

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

March 25, 2026

Rep. Tom Tiffany  
Chair, Federal Lands Subcommittee  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Joe Neguse  
Ranking Member, Federal Lands Subcommittee  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

## **Re: March 25th Federal Lands Subcommittee legislative hearing**

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for the opportunity to provide input on March 25th's Subcommittee hearing on legislation affecting federal public lands.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of nine 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, 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 Alliance appreciates the Subcommittee's continued attention to outdoor recreation on federal public lands. Recent data shows that outdoor recreation



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continues to grow in both overall participation,<sup>1</sup> and as an important sector of America's economy, supporting \$1.3 trillion in economic output and 5.2 million jobs and comprising 2.4% of U.S. gross domestic product in 2024.<sup>2</sup> We encourage the Subcommittee to build on the recent success of the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Experiences (EXPLORE Act) by advancing legislation that protects the landscapes and recreation opportunities that draw Americans to their public lands and empowers communities and businesses to invest in local outdoor economies.

Our input on specific bills before the Subcommittee is included in the sections below:

## **Public Lands Access Restoration Act (H.R. 7979)**

Outdoor Alliance strongly opposes the Public Lands Access Restoration Act. The bill proposes to expand access for motorized recreation on National Forests and BLM lands, but adopts an extreme approach that would harm non-motorized recreation opportunities and conservation values. Outdoor Alliance supports motorized recreation opportunities on public lands, but land managers must have appropriate tools to provide a spectrum of recreation opportunities, reduce user conflict, and protect resource values. As currently proposed, the bill creates an unbalanced and unworkable system that would significantly impair the quality of the outdoor recreation experience across the majority of our nation's public lands.

Specifically, H.R. 7979 would open all roads and trails managed by the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) outside of designated Wilderness to motor vehicle access unless the Secretary concerned designates a trail as closed—a reversal of longstanding USFS policy establishing that roads and trails are closed to motor vehicles unless otherwise designated as open,<sup>3</sup> a policy that was a necessary response to extremely significant resource degradation issues

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<sup>1</sup> See, Outdoor Industry Association, *2025 Outdoor Participation Trends Report: Executive Summary* (2025), available at <https://oia.outdoorindustry.org/exec-summary-outdoor-participation-trends>. Outdoor recreation participation grew to 181.1 million participants in 2024.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Outdoor Recreation Economic Statistics, U.S. and States, 2024* (2026), available at <https://www.bea.gov/news/2026/outdoor-recreation-economic-statistics-us-and-states-2024>.

<sup>3</sup> 36 C.F.R. § 212.50.



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stemming from unmanaged motorized use. The bill also sets strict standards by which agencies are instructed to evaluate motorized use restrictions, including that restrictions are based on “clear and convincing evidence for resource protection and public safety,” are informed by public comment, and applied to the smallest area, for the shortest amount of time possible. The bill also establishes a process by which members of the public can nominate new motorized trails, and sets a 90-day timeline for decisions related to these public nominations.

Together, these changes would open the vast majority of BLM and USFS trails to motorized use and create a very high bar for land managers to evaluate individual motorized access restrictions. While many members of our community enjoy both motorized and nonmotorized forms of recreation, the bill’s proposed “open unless designated closed” policy would substantially change the character of many public lands that members of our community currently seek out for a quieter nonmotorized recreation experience in addition to directly altering the nature of many trails, including trails not designed or intended to accommodate motorized use. These effects would be particularly severe for activities like mountain biking, which are not permissible in designated Wilderness. While motorized use and mountain biking can co-exist on the same trails in some areas, in other locations or soil types, motorized use can have direct and significant effects on the quality of trails. Land managers must have appropriate tools at their disposal to provide a high-quality recreation experience for recreationists of all types—including both motorized and non-motorized recreation—on landscapes managed for multiple use.

Additionally, we are concerned that the nomination process proposed in H.R. 7979 would be inefficient and onerous to implement compared to the current system, effectively forcing local BLM and USFS line officers to focus their already-limited capacity on a high number of individual, likely-contentious trail access decisions.

The human-powered outdoor recreation community is committed to working collaboratively towards ensuring that all forms of outdoor recreation are appropriately balanced on public lands and that road and trail decisions do not unnecessarily restrict access or damage important resource values. To this end, members of our community worked successfully with members of this Committee to pass the EXPLORE Act, which includes a requirement that BLM and USFS publish



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maps delineating motorized access in a timely manner, in accordance with current administrative policy.<sup>4</sup> We are committed to implementing this section of EXPLORE and ask that Congress not bias road and trails decisions to favor a particular recreational use.

For these reasons, we oppose H.R. 7979 and ask that the Subcommittee not advance this legislation.

## **Long-Term Good Neighbor Authority Act (H.R. 7951)**

The Long-Term Good Neighbor Authority Act would extend the timeline for Good Neighbor Agreements, including those authorized by the EXPLORE Act for recreation purposes, from 10 to 20 years. While we support extending the timeline for these agreements for cooperating state, local, and tribal governments, we encourage the Subcommittee to advance EXPLORE Act amendments in a comprehensive manner rather than through a piecemeal approach.

Prior to the EXPLORE Act passing in December 2024, House and Senate lawmakers negotiated a set of changes to the bill that incorporated agency feedback and made technical corrections to a number of sections. The 118th Congress ran out of time to pass the negotiated version of EXPLORE in both chambers, which resulted in the Senate passing the earlier House version of the bill with a verbal commitment among the bill sponsors to revisit the bill in the 119th Congress.

We strongly encourage the Subcommittee to advance a comprehensive package of EXPLORE Act amendments, including updates to GNA, based on the negotiated language from the last Congress. These changes will help clarify certain issues related to implementation and will help agencies better implement the bill's intent.

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Thank you for considering our community's input. We look forward to working with you to expand and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands and waters.

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<sup>4</sup> 16 U.S.C. § 8425.



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Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Vice President for Policy and Government Relations  
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance  
Heather Thorne, Executive Director, Access Fund  
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Clinton Begley, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
David Page, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers  
Ben Gabriel, Executive Director, American Alpine Club  
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Chad Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

