

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

September 5, 2018

Senator Mike Lee  
Chair, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining  
361A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

## Re: August 22 legislative hearing

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Wyden:

Outdoor Alliance and the outdoor recreation community appreciate the Subcommittee's attention to a number of important opportunities to enact appropriate protections for public lands and waters, and we write to offer our community's perspective on several of the bills heard on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of nine member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, and Colorado Mountain Club and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, and backcountry ski and snowshoe on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

## S. 483, Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

Outdoor Alliance appreciates S. 483, the "Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act." This legislation, sponsored by Senator Patty Murray, would protect 126,554 acres of the Olympic National Forest as Wilderness and designate 19 rivers and their major tributaries as Wild and Scenic. This landscape provides exceptional opportunities for world-class backcountry recreation engaged in by our membership. The Olympic Peninsula is a popular destination for outdoor recreation drawing visitors from across the country and around the world who enjoy the opportunities for climbing, hiking, mountaineering, paddlesports, mountain biking, and skiing. Additionally, many of our members live within the gateway communities on the Olympic Peninsula or in close proximity to take advantage of the close-to-home opportunities for outdoor recreation. Permanent protection of these lands and rivers provides job and labor income created



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by visitor spending in gateway communities while also enhancing the ability of the local community to attract and retain people, entrepreneurs, businesses, and retirees who contribute to the local economy. This bill is good for outdoor recreation and good for the local economy. We encourage the subcommittee to advance this bill without delay.

## **S. 1959, Central Coast Heritage Protection Act**

The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act would designate new Wilderness and protect Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument. Outdoor Alliance is particularly pleased by efforts that have been made to accommodate mountain bike access in key areas.

OA strongly supports provisions in the bill to create time-based stipulations for future trail development, and believe that these provisions must remain intact. The Fox Mountain Potential Wilderness Area has language that effectively gives the local mountain biking community 20 years to complete development of a trail system that, once complete (or the 20 years are up) will establish the Wilderness boundary. The bill authorizes trails and allows time for their completion. Accommodations for prospective—as well as existing—mountain biking opportunities is an essential way of helping to ensure that the mountain biking community remains supportive of Wilderness designations, where appropriate.

OA also appreciates efforts to establish a corridor for the Mono Alamar. This corridor through the Dick Smith Wilderness (Mono-Buckhorn) Addition is necessary to allow for the Mono Alamar trail to be contiguous to the north to the Forest Service fire road through Buckhorn. It is our understanding that maps currently do not accurately depict the corridor and instead show a short cherry stem, which is problematic. We understand that there is an intention to correct this, and OA is able to provide maps, if helpful. To ensure that this area is rideable once designated we support adding language in the bill clearly referencing the intent for the corridor to make the area open to bikes.

Further small adjustments are also necessary to accommodate trails in the Rinconada Mine area and the northwest portion of the Fox Mountain Potential Wilderness Area.

Overall, we are grateful for efforts to work with the mountain biking community to ensure that the bill works to benefit human powered outdoor recreation. The bill must protect mountain bike access to some of the most important trails and landscapes on the Los Padres National Forest, including the Mono Alamar Trail, the Condor Ridge and Black Mountain Scenic Areas, the Rocky Ridge and Bull Ridge Trails in the Fox Mountain Potential Wilderness, and the Murrietta, Sespe West, Ozena, and Boulder Canyon



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Trails. With the issues raised above addressed and the current boundaries, we believe this can be achieved.

## **S. 2809, Emery County Public Land Management Act**

Outdoor Alliance greatly appreciates the collaborative approach taken in the development of the Emery County Public Land Management Act, and we believe the bill has potential, with achievable revisions, to be a positive contribution to recreation, conservation, and local economic development in Emery County.

The Emery County Public Land Management Act of 2018 would protect nearly one million acres of public land, including nearly 530,000 acres of Wilderness and more than 336,000 acres of other protective designations, as well as add 54 miles of the Green River to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. We also greatly appreciate that the bill avoids precedent-setting changes to core conservation laws protecting our public lands and safeguards public lands from sell-off by including a reversion of transferred lands back to federal management if they are no longer used as state park.

