As Americans continue to suffer from COVID-19 and wrestle with ways to create jobs and improve health outcomes in their communities, outdoor recreation is well-positioned to play a prominent role in the economic, mental and physical recovery of the nation. The growing outdoor recreation industry is eager to partner with the incoming Biden Administration to “Build Back Better” through a focus on the outdoors. We hope to support national discussions around the critical importance of our economic sector that creates jobs, builds healthy communities, strengthens the health and well-being of Americans and of our public lands and waters for all to benefit from.

Outdoor recreation is a major economic engine in America that was growing faster than the economy as a whole prior to the pandemic, holding up jobs and local communities during this recession. We comprise 2.1 percent of GDP, account for 3.3 percent of U.S. employees, and support 5.2 million jobs - many of which are in rural communities. We contribute $788 billion in economic output, which surpasses other sectors such as utilities, mining, agriculture and chemical products manufacturing. Our industry is an economic multiplier that attracts new businesses, recruits and retains employees, and improves quality of life by supporting rural economies, connecting urban populations with our shared natural resources and helping people build healthy lifestyles.

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) — the nation’s leading coalition of outdoor recreation trade associations made up of 33 national members and serving 110,000 businesses — proposes an agenda that will improve equitable recreation access to public lands and waters across the nation. By investing in recreation infrastructure and access we can sustainably meet the increasing demand for time spent outdoors, create jobs supporting diverse communities, and grow economies in every corner of the country while upholding sound conservation policies that will sustain recreation resources for long-term economic growth and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In order for the outdoor recreation sector to do what we do best — build healthy communities and economies, create jobs, and contribute to a healthy planet — we recommend these immediate actions for the Biden Administration’s first 100 days:

I. **Re-establish the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation, or a similar network, with a White House lead to ensure efficiencies and coordination to support outdoor recreation across federal agencies.**

II. **Convene the Outdoor CEO Roundtable to engage the largest cross-sector outdoor businesses at a White House meeting around jobs, diversity, climate and the economy.**

III. **Remove Trump Administration tariffs on outdoor goods and products to immediately jumpstart American jobs and innovation in this growing and sustainable sector.**

ORR has outlined recommendations in line with the Biden Administration’s four pillars that will create thriving, sustainable rural communities, support the transition to cleaner and greener economies through a growing and inclusive workforce, and ensure access to our local and national outdoor treasures for generations to come.
ECONOMIC RECOVERY

**Rural Development:** Increased federal investment and attention to supporting rural community job and economic growth through outdoor recreation will address the needs of distressed communities coming back from the COVID-19 pandemic, including economic development and diversification, increased quality of life, and improved public health outcomes for under-resourced communities.

**Tariff Relief:** From backpacks to boats and fishing equipment, RVs and other motorized and non-motorized equipment, recreation is caught in the crosshairs of ongoing trade battles. Ultimately, the consumer pays the price as most manufacturers are unable to absorb all of the tariff costs, making outdoor recreation less affordable and stymieing growth in a vibrant manufacturing and retail sector that provides a myriad of health benefits. Removing steel and aluminum tariffs, working with trading partners to remove retaliatory measures, and ending the Chinese trade war would spur job creation and economic growth nationwide.

COVID 19

**Great American Outdoors Act:** All Americans need close-to-home access to the outdoors for health, well-being and community. Implementation of the deferred maintenance provisions of the Great American Outdoors Act must be transparently and sustainably executed to ensure a significant and long-lasting return to the American public. Through the Land and Water Conservation Fund we can improve access to the outdoors for all Americans by investing in projects that meet the needs of diverse communities lacking outdoor recreation access close to home and increase equity and health outcomes in communities where new projects are funded.

**Equitable Access:** We must significantly improve equitable access to nature for the health of all Americans. Revitalizing our outdoor recreation infrastructure represents an extraordinary bipartisan opportunity to advance signature green and blue recreation infrastructure projects to improve federal road systems, greenways, campgrounds, trails, marinas and bike access that interconnect our communities, improve safety, enhance quality of life and support environmental justice in rural and urban areas.

