

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

November 18, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Outdoor recreation community priorities and support for Build Back Better

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, we write to express our strong support for the Build Back Better Act, our gratitude for your efforts, and our hope that Congress will act purposefully to see these critical investments, particularly in our climate and public lands and waters, enacted into law.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten 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, the Mazamas, 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.

Our country's public lands and waters are a unique and singularly irreplaceable part of our country's infrastructure, and like infrastructure of the more narrowly defined variety, public lands and waters require investment and active support for



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their protection and maintenance. Decades of inadequate investment have created significant challenges for our public lands and waters, particularly with regard to wildfire, needed restoration work, and recreation infrastructure. These challenges have been exacerbated by climate change, and shortcomings harm communities' livability and equitability and stymie communities' ability to invest in the outdoor recreation economy.

We strongly support the investments included in the Build Back Better Act to address these needs. Moreover, we greatly appreciate the degree to which the bill embraces the potential for our public lands and waters to make a significant and meaningful contribution to addressing the climate crisis. In addition to climate benefits, these investments will support equity by ensuring that more Americans will have access to quality outdoor recreation opportunities, including a particular emphasis on communities, especially rural and marginalized communities, that have been overlooked or deliberately excluded from these resources in the past.

Outlined below are areas of particular significance for the outdoor recreation community. We also suggest small—but important—changes that we believe will further strengthen the bill, particularly with regard to incorporating recreation more thoroughly into the proposed CCC (those changes begin on p. 5).

Title I, Committee on Agriculture

Across the West in particular, wildfire has become a constant presence and crisis, both as a result of climate change and as the legacy of decades of fire suppression that has left forests increasingly vulnerable to uncharacteristic megafires. These fires are endangering communities and directly and calamitously affecting outdoor recreation opportunities and the outdoor recreation economy. The effect on the Forest Service has been an added layer of crisis, with the agency so (necessarily) focused on fire suppression that it lacks the resources to proactively address fire risk and attend to its other stewardship responsibilities, including providing for outdoor recreation. We strongly support the investments outlined in Title I of Build Back Better as a way for the agency to speed work to restore ecosystems and reduce fire risk. We are particularly pleased to see attention to considering ways to pursue this work in synergy with recreation infrastructure initiatives.

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports:



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- **§ 11001, National Forest System Restoration and Fuels Reduction Projects**, including funding for:
 - **Hazardous fuels reduction;**
 - **Legacy Roads and Trails;**
 - **Land management planning and monitoring;**
 - **Trail maintenance;**
 - **Capital maintenance and improvements;**
 - **More efficient and effective environmental reviews;**
 - **Protection of older and mature forests; and**
 - **Post-fire recovery.**
- **§ 11002, Non-Federal Land Forest Restoration and Fuels Reduction Projects and Research**, including critical research and grants to expand equitable access to outdoor recreation.
- **§ 11003, State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs**, including funding for the Forest Legacy program.

Title VII, Committee on Natural Resources

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the investments in public lands and waters, equitable access, and needed reforms to development activities included in Title VII of Build Back Better, and we further support the inclusion of additional provisions which will help to support recreational activity on public lands and waters. In particular, we strongly support:

- **Subtitle G, Public Lands**, including key investments in:
 - **National Parks and Public Conservation and Resilience (§ 70701);**
 - **National Parks and Public Lands Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration (§ 70702);**
 - **Land Projects (§ 70703);**
 - **Wildfire Management (§ 70704);**
 - **National Park Service Deferred Maintenance and Department of Interior Housing (§ 70705);**
 - **Urban Parks (§ 70706);**
 - **National Heritage Areas (§ 70708); and**
 - **Withdrawals (§ 70709).**