In addition, we greatly appreciate provisions of the bill to:

- Establish a “non-motorized recreation” seat on the advisory council charged with establishing a management plan and creating subsequent recreation management policies;
- Include Muddy Creek in the Muddy Creek Wilderness Area, and the San Rafael River in the Mexican Mountain and Sids Mountain Wilderness Areas;
- Prohibit of mineral, geothermal leasing, or mining patents in essential areas;
- Prohibit new irrigation or pumping facilities, conveyances, storage, or hydropower facilities in Wilderness;
- Prohibit federal permitting of water resource facilities in Wilderness areas; and
- Defer controversial provisions related to travel management.

While we greatly appreciate the bill’s protections for much of the San Rafael Swell and surrounding lands and rivers, some important areas are left unprotected by the legislation. These places, including 16 miles of new Wild and Scenic River recommended by Interior and adjacent to the Uinta and Ouray Reservation, have high recreational value, and, if added to the proposal, would dramatically improve the legislation from the standpoint of conservation and outdoor recreation.

We believe a few outstanding issues remain, which we continue to productively discuss with the bill’s sponsors:



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## *Climbing Management*

For climbers, an important part of the Emery County bill is the resolution of issues related to fixed anchors in Wilderness. The area covered in the bill currently includes hundreds of climbing routes with thousands of existing fixed anchors. Most of the climbing routes that could be affected by this legislation are at a place called the San Rafael Reef, an area known to climbers as the “Sandstone Alps,” where there are nearly 250 individual climbing routes up to 1,000 feet tall. This is an area with thousands of fixed anchors in place. Much of this area is currently designated as a Wilderness Study Area and is slated for permanent Wilderness designation in the Emery County bill.

We are concerned that:

1. Existing anchors be allowed to remain,
2. That there is a workable process for authorizing new climbing anchors, and
3. Reasonable means be allowed for maintaining/replacing these anchors as needed.

To address this, our goal for the bill is to include legislative language, modeled on existing law for grazing management, that allows the BLM to authorize the management/replacement of the thousands of fixed anchors that already exist within the scope of this bill. Proposed language would read as follows:

**ROCK CLIMBING ANCHORS.**—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) and any relevant Department of the Interior and Forest Service regulations, the use of rock climbing anchors in the Wilderness Areas shall be allowed to continue if such use was established before the date of the enactment of this Act, subject to such reasonable regulations, policies, and practices as the Secretary determines to be necessary for effective management and administration.

## *Mountain Bike Access*

We are concerned by the potential effects of the legislation regarding some mountain biking opportunities in Emery County. Specifically, we are concerned that:

1. Existing trails open to bikes be allowed to remain open, to the extent practicable, using strategies like boundary modifications or clarifications; and
2. If mountain biking opportunities are lost, that there is a workable process to mitigate that loss by authorizing new quality trails open to bikes in the vicinity, with resources to facilitate that process and development.



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## *Travel Management Settlement*

We continue to work with the bill's sponsors to ensure that the settlement agreement affecting ongoing travel management decisions in the area is honored. We believe that these issues are likely to be acceptably addressed and are hopeful for a constructive resolution.

## *Tribal Concerns*

Outdoor Alliance believes it is essential that the bill include language ensuring that reservation land is protected from potential state land exchanges. Our member organizations have also offered language clarifying the effect that Wild and Scenic River designation may have on Tribal water rights.

Outdoor Alliance and our member groups and partners continue to productively engage on this bill, and believe it likely that constructive resolution to outstanding issues can be achieved.

## **S. 2721, San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act**

Outdoor Alliance supports the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act. The bill protects important landscapes in Southwest Colorado for conservation and recreation, and we appreciate efforts to respect existing and prospective mountain biking opportunities in the bill.

We are concerned by the bill's inclusion of a "special management area," that largely excludes bikes while allowing helicopter access for heli-skiing operations. In general, non-Wilderness areas should be managed to include mountain biking opportunities, where appropriate, absent compelling reasons to the contrary. We are extremely pleased, however, by the adjustments made to the special management area boundaries to protect existing mountain bike opportunities, and the bill is supported by local and national mountain bike advocacy groups, including IMBA.

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Outdoor Alliance appreciates the Subcommittee's attention to these bills, and look forward to continue working with the Subcommittee to pass positive recreation and conservation legislation.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Policy Director  
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Executive Director, Outdoor Alliance  
Zachary Leich-Huey, Interim Executive Director, Access Fund  
Wade Blackwood, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Dave Wiens, Executive Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
Mark Menlove, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers  
Phil Powers, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club  
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Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club

