

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

May 18, 2022

Senator Joe Manchin
Chair, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator John Barrasso
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: May 19 full committee hearing to examine the President's FY 2023 budget request for the Department of the Interior

Chair Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the human powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding May 19th's hearing on the Fiscal Year 2023 budget request for the Department of Interior (DOI).

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.

DOI lands, including those managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS), house many of America's most iconic outdoor recreation destinations and help support the growing \$689 billion outdoor recreation economy. Due in part to decades of underinvestment, these agencies face staffing and resource challenges that have left them unable to meet modern land management needs related to recreation, conservation, and sustainability. For



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FY23, Congress should appropriate a significant increase from enacted levels for key land management accounts at BLM and NPS, and should also appropriate funds for DOI conservation initiatives including America the Beautiful and a modern Civilian Climate Corps.

Summary of Recommendations

Agency	Program Funding Recommendations
Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resource Protection and Maintenance—Resource Management Planning: \$97.026M ● National Conservation Lands: \$78.145M ● Wilderness Management: \$24.383M ● Recreation Resources Management: \$87.698M
Department of Interior National Park Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Recreation and Preservation: \$111.235M, including \$16.048M for Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance ● Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership: \$125M ● National Trails System: \$22.18M
Other Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● U.S. Geological Survey: \$24.6M for creation of the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas ● Land and Water Conservation Fund: \$1.35B ● Civilian Conservation Corps: \$60M

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

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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 underinvestment—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.

In recent years, both the Great American Outdoors Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided targeted investments to help DOI keep pace with increasing demands across our public lands. While greatly needed, these investments were intended to be additional to robust baseline budgets for land management agencies. Increased appropriations from Congress, including investments in recreation and planning staff, are needed to help plan and facilitate projects funded through the GAOA and IJJA, including where work is being completed with support from partners.

Our specific requests follow.

Bureau of Land Management

Resource Protection and Maintenance—Resource Management Planning: \$97.026M. Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the request for a 42% increase for BLM Resource Management Planning outlined in the FY23 President’s Budget. 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 and revision 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. These funds are also needed to improve the efficiency and quality of NEPA analyses, and to improve data collection, analysis, and monitoring to support evidence-based decision-making for land management actions.



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National Conservation Lands: \$78.145M. 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. The budget for the National Conservation Lands account has decreased over the past 20 years accounting for inflation. Meanwhile, the number of acres covered by the National Conservation Lands system nearly doubled over that same period. Outdoor Alliance supports increasing appropriations for National Conservation Lands to at least \$78.145M in order to account for the substantial increase in acreage protected under the National Conservation Lands system, and to address the backlog of management plans for National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, and other areas protected over the past decade.

Wilderness Management: \$24.383M. Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the agency's request for \$24.383M for Wilderness Management outlined in the FY2023 President's Budget. BLM Wilderness lands include areas that provide invaluable benefits for recreation and conservation and are strained by a lack of management resources. Increased resources are needed for the BLM to address sustainable recreation, ecological restoration, and other resource needs across its 21.5-million-acre network of 260 Wilderness areas and 491 Wilderness Study Areas.

Recreation Resources Management: \$87.698M. BLM manages innumerable important recreation resources, but needs additional capacity to manage the challenges (and opportunities) of increased visitation. Outdoor Alliance supports an increase in base funding for Recreation Resources Management to at least \$87.698M in order to address capacity issues for BLM recreation staff, and to account for an increase in the amount and diversity of recreational use across BLM lands.

National Park Service

National Recreation and Preservation: \$111.235M, including \$17M for the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program. NPS requires additional resources to meet the challenges of increased visitation, climate change, and other stressors.



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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.

Other Appropriations Priorities

American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas: \$24.6M. Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the Administration’s request for \$24.6M for the U.S. Geological Survey for the creation of the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas. The Atlas will be used to establish a baseline of protected areas in the U.S., and to track progress towards the Administration’s goal of protecting 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 through the America the Beautiful (AtB) initiative. Appropriations are needed to develop a robust, scientifically-informed, and user-friendly Atlas that will guide effective conservation actions that support the multiple goals of the AtB initiative, including increasing access for outdoor recreation.

Land and Water Conservation Fund: \$1.35B. In 2020, Congress guaranteed permanent dedicated funding of \$900M per year to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act. While significant, this funding is intended as a baseline for LWCF, and the number of important, time-sensitive land conservation projects seeking LWCF funding far surpasses \$900M. Congress should address this need by appropriating an additional \$450M for LWCF in FY23.

Civilian Climate Corps: \$60M. Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the Administration’s proposal to create a modern revisioning of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The President’s FY23 Budget includes a request for \$60M



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spread across multiple budget lines within DOI. 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.

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On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding this important hearing. We look forward to working with you to support sustainable recreation on federal public lands.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers
Jamie Logan, Interim Director, American Alpine Club
Kaleen Deatherage, Interim Executive Director, the Mazamas



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Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

