



March 3, 2022

The Honorable Thomas Carper  
Chairman  
Environment and Public Works Committee  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Ranking Member  
Environment and Public Works Committee  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito,

On behalf of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable and our 35 national association members, I would like to thank you for holding this hearing on the Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act by the U.S. Department of Transportation. We have been appreciative of Congress' continued commitment to investing in infrastructure that enhances outdoor recreation and the many rural communities that strongly benefit the outdoor recreation economy. This legislation and the ongoing work of the Department are important to our industry and continue to provide opportunities to enhance outdoor recreation and grow the recreation economy.

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) is the nation's leading coalition of outdoor recreation entities representing more than 110,000 American outdoor businesses and the full spectrum of outdoor activities. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the recreation industry generated \$689 billion in economic output, accounted for 1.8 percent of GDP, and 4.3 million American jobs in 2020, despite industry slowdowns and access restrictions caused by COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, outdoor recreation was growing faster than the economy as a whole.

Investments in outdoor recreation infrastructure have wide-ranging benefits for the United States. When infrastructure investments are made on public lands and waters, recreational trails, rural communities, and campgrounds, we can better meet the growing demand Americans have for the outdoors and ensure that everyone has a quality and safe outdoor experience. When Americans participate in outdoor recreation, they purchase gear, equipment, food, and lodging, while also contributing tens of billions of dollars in federal taxes. And it's not just good economics—outdoor recreation opportunities also provide significant improvements to public health and community vitality. The wind is at outdoor recreation's back: because of COVID-induced behavior changes, outdoor recreation sales and participation shattered records in 2020 and 2021 as Americans flocked to rural communities for their accessible recreation opportunities.

As we look at the impact of the infrastructure investments that were signed into law last year, we appreciate your committee's prioritization of the re-authorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, the Recreational Trails Program, the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), and natural infrastructure projects.

As it relates to the Department of Transportation, we are especially appreciative of the continued commitment to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). This program provides needed funding for motorized and non-motorized trails, which benefit many industry sectors within our membership. The continued investments in the RTP make trails accessible and provide more opportunities for people to get outside and enjoys the outdoors. We would like to work with this committee to better align gas tax revenues intended for the RTP with allocations to the RTP. The program is currently funded at \$84 million annually, which is substantially less than the \$280+ million collected in taxes on fuel used by these vehicles, and funding generated by users of recreational trails are being diverted for other purposes. We would request that you carefully consider bipartisan proposals in the House and Senate that would fully fund the RTP.

Through infrastructure investments like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, outdoor recreation will continue to create new jobs and economic growth. We look forward to working the Committee and the Department of Transportation to advance these investments and ensure they strengthen outdoor recreation economies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Wahl", written in a cursive style.

Jessica Wahl Turner  
President  
Outdoor Recreation Roundtable