



The Honorable Jacky Rosen
Chair
Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export
Promotion
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export
Promotion
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Rosen and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR), thank you for holding this hearing on “Examining the 2022 National Travel and Tourism Strategy,” which frequently references outdoor recreation opportunities around the United States. As Senators representing two states with economies that rely on outdoor recreation (\$4 billion in Nevada and \$33.2 billion in Florida¹) we appreciate your interest in these issues and look forward to working with you and your staff going forward. We also appreciate outdoor recreation being a critical part of this strategy. As the strategy indicates, “...communities have experienced economic decline and seek help exploring tourism and outdoor recreation as tools to diversify and expand their economies.” The role of outdoor recreation in our nation’s travel and tourism sector is significant and we will continue to work with local communities on leveraging outdoor recreation and public lands as a means of increasing tourism and quality outdoor experiences, while strengthening the outdoor recreation industry and building sustainable economies.

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, in 2020 the recreation industry generated \$689 billion in economic output, accounted for 1.8 percent of GDP, and created 4.3 million American jobs, 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.

The Department of Commerce’s new National Travel and Tourism Strategy provides an important focus on several issues at the intersection of outdoor recreation and tourism, including the need to maintain quality infrastructure, promote sustainable tourism, creatively respond to increased demands on public lands, leverage technology to assist with visitor management, and prioritize diversity within the workforce.

Outdoor recreation continues to be a significant draw for tourism. Many local communities throughout the nation, especially rural communities, have built meaningful economies around outdoor recreation. For example, the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities program, a technical assistance partnership facilitated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, received 300 applications from communities around the United States for just 20 spots over two years of the program. And it is not just travel and tourism that benefits from outdoor recreation investments; outdoor recreation attracts new residents and businesses, generates healthcare savings, revitalizes main streets, and helps businesses

¹ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. “Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account,” <https://apps.bea.gov/regional/orsa/>



across all sectors recruit and retain talented employees. Helping rural communities strengthen their economies through outdoor recreation is a priority for ORR, many of our member organizations, and partners. We look forward to working with the federal government to identify policy opportunities to incentivize rural economic development around outdoor recreation.

As more visitors prioritize outdoor recreation and public lands, however, it is more important than ever to ensure that our lands and local communities are protected. Responding to increased demand requires investments in infrastructure, technology, staffing, and data-driven analysis to ensure visitation to public lands and waters is balanced in the interest of both local ecosystems and providing visitors with quality experiences. It is important that we are innovative in providing solutions to increased visitation and we are working within our membership and with federal partners increase visibility of some of the lesser visited lands and waters as well as continuing to highlight many of the local parks that are more accessible to everyone. For these reasons, ORR is supporting a package of outdoor recreation legislation with pragmatic policies to address these challenges that recently passed with unanimous consent through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Additionally, outdoor recreation economies are most beneficial when they include the perspectives of all stakeholders in communities, including travel and tourism organizations, visitors, affected industries, marketing agencies, and the destination community. We are appreciative that the Strategy calls out the Together Outdoors Coalition, a program administered by ORR to help ensure a more inclusive outdoor recreation economy, as a key partner for developing new initiatives. The Department should consider the Together Outdoors Coalition an active partner in creating new strategies to welcome visitors.

As the Department of Commerce and their federal partners – especially those that manage public lands and waters – begin to implement the individual strategies outlined in the national strategy, our industry looks forward to helping to advance strategies that elevate outdoor recreation as a key component of any tourism strategy, strengthen the outdoor recreation economy, and protect the venues that have become leading tourist destinations across our public lands and waters through investments in infrastructure.

Again, thank you for holding this important hearing and we look forward to working with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Wahl Turner', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Jessica Wahl Turner

President

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable