

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

February 11, 2026

Senator John Barrasso
Chair, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: February 12th Public Lands, Forests, and Mining Subcommittee hearing to receive testimony on pending legislation

Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Cortez Masto, and members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for the opportunity to provide input on February 12th's Subcommittee hearing on legislation affecting federal public lands and waters. Our views on individual bills are below.

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.



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PUBLIC Lands Act (S.3526)

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the PUBLIC Lands Act, which would protect important conservation and recreation lands and waters in California.

The bill's protections for Northwest California were crafted after years of input from business leaders, conservationists, anglers, mountain bikers, fire management professionals, and more, and we appreciate efforts to consider the needs of a broad array of regional stakeholders in developing this legislation. In this region, the bill would conserve approximately 262,000 acres of public land as Wilderness, designate 379 miles of new Wild and Scenic rivers, and create a special restoration area of more than 700,000 acres. In addition to protecting conservation values in the area, the bill would expand opportunities for sustainable recreation. With the establishment of the Elk Camp Ridge Recreation Trail, the bill would expand mountain biking trails along the Elk Camp Ridge and in Del Norte County. It would permanently protect the South Fork Trinity River—a popular and valuable steelhead fishery—and study the feasibility of establishing the Bigfoot National Recreation Trail to highlight the botanical and biological diversity of the region. We greatly appreciate the bill's attention to ensuring the protection and sound management of Wilderness climbing opportunities, as well as the inclusion of Land of the Lost—the closest sport climbing to Arcata and Eureka—in a special management area. In addition to new Wild & Scenic designations for whitewater resources on the East Fork North Fork Trinity and Canyon Creek, paddlers enthusiastically support the protection of more than 48,000 acres of public land within the proposed Wilderness areas surrounding already-designated Wild and Scenic watersheds on the Trinity, Eel, and Black Butte Rivers. Moreover, 25 whitewater river access points will be protected within proposed Wilderness and special restoration areas, and potential Wilderness areas will ensure boaters can continue to paddle along the banks of the lower portion of Redwood Creek surrounded by the tallest trees in the world.

The bill would also protect key conservation and recreation values within California's Central Coast, including popular destinations for outdoor recreationists of many forms, from mountain bikers to wildlife viewers. In this region, the bill would protect more than 262,000 acres of public land within the Los Padres Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument, designate 159 miles of river as Wild and Scenic, and create two new scenic areas, Black Mountain and Condor Ridge. Santa



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Barbara County's Condor Ridge is within the Santa Ynez Mountains, and its unique climate creates an area of high biodiversity and critical habitat for southern steelhead. The bill designates a 400-mile-long Condor National Recreation Trail, supporting through-hiking and backpacking opportunities across the entire length of the Los Padres National Forest, from Los Angeles to Monterey County. It would also protect important and threatened wilderness characteristics around popular rock climbing areas in the Sespe Gorge along Highway 33. Paddlers support adding more miles to the Wild and Scenic Piru Creek, a waterway rare for the region that provides outstanding whitewater less than an hour drive from downtown Los Angeles. Importantly, all proposed new Wilderness boundaries were drawn in order to preserve existing mountain biking trails, and the title would mandate that the Forest Service conduct future studies for improving mountain biking trail opportunities across the Los Padres National Forest. Additionally, the bill protects trail corridors for numerous high priority trails identified by local mountain bikers through the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCCMB), an IMBA local group.

The bill would also add lasting protections to the San Gabriel Mountains, supporting the health and well-being of all Angelenos and helping to sustain local businesses and the broader outdoor recreation economy. The San Gabriel foothills are an important urban/wildland buffer zone and the gateway to the mountains for many millions of Angelenos who otherwise have limited access to open space and outdoor recreation. The bill would establish an 8,417 acre Condor Peak Wilderness and a 6,774 acre Yerba Buena Wilderness. Additionally, the San Gabriel Wilderness would be expanded by 2,000 acres, and the Sheep Mountain Wilderness by nearly 14,000 acres. It adds Little Rock Creek and its tributaries to the Wild and Scenic Rivers system and designates three segments of the San Gabriel River for future study as potential wild and scenic rivers. The bill includes provisions for wilderness management, including fire control, wildlife management, tribal access for cultural purposes, and recreational activities like rock climbing and horseback riding.

Ruby Mountains Protection Act (S.1349)

Outdoor Alliance supports the Ruby Mountains Protection Act, which would withdraw approximately 350,000 acres of National Forests and National Wildlife Refuges System lands in Nevada's iconic Ruby Mountains from oil and gas



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development. The Ruby Mountains are a popular destination for numerous human-powered outdoor recreation activities, as well as hunting and angling. The withdrawal would protect popular recreation sites, including Lamoille Canyon and the Ruby Crest National Recreation Trail. The area also includes extensive high-quality backcountry skiing terrain, such as the well-known Terminal Cancer Couloir. Outdoor recreationists strongly support long term protections for this important landscape, and we encourage the Subcommittee to advance S. 1349.

American Shores Protection Act of 2025 (S.3082)

Outdoor Alliance supports S.3082 to establish a temporary prohibition on new oil and gas development off the shores of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. While we prefer to see Congress enact a permanent prohibition due to the severity of harmful impacts that new offshore oil and gas drilling would have on Southeast and Florida Gulf communities, wildlife, and coastal economies, this temporary protection is extremely important and valuable.

