

## Responses to Additional Questions for the Record

### House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

February 28, 2019

**1. Mr. Cole, some conservatives, especially those from the West, often cast our public lands as a burden. They claim that public lands hurt economies and ruin development potential.**

**Do you at Patagonia think that public lands harm communities?**

At Patagonia, we do not think of public lands as a burden, and in fact just the opposite: as a business that relies on protected public lands for our very existence, we know that public lands, particularly protected public lands, contribute immensely to the health and economic vitality of local communities. Looking first at the data, Headwaters Economics, an independent, non-partisan research firm, has shown that from the early 1970s to the early 2010s, "...rural counties in the West with more federal lands or protected federal lands [perform] better on average than their peers with less federal lands." This was shown to be true for four key economic measures: population, employment, personal income, and to a smaller extent, per capita income growth. Public lands also bring value across numerous different areas: from the ecosystem services of clean water and air (for example, National Forests provide as much as 33% of our water in the West), to the more community-based values of healthy opportunities for kids and families, to the recreation sector and economy that Patagonia is a part of. This sector, which brings economic opportunity for many "gateway" communities that sit at the doorstep of our public lands, now provides \$887 billion in annual consumer spending and 7.6 million jobs (as compared with about 180,000 jobs from oil and gas extraction). National parks, national wildlife refuges, national monuments and other public lands and waters account for \$45 billion in economic output and about 396,000 jobs nationwide – many of which are in communities with close proximity to public lands.

It's equally clear when you ask the public: a clear majority of people from across the political spectrum love our protected public lands and recognize the importance of the outdoor economy they support. For example, in the 2019 Colorado College "Conservation in the West" poll, results indicate that "...there is almost no partisan distinction in perceptions of outdoor recreation's importance to the economic future of the West." Whether it was Republicans, Independents or Democrats responding, over 85% indicated that outdoor recreation is important to their state's economic future.

Finally, coming out of the hearing on February 13, it's critical to note that our public lands are an important and often overlooked component of community-level efforts to address climate change. Protected public lands (where forests, wetlands, grasslands and other ecosystems are intact) have increased carbon storage capacity that will be needed to reduce greenhouse gases in the long term, and in the short term, provide the ecosystem services and resilience that communities will require as precipitation patterns and temperatures change, and as we face increasing fires, floods and other challenges. Intact and protected public lands provide a refuge for biodiversity and connectivity for migrating species that will need to move and adapt in response to a changing climate. And, with care given to smart and ecologically sensitive citing, we can even consider renewable energy development

opportunities on our public lands. In summary, protected public lands are one of our greatest assets in the fight to protect our communities and ecosystems in the face of climate change.

**2. Mr. Cole, this administration has prioritized extraction on our public lands over other uses, exposing us to the dangers of climate change and to the local impacts associated with methane leakage and groundwater depletion and contamination. This prioritization includes the alteration of our national monuments, seemingly for the benefit of fossil fuel interests.**

**a. Why is it important that we protect our public lands from unbridled extraction and depletion?**

**b. What benefits do national monuments provide that supersede the benefits of short-term and short-sighted extraction?**

Public lands provide a diverse array of values to local communities, and they are critical to maintaining a life-sustaining climate and biosphere on a macro level. However, when we prioritize using these lands for resource extraction – particularly without any sense of balance or attention to sensitive ecosystems – we quickly lose access to many of the values that protected public lands offer. Unbridled resource extraction creates serious and long-lasting impacts (for example: pollution, disturbance, aesthetic impacts, barriers such as dams and fences, and carbon emissions), that permanently damage natural ecosystems, threaten biodiversity, exacerbate climate change, and exclude, often permanently, other more sustainable activities. While sometimes touted as part of a “multi-use” agenda on our public lands, the truth is that unwise resource extraction can turn our public lands into a single-use landscape, one where corporate interests are favored over those of citizens who rely on the place to support a more diverse, sustainable economy, or to recreate and spend time with family and community. Intensive resource extraction can also damage cultural resources and uses of the land important to native communities, who in many cases live closest to these landscapes and have a connection with them that stretches back hundreds, even thousands of years.

By contrast, National Monument designation can prevent unwise resource extraction on sensitive landscapes that hold incredible natural and cultural value. Whether we’re talking about the sensitive cultural and ecological landscape of Bears Ears, the forests of Katahdin Woods and Waters, or the still largely unknown depths of the Northeast Canyon and Seamounts – National Monument status can quickly and effectively provide significant immediate protection, allowing for more thoughtful management planning to take place and giving Congress the time and opportunity to consider greater protection down the road if needed. It should be no surprise that almost half of our treasured National Parks started as National Monuments, including many of our most popular parks: Teton, Grand Canyon, Acadia, Zion, Olympic, and Arches. National Monument management plans offer an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to come to the table together, to discuss and plan for truly sustainable use of the landscape – allowing sensitive areas to have a rest, while simultaneously enabling a greater swath of the public to access, enjoy, and gain benefit from the area. The beauty of thoughtful management is that long-standing uses of the landscape can be grandfathered in where appropriate – for example, ranching, hunting, firewood gathering, and similar activities. Thus, a National Monument, while off limits to corporate oil and gas development, is not an exclusive model at all, but instead can host a variety of activities and groups of people, many of whom have had life-long and multi-generational connection to the place. Finally, in terms of long-term impact vs. short term gain, there is no more convincing argument than the fact that National Monument protection can keep more fossil fuels in the ground, preventing further impact to our climate.