

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

November 2, 2021

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto
Chair, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Sen. Mike Lee
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
361A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: **October 19 legislative hearing**

Dear Chair Cortez Masto and Ranking Member Lee:

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding the October 19 Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining legislative hearing to consider a number of bills of significance for our community. Our views on individual bills are detailed below.

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.

S. 607, the End Speculative Oil and Gas Leasing Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the End Speculative Oil and Gas Leasing Act. Climate change and the direct environmental impacts of fossil fuel development are sufficient reason alone for a rigorous reconsideration of what role is appropriate for these activities on public lands and waters moving forward. In addition to problematic environmental effects, however, oil and gas leasing has



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significant direct effects on outdoor recreation, effects which have been exacerbated by actions of the last administration.

Since 2018, OA has partnered with Rocky Mountain Wild to monitor new oil and gas lease sales in six western states (Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming). As part of Rocky Mountain Wild's Oil and Gas Watch program, we screened our recreation database (rock climbing sites, mountain biking, hiking, and skiing trails, and whitewater paddling runs) against new oil and gas lease parcels to identify potential recreation conflicts and important places that might be at risk. Over the past three years, we have flagged 95 parcels and more than 150,000 acres of public land made available for oil and gas leasing and containing recreational resources.

The process of reviewing and commenting on these lease sales was significantly complicated by shortened comment periods—in some cases as short as 10 days. Additionally, BLM's parcel review period was reduced under direction from the previous administration to no longer than 6 months from a previous average of 16 months. Simultaneously, Master Leasing Plans, which had proved useful tools for balancing oil and gas development with other resource values, were eliminated. Statewide leases were required every quarter, whereas previously sales were rotated through different field offices and regions in each state, resulting in a high level of (anonymous) nominations and proposed leases in areas with high value for recreation or conservation, as well as significant speculative leasing of low potential lands. The cumulative effect of these changes was to significantly reduce opportunities for public input, ramp up conflict between energy development and other resource values, and create long-term uncertainty for other resource values because of speculative leases.

In addition, perhaps in part stemming from compressed time frames, BLM in our experience has routinely failed to take a hard look at impacts to recreation and related socioeconomics in NEPA documents. At times this manifested as a complete failure to consider the effects of leasing on specific, developed recreation resources. In one example, BLM proposed, and then withdrew, lease parcels underlying Moab's world famous Slickrock trail. In another example, a lease sale was proposed for a parcel containing a National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) high school race course, erroneously stating in the EA that "there are no developed recreation areas near or within the project area."



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Speculative leasing has proved to be a significant problem. In 2018, BLM offered 12.8 million acres for leasing, but only 1.4 million acres (11%) received bids, making 11.4 million acres available for noncompetitive bidding. At the end of fiscal year 2018, approximately half of all federal acreage set aside for oil and gas leasing was tethered to non-producing leases. Huge swaths of public land are being leased for next to nothing, and it is unclear what companies intend to do with the land. In the meantime, these leases complicate or foreclose conservation efforts or efforts by communities to invest in the outdoor recreation economy through the development of sustainable recreational uses and amenities.

The End Speculative Oil and Gas Leasing Act would help restore balance to public lands management by requiring the BLM to study a parcel's potential for mineral development and end the practice of leasing lands with a low potential for development to speculators. On public lands with low or no mineral potential, the bill would put the focus back on other resource values like outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat preservation. This common-sense change would ensure that communities are able to move forward with developing recreation infrastructure and engage in long-range planning without low-potential leases complicating efforts or hanging like a sword of Damocles over future goals.

S. 1214, the State Grazing Management Authority Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly opposes the State Grazing Management Authority Act. In recent years, we have been pleased to see proposals to turn over national public lands to states largely recede. We continue, however, to see proposals that would undermine public management of public resources by turning over aspects of ownership or control of public lands to states or outside entities. These proposals undercut the very concept of public lands and are intended to allow industry groups—here, grazers—to circumvent the laws and policies that assure balance among sometimes-competing uses.

S. 1459, PUBLIC Lands Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the PUBLIC Lands Act. The bill's three titles comprise protections that enjoy strong support from California's recreation community and have been developed with broad community input.



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Title I, **Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests**, was crafted after years of input from business leaders, conservationists, anglers, mountain bikers, fire management professionals, and more, and we appreciate efforts to consider the needs of a broad array of regional stakeholders in developing this legislation. Because of it, the title benefits the region's public lands, local communities, and the millions of visitors who come to experience northwest California's storied outdoor recreation. This bill secures a vision for well-balanced, landscape-scale conservation, promotes restoration of degraded watersheds, and improves fire management.

