

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Fulcher
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Oversight Hearing on “Examining the Potential
for a Civilian Climate Corps.”
July 20, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would first like to thank you for including two Republican bills on our last Subcommittee legislative hearing. We were pleased to discuss Representative Miller-Meeke’s “Veterans in Parks Act” and Representative Amodei’s “Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act.” Your commitment to correcting the Democrat to Republican bill ratio issue did not go unnoticed by us, and we are appreciative of your leadership in fixing those earlier deviations.

Today we are meeting to examine proposals related to the establishment of a civilian climate corps. It is perplexing that the Subcommittee is prioritizing this oversight hearing over other much more pressing and important topics such as forest health

and wildfires in the face of a severe drought in the West, and the implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act. I would like to reiterate the request to the Chairman that I made previously to schedule an oversight hearing on the implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act. Instead of conducting oversight and ensuring we are wisely stewarding billions of dollars of taxpayer money to repair the iconic treasures of our national parks and other federal lands, today we are instead discussing how quickly we can rush into spending billions more. I had hoped that a hearing on this important topic, which is an interest to many of our members on both sides of the aisle, could get scheduled for this month and would like to work with the Chairman to see that a Great American Outdoors Act hearing gets scheduled when the Committee returns from August recess.

That being said, I am looking forward to hearing the different testimony on proposals for the Civilian Climate Corps. This concept, which many are calling a re-boot of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's, has so far been light on specifics and implementation details. There are many unanswered questions we have about what this new corps would look like, including:

- How much federal money would be spent?
- How would this overlap with or duplicate efforts of existing corps networks?
- And what kinds of activities would these corps members engage in?

For Republicans on this Committee, the answer is simple. We need to reduce our federal bureaucracy and red tape, not increase it. We need to incentivize public-private partnerships that leverage private capital, not spend more and more taxpayer

money to duplicate efforts that the private sector could easily fill in. And, most importantly, we need to prioritize work on our federal lands around active management and reducing deferred maintenance. Any other activities should take a backseat to these two important goals.

I'm concerned that Democrats are taking what could be a popular, bipartisan concept, and hijacking it with reckless spending and unneeded federal involvement. In January, President Biden issued an Executive Order titled "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," in which he directed the heads of the various federal land management agencies to create a strategy for a Civilian Climate Corps. The Biden Administration recommended that \$10 billion be invested in the Civilian Climate Corps initiative as part of their March 2021 American Jobs Plan proposal. The initial fiscal year 2022

discretionary budget request for the Department of the Interior also included \$200 million for the initiative.

As an alternative to creating an entirely new Civilian Climate Corps, Congress can simply encourage public-private partnerships and allow the private sector to innovate and continue existing, successful corps programs.

Bills introduced this Congress such as the Trillion Trees Act sponsored by Ranking Member Westerman, and my bill, the Forestry Education and Workforce Development Act, are two examples of proposals that don't rely on new taxpayer money and instead support conservation corps by expanding the eligible activities of existing corps programs to help improve the health of our nation's forests. We should follow the model created by these pieces of legislation, which demonstrate that we certainly don't need a massive new government agency to accomplish this work.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony. I yield back the balance of my time.