

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

July 8, 2015

Rep. John Boehner
Speaker of the House
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 2647, the “Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015”

Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi,

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of seven member-based organizations, including Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, the Mountaineers, and the American Alpine Club, that represents the interests of the millions of Americans who paddle, climb, mountain bike, hike, and backcountry ski and snowshoe on our nation’s public lands, waters, and snowscapes. Collectively, Outdoor Alliance has members in all fifty states and a network of approximately 1,100 local clubs and advocacy groups across the nation.

In light of our community’s interest in recreation on America’s National Forests and public lands, we would like to share our perspectives on H.R. 2647, the “Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015.” This measure shortcuts critical public participation requirements for management decisions on National Forests and BLM lands that have the potential for severe negative impacts on outdoor recreation, the outdoor recreation economy, and conservation values. Public lands management requires a balanced approach to sometimes-competing uses and values; this bill upsets this balance and inappropriately limits the ability of a full array of stakeholders to participate in the management process and, where necessary, initiate judicial review of agency actions.

Gateway communities to our public lands, as well as more geographically dispersed stakeholders, have a wide array of interests in our country’s forests, and those forests, in turn, provide a wide range of benefits. The outdoor recreation economy alone—which is critically dependent on access to and protection of our country’s forests—is responsible for \$646 billion in consumer spending annually and directly employs 6.1 million Americans. While we recognize the importance of the timber industry to some communities and the need to sustainably generate forest products, this bill inappropriately elevates one interest over the diverse range of benefits provided by our forests, and most disappointingly, does so by limiting opportunities for the public to participate in generating and reviewing agency actions.



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In particular, we strongly object to:

- The creation of new, unnecessary categorical exclusions from review under the National Environmental Policy Act;
- Provisions to severely curtail opportunities for judicial review by creating attorneys' fee recovery provisions and bonding requirements that would effectively preclude access to the courts;
- And changes to the composition of resource advisory committees that would undercut the effectiveness of this tool for generating community consensus.

Additionally, we are disappointed that this measure would once again fail to fully address the problem of wildfire suppression funding in the manner contemplated by the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, which enjoys tremendous bipartisan support and which we strongly endorse.

We ask Congress to more carefully consider the diverse range of values provided by our nation's forests and set aside legislation that unfairly and unnecessarily harms opportunities for public participation in forest management decision-making.

Best regards,



Adam Cramer
Executive Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc:

Rep. Rob Bishop, Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources
Rep. Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources

Brady Robinson, Executive Director, Access Fund
Wade Blackwood, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Michael Van Abel, Executive Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Mark Menlove, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Martinique Grigg, Executive Director, The Mountaineers
Phil Powers, Executive Director, American Alpine Club

