

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

Testimony of Louis Geltman, Policy Director, Outdoor Alliance  
 United States House of Representatives  
 Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
 Public Witness Testimony, March 10, 2022

## Summary of Recommendations

Agency	Program Funding Recommendations
Department of Agriculture Forest Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Land Management Planning/Assessment/Monitoring: \$24.816M</li> <li>● Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness: \$72M</li> <li>● Capital Improvements and Maintenance: \$210.556M</li> <li>● Legacy Roads and Trails: \$100M</li> <li>● Forest and Rangeland Research: \$388.14M</li> </ul> <p>Note: All USFS recommendations should be accompanied by commensurate increases in Salaries and Expenses.</p>
Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Resource Protection and Maintenance—Resource Management Planning: \$100.69M</li> <li>● National Conservation Lands: \$69.491M</li> <li>● Wilderness Management: \$27.396M</li> <li>● Recreation Resources Management: \$87.698M</li> </ul>
Department of Interior National Park Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Recreation and Preservation: \$111.235M, including \$16.048M for Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance</li> <li>● Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership: \$125M</li> <li>● National Trails System: \$22.18M</li> </ul>

Chair Pingree, Ranking Member Joyce, and Subcommittee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide requests to help inform the FY23 appropriations process.

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



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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.

Outdoor recreation is the most common way that Americans come to know their public lands and waters. It contributes immeasurably to people’s lives and supports vibrant communities through better health, well being, and the ability of outdoor recreation access and amenities to attract businesses and workers across a range of industries, particularly in rural communities. It also supports the growing outdoor recreation economy, which accounts for nearly 2 percent of U.S. GDP.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the outdoor industry hard, while simultaneously bringing an influx of new visitors to our country’s public lands and waters. Climate change, and particularly fire, have stretched the capacity of land management agencies to the point that they are hamstrung in their ability to deliver on their other stewardship responsibilities, including providing visitor services, protecting resources, maintaining recreational and other infrastructure, and engaging in medium and long-term planning. These impacts—and decades of declining budgets in real-dollar terms—have stretched agencies to the breaking point, and it is essential that Congress provide the resources that will enable land managers to address climate impacts and provide the recreational resources and services that Americans expect and that provide significant return on investment, particularly for rural communities.

Additionally, there is strong bipartisan support in Congress for the creation of a modern revisioning of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and a funding request—spread across multiple agencies and budget lines—was a part of the President’s budget request for FY22. A modern CCC would enable a strong and integrated approach to climate change, conservation, equitable and sustainable recreation access, and local economic development. Tackling the impacts of climate change, such as the increased risk of mega-fires, while restoring ecosystems, improving recreation access, and creating new jobs, is a winning strategy for moving America forward on environmental resilience and away from the pandemic-induced economic downturn. The CCC would create new job opportunities in the rapidly growing clean energy, ecosystem restoration, and recreation industries for both urban centers and rural communities, while at the same time inspiring a new generation of land stewards and healthy outdoor recreation enthusiasts. The outdoor recreation community strongly supports the subcommittee in exploring how a modern CCC could be implemented through FY23 appropriations.

Our specific requests follow.

## Department of Agriculture Forest Service

*Note: All USFS recommendations should be accompanied by commensurate increases in Salaries and Expenses.*



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Forest Service lands provide irreplaceable ecosystem services and economic benefits and include many of our nation's most valued outdoor recreation destinations. The USFS has been underfunded and understaffed for decades, hampering its ability to meet even the most basic aspects of its mission, much less the needs of a 21st century America. For FY23, Congress should appropriate a significant increase from enacted levels for the National Forest System, particularly for key accounts including the Land Management Planning/Assessment/Monitoring; Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness; Capital Improvement and Maintenance; Forest and Rangeland Research; and the Salaries and Expenses budget lines

Land Management Planning/Assessment/Monitoring: \$24.816M. The Forest Service must increase the pace and scale of forest plan revisions in order to outline bold, visionary, and climate-focused plans for each National Forest. These plans are the foundations upon which the site-specific actions needed to address the climate crisis and provide recreational opportunities are built. Forest plan revision is supposed to occur every 15 years, but currently, 52 out of 130 forest plans nationwide are more than fifteen years old, and providing resources to prioritize these plan revisions is a critical step towards better management. The Forest Service also needs increased resources to tackle project-level planning, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire, implement new forest plans, and create or update recreation management plans.

Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness: \$72M. An increase to the Forest Service's recreation budget is critically needed to help the agency adapt to increased visitation and provide better opportunities for equitable and sustainable recreation access. Funding at \$72M will help the Forest Service proactively manage use and deliver the opportunities that support local economies.

Capital Improvements and Maintenance: \$210.556M. The Great American Outdoors Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided much-needed funding to address Forest Service infrastructure maintenance backlogs, however, this funding does not meet the existing need for capital improvements and maintenance. These investments should be augmented with an additional \$210.556M to help the agency more fully address its infrastructure and maintenance backlog.

Legacy Roads and Trails: \$100M. Although Congress permanently authorized Legacy Roads & Trails in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) at \$50M per year, this number does not meet the existing need for road and trail repair, road decommissioning, and other needs. The IIJA investments should be augmented with an additional \$100M from the USFS budget to help the agency prevent adverse impacts to water quality, sensitive species, and outdoor recreation from USFS roads.

Forest and Rangeland Research: \$388.14M. Forest Service research is critical to understanding our natural world. This research is more important than ever in a changing climate and with novel pressures facing our national forests and grasslands. An increase in forest and rangeland



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research funding will bring much-needed capacity to addressing pressing questions and developing new techniques for forest and rangeland management.

## Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management

Resource Protection and Maintenance—Resource Management Planning: \$100.69M. As with the development of land management plans for the Forest Service, Resource Management Planning is a critical exercise by the Bureau of Land Management for ensuring the best use of BLM lands. These efforts will not only help to ensure thoughtful and technically adept development of Resource Management Plans, but aid the agency in appropriately taking into account the type of place-specific information that is critical to meeting the needs of the outdoor recreation community.

National Conservation Lands: \$69.491M. The National Conservation Lands system comprises more than 900 units and 35 million acres of public lands, including Monuments, National Conservation Areas, National Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness. These areas include some of our country’s marquee destinations for outdoor recreation, and investing in these resources is critical for their long-term protection and their ability to deliver economic benefits to local communities.

Wilderness Management: \$27.396M. BLM Wilderness lands include areas that provide invaluable benefits for recreation and conservation and are strained by a lack of management resources. We support a robust increase for this budget line.

Recreation Resources Management: \$87.698M. BLM manages innumerable important recreation resources, but needs additional capacity to manage the challenges (and opportunities) of increased visitation.

## Department of Interior National Park Service

National Recreation and Preservation: \$111.235M, including \$17M for the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program. As with other management agencies, NPS requires additional resources to meet the challenges of increased visitation, climate change, and other stressors. Additionally, RTCA is an effective and critically important program for helping local communities realize their visions for improved recreation resources.

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP): \$125M. The ORLP improves access to outdoor recreation opportunities for underserved communities where these investments are most needed. We recommend maintaining the FY21 appropriation of \$125M for ORLP.

National Trails System: \$22.18M. We support an increase in appropriations for the National Trails System, which the NPS administers. Funding this program at \$22.18M will ensure the NPS and its stewardship partners can keep these iconic trails accessible, maintained, and sustainable.

