

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

April 7, 2020

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Outdoor recreation community support for S. 3422, the Great American Outdoors Act

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, we write to express our strong support for S. 3422, the Great American Outdoors Act, and our hope that the bill will be included in an upcoming round of pandemic response legislation.

The Great American Outdoors Act, comprising legislation providing permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and addressing the deferred maintenance needs of our country's public lands, enjoys strong bipartisan support and was scheduled for Senate floor time the week of March 23rd before events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic intervened. The President has expressed his support for fully funding LWCF and addressing deferred maintenance, and similar bills to provide LWCF funding and address public lands maintenance have been reported by the House Natural Resources Committee.

The events of recent weeks have underscored, for millions of Americans, the importance of outdoor recreation opportunities and close-to-home recreational resources. More than ever, Americans are looking for opportunities to get outside for a reprieve from daily life and as an important support for mental health. Moreover, as our country, in months ahead, looks to recover from economic shock, infrastructure repairs and recreational resource development are both a source of



OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

jobs and a concrete action to support economic diversification and resiliency in communities across the country.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding

Outdoor Alliance and the outdoor recreation community strongly support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and we applaud its recent permanent reauthorization through the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. Over the life of the program, however, Congress has not lived up to the program's full promise, and more than \$20 billion collected expressly for LWCF purposes have been misdirected. We strongly support permanent funding to ensure that each year, LWCF's full \$900 million is applied toward recreation and conservation goals.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is an overwhelmingly successful program for achieving balanced use of public lands by directing a portion of royalties from off-shore oil and gas development toward targeted recreation and conservation projects. Over the life of the program, LWCF has funded critical protections for river corridors in places like West Virginia's Gauley and New Rivers and helped establish public river access points for canoers, kayakers, and rafters in places like Washington's White Salmon River. LWCF has made possible thousands of miles of singletrack for mountain bikers and hikers, including at areas like the world-class trail system at Lory State Park near Fort Collins, Colorado, and Toro Park, California, home to challenging trails and spectacular views of Monterey Bay.

LWCF has funded close-to-home recreation opportunities in all fifty states and every congressional district. According to a recent study by the Trust for Public Land, spending on land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund produces a return on investment for local economies at rate of 4 to 1.¹

Parks and Public Lands Restoration Funding

As a result of years of shortfalls in appropriations by Congress, a substantial backlog of infrastructure and maintenance needs currently exists on our country's

¹ THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND, RETURN ON INVESTMENT FROM THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND, <https://www.tpl.org/return-investment-land-and-water-conservation-fund>.



OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

public lands and waters. While the need for greater appropriations—both for maintenance and infrastructure needs, as well as for responsibilities like planning and visitor services—remains, we strongly support congressional efforts to make investments targeted specifically toward maintenance and infrastructure.

In recent years, attention has largely focused on the deferred maintenance needs of the National Park Service, and we strongly support efforts to ensure the sustainability and vitality of those iconic areas. We are also extremely pleased that the Great American Outdoors Act directs needed resources to other land management agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as the Bureau of Indian Education. The addition of the Forest Service, in particular, is a key improvement that renders the GAOA significantly better than previous bills to address deferred maintenance.

* * *

As Congress moves forward with responding to the ongoing pandemic and its economic reverberations, we ask that you consider the important role that public lands and waters and the outdoor recreation opportunities they support are playing and will continue to play in our country's recovery. The Great American Outdoors Act enjoys overwhelming bipartisan support and would make a meaningful contribution to pandemic recovery efforts.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Executive Director, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Interim Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater



OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association

Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance

Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers

Phil Powers, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club

Mitsu Iwasaki, Executive Director, the Mazamas

Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club

Chad Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

About Outdoor Alliance

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten 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, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

