



January 21, 2026

Testimony of Jessica Turner, President, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable

Legislative Hearing on EXPLORE America250: Celebrating One Year of the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about the EXPLORE Act on behalf of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR). The entire recreation community is sincerely grateful for your attention to this historic legislation, which was the product of decades of hard work and careful compromise. The goals today remain true to the bill's original intent: expanding recreation access and modernizing federal agency policies and infrastructure to meet current and future needs of growing the recreation economy while supporting the health of local communities, businesses, and our public lands and waters. The EXPLORE Act has given us the tools, the mandate, and the momentum; success will now be measured by whether we act with urgency equal to the opportunity before us. I look forward to our discussion today about how we can do just that through the continued implementation of this law as we celebrate America's 250th.

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable is the nation's leading coalition of outdoor recreation associations representing more than 110,000 American outdoor businesses and the full spectrum of outdoor-related activities. Data from the U.S. Department of Commerce shows that outdoor recreation generated \$1.2 trillion in economic impact comprising 2.3% of the nation's economy in 2023, as well as and 5 million American jobs, and 3.1% of all employees in the country. But outdoor recreation isn't just about dollars and jobs; it's essential to our physical, mental, and community health, with wide-ranging benefits for the well-being of our nation now and into the next 250 years.

First, I would like to commend Chairman Westerman, the late Ranking Member Grijalva, and this subcommittee for your leadership and tireless efforts to advance and pass the EXPLORE Act--the first-ever recreation package! It was, in part, a collection of individual bipartisan and bicameral initiatives that were championed by many members of this Committee, hundreds of businesses and organizations and recreationists across the board. This landmark legislation was built through old fashioned hard work, negotiation, and good faith collaboration; and those same values will be essential to carrying the bill's intent forward in the years to come. It is worth noting that this legislation received unanimous support at every stage of the legislative process, highlighting the important role outdoor recreation plays for all Americans of all backgrounds and political

ideologies, and the impact that the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy brings to every corner of the country.

I am also appreciative of all the members of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable and partner organizations across the outdoor recreation and conservation communities that worked so hard to bring this legislation from a pipe dream years ago to a reality today. Because of the collaborative efforts between Congress and stakeholders, outdoor recreation is better positioned to provide more opportunities for people living near public lands and waters, better visitor experiences for the 165 million Americans who get outside each year, business certainty, and more economic activity for rural communities for years to come.

One year in, the EXPLORE Act is already delivering real progress—from streamlining access through the America the Beautiful digital pass to more than 150,000 fourth graders using their Every Kid in a Park pass to connect with our public lands and waters. We have seen the Bureau of Land Management expand accessible trails and get to work on guide and outfitter permitting reform.

At ORR, we were proud to work closely with Secretary Burgum on a Secretarial Order around the implementation of the law, which includes six areas of prioritization and represents support for the bill's policies and directives at the highest levels of the Trump Administration. We have also met with US Forest Service Chief Schultz and hope for a similar Secretarial Memo from Secretary Rollins. We know agency leaders and staff are working diligently on implementing the law's many provisions and hope this anniversary serves both as celebration and a reminder that bipartisan leadership and private-sector innovation work, and with continued momentum this year, we can ensure every community and every American benefits from this landmark law.

But much work remains. Federal agencies have been entrusted with the incredible task of implementing EXPLORE—a paradigm-shifting law whose size and scope spans everything from expanding access through major permitting reforms and park pass provisions, to reimagining trails and parking, increasing access and workforce opportunities for veterans, advancing data and visitation innovations, modernizing infrastructure, and investing in recreation opportunities in underserved communities—among much more.

We encourage government agencies to work collaboratively through the Federal Interagency Council on Recreation (FICOR) on interagency provisions and a shared implementation framework as the law directs. Coordination at the highest levels across agencies is critical to ensuring internal alignment, efficient and impactful use of government resources, consistent recreation policies across bureaus, and a hub for key recreation challenges and opportunities.

Similarly, we encourage the agencies to continue partnering with external recreation experts and leaders, including state offices of outdoor recreation across the country, to reduce hurdles and duplication and propel innovation. For instance, ORR convened agency leaders, industry CEOs, and top innovators at the Outdoor Recreation Technology & Innovation Summit in September, showcasing public-private partnerships and technological solutions critical to EXPLORE implementation. We will continue to identify core actions that will support critical data intelligence and interoperability that lead to more access - to recreation assets and information - that can support sustainable businesses, natural resources, and gateway communities.

This progress, and the great accomplishments EXPLORE is poised to deliver, could not come at a better time, as we view the successful implementation of the EXPLORE Act as a key component of America's 250th anniversary celebrations. What better way to celebrate 250 years of this great nation than planning and preserving these same outdoor recreation experiences for the next 250 years? Execution of the EXPLORE provisions will highlight America's public lands and waters at their best and use the backdrop of America 250 to introduce more opportunities and better experiences for visitors from near and far. We also hope that the reauthorization of the Legacy Restoration Fund will complement the new tools in the EXPLORE toolbox with designated funding for 250 impactful recreation projects that bring revenue to agencies and local communities- like marinas, campgrounds, and trails. These are the durable solutions and legacy that Americans will continue to enjoy and benefit from 250 years from now.

Year one demonstrated what we can achieve with bipartisan Congressional support, the Administration's partnership in turning this vision into action and industry innovation, but significant work remains to fully realize the EXPLORE Act's promise. I strongly encourage this committee to ensure that implementation of the EXPLORE Act remains as much a priority for Congress as its passage was last year as delays carry real opportunity costs. Championing this implementation process with sustained bipartisan oversight, in collaboration with federal agencies, states, Tribes, gateway communities, and the private sector, as you are modeling here today, will keep the work moving forward with the urgency and unified direction essential to delivering the law's full benefits. Successful execution will have an enormous impact on preserving natural resources and recreation opportunities for future generations while supporting more dollars for recreation management and business certainty.

As America's 250th reminds us of our common ground and shared cause, it is also important to note how the EXPLORE Act has brought both sides of the political aisle together around shared priorities as a beacon of bipartisan cooperation and consensus building. ORR and our members will continue to lead, convene, and support partners across the public and private sectors to ensure the EXPLORE Act is fully implemented and delivers lasting outcomes for outdoor access,

stewardship, and economic vitality. Everyone wins when this collaboration occurs, and our industry is able to do what we do best: create healthy communities, jobs, people, and economies. We look forward to working together and lifting all boats in the recreation economy's rising tide.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Turner'.

Jessica Turner
President
Outdoor Recreation Roundtable