RACIAL EQUITY

**Build a Diverse Workforce:** As the outdoor recreation economy continues to grow, there is a tremendous opportunity to grow a diverse workforce of millions of young people (many who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19) trained in green jobs. By expanding the modern conservation corps movement, we can build a diverse, equitable, and highly skilled workforce ready to meet the needs of a 21st century outdoor recreation economy and have equitable access to the outdoors.

CLIMATE CHANGE

**Conservation and Climate Resiliency:** Healthy public lands and waters are the backbone of the outdoor industry. The public’s ability to access and enjoy natural spaces provides tremendous social, economic and conservation benefits to the nation. Through strong, science-based natural resource management we can ensure the outdoors and fish and wildlife are healthy and sustained for current and future generations. Additionally, through climate resilient technologies and mitigation efforts, we can rebuild our nation’s crumbling outdoor recreation infrastructure in ways that bolster our environment and create jobs.
ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Kickstarting America’s Economic Recovery and Growing Jobs Through Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is a crucial component of not just the U.S. economy, but also local economies across the country. Our industry supports 5.2 million jobs: from manufacturers to guides and outfitters, biologists, manufacturers, hospitality workers and more. As communities look to build healthy economies based in sustainable industries, outdoor recreation offers a clear path. According to Headwaters Economics, counties with outdoor recreation economies are more likely to attract new residents with greater wealth and have faster-growing wages than their non-recreation counterparts. These trends are particularly true in rural communities, as those that have natural amenities and recreation economies do better than those that do not. Many communities have demonstrated how outdoor recreation assets like trails can attract visitors who spend money at local businesses, injecting money into the local economy. Research around the U.S. has found that trails also can increase property values and improve public health, particularly in low-income neighborhoods.

Increased federal investment and attention to supporting jobs and economic growth through outdoor recreation will address the needs of distressed rural communities coming back from the COVID-19 pandemic, including economic development and diversification, increased quality of life, and improved public health outcomes for under-resourced communities. Additionally, establishing free and fair-trade policies and practices will ignite more U.S. innovation, manufacturing and exports, and opportunities for American workers to build a promising career.

I. Apply existing 2018 Farm Bill report language allowing for Rural Development programs to be used for recreation economy revitalization.
   A. The 2018 Farm Bill included groundbreaking report language supporting the growth of recreation economies in rural areas through access to rural economic development grants for recreation projects, technical and financial assistance, infrastructure improvements, business loans and more. Agencies should use the USDA Recreation Rural Development toolkit to disseminate information and train staff across the country on how to better align these programs and tools with needed recreation assistance in rural communities across the country.

II. Strengthen economies in rural communities by supporting development of outdoor recreation infrastructure through the Economic Development Administration (EDA).
   A. Outdoor recreation infrastructure projects (e.g. parks/trails development and renovation, playgrounds, public pools, ballfields, lodging/campground facilities, etc.) are a strong fit for EDA’s Economic Adjustment Assistance Program ‘Implementation Grants’ category. These projects can be a catalyst for economic development and should be eligible for EDA funding.

III. Expand and replicate existing programs that provide support to rural communities seeking to rebuild their Main Streets through outdoor recreation.
   A. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development has partnered with the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Forest Service and the Northern Border Regional Commission to create the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities assistance program. This year the program provided technical assistance to 10 rural communities asking for support to grow their economies through outdoor recreation. Considering that 170 communities applied for this
support, this popular initiative should be expanded and replicated to support all communities seeking to diversify and supplement their traditional economies with a well-planned, sustainable recreation plan. With additional funding, this program would support both public-public partnerships (e.g. municipalities with federal agencies and state economic development offices) and public-private partnerships (e.g. municipalities with local businesses, guides and outfitters, trailbuilding companies, campground operators, nonprofits and/or outdoor business alliances), supporting rural resilience in more communities across the country.

