



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
DEMOCRATS  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Pallone Highlights Impacts of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation on the Outdoor Recreation Economy**

**Washington, D.C.** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Subcommittee hearing on “Outdoor Recreation: Vast Impact of the Great Outdoors.”*

Mr. Chairman, today’s hearing is on the effect of outdoor recreation on the U.S. economy. It is an opportunity to celebrate outdoor recreation. Nothing gets families clamoring to be outdoors more than a day at the beach. And in my district, with the beautiful beaches in Monmouth County, tourism was up more than five percent in 2016 due to the great weather we had last summer. When tourism increases, our local economy thrives, especially in more rural areas.

This hearing also gives us the opportunity to highlight the clear link between the economy and environmental stewardship. Supporting outdoor recreation means taking meaningful action to protect the environment. If we do not take care of our environment, the benefits of outdoor recreation to the economy, and to the American people, will vanish. Severe weather events are increasing, having devastating effects on communities across the country. Superstorm Sandy wrecked shore towns in New Jersey and badly hurt our economy. The storm caused catastrophic property damage, destructive shoreline erosion, and many deaths.

Temperatures are increasing and precipitation patterns are changing. Not only does this affect ski and snowboarding resorts, it leads to water shortages and increases the risk of fires. It also means more heat advisories and air quality warnings, forcing more people to stay indoors and avoid outdoor activities. We are also seeing an increase in vector-borne diseases like Zika as mosquitos and ticks migrate northward, increasing health risks and again giving people a reason to stay inside.

So at the same time as we pay tribute to outdoor recreation’s positive effects on our economy, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge existing environmental concerns—including climate change—and consider how recent federal policy initiatives could exacerbate those concerns.

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It is hard to know where to start. Just yesterday, President Trump issued an executive order instructing a review of national monument designations as an attack on the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designations by Presidents Obama and Clinton, and perhaps others. This attack comes despite the fact that counties with protected lands have faster economic growth than those without such protections. Therefore, also yesterday, my colleagues and I wrote Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke seeking to ensure protection of these vital national lands.

Then there is the Trump Administration and Republican efforts to slash funding for the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior, and other federal agencies that have a mission to keep our water and air clean and federal lands protected and open to the public. Republicans are also attempting to roll-back efforts to curb carbon pollution, exit the Paris Agreement, privatize public lands, and allow coal production and oil and gas drilling in national parks.

Concerns also have been raised over the decline in international visitors to the United States in response to the Administration's travel ban. Thirty-five percent of international visitors go to national parks and monuments while in the U.S. The Administration's actions can seriously harm tourism and the outdoor recreation economy.

If we want the outdoor recreation industry to thrive, we must protect the land, water, and wildlife resources that are the foundations of outdoor activities. The outdoor recreation economy is dependent on funding for, protection of, and access to public lands and waters.

So while I was pleased that this Committee was able to pass the Outdoor Rec Act last Congress, which elevated the issue of outdoor recreation and gave it the bipartisan support it deserves, I want to stress that there is more work to be done. Damage to the environment leads to damage to outdoor recreation, hurting the U.S. economy. Let's work to address the changing climate and protect our shorelines, streams, and federal lands. Thank you.

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