This title will conserve approximately 262,000 acres of public land as Wilderness, designate 379 miles of new Wild and Scenic rivers, and create a special restoration area of more than 700,000 acres. From the fog-shrouded redwood forests of Humboldt County to the sunny oak woodlands and grasslands of Mendocino, and the soaring peaks of the Trinity Alps Wilderness to the turquoise waters of the Wild and Scenic Smith River, this region is home to spectacular landscapes and world-renowned recreational opportunities.

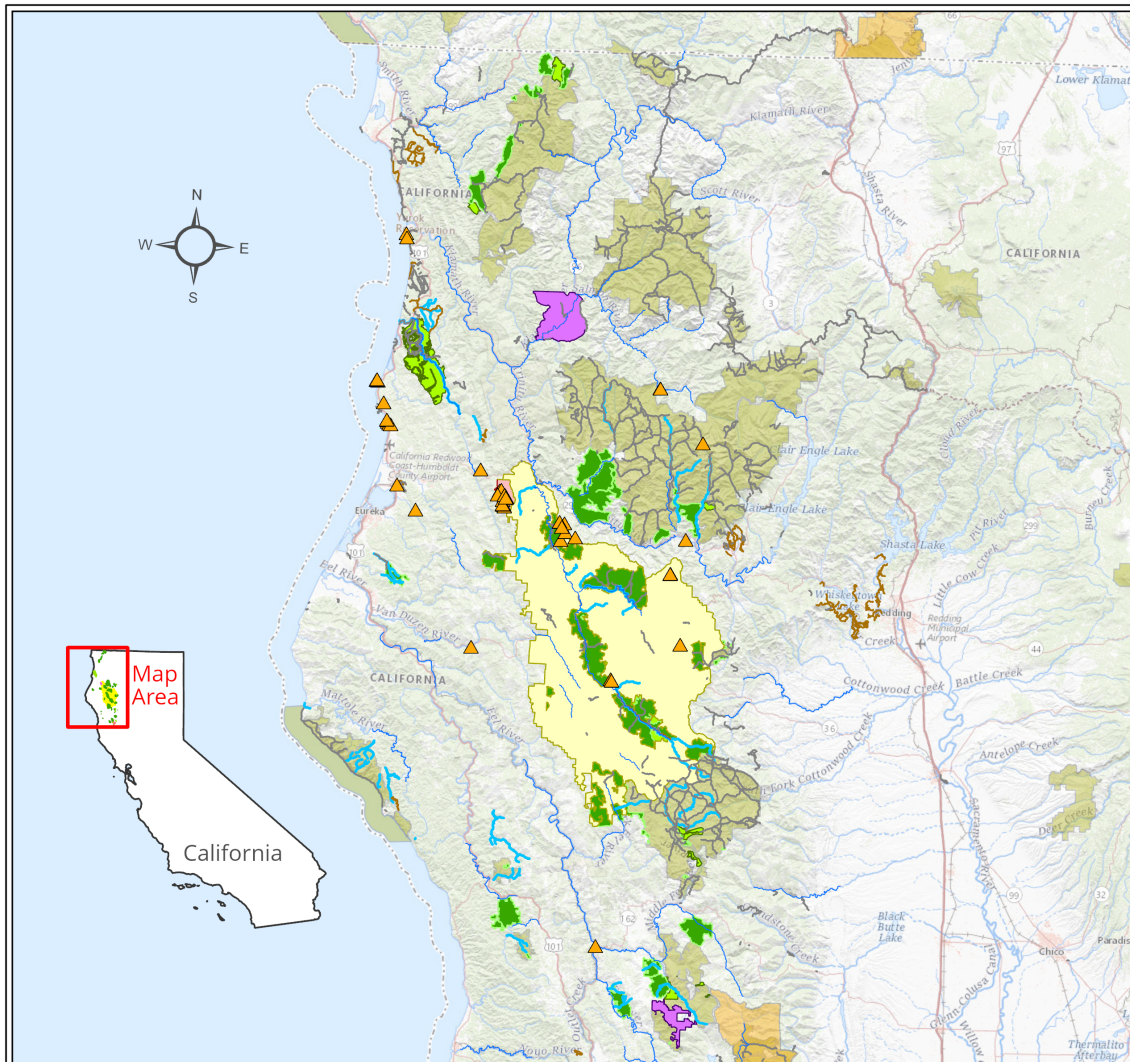
In addition to protecting conservation values in the area, the title would expand opportunities for sustainable recreation. With the establishment of the Elk Camp Ridge Recreation Trail, the title would benefit northwest California by expanding mountain biking trails along the Elk Camp Ridge and in Del Norte County. It would permanently protect the South Fork Trinity River—a popular and valuable steelhead fishery—and study the feasibility of establishing the Bigfoot National Recreation Trail to highlight the botanical and biological diversity of the region. We greatly appreciate the title's attention to ensuring the protection and sound management of Wilderness climbing opportunities, as well as the inclusion of Land of the Lost—the closest sport climbing to Arcata and Eureka—in a special management area.