B. ORR and The VF Foundation have partnered to ensure some of the communities receiving the initial federal investment have a kickstarter grant to create the economic growth engine identified in their implementation plan. We also worked together to develop a toolkit for State Offices of Outdoor Recreation, community leaders and local business partners that goes hand-in-hand with the USDA Rural Development toolkit. With increased federal support and funding for these programs, more private match dollars could be leveraged to serve additional communities asking for help transitioning and diversifying their traditional economies into a sustainable recreation economy.

IV. Remove tariffs and retaliatory measures on recreation products and support multilateral trade deals that reduce non-tariff barriers and ensure regulatory cooperation while promoting “Made in America” products and workforce.

A. The Trump Administration’s practice of levying tariffs on a wide variety of products has inadvertently had an adverse impact on the recreational community. From backpacks to boats, RVs and other motorized and non-motorized equipment, recreation is being caught in the crosshairs. Outdoor recreation continues to face tariffs on raw materials such as steel, aluminum, fiberglass and upholstery as well as component parts essential to manufacturing countless products. In addition, our allies have retaliated against key American-made recreational products with devastating export tariffs. Recreation is being squeezed at both ends, with higher input costs and lost export sales.

B. Ultimately the consumer pays the price as most manufacturers are unable to absorb all of the tariff costs. This will make outdoor recreation less affordable to the average American and could stymie economic growth in a vibrant manufacturing and retail sector. ORR supports the protection of intellectual property rights and leveling the playing field to unfair competition, but the current application of tariffs threatens the health of an economic sector that will play a key role in our country’s mental, physical and financial recovery from COVID-19.
COVID-19

Supporting healthy people, places and planet through Outdoor Recreation

As COVID-19 struck our country, Americans migrated to the outdoors to find respite from the mental and physical strain of lockdowns and other necessary mitigation efforts. Our nation was told it was important to get exercise and vitamin D and that being outside lessened the viral spread. In fact, an October Harris Poll found that 65 percent of Americans have been trying to find safe outdoor activities to spend their time during the pandemic. This is a huge uptick from the Outdoor Foundation annual survey which finds that less than 50 percent of Americans enjoy an outdoor experience on an annual basis. According to Kampgrounds of America’s recent report, campers and non-campers rank camping as the safest type of travel right now with 29 percent of general travelers, 45 percent of campers and 15 percent of non-campers planning to replace cancelled or postponed travel with an outdoor camping trip.

With more people prioritizing spending time outside, federal investments in more equitable access and safe modern recreation infrastructure are needed. The benefits of investing in recreation infrastructure are as clear and compelling as the benefits of time spent outdoors to mental and physical health, which have been proven time and again. A study at Cornell University showed that just 10 minutes in a natural setting helped people feel happier and lessened the mental and physical effects of stress. Researchers from the University of Essex found that participating in as little as five minutes of activity in nature was enough to boost participants’ mood and self-esteem. Revitalizing America’s outdoor recreation infrastructure represents an extraordinary bipartisan opportunity to advance signature green and blue recreation infrastructure projects to improve federal road systems, greenways, campgrounds, trails, marinas, and bike access that interconnect our communities, improve safety, enhance quality of life and drive forward recreation economies for rural and urban areas alike. Because of this, the outdoor recreation industry should be included in any national infrastructure initiatives.

Sadly, many of the roads, trails, marinas, campgrounds and other recreation infrastructure our industry depends on are worn out or desperately in need of maintenance and modernization. Simply put, we have Eisenhower-era recreation infrastructure at a time when visitors depend on the ability to social distance in a park, safe roads and trails, clean and navigable public waters and water systems, and 21st century amenities in front country areas.

This summer, Congress passed the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). GAOA represents a major milestone in promoting access to our shared public lands and waters by repairing damaged and out-of-date infrastructure, as well as fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). This landmark legislation will help ensure safe, sustainable recreational opportunities for all Americans at a time when getting outside is proven to help with COVID-19 outcomes and allows for a safer way to social distance with loved ones. Maintenance improvements and LWCF projects across all agencies can bring jobs to rural communities and jump start main street economies. They can also support more people having access to the physical, mental and spiritual health benefits of time spent in nature.

