

Opening Statement of Republican Leader Young
Oversight Hearing on “Examining the Impacts of Climate
Change on Public Lands Recreation”
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
May 15, 2019

As the Chair noted in her opening statement, today we meet once again to discuss climate change. This time, the focus is its effect on recreation on our public lands.

By my count this is the 8th hearing that this Committee has held this Congress focusing on climate change.

While this topic is important and worthy of Committee attention, my friends on the other side of the dais have used these hearings to push an extreme and unrealistic progressive agenda. They do this while ignoring many reasonable land management solutions that would improve many of the ongoing challenges facing our public lands.

It is my hope that we can reverse that unfortunate trend today and leave partisan showboating out.

There are many policy solutions that fall under this subcommittee’s jurisdiction, and I hope we can begin to work

towards the type realistic long-term solutions that our constituents elected us to deliver.

The Natural Resources Republicans stand ready to work with our Democrat colleagues to craft practical solutions to improve land and resource management, enhance environmental stewardship, and expand access to recreational opportunities.

Among the most dire calamities afflicting our nation's public lands and rural communities year after year is the growing threat of extreme wildfires.

Many of our nation's forests, particularly in the West, are overgrown and undermanaged. Warmer and drier summers have worsened an existing problem and have turned many of our lands into ticking time bombs.

These yearly, unmanageable, megafires have brought horrifying devastation. They have destroyed enormous amounts of land, countless structures, and most tragic of all have killed over 400 Americans in the last 20 years.

For our nation's sportsmen and outdoor recreationists, wildfires have destroyed pristine wildlife habitat, popular trails, and critical infrastructure needed to access our public lands.

In addition to the need for active forest management, there are many other policies this subcommittee should focus on.

Today, we have invited two esteemed representatives from the outdoor recreation community. **Mr. Mark Lambrecht of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Mr. Fred Ferguson representing one of our nation's largest outdoor retailers, Vista Outdoor.**

Both witnesses will highlight specific things this Committee can do to increase recreational access, foster sustainable wildlife populations, remove bureaucratic red tape, and fund public lands maintenance.

It is my hope that we can focus on real solutions and that this does not end up being yet another vaguely titled hearing full of partisan fluff. This Committee ought to begin work on specific reforms, within its jurisdiction, that will bring relief to our recreating public.

I thank the witnesses for their testimony and willingness to travel to Washington, D.C. to be with us here today.

I yield back.