In addition to new Wild & Scenic designations for whitewater resources on the East Fork North Fork Trinity and Canyon Creek, paddlers enthusiastically support the protection of more than 48,000 acres of public land within the proposed Wilderness areas surrounding already-designated Wild and Scenic watersheds on the Trinity, Eel, and Black Butte Rivers. Moreover, 25 whitewater river access points will be protected within proposed Wilderness and special restoration areas, and potential



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Wilderness areas will ensure boaters can continue to paddle along the banks of the lower portion of Redwood Creek surrounded by the tallest living trees in the world.



Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act

Proposed Designations

- Wild & Scenic River
- Recreation Area
- Special Management Area
- Special Restoration Area
- Potential Wilderness Area
- Proposed Wilderness Area

Designated Areas

- Wilderness Area
- National Monument

Recreation Resources

- ▲ Rock Climbing
- Whitewater Paddling
- Mountain Biking Trail
- Hiking Trail

0 20 Miles

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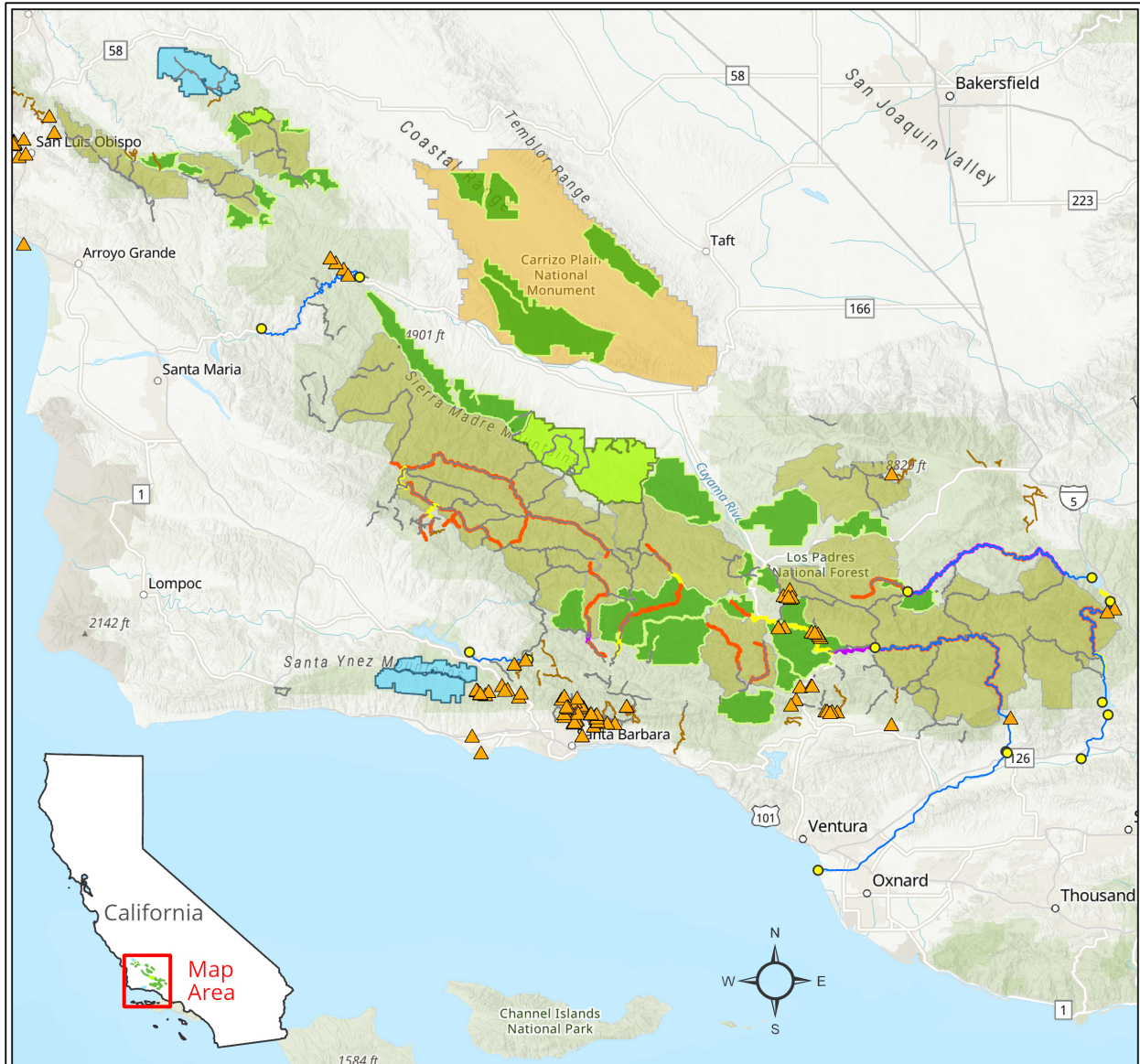
The **Central Coast Heritage Protection** title similarly protects key conservation and recreation values. California's Los Padres National Forest is a popular destination for outdoor recreationists of many forms, from mountain bikers to wildlife viewers. The title would protect more than 262,000 acres of public land within the Los Padres Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument, designate 159 miles of river as Wild and Scenic, and create two new scenic areas, Black Mountain and Condor Ridge. Santa Barbara County's Condor Ridge is within the Santa Ynez Mountains, and its unique climate creates an area of high biodiversity and critical habitat for southern steelhead.

