

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

October 9, 2025

Senator John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Outdoor recreation community support for wildfire legislation in the 119th Congress.

Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries,

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, we write to express our support for particular wildfire and forestry legislation in the 119th Congress. As frequent visitors to public lands, and often as residents of communities in the wildland-urban interface, our community is affected by wildfire in a variety of ways. Building resilience to wildfire, both across public lands and within communities, is a high priority for outdoor recreationists. This letter outlines our support for seven bills that would improve multiple aspects of fire management, including landscape resilience, community protection, and wildfire response, with the goal of informing a bipartisan wildfire package in 2025.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of nine 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, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike,



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backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

In recent decades, an increase in the size and severity of wildfires—particularly in the western U.S.—has affected outdoor recreation and the outdoor economy through closures, smoke, damage to scenic values, and other economic and ecological impacts.¹ The 2025 wildfire year is still active, although fire activity has slowed throughout much of the country. Although the overall number of acres burned across the U.S. so far in 2025 is relatively low compared with recent years,² this year nevertheless saw a number of highly significant wildfire events. Notably, the Palisade and Eaton Fires in Los Angeles destroyed thousands of homes and now rank among the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history. Over the summer, the Dragon Bravo Fire burned for more than a month in rugged terrain in and around the Grand Canyon, destroying numerous structures including the historic Grand Canyon Lodge. These wildfires, occurring in both urban and wildland environments, illustrate the complexity of the wildfire crisis and the wide range of policy changes necessary to build resilience to wildfire in the U.S.

Fortunately, Congress already has a strong bipartisan roadmap for improving wildfire management. In 2023, the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission (hereinafter the “Commission”) released a first-of-its-kind report detailing 148 actionable recommendations to address the wildfire crisis.³ The report is comprehensive in its approach to wildfire management and details recommendations to address every level of wildfire resilience, from building resilient landscapes, to strengthening our fire response, to hardening communities, to workforce development, to post-fire rehabilitation, and beyond.

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the following bills, which would put the Commission recommendations into action:

¹ See, Jamie Ervin, *Wildfire and Outdoor Recreation in the West: How Recreationists Can Support a Fire-Resilient Future*, Policy Report, Outdoor Alliance, Washington, D.C. (2023).

² National Interagency Fire Center, *Wildfires and Acres* (last visited Oct. 9, 2025), <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/statistics/wildfires>.

³ Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, *ON FIRE: The Report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission* (2023).



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- National Prescribed Fire Act of 2025 (S. 2015/H.R. 3889)
- Fire Information and Reaction Enhancement (FIRE) Act of 2025 (H.R. 753)
- The Facilitating Increased Resilience, Environmental Weatherization And Lowered Liability (FIREWALL) Act (S. 1323)
- Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act (H.R. 3444)
- Tim's Act (S. 279/H.R. 743)
- Wildfire Smoke Relief Act (S. 2856/H.R. 5481)
- Modernizing Wildfire Safety and Prevention Act of 2025 (H.R.1923)

These bills lie within the jurisdiction of multiple committees and address a wide range of issues, spanning from home hardening to prescribed fire. We encourage you to advance these bills, or their key components, as part of a comprehensive wildfire package prior to the 2026 wildfire season.

Our support for specific bills is described below.

National Prescribed Fire Act of 2025 (S. 2015/H.R. 3889)

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the National Prescribed Fire Act of 2025 (NPFA), which would increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire across our nation's fire-adapted and fire-dependent landscapes. It is widely acknowledged that widespread exclusion of fire (including cultural burning) from fire-adapted ecosystems over the past two centuries increased fuels and structural homogeneity across numerous western ecosystems (particularly forests), leading to more severe fires.⁴ Prescribed fire is a critically-important tool for addressing this fire deficit, and in turn mitigating wildfire risk to ecosystems and communities. Indeed, prescribed fire (and "beneficial fire" more broadly) was identified as a key wildfire resilience strategy by the Commission, with multiple recommendations focusing on increasing prescribed fire and cultural burning.⁵

⁴ See, Ervin, *supra* note 1, at 6-8

⁵ See, Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, *supra* note 2, at 55-63. Commission recommendations 10-16 emphasize increasing beneficial fire use.



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Despite its importance, prescribed fire is greatly underused, particularly in the West, due to a long list of barriers to implementation, including inadequate workforce capacity, lack of incentives for land managers to plan and implement prescribed burns, lack of dedicated funding, perceived risk among land managers and the public, issues with permitting for smoke emissions, challenges with weather windows, and more.⁶ The NPFA comprehensively addresses these barriers so that land managers can expand prescribed fire to levels commensurate with the wildfire crisis where it is safe and ecologically appropriate. Key components of the bill include establishing targets and incentives for prescribed fire use, creating new pathways for non-federal partners like Tribes to conduct prescribed burns on federal lands, improving work benefits for prescribed burners, and improving air quality permitting for essential prescribed fire activities.

Fire Information and Reaction Enhancement (FIRE) Act of 2025 (H.R. 753)

Access to accurate, real-time data related to wildfire conditions and fire behavior is critically important for effective wildfire response and fire management. H.R. 753 would improve wildfire forecasting and detection by establishing a new program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration dedicated to these functions. Improved forecasting will help fire managers make risk-informed decisions that better ensure the safety of wildland firefighters and better protect communities and natural resources.

