

**Written Testimony of the National Ski Areas Association
To the House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
On H.R. 9248, the Recreation Permitting Improvement Act
July 1, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on H.R. 9248, the Recreation Permitting Improvement Act, on behalf of the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA). NSAA supports the bill's objective of making recreation projects eligible for the permitting coordination tools that FAST-41 already extends to other infrastructure sectors, and we appreciate Representative Hurd's attention to the federal permitting process as it affects outdoor recreation on public lands.

NSAA is the national trade association for ski area owners and operators, with over 330 member ski areas accounting for more than 90 percent of the skier and snowboarder visits nationwide. 127 of those ski areas operate on National Forest System lands under special use authorizations from the U.S. Forest Service. This essential public-private partnership dates back to the 1940s and delivers an outdoor recreation experience unmatched in the world, supporting rural economies, boosting the health of millions of Americans, and providing financial return to the federal government through the fees ski areas pay for use of the land.

Ski areas on National Forest System lands are among the most repeatedly analyzed federal lands. As applicants with deep National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) experience, our members have a direct and practical interest in federal permitting policies and procedures. Ski areas are also uniquely exposed to the cost of permitting delays as construction at high-elevation sites can generally only be completed during the short snow-free months of summer and early fall. A federal decision that slips by even a few weeks can push an entire project back by a full year to the next available construction season.

Since its enactment in 2015 and establishment as a permanent body in 2021, FAST-41 has improved the transparency, predictability, and timeliness of federal environmental review and authorization for qualifying infrastructure projects. It does so not by altering substantive environmental standards, but by designating a lead review agency, requiring coordinated project-specific timetables, and tracking review milestones publicly on the Federal Permitting Dashboard. Across sectors ranging from energy and water to manufacturing and broadband, added coordination and accountability has delivered real value to project sponsors, agencies, and the public alike.

There is a sound basis for extending that same eligibility to recreation. Accounting for more than 164 million visits annually, recreation is the single greatest use of the National Forests. Ski areas represent some of the most significant long-horizon capital investments on those lands — over

\$10 billion to date! — made on the strength of 40-year special use permits.¹ Extending FAST-41 eligibility to the recreation sector would allow qualifying recreation projects to access the same coordination and transparency tools available to other sectors, with significant benefits for the visiting public, the gateway communities that depend on these ski areas, and the agencies charged with reviewing the projects.

It is worth noting that for meaningful change to take place in speeding up the process for completing recreation projects, more is needed than H.R. 9248. FAST-41 is a procedural framework: it improves how federal reviews are coordinated and tracked, but it does not by itself add Forest Service staffing or funding, and it would not create any special status for recreation projects. Often the bottlenecks NSAA members encounter in ski area permitting are related to the agency's capacity to administer recreation special use permits and review proposed improvements. We therefore view recreation eligibility under FAST-41 as a useful tool that complements, rather than substitutes for, the broader work of ensuring the agency has the capacity to meet its partnership obligations to ski areas. Seen in that light, H.R. 9248 is a modest, sensible step, and we support it.

NSAA welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources and Representative Hurd's office as this legislation moves forward. Thank you for your consideration of this written testimony.

¹ USDA Forest Service, National Visitor Use Monitoring (2024), fs.usda.gov/about-agency/nvum