

Opening Statement of  
Ranking Republican John Curtis  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3879, Simplifying  
Outdoor Access for Recreation Act (SOAR) and  
H.R. 3458, Recreation Not Red Tape  
09.19.2019

I want to thank Chair Haaland for convening this hearing today. We have before us two bills that have been crafted through extensive bipartisan collaboration. I am especially pleased to see the inclusion of H.R. 3879, the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act, which is a bill that I am very proud to have introduced with Chair Haaland. I believe this bill, along with H.R. 3458, the Recreation Not Red Tape Act, sponsored by Ranking Republican Bishop, reflect the type of legislative solutions that are possible when we

put aside partisan posturing and we work together.

Our nation has a long and proud tradition of love for the great outdoors. Outdoor recreation is deeply ingrained in the fabric of our nation, and our vast bounty of public lands offer an unparalleled array of recreation and sporting activities as diverse as our great nation.

I have the privilege of representing the 3rd Congressional District of Utah, which is home to some of the most breathtaking public lands in the country. With three of my counties exceeding 90 percent public ownership, maintaining recreational opportunities and access to these lands is vitally important to Utahns, and also for the many visitors we host every year.

Unfortunately, outdoor recreational opportunities are not easily accessible to many Americans. In recent decades, population growth and urbanization has forced millions of Americans to traverse miles of crowded highways to access the great outdoors. Moreover, recreating on our nation's public lands often requires special permits, parking passes, and payment of fees that, while important to help maintain our public lands, too often involve confusing, cumbersome, and costly processes.

Both of the bills before us today will reduce the cost and complexity of recreation on federal lands.

The SOAR Act provides expanded access to outdoor recreation by improving our federal outfitter and guide permitting systems. This bill increases flexibility, simplifies processes, and

improves fee collection and cost recovery. The provisions contained in this bill will improve outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, while easing unnecessary burdens and delays in the permitting process used by outfitters and guides. The SOAR is the culmination of years of stakeholder outreach and bipartisan conversations, which is reflected in the overwhelming support it has garnered from a wide spectrum of outdoor recreation and sportsmen's communities. I'd like to ask unanimous consent to submit for the record a letter of support and thanks from the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, with a coalition of 28 members representing more than 50,000 businesses from the outdoor community, addressed to myself and Ms. Haaland for working together on this bill.

The second bill before us today would similarly enhance outdoor recreation opportunities and allow for more Americans to get outdoors. This bill will remove barriers to outdoor recreation, streamline the permitting process for guides and recreationists, empower state outdoor recreation efforts, reduce burdensome costs associated recreation permits and hold federal agencies accountable for making outdoor recreation a priority.

Outdoor recreation provides significant benefits to personal health and well-being and it is vitally important that we do everything we can to ensure ample access and opportunities for all Americans to enjoy recreating on our public lands. The two bills before us today will most assuredly advance that shared objective that transcends party lines. I want to thank the witnesses for being here today, and I look

forward to hearing their testimony. Thank you,  
and I yield back.