The Facilitating Increased Resilience, Environmental Weatherization And Lowered Liability (FIREWALL) Act (S. 1323)

Research shows that building and retrofitting structures with fire-resistant materials, combined with clearing defensible space, are important strategies for reducing structure loss during wildfires.⁷ However, many homeowners lack the

⁶ See, Crystal Kolden, *We're Not Doing Enough Prescribed Fire in the Western United States to Mitigate Wildfire Risk*, 2(2) *Fire* (2019); See also, Courtney Schultz et. al., *Policy barriers and opportunities for prescribed fire application in the western United States*, 28(11) *Int. J. Wildland Fire* (2019).

⁷ Alexandra Syphard, et al., *The importance of building construction materials relative to other factors affecting structure survival during wildfire*, 21 *Int. J. Disaster Risk Reduct.* (2017); Alexandra Syphard, et al., *The role of defensible space for residential structure protection during wildfires*, 23 *Int. J. Wildland Fire* (2014).



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resources necessary to pay for these activities on their homes and properties. The FIREWALL Act would create a new refundable tax credit to help certain individuals and households cover the costs of disaster mitigation expenditures related to wildfires. This incentive is needed to build resilience to fire within the built environment and to mitigate the effects of fires within communities.

Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act (H.R. 3444)

Tribes throughout the country have a deep cultural knowledge of land stewardship, including fire, and are essential partners for improving fire and fuels management on both public and private lands. H.R. 3444 would institutionalize tribal co-management at federal land management agencies and help ensure that stewardship actions on federal lands are informed by Indigenous knowledge. At the Department of Interior (DOI), the bill would require bureaus to develop Tribal Co-Management Plans that would guide restoration and other activities on DOI lands identified as being historically, culturally, or geographically related to Tribes. The bill would also extend the U.S. Forest Service's authority to enter into agreements with Tribes and tribal organizations to conduct restoration and other land management activities on National Forests.

Tim's Act (S. 279/H.R. 743)

A robust wildland fire workforce is essential for protecting America's communities from fire and for achieving restoration goals. Wildland firefighters are highly specialized, trained federal employees who work long hours, often far from home, in a physically and emotionally taxing environment. These working conditions are only becoming more challenging as climate change brings longer, hotter fire seasons and more extreme conditions. Wildland firefighters received a long overdue pay raise through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2021, which was made permanent through the Fiscal Year 2025 Continuing Resolution. Tim's Act would build on the FY25 pay raise by further improving work benefits for wildland firefighters, including through rest and recuperation leave, expanded family and medical leave, mental health programs, and more. These job improvements will provide security for wildland firefighters and strengthen the workforce needed to address the wildfire crisis.



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Wildfire Smoke Relief Act (S. 2856/H.R. 5481)

Exposure to wildfire smoke has been linked to a wide range of adverse health impacts, including respiratory problems (asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), cardiovascular disease (heart attacks, stroke, etc.), pregnancy complications, and more.⁸ As wildfire seasons grow longer and more intense, prolonged smoke exposure has become a serious public health concern, including for outdoor recreationists and those living in gateway communities in close proximity to public lands. H.R. 5481 would help mitigate these health risks by authorizing FEMA to provide certain low cost smoke inhalation prevention equipment, such as air filters, to vulnerable populations during periods of hazardous wildfire smoke.

Modernizing Wildfire Safety and Prevention Act of 2025 (H.R. 1923)

H.R. 1923 would directly implement 18 Commission recommendations around workforce development, supporting wildland firefighters, smoke management, and wildfire technology. This legislation would help build the workforce necessary to address the wildfire crisis by establishing a Middle Fire Leaders Academy to provide wildland fire training opportunities needed to recruit an adequate workforce. Importantly, the bill would also improve work benefits for wildland firefighters by extending the break in service provision to two years—ensuring that wildland firefighters are not forced to forfeit hard-earned retirement benefits when it is necessary to take time off of work.

Outdoor Alliance especially supports Section 301, which would establish a nationally-consistent monitoring and alert system for wildfire smoke. Hazardous wildfire smoke emissions create a serious public health concern that can make outdoor recreation unsafe across large regions of the country, and access to accurate, real-time smoke forecasts can be difficult, or even impossible to find. Smoke emissions can deter both recreational activities and impact recreational tourism, harming local economies. H.R. 1923 would improve interagency

⁸ Daniel A. Jaffe et al., *Wildfire and Prescribed Burning Impacts on Air Quality in the United States*, 70 J. Air & Waste Mgmt. Ass'n 583 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10962247.2020.1749731>.



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coordination around smoke management and also make technological improvements to help provide accurate, easily accessible information about smoke emissions available to the public, making outdoor activities easier to safely pursue during fire season.

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Thank you for considering our input. The outdoor recreation community offers our support and collaboration in addressing the wildfire crisis.

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
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers
Ben Gabriel, Executive Director, American Alpine Club
Madeline Bachner Lane, Chief Executive Officer, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

