiously.

H.R. 1225, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act

As a result of years of inadequate appropriations by Congress for the work of the public lands management agencies entrusted with stewarding our public resources, a substantial backlog of infrastructure and maintenance needs currently exists on our country's public lands and waters. While the need for greater appropriations—both for maintenance and infrastructure needs, as well as for responsibilities like planning and visitor services—remains, we support congressional efforts to redress past inadequate appropriations through investments targeted specifically toward maintenance and infrastructure.

¹ THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND, RETURN ON INVESTMENT FROM THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND, <https://www.tpl.org/return-investment-land-and-water-conservation-fund>.



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In recent years, attention has largely focused on the deferred maintenance needs of the National Park Service, and we strongly support efforts to ensure the sustainability and vitality of those iconic areas. We also believe strongly that Congress must address the needs of other land management agencies, and we applaud the committee's efforts to expand the scope of proposed solutions to include other land management agencies within the Department of Interior. Outdoor Alliance supports the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, and we hope that, moving forward, the committee will look for ways to incorporate the needs of the USDA Forest Service into legislative solutions.

According to the Forest Service's FY20 budget justification, the agency currently has \$5.5 billion in maintenance needs due to years of inadequate federal appropriations; this includes nearly \$300 million in trail maintenance needs.² This legacy of inadequate investment in our public lands affects everything from the visitor experience to the ability to even access certain areas with our National Forests.

To illustrate the importance of National Forests for outdoor recreation activities, Outdoor Alliance conducted a GIS analysis of recreational resources in Colorado, home to both iconic National Parks and invaluable National Forests.³ In Colorado, we found that areas managed by the Forest Service account for more than 4,700 miles of hiking trails in comparison to 478 miles managed by the National Park Service. With regard to mountain biking trails, the difference was even more profound: 4,284 miles of mountain biking trails are under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service versus only 7 miles managed by NPS. For whitewater paddling, 27 miles of paddling is available under NPS jurisdiction, versus 642 miles managed by the Forest Service. For climbers, 251 sites are managed by NPS versus 1,839 sites managed by the Forest Service. The bottom line is that, while NPS units provide important opportunities for outdoor recreation, the vast majority of experiences our community participates in occur on Forest Service lands.

Forest Service lands and the recreational opportunities they provide are also critical to the economy of rural and gateway communities. As part of the ongoing forest

² UNITED STATES DEP'T OF AGRICULTURE, FY 2020 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION 84 (2019).

³ Our analysis used the State of Colorado's COTREX data to compare trail use and mileage; American Whitewater's National Whitewater Inventory data for whitewater paddling; and Adventure Project crowd-sourced data for climbing and skiing information.



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plan revision process for Colorado's Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Outdoor Alliance commissioned an economic study, which found that climbing, biking, hiking, paddling, and snowsports on those forests produce \$392 million annually in visitor spending, supporting more than 4,100 full time jobs.⁴ Investment in recreational infrastructure and maintenance provides a direct return to local economies.

Again, we strongly support H.R. 1225 and efforts to address the underfunded maintenance needs at our country's National Parks and other sites managed by the Department of Interior. These areas are iconic and an invaluable part of our national heritage, in addition to supporting prized outdoor recreation opportunities. We hope that the committee will look for opportunities, as well, to address the important needs of the USDA Forest Service.

Thank you for the committee's attention to our public lands and waters investment needs through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act and the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in support of these worthy objectives.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Executive Director, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Interim Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater

⁴ OUTDOOR ALLIANCE, THE ECONOMIC INFLUENCE OF HUMAN POWERED RECREATION IN COLORADO'S GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE & GUNNISON NATIONAL FORESTS 3 (2018), *available at* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54aabb14e4b01142027654ee/t/5bff483303ce647407356fc1/1543456828876/OA_GMUGNF_SharePiece.pdf.



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Dave Wiens, Executive Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association

Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance

Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers

Phil Powers, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club

Sarah Bradham, Acting Executive Director, the Mazamas

Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club

Chad Nelson, CEO, Surfrider Foundation

