

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

December 16, 2025

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

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

Re: December 17th Business Meeting to Consider Pending Legislation

Chair Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Committee members:

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, we write to provide our perspectives on public lands and wildfire legislation scheduled for December 17th's business meeting. This letter outlines our support for five bills before the Committee that would protect high-value recreation landscapes and improve management of public lands. It also expresses our opposition to two bills—S.1860 and S.2262—that would, respectively, privatize certain public land and limit the public input process for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands.

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

Federal public lands and waters provide outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation and provide countless environmental, cultural, and public health benefits to society. In recent decades, outdoor recreation has grown considerably



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in popularity, diversity, and economic importance, with a record of 175.8 million Americans venturing outdoors in 2024.¹ Federal public lands and waters make many of these experiences possible, and also form the foundation of America's outdoor recreation economy, which contributed \$1.2 trillion to America's economy, supported nearly 5 million jobs, and accounted for 2.3% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product in 2023.² In addition to these economic benefits, research shows that outdoor recreation also provides a significant return on investment, with recreation contributing nearly 14 times more to the GDP than what it receives from federal spending.³

Sustaining and building on these public health, environmental, and economic benefits is a high priority for the outdoor recreation community, and to this end, Outdoor Alliance appreciates the Committee's attention to public lands legislation. Our recommendations for December 17th's business meeting are described in detail below.

Support: Outdoor Alliance supports and recommends that the Committee advance the following bills, which would protect recreation opportunities on public lands and waters and help land managers make our communities and landscapes wildfire-resilient:

- **Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act (S. 1787):** This legislation would establish a National Conservation Area (NCA) and a Special Management Area (SMA) protecting 68,000 acres surrounding the Dolores River in western Colorado. This highly scenic section of the Dolores River Canyon houses outstanding recreational opportunities for whitewater rafting, kayaking, and canoeing when flows allow. There are also numerous remote backcountry hiking and backpacking opportunities and destinations for climbing and mountain biking. The bill would protect these important recreation assets and sustain the outstanding conservation values and cultural resources present across the Dolores landscape. The bill,

¹ 2024 Outdoor Trends Report Executive Summary, Outdoor Industry Association (2024).

² U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, BEA 24-53, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2023 (2024).

³ Recreation Funding in America: Current Results and Future Insights, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (2024).



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which was developed collaboratively, enjoys support from a diverse group of local stakeholders including agriculture and water users, local governments, recreation and conservation interests, mineral interests, landowners, and livestock operators.

- **National Prescribed Fire Act of 2025 (S. 2015):** 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. Prescribed fire is a critically-important tool for building resilience to wildfire in the western U.S. and beyond, yet it is greatly underused 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.⁴ 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.
- **Sarvis Creek Wilderness Completion Act (S. 1341):** This legislation would add 6,817 acres to the existing Sarvis Creek Wilderness in northwestern Colorado. The proposed addition will increase protection for the headwaters of the Yampa River, and will protect Wilderness recreation opportunities including hiking and backcountry skiing. Local recreationists, including mountain bike organizations, support the addition. We recommend that the Committee advance this legislation to protect these recreation opportunities in perpetuity.

⁴ 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).



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- **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Completion Act (S. 1470):** The Continental Divide Trail (CDT) is one of the United States' most iconic long-distance hiking trails. The CDT, which was designated as a National Scenic Trail in 1978, travels 3,100 miles across five western states from the Mexican border to the Canadian border. The CDT is used by backpackers and day hikers alike, and through-hiking the entire trail is considered a lifetime achievement by many in the outdoor recreation community. Currently, there are more than 160 miles of the CDT where hikers are diverted onto roadways, which creates safety issues for hikers and detracts from the trail's character as a continuous footpath. S. 1470 directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to complete the CDT as a continuous route within the next decade. Outdoor Alliance strongly supports this bipartisan legislation, which would help ensure that the longtime goal of completing the CDT as a contiguous trail is accomplished expeditiously.
- **Cross-Boundary Wildfire Solutions Act (S. 2033):** Outdoor Alliance supports the Cross-Boundary Wildfire Solutions Act, which would require the Comptroller General to complete a study on improving wildfire management across jurisdictional boundaries. Wildfires often burn across a mix of land ownerships, moving between private lands and lands managed by federal, state, and local governments. The study required by S. 2033 could improve fire management outcomes by identifying federal policy changes that might make cross-boundary wildfire management more efficient.

Oppose: Additionally, for the reasons described below, Outdoor Alliance respectfully opposes the following bills and recommends that Committee members vote no:

- **Brian Head Town Land Conveyance Act (S. 1860):** The Brian Head Town Land Conveyance Act would convey 24 acres of federal land on the Dixie National Forest to the town of Brian Head, Utah—the site of a proposed ski resort expansion—at no cost to the town. While Outdoor Alliance supports investments in gateway communities to help support recreation-related economic growth—including land transfers where appropriate—we are concerned that this bill sets an unacceptable precedent regarding federal land conveyances. While land transfers of this size are not uncommon, these



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sorts of transactions have historically required payment of fair market value, a requirement that land be used for public purposes, a land exchange, or some other fair compensation to American taxpayers to account for the reduction in federal land. This bill would grant federal land to Brian Head for free, without any requirement for public input or other process to take the concerns of the local community into account. We are concerned that this legislation opens the door to further privatization of federal lands in gateway communities without a fair process or a fair return to the American public.

- **American Voices in Federal Lands Act (S. 2262):** The American Voices in Federal Lands Act would require that the BLM implement a Completely Automated Public Test to tell Computers and Humans Apart (CAPTCHA) for comment submissions regarding rules and regulations affecting BLM lands, and would establish that BLM can only consider comments submitted by U.S. citizens. While we support the use of CAPTCHA or similar more-current technology in this context, we are concerned that requiring proof of citizenship in order to submit public comments will preclude BLM from considering comments from legal U.S. residents who are not citizens, ultimately cutting legitimate public lands stakeholders out of the public comment process. Additionally, this will add complexity to the public comment process and create an unnecessary obstacle to BLM getting the best information. Public comment periods are not elections. Their purpose is to provide an avenue for members of the public to raise substantive issues for the agency to consider. S. 2262 risks reducing public involvement in BLM decision making and risks limiting the substantive information that the agency receives through the public comment process.

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Thank you for holding December 17th's business meeting, and thank you for considering our community's input. We look forward to working with you to pass a bipartisan package of public lands legislation in the 119th Congress.

Best regards,



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Outdoor Alliance

cc: Louis Geltman, VP for Policy & Government Relations, Outdoor Alliance
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