

**Subcommittee Chair Debra Haaland  
NPFPL Oversight Hearing  
Opening Statement  
May 15, 2019**

- **Thank you all for being here today for the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' oversight hearing on climate change and outdoor recreation.**
- **Earlier this Congress, this Subcommittee heard testimony from leading scientists about the disproportionate impact climate change is having on our public lands, and the role that these lands can play in helping us adapt to climate change.**
- **When addressing complex problems such as climate change, it is critical that we consider the impacts to our communities, livelihoods and economy.**
- **Across the country, our public lands support a robust outdoor recreation industry that generates 7.6 million stable, clean, American jobs and nearly \$900 billion in annual consumer spending and growing.**
- **The industry is becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate change, however.**

- **Rising temperatures and declining snowpack are leading to shorter seasons for snow-sports, negatively impacting the winter tourism economy.**
- **Climate change impacts kayaking, rafting, swimming and surfing as reduced flows and algal blooms plague our lakes, rivers and beaches.**
- **Warmer temperatures are shifting ecosystems, forcing wildlife to alter their behaviors and migration patterns, which is impacting hunting.**
- **In my home state of New Mexico, rising temperatures and drought are causing lower stream levels that are expected to reduce the availability of suitable habitats for Gila trout by 70 percent and could drastically reduce sportfishing opportunities.**
- **Climate change is impacting our recreational landscapes in National Parks. It is shifting the range of the iconic trees in Joshua Tree National Park, disappearing ice and snow in Glacier National Park, and leading to lower water levels in Lake Mead.**

- **Landscapes and resources that have existed since time immemorial are disappearing.**
- **Unfortunately, the Trump administration's aggressive push for "energy dominance" continues to put our public lands, our health, and our recreational opportunities at risk.**
- **This extractive agenda will only degrade our public lands further and exacerbate the impacts of climate change.**
- **Over a ten-year period, extraction produced 25 percent of the U.S.'s total carbon dioxide emissions. A large portion of this extraction occurred on public lands – land that is tied up in leases and locked away from recreation.**
- **Contrary to the administration's beliefs, protecting our public lands and addressing climate change does not need to come at the expense of economic development.**
- **A 2019 Colorado College poll confirmed that nearly two thirds of westerners want their elected officials to address climate change and protect our public lands while only a quarter prefer "energy dominance."**

- **And nearly 90 percent of respondents believe outdoor recreation is important to their states' economy.**
- **In 2016, the outdoor recreation industry accounted for more of the gross domestic product than mining, oil, and gas extraction combined – with outdoor recreation growing at a faster rate than the overall U.S. economy.**
- **In New Mexico, outdoor recreation supports twice as many jobs as the energy and mining industries combined.**
- **We cannot continue to abuse our public lands in a way that contributes to the climate problem – rather, these exceptional resources need to be part of the solution.**
- **Conserving public lands protects habitat for wildlife, helping vulnerable species adapt to changing environments, and safeguards the ecosystems which recreational communities rely on.**
- **It is time that we prioritize the welfare of the American people over polluting industries.**

- **Climate change has already started to impact the ability of Americans to enjoy their public lands.**
- **We must start to aggressively address climate change to save the places and recreational opportunities that people need and love.**
- **Thank you again to the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.**