In addition to safeguarding clean air and water for Californians, the title would create and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. It designates a 400-mile-long Condor National Recreation Trail, supporting through-hiking and backpacking opportunities across the entire length of the Los Padres National Forest, from Los Angeles to Monterey County. It would also protect important and threatened wilderness characteristics around popular rock climbing areas in the Sespe Gorge along Highway 33. Paddlers support adding more miles to the Wild and Scenic Piru Creek, a waterway rare for the region that provides outstanding whitewater less than an hour drive from downtown Los Angeles.

Importantly, all proposed new Wilderness boundaries were drawn in order to preserve existing mountain biking trails, and the title would mandate that the Forest Service conduct future studies for improving mountain biking trail opportunities across the Los Padres National Forest. Additionally, the title protects trail corridors for numerous high priority trails identified by local mountain bikers through the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCCMB), an IMBA local group, and CCCMB and IMBA have worked as part of a coalition to adjust proposed boundaries in order to protect corridors for the Mono Alamar trail, the McPherson Peak Trail, and the Rinconada Creek/Mine trails, as well as make other priority trail adjustments.



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Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

Proposed Designations

- Proposed Scenic Area
- Potential Wilderness Area
- Proposed Wilderness Area

Designated Areas

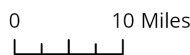
- Wilderness Area
- National Monument

Proposed Wild & Scenic River

- Recreational
- Scenic
- Wild

Recreation

- ▲ Rock Climbing
- River Access
- Whitewater Paddling
- Mountain Biking Trail
- Hiking Trail