Clean beaches and healthy coasts are the lifeblood of many local economies in the southeast, especially in Florida, where tourism generates more than \$133 billion in economic impact annually and employs an estimated 2 million people. Florida's beaches and waterfront activities consistently rank as a top factor in tourists' decisions to visit the state. The services and opportunities that beaches and the coast provide are why 75% of Floridians live in coastal counties.

The risks of expanded offshore oil and gas development to beaches, fisheries, local economies, and unique environments are simply too great. New oil and gas development would require seismic surveys, drilling operations, oil transport by tankers, and the installation of platforms, pipelines, and other infrastructure. Collectively these activities would significantly damage both the environment and outdoor recreation economies while exposing these regions to the risk of catastrophic oil spill. More than a decade has passed since the devastating 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, and yet the disastrous consequences are still felt in the Gulf region. So long as we continue to pursue new offshore oil and gas exploration and leasing, we will be placing communities, economies, and environments at unnecessary risk.



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Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act (S.2968)

The Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act (OADA) states an intent to increase access to public lands for individuals with disabilities, primarily by increasing roads and motorized routes and by preventing closures of existing roads. Although Outdoor Alliance supports this bill's stated intent, the OADA takes an extreme approach that would mandate the proliferation of roads and motorized trails across public lands without regard for other public lands values such as cultural sites, human-powered backcountry recreation, wildlife habitat, water quality, and scenic character.

The OADA defines “disability-accessible land” as land having at least 2.5 miles of roads accessible to motorized vehicles or off-highway vehicles per square mile. It then places extensive restrictions on road closures—especially closures that would result in a reduction in disability-accessible land—while encouraging land managers to reopen closed roads in order to increase the amount of disability-accessible land. The bill would also require public hearings for certain road closures, would require that land managers establish new roads to account for road closures, and would exclude certain decisions establishing or closing roads from consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Applying a blanket definition of disability-accessible land based on a standard per-square-mile road density is arbitrary and does not reflect the recreational resources or landscape features that draw recreationists to a particular location on public lands. Although roads are important access infrastructure for recreationists of all backgrounds, they are not appropriate or desirable everywhere on public lands. By requiring that land managers make travel management decisions based on this metric, the OADA would inappropriately tilt these decisions towards leaving roads open or establishing new roads even where they create public safety issues, cause unacceptable resource impacts, or add to agencies' deferred maintenance backlogs. Land managers must retain the ability to manage roads and other motorized routes through travel management planning and site-specific decision-making to protect outdoor recreation and other public lands values.



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Revitalizing America's Offshore Critical Minerals Dominance Act (S.2860)

Outdoor Alliance strongly opposes S. 2860, which would expedite permits and authorizations for seabed mining. The deep ocean and its seabed are considered the last unexplored regions of our world, yet what we do know of them is that they are highly intricate and fragile, often containing some of the oldest living coral species on the planet. The severity of environmental impacts caused by seabed mining is poorly understood. Expediting permits for seabed mining, as directed by S. 2860, risks causing irreversible harm to these ecosystems as well as to ocean and coastal recreation and tourism, which depend on a healthy ocean environment. The U.S. should instead play a leadership role at the global level by supporting moratoria on seabed mining until its consequences and its technological and economic feasibility are more fully understood.

Upper Price River Watershed Project Act of 2025 (S.3004)

Outdoor Alliance opposes the Upper Price River Watershed Act, which would convey 125 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands to the City of Price, Utah at no cost to the town and without meaningful sideboards regarding future uses. While land transfers of this size are not uncommon, these sorts of transactions have historically required payment to the federal government, a land exchange, or a reversionary clause requiring that land be returned to the federal government if used for purposes other than those stipulated in the bill. Additionally, S. 3004 states that the conveyed land should “be used by the City for public purposes, *as defined by the City*,” essentially removing any meaningful restriction on future uses of the land. We are concerned that this legislation sets a dangerous precedent that ignores longstanding practice related to land conveyances and opens the door to further privatization of federal lands in gateway communities without a fair process or a fair return to the American public.

Montana Sportsmen Conservation Act (S.3527)

Outdoor Alliance opposes S. 3527, which would eliminate Wilderness Study Area (WSA) designations from the Middle Fork Judith, Hoodoo Mountain, and Wales Creek WSAs—an area totaling approximately 100,000 acres in western Montana. While we appreciate the need to reach permanent solutions regarding landscapes



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designated as WSAs, these solutions should be driven by a long-term vision that is developed collaboratively with Tribes and local stakeholders, including recreationists. Ultimately, it is our community's belief that an appropriate long-term vision for these landscapes must include a mix of recreation-friendly protective designations, as well as potentially new Wilderness and other areas' release back into multiple-use management. The specifics of the application of those designation types should be worked out through collaboration and without a gap in the protection of these landscapes created by an immediate and broad-scale WSA release.

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Thank you for considering our community's input. We look forward to working with you to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities on America's public lands and waters.

Best regards,



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Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance
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Madeline Bachner Lane, Chief Executive Officer, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelsen, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

