



April 5, 2022

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks
1328 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Russ Fulcher
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher,

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) and our members thank you for today's hearing examining the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This historic legislation and the programs it funds are crucial to maintaining and expanding the outdoor recreation industry – which generates \$689 billion in economic output, comprises 1.8 percent of GDP, creates 4.3 million jobs, and prior to the pandemic was growing faster than the economy as a whole – and ensuring all Americans have access to outdoor recreation on resilient public lands and waters for generations to come.

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.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided necessary funds for our beloved public lands and waters, and the outdoor recreation industry is feeling a heightened sense of urgency to ensure that these investments are implemented expeditiously. Investments in grey, green and blue infrastructure are critical to our shared recreation assets, as well as managing existing conserved lands and waters and improving their ability to withstand the ongoing threats posed by wildfires, drought, and other natural disasters caused by climate change. At a time when more Americans than ever are prioritizing getting outside on our public lands and waters, modernization and mitigation is needed to ensure increased visitation does not harm an already fragile ecosystem. Additionally, infrastructure funds can be used to repair and replace damage caused by wildfires, as well as prevent future damage and invest in wildfire management and response. Improved roads, bridges, facilities, and more help build resilient rural economies that rely on their proximity to natural resources, rather than the boom-and-bust cycle of extractive industries.

Funds from IIJA will be implemented more effectively if Congress passes the Outdoor Recreation Package currently making its way through the Senate. This historic package – which includes bills like the *Outdoor Rec Act*, *Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act*, *Recreation Not Red-Tape Act*, as well as other bipartisan and pragmatic outdoor recreation legislation – will help manage already existing conserved lands and waters in order to support businesses recovering from COVID-19, and now impacted by wildfires and drought, ensure better access to the outdoors for all Americans, mitigate the impacts of climate change and ever-increasing visitation in some areas on the outdoor experience, and create jobs by supporting rural economies and communities.

The infrastructure package was an extraordinary bipartisan achievement that will not only rebuild our crumbling roads, bridges, and airports, but also improve the infrastructure behind our beloved public lands and waters. These meaningful investments in transportation, public lands, rural development, and natural infrastructure have the potential to connect more people to the outdoors and strengthen the outdoor recreation economy, which creates jobs, helps us to remain globally competitive, and ensures we recover from the impacts the pandemic had on workforce, local communities, our health, and our quality of life. This can be achieved and sustained if we are able to provide agencies with the tools they need to plan, analyze and support recreation appropriately by passing an Outdoor Recreation Package to focus these efforts on where they can do the most good for the most Americans. ORR and our members stand ready to work with you and your committee to ensure all Americans have access to safe, sustainable recreation for generations to come.

Sincerely,

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

Jessica Turner
President