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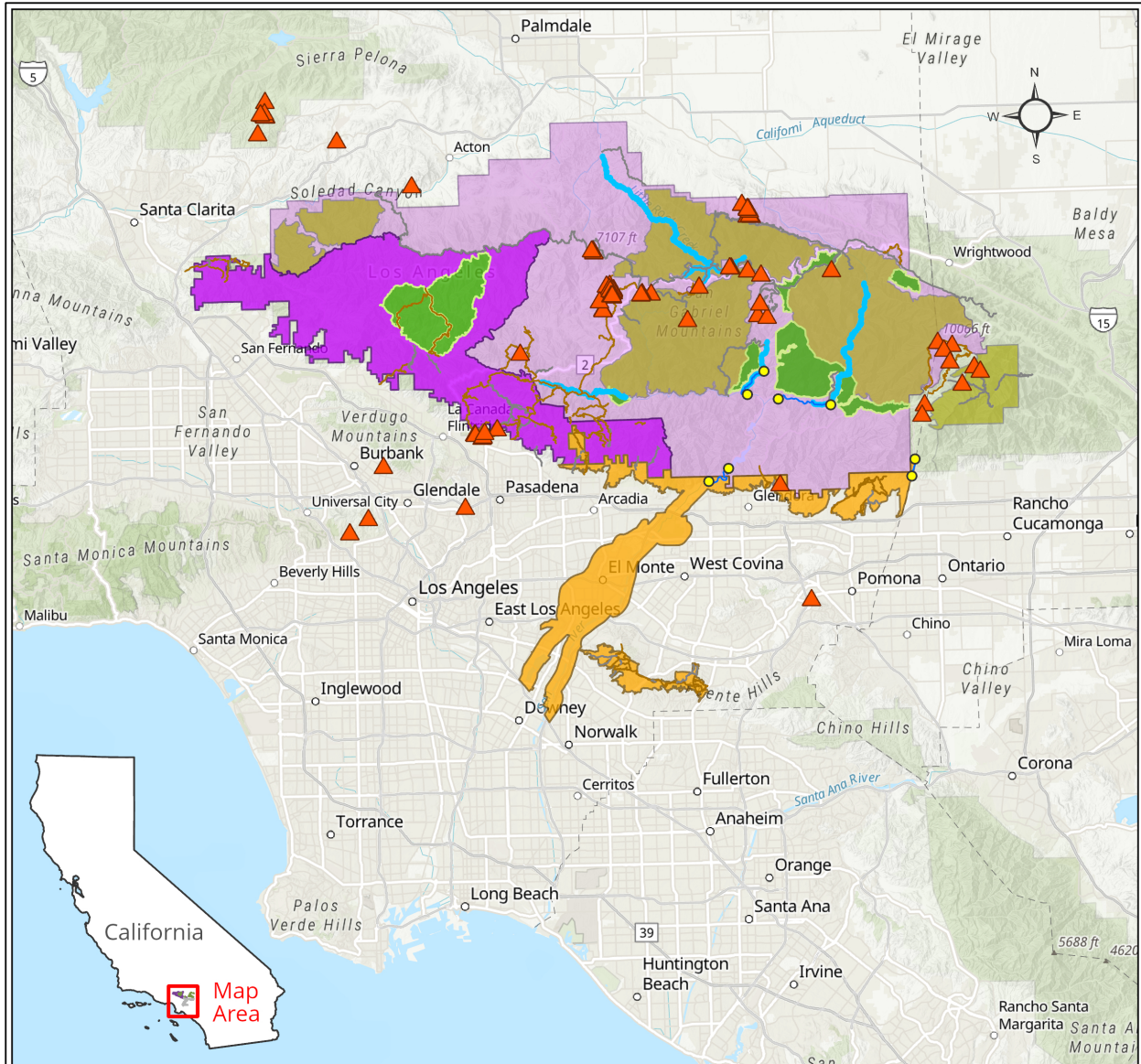
Right on the edge of Los Angeles in the Angeles National Forest, the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument represents 70 percent of the open space in the Los Angeles metropolitan region and provides 30 percent of the region's drinking water. The **San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection** title of the PUBLIC Lands Act will adding lasting protections to the San Gabriel Mountains, supporting the health and well-being of all Angelenos and helping to sustain the health of local businesses and the broader outdoor recreation economy.

We especially appreciate the various designations included in the bill that allow for multiple recreational uses. The San Gabriel foothills are an important urban/wild buffer zone and the gateway to the mountains for many millions of Angelenos who otherwise have limited access to open space and outdoor recreation. The establishment of a 51,000-acre National Recreation Area along the foothills and San Gabriel River corridor and Puente Hills will not only help improve that access, but will also ensure that these highly popular and heavily used areas receive the resources they need to be managed and maintained in a sustainable manner for the safety and enjoyment of all.

The title would increase opportunities for Angelenos to enjoy the outdoors by expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by nearly 110,000 acres to include the western portions of the Angeles National Forest. The title would establish an 8,417 acre Condor Peak Wilderness and a 6,774 acre Yerba Buena Wilderness. Additionally, the San Gabriel Wilderness would be expanded by 2,000 acres, and the Sheep Mountain by nearly 14,000 acres. The proposed Sheep Mountain Wilderness additions include a segment of the famous Pacific Crest Trail and the popular East Fork Trail. This area is famous for its rare mountain yellow-legged frog, the California spotted owl, and the many incredible trout streams perfect for fishing.







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San Gabriel Mountains, Foothills, and Rivers Protection Act






Proposed Designations

-  Proposed Wild & Scenic River
-  National Monument Expansion
-  National Recreation Area
-  Proposed Wilderness

Designated Areas

-  National Monument
-  Wilderness Area

Recreation Resources

-  Rock Climbing
-  River Access
-  Whitewater Paddling
-  Mountain Biking Trail
-  Hiking Trail



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The PUBLIC Lands act, as whole, comprises bills that reflect decades of thoughtful development and collaboration, and we strongly support its passage.

S. 1493, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act

The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act balances forest health, recreation, and conservation, and in addition to enhancing the state and national outdoor recreation economy, the bill will help sustain thousands of forest restoration jobs that improve fish and wildlife habitat.

