

POLICY PRIORITIES 2025

The \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy supports healthy people, places, communities, and economies. Outdoor recreation contributes 5 million jobs across the country and stimulates health and wellness, conservation, and economic opportunities—especially in rural America. To continue its growth and resilience in every corner of the country, the new Trump Administration and Members of Congress should prioritize recreation access, infrastructure and funding for the outdoors, and favorable business policies. Supporting the outdoor recreation economy supports the health of local communities and people and the growth and resilience of American jobs and businesses.

LASTING INFRASTRUCTURE: Fund Outdoor Recreation Assets, Agencies, and Studies

Healthy public lands and waters are the backbone of a vibrant outdoor recreation economy. Given the impact outdoor recreation has on our nation's jobs and the economy, health and wellness, conservation, equity, and rural development, investments in recreation infrastructure and assets support the health of local communities, economies, and people.

- **Establish a Presidential Commission on Outdoor Recreation** to analyze near-term budget shortfalls and innovative funding solutions that can supplement existing funding sources that are at risk.
- **Fund the annual U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account**, which provides for critical economic analysis of the outdoor recreation economy.
- **Adequately fund federal agencies** responsible for maintaining outdoor recreation infrastructure, including ensuring enough staff to meet permittee and visitor needs so our industry can continue to thrive, create jobs, and support Americans' quality of life.
- **Ensure reinvestment of recreation fee revenues** at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites and establish retention of ski area permit fees by USDA Forest Service to reinvest in recreation on the local units that collect them.
- **Establish Bureau of Land Management Concessionaire Authority** for more front-country and developed recreation assets.
- **Reauthorize the Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Fund** which provides federal public land and water agencies with needed financial resources for reducing and responding to the growing deferred maintenance backlog.
- **Fund the Recreational Trails Program (RTP)** as a proven, effective means for boosting the nation's health, economy, and access to public lands and waters. RTP provides funds from users to the states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses.

BUSINESS CERTAINTY:

Ensure U.S. Outdoor Recreation Businesses Remain Globally Competitive

The outdoor recreation community relies on balanced trade to create jobs and provide consumers with outdoor recreation products, gear, and vehicles. While large sectors of the outdoor recreation industry manufacture in the United States and are looking for additional opportunities to manufacture domestically, many rely on international supply chains. Therefore, the outdoor recreation industry needs a trade policy rooted in certainty and that provides meaningful incentives to both onshore to the United States and diversify manufacturing footprints with allies and trusted trading partners. We rely on resilient supply chains and a stable business environment to remain competitive and support well-paying jobs in the United States.

- **Retroactive extension of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)** and reform to Competitive Need Limitations to allow U.S. companies to obtain relief from tariffs that they have been required to pay since the program's expiration in 2020. GSP renewal and reform will ensure that the program continues to provide a meaningful incentive to companies to shift their supply chains out of China and to GSP eligible nations through duty-free imports.
- **Reform the application of Section 301 Tariffs** (on country-of-origin China products) to stabilize the current disproportionate impact on small business to provide for a fair, transparent product exclusion process. Tariffs are a powerful tool for negotiating favorable trade agreements and making sure that American companies can compete on fair terms. However, while tariffs have proven effective, they also pose challenges for American manufacturers. By allowing smart free trade agreements like USMCA to open access to markets, domestic finished products manufacturing can be a thriving industry, and businesses can have certainty and capital to grow jobs, R&D, and sustainability.
- **Significant reduction to the de minimis threshold** to protect U.S. manufacturers and retailers from being undermined by foreign competitors who are not required to pay duties, trade remedy tariffs, or fees like federal excise tax on imports and to protect U.S. consumers from unsafe and illicit products. Additionally, Congress should look to prevent China and other bad actors from using this loophole entirely, by either limiting their participation or excluding products originating in those countries. Submission of key data points like HTS classification and manufacturing IDs should also be included in such reforms.
- **Remove the new tax provision** that forces businesses to deduct their R&D costs over the course of several years and allow businesses to deduct those expenses in the same year they are incurred. This harmful change makes R&D investments significantly more expensive, especially for small and medium manufacturers.

RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY:

Mitigate the Costly Impacts of Climate Change on Recreation Assets and Businesses and Support Sustainability Efforts Across the Recreation Economy

The outdoor recreation industry is increasingly developing technology and products that are helping to reduce carbon emissions and grow a more sustainable industry. At the same time, outdoor recreation assets (forests, greenways, etc.) are important tools for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of extreme weather events. The federal government should prioritize natural climate solutions because of the many benefits they provide for conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation, public health, and outdoor recreation. Agencies should also invest in the infrastructure needed to meet future demands by vehicles powered by cleaner energy sources.

- **Develop proposals for clean technology infrastructure** in and around public lands to accommodate industries moving towards decarbonization for their outdoor vehicle technology. Build rural infrastructure that can accommodate new outdoor recreation vehicles and products, including EV infrastructure as well as sustainable fuels and hydrogen. Additionally, new public-private partnerships can help support clean energy transitions on and around public lands and waters.
- **Balance access with energy development** knowing that adequate access to America's public lands and waters helps sustain healthy ecosystems and the next generations of conservationists. Access policies and new energy development and infrastructure must include recreation industry input and be informed by the best available science and data.
- **Prioritize policy and funding focused on resilient recreation infrastructure and natural climate solutions** to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and extreme weather on recreation economies. These strategies should align with increased outdoor recreation access and building thriving economies and healthier places to live and work.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: Create Rural Economic Development through Recreation

Outdoor recreation has consistently proven to be an important cornerstone around which rural America can strengthen its economies and communities. Communities adjacent to public lands and waters or other outdoor recreation infrastructure require the ability to recruit and retain recreation-related businesses and workers.

- **Create quality affordable housing to support the outdoor recreation workforce.** The recreation workforce is often forced to make long commutes or spend outside their means to find housing. Innovative housing solutions are essential for federal employees serving the outdoors and partners connecting Americans to these experiences.
- **Implement recreation laws and work with the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR)** to create more safe, affordable, and equitable opportunities for Americans to get outdoors.
- **Integrate and prioritize outdoor recreation in existing infrastructure, planning, and business programs** at the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Small Business Administration (SBA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Department of Agriculture (USDA). Examples: Community Facilities Grants, Public Works & Economic Adjustment Assistance, SBA Grant and Loan Programs, Brownfields Grants.
- **Support the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) program and new EDA investments** to provide planning and technical assistance around recreation economy development and increase funding opportunities for rural communities and their recreation infrastructure.
- **Address the growing technical gap between in-demand skills and the applicant pool.** Workforce shortages are plaguing domestic manufacturing and causing a shrinkage in production for all kinds of industries, including marine manufacturing. By creating and extending programs to target students and professionals to provide the tools needed for skilled labor, we can ensure a skilled labor workforce to sustain United States manufacturing industries for decades to come. Innovative K-12 partnerships, new tools, and research are needed to align talent to opportunities, as well as periodic reporting and innovative federal programs to invest in future outdoor careers.

HEALTHY PEOPLE AND PLACES: Connect Time Outside to Health and Wellness

Outdoor recreation is a meaningful health and wellness solution, which became evident across virtually every community in the United States throughout the pandemic. Time outside and the benefits of staying active have proven to be vital for everyone, especially for strengthening physical and mental well-being. Policymakers at all levels should prioritize equitable and meaningful access to outdoor recreation as a health and wellness solution and consider its importance in communities when developing policies around healthcare, community development and planning, access to green spaces, transportation, and overall budgeting.

- **Create grants and incentives for communities with lower health outcomes** to fund local outdoor recreation infrastructure and access improvements, specifically in park deserts or low-income areas, and public-private partnerships to help connect underrepresented communities with outdoor recreational activities and skills.
- **Increase access to recreation for veterans and the broader disability community** through adaptive technologies and trail design improvements, as well as by increasing public awareness of accessible outdoor recreation options in public lands and waters. Federal partnerships with NGOs and stronger connections between VA hospitals throughout the country and state and federal agencies managing public lands and waters can also ensure that recreation access is improved for these communities.
- **Elevate research on the impact of nature and outdoor recreation** on mental and physical health outcomes and identify research gaps relating to treatment options that leverage outdoor recreation and time spent outside.