Additionally, full funding of LWCF will make it easier for federal and state agencies to expand recreation to meet increasing demands by acquiring new land and enhancing existing recreation assets. Even though many federal lands and waters have seen record visitation during the pandemic many communities could not access the outdoors at a time when they needed it the most. This spring, as governors restricted travel and encouraged residents to use their local communities for recreation, 100 million people were not within 10 minutes of a park or green space. Of 14,000 cities and towns analyzed by the Trust for Public Land, parks serving a majority of people of color average half the size while serving five times as many people per acre.
By investing in projects that meet the needs of diverse communities who lack outdoor recreation access close to home, LWCF can increase equity and health outcomes in communities most in need of green spaces and outdoor opportunities.

The outdoor recreation business community has worked to provide contemporary and thoughtful solutions that will improve the health and vibrancy of people and communities across the country when access to backyard and backcountry recreation opportunities are needed the most. We must ensure that these places are planned, funded and supported in a way that keeps pace with the growing demand and necessity for safe and healthy outdoor activities, while limiting impacts on our natural resources.

I. **Ensure federal agencies have a transparent methodology that identifies and prioritizes GAOA backlog recreation projects across asset classes, and addresses resource protection, visitor use and access, health and safety and long-term financial sustainability. This planning should consider projects that:**

   A. Improve existing recreation public access.
   
   B. Balance investments in revenue and non-revenue generating recreation projects.
   
   C. Benefit recreation site portfolio (e.g., contemplate the entire recreation site: road to site, parking, restrooms, trails, campgrounds, etc.).
   
   D. Connect trail systems to adjacent non-federal recreational trails to grow intergovernmental access to federal lands.
   
   E. Mitigate future operational/maintenance costs and/or support sustainable funding streams.
   
   F. Support public/private partnerships to maximize community impacts.

II. **Ensure that government infrastructure contracting is competitive, performance-based and provides the greatest return for every dollar of available funding by:**

   A. Utilizing youth and veteran service corps to provide cost-effective solutions while addressing unemployment issues.
   
   B. Recognizing the need for additional contracting and project management expertise to ensure consistency, thoroughness and transparency, and provide public access to project lists and timelines.

III. **Return the LWCF program to its Congressional intent, and work with the recreation business community to establish policies that support the successful rollout of funds.**

   A. Provide flexibility for the stateside match dollars for LWCF projects.

      1. Work with state and local communities to identify match funding in difficult budget years by providing flexibility for the stateside match and support for the state SCORP process to ensure up-to-date information is used to select projects.
      
      2. Work with state Office of Outdoor Recreation directors to coordinate federal and state efforts prioritizing recreation projects with the greatest community benefit.

   B. Ensure LWCF project information is publicly available in order to better celebrate program outcomes and track uniform data across the agencies and states in one place.
IV. **Prioritize LWCF projects that would create access in communities lacking outdoor spaces.**
   
   A. Work with the outdoor recreation business community to identify and prioritize projects that would provide access to recreational opportunities in communities that currently lack it.
   
   B. Work with the outdoor recreation business community to identify projects that grow outdoor recreation economies in rural communities, increasing quality of life and addressing equity issues.

V. **Fully fund for the Recreational Trails Program in order to support more human-powered and motorized trail networks across the country.**
   
   A. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is currently funded through the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) at $85 million annually. This is only a portion of the $270 million annually that the Federal Highway Administration conservatively estimates motorized trail users pay into the HTF through fuel taxes from non-highway recreation. RTP is a user-pay, user-benefit program that benefits all recreationists and serves as the primary funding mechanism for thousands of motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities.
   
   B. Undertake a study to determine the best available estimate of the total amount of off-highway recreation fuel taxes paid into the Highway Trust Fund.
   
   C. Ensure that the full extent or what trail users pay into the HTF supports the RTP program as intended.

VI. **Better understand who is visiting our public lands and why to ensure better distribution of visitation and management of our resources.**
   
   A. Create a synchronized annual method for collecting visitor data across all federal agencies that tracks how and where visitors are recreating and what activities they are participating in.
   
   B. Create a better mechanism for dispersing activities and connecting diverse communities to these shared resources based on data.
   
   C. Work with state Offices of Outdoor Recreation to streamline access issues on state and federal lands and engage outdoor businesses on shared access outcomes.

VII. **As the Biden Administration looks to tackle our nation's infrastructure challenges and overcome COVID-19, outdoor recreation needs to be at the table to ensure all Americans have access to safe recreation experiences that result in better health outcomes.**
   
   A. Ensure that Grey and Green Infrastructure is built in a way that supports resilient recreation assets and ensures assets are built and managed for the future of recreation and supports access for all.
   
   B. Support more adequate funding for the Federal Lands Transportation Program, the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects, the Federal Lands Access Program, the National Scenic Byways Program and the Forest Service Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Program.
   
   C. Expedite the deployment and enhancement of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure and services on and adjacent to public lands to support recreational safety and enjoyment, as well as small business growth in rural gateway communities.
RACIAL EQUITY

Creating career pathways and opportunities for diverse communities through outdoor recreation

As the outdoor recreation economy continues to grow, there is a tremendous opportunity to reinvigorate and diversify our workforce. Millions of young people, especially minorities, have been impacted by COVID-19 layoffs. Teens and young adults are currently experiencing unemployment rates roughly double the national average. In an economic downturn, inexperienced young workers are often the “first fired; last hired.” Interventions are needed to ensure young, diverse Americans have opportunities to support themselves and their families during these uncertain times, while gaining skillsets that will set them up for success later in life.

Expanding the modern conservation corps movement to build a more resilient, sustainable outdoor recreation economy supported by a diverse and highly skilled workforce provides an immediate solution. Forty-four percent of Youth Corps members are from communities of color, and providing them with jobs, training and a career pathway will ensure an outdoor industry, and land and water agency, workforce that is more reflective of our population and able to benefit from diverse backgrounds, opinions and experiences.

Additionally, federal agencies should consider launching a National Workforce Development Consortium for the Outdoor Recreation Economy. This consortium would provide research, national education and training standards, curriculum development, and life-long learning opportunities to support the outdoor recreation economy, accelerating innovation and progress for businesses, employees, green jobs and diverse communities.

I. Establish a 21st Century “Civilian Climate & Conservation Corps” (21CCCC) scaling the existing model of Service and Conservation Corps to engage thousands of diverse groups of young people and veterans in the outdoors while providing job training and career pathways.

   A. Provide the funding, resources and support to administer comprehensive and holistic workforce development programs for the 21CCCC participants/Corpsmembers.
   B. Bring together federal, state and local land and resource management agencies to identify, fund and oversee the implementation of priority projects based on the needs of communities and scalability of local corps.
   C. Establish a White House level position or office to coordinate oversight of the 21CCCC throughout the federal agencies (USDA, DOI, DOE, DOL, DOD, VA, Commerce, etc.).
   D. Work with the outdoor recreation sector to identify skills gaps, technical training and workforce needs in order to create direct career pathways to open jobs in the outdoor recreation sector through Corps work experience.
   E. Achieve climate and conservation outcomes with a better return on investment.

II. Form a National Outdoor Recreation Workforce Development Consortium.

   A. The consortium would be a model of inclusivity, supporting workforce development strategies that grow equity and diversity within the outdoor industry leading to more welcoming outdoor spaces and businesses for all people while developing national standards and programming focused on outdoor recreation-related careers in the 21st century.
   B. The consortium would bring together universities, community colleges, governors, state Directors of Outdoor Recreation, Workforce Investment Boards, recreation associations, federal agencies and private sector technical schools to work hand-in-hand to understand and address skill gaps in the current and future workforce, and to design and develop nationally consistent training programs that can be delivered by any service provider in America.
CLIMATE CHANGE

Achieve climate and conservation outcomes through a national outdoor recreation plan

Outdoor recreation opportunities allow the public to connect with our land, water and wildlife, resulting in a deep appreciation for the outdoors and sense of stewardship for our shared natural resources. The public’s ability to access and enjoy natural spaces provides tremendous social, economic and conservation benefits to the nation. Underlining that access and enjoyment is a need for strong, science-based natural resource management that ensures our lands and waters are healthy and sustainable for current and future generations.

