

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

September 29, 2023

Rep. Tom Tiffany
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
451 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Joe Neguse
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
2400 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: September 19th Federal Lands Subcommittee legislative hearing on outdoor recreation.

Chair Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for holding September 19th's legislative hearing on outdoor recreation. Multiple bills before the subcommittee would improve and expand sustainable recreation opportunities across the U.S. and provide support to the nation's growing \$862 billion outdoor recreation economy. We encourage you to advance the bills noted below and include them in a first-of-its kind outdoor recreation package in 2023.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

Outdoor recreation on federal public lands and waters supports numerous public health and environmental benefits and helps Americans build a lasting connection with their public lands. Recreation also provides far-reaching economic benefits, which are particularly pronounced for rural communities and others in the vicinity



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of public lands. As these benefits continue to grow alongside overall participation in outdoor activities, action from Congress is needed to modernize how federal agencies plan for and manage recreational use.

The bills before the subcommittee would help elevate outdoor recreation as a priority across multiple federal agencies, and would support needed updates and new initiatives to account for the type, extent, and diversity of outdoor recreation activities occurring across the U.S. today. The two bills mentioned below—H.R. 3107 and 3200—closely resemble components of S. 873, America’s Outdoor Recreation Act (AORA), which recently passed out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with a unanimous bipartisan vote. We are highly pleased to see the subcommittee consider outdoor recreation policy in a similar bipartisan manner, and we encourage you to move forward with a bipartisan recreation package similar to AORA before the end of the year.

Our comments on specific bills are below.

Improving Outdoor Coordination Act (H.R. 3107)

Outdoor Alliance supports H.R. 3107, which would make permanent the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR). As the popularity, diversity, and economic impact of outdoor recreation continues to grow, increased attention to recreation management is needed across federal agencies. In many cases, the recreation experience does not abide by jurisdictional boundaries, and recreationists often pass through lands or waters managed by multiple agencies during their time outdoors. FICOR can improve coordination around recreation management between agencies, and can elevate outdoor recreation as a land management priority across the federal government.

FICOR was renewed in 2022 with overwhelming support from the outdoor recreation community. The council’s goals include investing in recreation infrastructure, expanding outdoor education and career development, improving coordination with non-federal partners, and improving access to sustainable recreation opportunities on federal public lands and waters. H.R. 3107 builds on these existing goals and would codify FICOR to provide more permanency and consistency to the council’s work.



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Outdoor Alliance appreciates the bill sponsors' leadership on this issue and respectfully recommends the following changes to H.R. 3107:

- Expand the definitions of “Federal Land Management Agency” and “Federal Recreational Lands and Waters” to include U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These agencies play a critical role in managing recreation lands and waters and recreation infrastructure enjoyed by our community.
- Change § 200104(b) to include NOAA in its entirety, rather than just the National Marine Fisheries Service. Multiple departments within NOAA play a role in managing coastal recreation and should be considered by FICOR.
- Clarify that FICOR leadership is shared between agencies by removing reference to “The Secretary” in § 200104(a).

Gateway Community and Recreation Enhancement Act (H.R. 3200)

Outdoor Alliance supports H.R. 3200, which will help gateway communities capitalize on their proximity to recreation amenities in building local economies and also establish a digital National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands pass. The significance of outdoor recreation-related tourism in gateway communities has grown in recent years following high levels of participation in outdoor activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. As more communities adapt to high levels of visitation and invest in their outdoor economies, additional support and collaboration from federal land managers can help address housing costs, infrastructure needs, workforce development, and other issues that can accompany recreation-related economic growth. To accomplish this goal, H.R. 3200 requires federal agencies to work with state, local, Tribal, and nonprofit partners to create a needs assessment of gateway communities, and would provide new pathways for resource sharing between the federal government and local communities.

Outdoor Alliance supports Section 4's intent that local stakeholders be notified and have an opportunity to weigh in on potential closures of National Parks. We respectfully recommend adding the phrase “or resource conservation concerns” to the parenthetical language in the beginning of this section in order to account for potential impacts on sensitive ecological resources.



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We also appreciate Section 5, which improves how federal agencies communicate with the public regarding visitation to public lands. Current agency reporting makes it difficult for the public—and often land managers themselves—to understand the true location, extent, seasonality, and timing of recreational use across public lands. Innovative approaches like the proposed Real-time Data Pilot Program will help agencies adapt their recreation management to better account for where and when significant recreational use is occurring, including by identifying lesser-known recreation sites.

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Thank you for considering our community's input, and thank you for holding this important hearing. We look forward to working with you to expand sustainable, high-quality outdoor opportunities across America's public lands and waters.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Vice President for Policy and Government Relations
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance
Erik Murdock, Interim Executive Director, Access Fund
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