

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

February 1, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid,

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of seven 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, and the American Alpine Club and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, and backcountry ski and snowshoe on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes. We write to share our perspectives on S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015.

In general, we are pleased to see Congress taking a thoughtful and bipartisan approach to energy policy. We believe, however, that the bill can be improved in several respects, and we hope that the Senate will avoid the addition of problematic amendments, particularly with regard to management of public lands, which are essential to providing outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Reauthorization

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the agreement embodied in S. 2012 for permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a long-serving program that has been of tremendous utility in ensuring outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, and we oppose any efforts to undermine this agreement through amendments.

Over the life of the program, LWCF has funded critical protections for river corridors in places like West Virginia's Gauley and New Rivers and helped establish public river access points for canoers, kayakers, and rafters in places like Washington's White Salmon River. LWCF has made possible thousands of miles of singletrack for mountain



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bikers and hikers, including at areas like the world-class trail system at Lory State Park near Fort Collins, Colorado, and Toro Park, California, and LWCF has funded close-to-home recreation opportunities in all fifty states and every congressional district.

We believe the balance struck by the S. 2012 between state and federal programs is appropriate, and we are pleased to see an additional fund devoted to addressing the backlog of maintenance needs for our public lands. We support these provisions as included in the bill, and oppose any efforts to upset this balance through amendments.

Hydropower

While Outdoor Alliance appreciates the improvements that have been made to the hydropower title of S. 2012 relative to earlier versions of the bill, we continue to have serious concerns about the effect of these provisions on environmental and recreational values. We continue to strongly object to the assertions made in 3001(a) and (b) that hydroelectric power be considered, in all instances, as renewable energy, as well as the assertion that hydropower should be expanded substantially. While hydropower can be an appropriate part of a balanced energy policy under some circumstances, it often comes with extremely significant negative effects, on both outdoor recreation and the environment, and must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, the hydropower title of the bill still weakens the authorities of states, tribes, and land management agencies to protect recreational values, fish and wildlife, water quality, and public lands. Among other problematic provisions, the hydropower title would limit agencies from requiring new studies into the impacts of dams, even when a dam's existing license, and the studies the license was based on, are more than 50 years old and pre-date modern environmental requirements and changed physical conditions.

Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act

In contrast to the hydropower title, which advances a problematic energy source by reducing important safeguards, amendment number 3043, the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act (PLREDA), is a common-sense and carefully crafted piece of legislation with strong bipartisan support that would help to facilitate responsible development of renewable energy resources on public lands, and we support adoption of this amendment.

True renewable energy development on public lands will play an important role in the country's energy future, and PLREDA represents a positive step toward ensuring that that development occurs in a thoughtful way: taking into account other important public



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lands values like conservation and outdoor recreation, paying back the land, ensuring that benefits of development accrue to local communities, and giving those communities the resources they need to respond to utility-scale resource development.

Antiquities Act Amendments, No. 3023 and 3126

While we understand that the Senate will consider a wide range of amendments to S. 2012, and we encourage Senators to avoid measures harmful to public lands, outdoor recreation, and ecosystem health (including habitat, clean air, and clean water), we would like to express our particular opposition to two amendments aimed at barring use of the Antiquities Act to protect areas of American public lands.

Over the course of more than a century, nearly every president from each political party has employed the Antiquities Act to protect treasured places on America's public lands. While the Act is dedicated to protection of areas of historic or scientific significance, protection of outdoor recreation opportunities has been among the Act's invaluable additional benefits. Among the National Monuments designated under the Act are many areas that went on to become crown jewels of the National Parks System, including the Grand Canyon and Jackson Hole (now Grand Teton National Park).

National Monuments designated under the Antiquities Act are home to truly world-class outdoor recreation opportunities, and—far from taking lands out of productive economic use—these designations are of proven benefit to near-by businesses and communities. The outdoor recreation community strongly opposes any effort to undermine this important tool.

Thank you for considering our perspectives on these issues as the Senate considers S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015.

Best regards,



Adam Cramer
Executive Director
Outdoor Alliance



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cc:

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