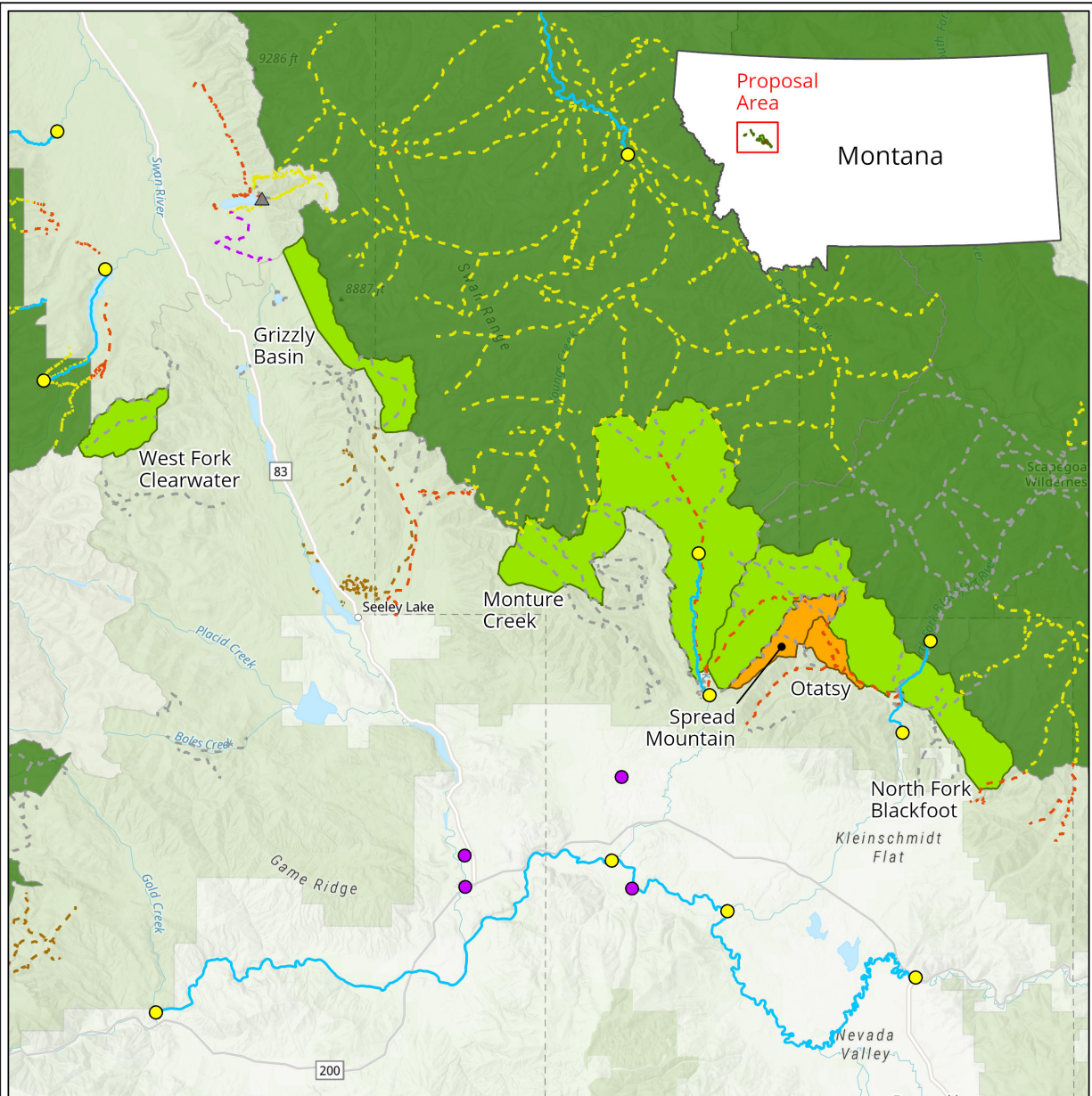
Eighty percent of Montanans and millions of annual Montana visitors recreate on Montana's public lands. The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act protects existing recreation opportunities like hiking, fishing the world-renowned Blackfoot River, and hunting in the famous Bob Marshall Wilderness, and identifies areas for new mountain bike and snowmobile access. The proposed Spread Mountain Recreation Management Area will preserve mountain bike access from Spread Mountain to Camp Pass, and the Otatsy Recreation Management Area would open 2,000 acres to high-quality snowmobiling near Ovando. Furthermore, the bill asks the Forest Service to study new recreation opportunities for varied users.

