

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection
“Outdoor Recreation: Vast Impact of the Great Outdoors”**

April 27, 2017

As the longest-standing committee on the Hill, Energy and Commerce has long sought to highlight industries and promote policies that will boost our economy and create more jobs. That is precisely why I am excited about the topic of our discussion today: the outdoor recreation industry. Increasingly, we are seeing the economic prowess of outdoor recreation and understanding how vital it is to a healthy American economy. In recent years, outdoor recreation has demonstrated its importance by injecting hundreds of billions of dollars into the U.S. economy and generating millions of jobs.

The outdoor recreation industry has quickly become one of our nation’s largest economic sectors. From manufacturing to retail and accommodation to transportation, outdoor recreation affects many major U.S. economic sectors. It’s an industry that is truly driven by the American consumer. Every year millions of Americans spend their hard-earned dollars on everything from gear and vehicles to trips and travel. In fact, Americans spend about \$185 billion on outdoor recreation gear and roughly \$702 billion on everything from airfare and lodging to lift tickets and guided tours.

I’d like to highlight Columbia Sportswear and the RV Industry Association joining us among our panel today, as my home state of Oregon, and specifically my district, benefit greatly from both. Northwood Manufacturing and Keystone RV design develop and manufacture RVs, helping to create jobs and economic stability in Oregon’s Second District. Columbia, which is headquartered in Oregon, helps supports folks across the Beaver state. I am happy to have you here with us today and thank you for your work back home.

Oregon is also home to some of our nation’s greatest public treasures. From Crater Lake National Park to the Columbia River Gorge and many other impressive public lands, Oregon offers an abundance of outdoor opportunities. Nearly 70% of all Oregon residents take advantage of these public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities annually. This high level of consumer engagement has resulted in almost 141,000 jobs and \$4 billion dollars in wages and salaries back home in Oregon alone.

As Chairman Latta indicated in his opening, the 114th Congress passed the Outdoor REC Act which ensures outdoor recreation will be counted as part of the U.S. GDP. The data provided through this effort will help inform policymakers about how outdoor recreation is quickly becoming a powerful economic engine on public lands. The data will also help to guide budget and investment decisions at every level of government, including how to boost rural economies, attract out-of-state employers and visitors, and create sound policies that preserve public lands for future generations.

I look forward to exploring the economic and social benefits of outdoor recreation as well as any barriers that may stifle continued growth and success in this extremely important industry. I want to thank you all for being here with us today, and I look forward to hearing your testimony.