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- **Subtitle L, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**, repealing the establishment of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas leasing program.
- **Subtitle M, Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing**, banning new leasing along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. Given overwhelming community support—and the imperatives vividly illustrated by the recent oil spill in Southern California—we strongly support ending new oil and gas leasing on the Atlantic, Pacific, and Eastern Gulf coasts.
- **Subtitle N, Fossil Fuel Resources**. Outdoor Alliance strongly supports provisions ensuring a more appropriate return for the public for fossil fuel development activities on public lands and waters. These additional returns are entirely appropriate given the contributions of these activities to climate change, but also because of the direct impacts of activities like speculative oil and gas leasing on other resource values, including outdoor recreation. Particularly over the course of the previous administration, direct conflicts with other resource values have abounded, and the provisions in this bill section will restore a more appropriate balance among public lands and waters values.
- **Subtitle B, National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration**, including:
 - **Investing in Coastal Communities and Climate Resilience (§ 70201);**
 - **Pacific Salmon Restoration and Conservation (§ 70202).**
- **Subtitle F, Department of the Interior Efficient and Effective Environmental Reviews**. The outdoor recreation community strongly supports the National Environmental Policy Act as a means of facilitating public participation in land management decision-making and as a means of ensuring that decisions are informed by environmental values and strong science. We also work, at times, in the development of recreation infrastructure that requires navigating the NEPA process, and we can share the frustration of stakeholders finding the process to be slow and challenging. We believe strongly that the path forward is additional resources for the land management agencies to conduct environmental analysis and look for efficiencies that remain respectful of NEPA's core values. We wholeheartedly support these investments.
- **Subtitle E, Council on Environmental Quality**, including support for environmental and climate data collection and efficient and effective environmental reviews.



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- **Subtitle K, Preventing Damage From Mining.** While we are pleased to see resources for BLM to pursue needed updates to regulations, we are disappointed to see that previous proposals to help fund remediation work through royalty fees have been cut. Hardrock mining has a long history of deleterious effects on conservation and recreational resource values on public lands and waters. Those effects are exacerbated by the market distortions that stem from giving public resources away for free and a failure to hold industry accountable for resource damage. Reforms are urgently needed to ensure that mining proceeds in a manner more cognizant of other resource values and provide needed resources for addressing ongoing degradation caused by past mining activity.

Conservation and Jobs Corps programs (CCC), including federal and non-federal lands programs allocations described in §§ 70701, 70703, 70706, 11001, and 11002

Outdoor Alliance supports a modern CCC because the program would enable a strong and integrated approach to climate change, conservation, equitable and sustainable recreation access, and local economic development. Tackling the impacts of climate change, such as the increased risk of mega-fires, while restoring ecosystems, improving recreation access, enhancing recreation infrastructure, and creating new jobs is a winning strategy for moving America forward on environmental resiliency and away from the pandemic-induced economic downturn. The CCC would create new career opportunities in the rapidly growing clean energy, ecosystem restoration, and recreation industries for both urban centers and rural communities, while at the same time inspiring a new generation of conservationists and healthy outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

Outdoor Alliance recommends the following additions to strengthen CCC program efficacy (suggested additions in **bold**):

Subtitle B—Forestry

SEC. 11001. NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM RESTORATION AND FUELS REDUCTION PROJECTS.



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(8) \$100,000,000 for maintenance of trails **and associated recreation infrastructure** on National Forest System land, with a priority on trails **and recreation infrastructure** that provide to underserved communities access to National Forest System land;

SEC. 11002. NON-FEDERAL LAND FOREST RESTORATION AND FUELS REDUCTION PROJECTS AND RESEARCH.

(4) \$175,000,000 to award grants to Tribal, State, or local governments or the government of the District of Columbia, regional organizations, special districts, or nonprofit organizations for projects on non-Federal land to expand equitable outdoor access, **enhance recreation infrastructure**, and promote tourism on non-Federal forested land for members of underserved groups;

(12) \$100,000,000 for the forest inventory and analysis program established under section (e) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 1642(e)) to carry out recommendations from a panel of relevant experts convened by the Secretary that has reviewed and, based on the review, issued recommendations regarding the current priorities and future needs of the forest inventory and analysis program with respect to climate change, forest health, sustainable wood products, **recreation**, and increasing carbon storage in forests;

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Thank you for considering the feedback and support of the human-powered recreation community as you work to advance the Build Back Better Act. We believe these investments in our public lands and waters will pay tremendous dividends for the American public, and we look forward to seeing them advanced into law.



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Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers
Mitsu Iwasaki, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club
Sarah Bradham, Interim Executive Director, the Mazamas
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