The outdoor recreation community is proud of our longstanding commitment to conservation that supports the United States as a global leader in natural resource and biodiversity protections. Through hunting and fishing license fees, as well as excise taxes paid on fishing tackle, boat motors, marine fuel and more, outdoor recreationists contribute billions of dollars to conservation at the federal, state and local levels. More recreation opportunities grow conservation programs and our next generation of natural resource stewards. However, as global temperatures rise and natural disasters like wildfires and hurricanes increase in frequency and destructive capacity, climate change is a direct threat to these lands and waters that serve as the backbone of the $788 billion recreation economy.

In order to maintain and preserve access to our nation’s natural treasures and continue to hold up local economies in the face of climate change, it is critical that improvements to existing infrastructure or construction of new facilities be done with a focus on long-term sustainability and resiliency and consider nature-based solutions. Recreation access to our lands and waters can be balanced with smart planning that ensures resource conservation and sustainability.

We support and embrace the overlap between our collective work toward conservation and the establishment of global biodiversity principles in the “30 by 30” initiative, which aims to conserve 30 percent of the globe’s lands and waters by 2030. Recreation access and the enjoyment of our public lands and waters is imperative to the success of 30 by 30. Well-managed and sustainable outdoor activities are in harmony with 30 by 30 goals and continue to support jobs and economic activity in communities across the country while areas are conserved for climate solutions. Maintaining the sense of connection to our abundant resources and unrivaled natural beauty that these activities provide is essential to ensuring we have natural resource and biodiversity stewards for the next century, just as we have had in the past, and that places transitioning from traditional extractive industries have a bright economic future.

I. Ensure that any “30 by 30” policies properly account for the following principles:

A. Explicitly recognize the imperative role that outdoor recreation plays in conservation and as economic engines in communities throughout the country.

B. Include protected area definitions that allow for well-managed and sustainable outdoor activities.

C. Consider existing protected areas in measuring progress toward stated goals.

D. Seek to achieve targeted, science-based conservation measures developed through a stakeholder-driven process, that includes the recreation industry voice, to address biodiversity threats.
E. Clearly define roles and authorities for the entities charged with carrying out the 30 by 30 initiative proposal.

F. Through an objective, science-driven, stakeholder-engaged process determine the appropriate level of management necessary to meet biodiversity and conservation goals while supporting sustainable recreation.

II. Establish a 21st Century “Civilian Climate & Conservation Corps” (21CCCC) scaling the existing model of Service and Conservation Corps to engage thousands of diverse groups of young people and veterans in the outdoors while providing job training and career pathways (see Racial Equity section IA-E).

III. Ensure improvements to existing outdoor recreation infrastructure and construction of new facilities are done with a focus on long-term sustainability and climate resiliency.

A. Work with outdoor recreation stakeholders to create plans to mitigate climate change impacts on recreation assets and gateway communities that rely on robust outdoor recreation.

B. Support quick recovery and restoration of recreation assets after natural disasters and ensure that the rebuilding of infrastructure is done in a sustainable way.

C. Invest in natural solutions that allow for recreation while providing buffers during severe storms.

IV. Convene the outdoor recreation business community to discuss long-term solutions for traditional recreation and conservation funding mechanisms that could be disrupted by the movement to clean energy and electric vehicles.

A. Many conservation and recreation programs are paid for by the fossil fuel industry or gas and excise taxes (LWCF, Recreational Trails Program, Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund to name a few). We need to start transitioning to new and diverse revenue streams in order to ensure the longevity of these critical conservation programs.

B. Convene the recreation business community with agency partners to discuss the infrastructure needed, on both land and water, to support an Electric Vehicle future and what incentives may be needed for manufacturers and consumers to transition to clean economies successfully.