The bill will protect the health of the Blackfoot River and its native trout populations by protecting key tributaries, including the North Fork, Monture Creek, Morrell Creek, and West Fork Clearwater. The North Fork Blackfoot and Monture Creek are particularly valued by paddlers and would be excellent future candidates for Wild and Scenic designation. The bill preserves these important trout habitats and supports Montana's vibrant angling industry. This initiative protects wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors—important to game, like elk, and sensitive species like grizzlies, wolverines, and lynx—by adding nearly 80,000 acres to the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Mission Mountains Wilderness areas.

The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act is a grassroots, Montana-lead effort to protect some of the state's most treasured headwaters. Because it balances the varied ways in which the state's public lands are used, it enjoys broad support from the timber, recreation, business, ranching, and conservation communities.

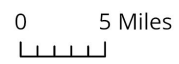
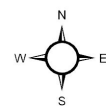


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Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act

- Proposed Recreation Management Area
- Proposed Wilderness Area
- Designated Wilderness Area
- Whitewater Paddling
- Trails
- Hiking
- Hiking, Equestrian
- Hiking, Mountain Biking
- Hiking, Mountain Biking, Equestrian
- Cross-Country Skiing, Snowshoeing
- Rock Climbing Site
- River Access
- Fishing Access



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S. 1538, the Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act. This legislation will protect the North Fork Smith River headwaters from the destructive effects of strip mining and safeguard its unique habitat and world class recreation opportunities.

The Smith River is the largest entirely free flowing river in California. Unfortunately, the Smith River National Recreation Area currently does not include the portion of the North Fork Smith in Oregon. Although relatively small in area, the bill contains the northern headwaters of the Smith River, which support a unique landscape, miles of pristine rivers and streams, and priceless recreation opportunities.

Current trends show that proximity to natural beauty and opportunities for outdoor recreation are tightly linked to increased desirability and economic development. The Smith River and its surroundings are already legendary in this regard, and the primary economic base for the region is its recreational opportunities, including fishing, hunting, whitewater paddling, cycling, hiking, backpacking, and surfing. Any damage done to the headwaters of the North Fork Smith has the potential to ripple down through all of these activities, causing significant harm to the region's economy. The legislation would protect the remaining 58,000 acres of North Fork Smith watershed, including at least 40 miles of hiking trails, a portion of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, and 75 miles of river and tributaries, including three premier wilderness whitewater paddling reaches totaling 35 miles of rugged, remote, beautiful water of the highest quality.

S. 1589, the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the thoughtful protections that would be enacted by the Oregon Recreation Enhancement (ORE) Act. We are particularly pleased to support legislation that designates Wilderness while also using other protective designations where more appropriate. This legislation would establish the following three designations:



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Rogue Canyon Recreation Area

The bill establishes a 98,000 acre Recreation Area on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management adjacent to the Wild Rogue Wilderness Area. This includes lands along the upper reaches of the Wild and Scenic corridor often enjoyed for day use near Galice, as well as lands along the Bear Camp Road. While existing roads would remain, no new permanent roads would be constructed, wildfire management would continue to be permitted, and new mining claims would be prohibited. Lands would be managed for purposes of protecting, conserving, and enhancing the unique and nationally important recreational, ecological, scenic, cultural, watershed, and fish and wildlife values.

Wild Rogue Wilderness Expansion

The bill expands the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness Area to approximately 60,000 acres. Although river runners and trail users experiencing the Wild and Scenic Rogue River enjoy a backcountry experience from Grave Creek to Foster Bar, the river is not protected as Wilderness until you pass through Mule Creek Canyon and enter the lower reaches of the river corridor administered by the Forest Service. This Wilderness expansion would protect the river corridor along the entire length of the section of the Rogue River experienced as a multi-day river trip.

Molalla Recreation Area

The bill establishes a 30,000 acre Recreation Area on the banks of the Molalla River in Clackamas County adjacent to the Table Rock Wilderness Area. The Molalla River Trails System, a network of approximately 20 miles of trail, winds through forested foothills and offers scenic views of the Cascade Range for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians who visit. While the Molalla was designated as a Wild and Scenic River in March 2019, this designation would provide complementary protection to the lands along the river corridor and ensure that they are managed for purposes of protecting, conserving, and enhancing the unique and nationally important recreational, ecological, scenic, cultural, watershed, and fish and wildlife values.



