

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

June 26, 2025

Senate Majority Leader John Thune
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

Re: Opposition to updated reconciliation land sale proposals

Dear Majority Leader Thune and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, we write to express our continued firm opposition to including public land sales in budget reconciliation and articulate our specific concerns with draft language from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee dated June 24. While this updated language ostensibly scales back sales relative to a previous version, the outcome would still be drastic from an outdoor recreation standpoint, perhaps even more so because of its concentrated effect on close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities.

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.

Public land ownership and management is a core, existential priority for our community, the interests of millions of outdoor recreationists across the country, and our outdoor recreation economy. While we are open to judicious, carefully targeted, small-scale transfers or sales of public lands, for specific purposes and in



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accordance with existing law,¹ we are vigorously opposed to large-scale, indiscriminate transfers, particularly for the purpose of raising revenue.

The Energy and Natural Resources Committee draft text ostensibly proposes the sale of between .25 and .5 percent of BLM land, amounting to between 612,500 and 1,225,00 acres. These areas would be selected from multiple-use BLM land within 5 miles of “population centers,” which is undefined in the bill text. While this terminology is too ambiguous to allow for comprehensive GIS analysis of every area potentially subject to sale, they include recreation resources like:

- Bald Mountain in Ketchum, ID (pop. 3,600)
- Hartman Rocks climbing, mountain bike, and OHV area outside Gunnison, CO (pop. 6800)
- Lunch Loops mountain bike trail system outside Grand Junction, CO (pop. 69,000)
- Cline Butte mountain biking trails, hiking, wildlife viewing, and OHV routes near Redmond, OR (pop. 37,000)
- The American River near Placerville and Diamond Springs, CA (combined pop. 22,000)
- Porcupine Rim Trail near Moab, UT (pop. 5200)

These are premier frontcountry recreation areas: places that provide close-to-town recreation access for millions of Americans and provide essential infrastructure for the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy. Given the mandatory nature of the sales and the reduced (relative to previous versions of the bill) acreage available for selection, sales of valued outdoor recreation landscapes would be nearly inevitable.

Again, because the term “population center” is undefined, it is impossible to know precisely what areas would be available for sale. However, based on our analysis, fewer than 1.8 million acres of BLM land, excluding known valid existing rights and grazing permits, are located within 5 miles of 2,500+ person municipalities. More than a third of these areas would be *required* to be sold to comply with only the *minimum* area mandated for sale under the bill. If “population center” is defined more broadly as any populated area, again excluding known valid existing rights

¹ Including, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act, and the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.



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and grazing permits, we believe the area available for sale would approach 5 million acres, again including countless invaluable recreational assets that could be sold without public process or input.

Additionally, while we read the bill's intent as limited to the sale of BLM land, the actual language of the bill text defines "Bureau of Land Management Land" as "Federal land administered by the Secretary [of Interior]," meaning the language could be interpreted as requiring the sale of .25 to .5 percent of the full land area managed by the Department of Interior, resulting in a required sale of between 1.05 and 2.1 million acres of public land. These numbers would create a scenario where BLM is aggressively turning every stone to find land to sell rather than continuing to honor the Federal Land Policy and Management Act's policy of generally retaining federal land.

The bill would also allow for disposed lands to be used for a wider range of uses beyond housing compared to earlier versions. The bill's only limitations are that land be used for housing (regardless of affordability) or to address "any infrastructure **and amenities** to support local needs associated with housing." The word "amenities" could be interpreted to allow for a range of uses not directly tied to housing, such as commercial development or golf courses, thus providing even less assurance for residents of western communities that disposed lands will actually support housing where it is needed most.

The addition of language requiring that 10% of the proceeds from land sales go towards "hunting, fishing, and recreational amenities" does not provide our community any solace over the loss of public lands. Under current law, the vast majority of funds from disposals of BLM lands are used for conservation purposes. We support this existing process and remain unwavering in our position that budget reconciliation is not an appropriate venue for mandating public land sales.

Finally, Outdoor Alliance is highly concerned by the potential for this bill to exacerbate the wildfire crisis in the western U.S. through a proliferation of new development in the wildland-urban interface. Data shows that more than half of the federal land located near communities with housing needs faces high wildfire



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risk.² Once homes are built in these areas, firefighters will be forced to dedicate valuable resources towards protecting structures when wildfires inevitably start—a significant cost to federal, state, and local firefighting agencies.

While the precise landscapes that would be lost out of public ownership under this proposal are impossible to state with certainty given the vagaries of the bill, in all possible outcomes, these provisions would lead to loss for outdoor recreation and close-to-home outdoor access. We ask that the Senate remove this language from proposed budget reconciliation bill text.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Vice President for Policy and Government Relations
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Rep. Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House
Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, House Minority Leader

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
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

² Megan Lawson et. al., *Housing on public lands will be limited by wildfire risk and development challenges*, Headwaters Economics (May 2025), available at <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/wildfire-public-land-housing/>.

