

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

Senator Mike Lee  
Chair, Senate Energy and Natural  
Resources Committee  
363 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Martin Heinrich  
Ranking Member, Senate Energy and  
Natural Resources Committee  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Bruce Westerman  
Chair, House Natural Resources  
Committee  
202 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member, House Natural  
Resources Committee  
2330 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

## **RE: President's Budget request for the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management for Fiscal Year 2026.**

Chairs Lee and Westerman, Ranking Members Heinrich and Huffman, and  
Committee members,

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, we write to share our perspectives on the Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget request for the National Park Service (NPS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The budget proposes sweeping cuts to public lands and conservation programs that would devastate the agency's ability to provide sustainable recreation opportunities to the American public. We ask that Congress put forward a stronger budget for public lands that enables land managers to fulfill their stewardship responsibilities while supporting recreation access and the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy.

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.



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Our input on select sections of the FY26 President's Budget are outlined in more detail below.

## Bureau of Land Management

Outdoor Alliance is extremely concerned by the scale of budget cuts proposed for the BLM. Overall, the budget would cut funding for the BLM by approximately 36% excluding new proposed deferred maintenance funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (see below). Recreation and conservation programs that are vital for our community would see even steeper cuts, including a 63% cut to Recreation Management and a striking 73% cut to the National Conservation Lands. Despite overseeing more lands than any other federal land management agency, BLM's recreation funding has historically lagged considerably behind other agencies—a dynamic that already prevents the agency from supporting local communities working to build and enhance their outdoor recreation economies. These proposed budget cuts would reduce the agency's capacity even further, making it impossible for BLM to fulfill basic tasks around land stewardship and setting back western communities that are invested in outdoor recreation opportunities on BLM lands.

## National Park Service

The NPS would see similarly devastating budget cuts, including a 31% cut to NPS Operations. This proposal comes as the agency struggles to meet seasonal hiring goals, and as Congress separately weighs cutting millions in unobligated funds for NPS staffing through budget reconciliation. As such, the budget would worsen the agency's staffing crisis at a time when visitation to National Parks is increasing. Further, we are disappointed to see an 87% cut proposed for National Recreation and Preservation, which supports outdoor recreation planning with state governments and other non-federal entities.

The budget outline released in early May notes that the Administration is considering transferring certain NPS units to state and local management,<sup>1</sup> but this

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<sup>1</sup> See, White House Fiscal Year 2026 Discretionary Budget Request, Page 28, *available at* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>, "The Budget would continue supporting many national treasures, but there is an urgent need to



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proposal is not addressed in the more detailed technical supplement to the budget released more recently. If the Administration plans to transfer or privatize NPS units, stakeholders including the outdoor recreation community will need significantly more clarity on what is being proposed and must be afforded an opportunity to weigh in with the NPS to inform their actions.

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

Outdoor Alliance strongly opposes the Administration's proposal to redirect LWCF funds towards deferred maintenance needs at the land management agencies—reversing a commitment to the American public made through the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act, signed into law by President Trump in 2020. LWCF is America's most important program for private land conservation and plays an invaluable role in expanding outdoor recreation access across the U.S. While deferred maintenance needs are significant, land acquisition opportunities are often time-sensitive, and LWCF is critical for preventing open spaces from being developed or converted to other uses that are incompatible with outdoor recreation. Similarly, LWCF can often facilitate less expensive, more efficient management through the acquisition of private inholdings from willing sellers. There are already more worthwhile projects than LWCF can support each year, and the agencies already have a funding source—the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund—that supports deferred maintenance. Rather than redirecting LWCF dollars, Congress should pass the bipartisan America the Beautiful Act (S. 1547), which would extend the Legacy Restoration Fund through 2033.

## **U.S. Wildland Fire Service**

The budget proposes combining multiple agencies' wildland fire suppression programs into a single U.S. Wildland Fire Service that would be housed under DOI. We caution that this idea should be planned and pursued thoughtfully and in a way sustains the historic connection between fire suppression and land management that exists across multiple federal agencies today. The budget fails to provide

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streamline staffing and transfer certain properties to State-level management to ensure the long-term health and sustainment of the National Park system."



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assurance to stakeholders like the outdoor recreation community that this type of careful transition will occur.

Currently the USDA Forest Service oversees the largest wildland fire program in the federal government, as well as a large number of red-carded employees who support wildfire management despite primarily working in other land management areas. Moving the wildland fire program out of USDA and into DOI will be a seismic change in Forest Service operations and risks crippling the agency's ability to fulfill its land management responsibilities outside of wildfire suppression. Siloing wildland fire suppression into a single agency also risks de-emphasizing other fire mitigation practices like prescribed fire that are critical for long-term wildfire resilience.

Given the magnitude of creating a unified wildfire agency and its potential to affect outdoor recreation, we recommend that Congress take time to consider stakeholder input and to only advance this idea in a bipartisan fashion.

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Thank you for considering our community's input. We look forward to working with you to pass strong FY26 appropriations bills that sustain the invaluable benefits that federal public lands provide for all Americans.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Vice President for Policy and Government Relations  
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance  
Heather Thorne, Executive Director, Access Fund  
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Clinton Begley, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
David Page, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance



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Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers

Ben Gabriel, Executive Director, American Alpine Club

Rebekah Phillips, Executive Director, the Mazamas

Madeline Bachner Lane, Chief Executive Officer, Colorado Mountain Club

Chad Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