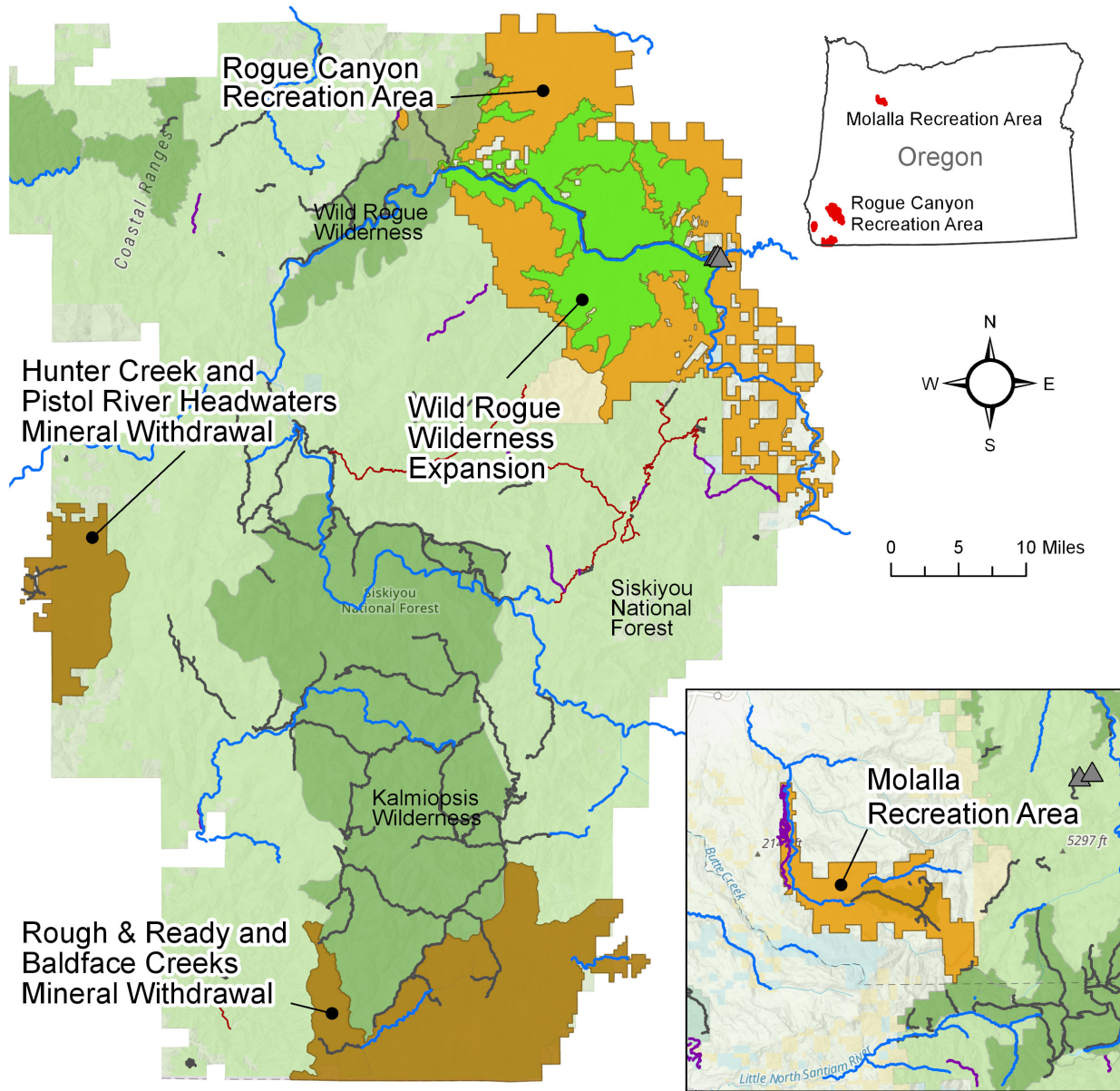
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Mineral Withdrawals

In addition to these protected areas, the ORE Act would protect more than 100,000 acres of federal lands along the headwater streams of Baldface Creek, Rough and Ready Creek, Hunter Creek, and Pistol River from new mining claims. These lands are located at the headwaters of rivers that include the Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith and Illinois Rivers that represent spectacular whitewater boating resources known for their exceptional water quality. While the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management issued a 20-year administrative withdrawal from new mining claims in 2016, the legislation would make this protection permanent.



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Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act

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Proposed Designation

- Mineral Withdrawal
- Proposed Wilderness
- Recreation Area

Land Management

- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- State
- Wilderness Area

Recreation Resources

- Rock Climbing Site
- Whitewater Paddling
- Hiking
- Hiking | Mountain Biking
- Motorized



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* * *

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding this hearing, and we look forward to working with the Subcommittee to advance legislation in support of recreation and conservation values on our public lands and waters.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers
Mitsu Iwasaki, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club
Sarah Bradham, Interim Executive Director, the Mazamas
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

