

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

March 1, 2022

Rep. Raúl Grijalva  
Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources  
1511 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources  
202 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

## **Re: Full Committee Legislative Hearing, February 15, 2022**

Dear Chair Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

On behalf of the human powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding February 15th's legislative hearing on H.R. 2021, the Environmental Justice for All Act.

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.

## **Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 2021)**

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 2021), which would increase protections for communities affected by pollution and other environmental hazards. This bill would make a series of needed policy changes and investments that would improve the ways that America's bedrock environmental laws and conservation programs address equity, inequality, and racism. These long-overdue changes represent an important reckoning over how environmental



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decisions are made and which communities benefit from environmental protections.

We commend the bill's sponsors for the process by which H.R. 2021 was developed. This bill is the result of a multi-year process that incorporated input from environmental justice leaders and front-line communities throughout the country. This sort of front-end collaboration provides a model for community input on legislation and ensures that H.R. 2021 addresses the concerns of those most affected by the systems that perpetuate environmental injustice.

We are especially encouraged by the inclusion of Sections 11–14 of the bill, which acknowledge that access to nature is an environmental justice issue, and Sections 28–29, which help ensure a more appropriate return for fossil fuel development activities and devote revenues towards a just transition. These sections are addressed in more detail below.

## *Sec. 11. Access to parks, outdoor spaces, and public recreation opportunities.*

Outdoor recreation is the most common way in which Americans come to know their public lands and waters and develop a stewardship ethic. Recreation activities help provide a connection to place; personal and health benefits; community connection; and vibrant economies. Too many Americans, however, lack ready access to these opportunities. Section 11 would create a dedicated funding source for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) grant program to improve access to outdoor recreation opportunities in underserved communities, and we strongly support its inclusion in H.R. 2021.

## *Sec. 12. Transit to trails grant program.*

Section 12 would create a grant program to connect underserved urban communities and rural communities to green spaces. Access to reliable transportation is among the most significant barriers for underserved communities to participate in outdoor recreation. This section focuses on creating public transportation to connect communities with insufficient parks and green spaces with public lands and recreation opportunities. This program makes existing public lands more available to local communities that lack good access to green spaces,



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helping to ensure that public lands are not just available, but accessible to everyone in America.

## *Sec. 13. Repeal of sunset for the Every Kid Outdoors program.*

The Every Kid Outdoors Program encourages fourth graders to experience America's public lands and waters by providing free access to thousands of sites throughout the U.S., including National Parks. This program helps to give kids the opportunity to experience outdoor recreation early in life, which can have lifelong health benefits and helps inspire the next generation of caretakers for America's public lands. The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which codified this program in 2019, included a sunset provision that would cause this important program to expire in 2026. Section 13 would remove the sunset provision, making the benefits of the Every Kid Outdoors Program permanent.

## *Sec. 14. Protections for environmental justice communities against harmful Federal actions.*

Section 14 would strengthen the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) so that environmental justice concerns are better accounted for in the NEPA process. This section would require federal agencies to more explicitly consider the impacts of federal actions on environmental justice communities. Importantly, agencies would be required to assess whether federal actions would impact an environmental justice community's ability to access public parks, outdoor spaces, and public recreation opportunities. This section would provide for earlier, more robust public comment opportunities for federal actions that would affect environmental justice communities and would also improve Tribal representation in the NEPA process.

## *Sec. 28. Revenues for just transition assistance; Sec. 29. Economic revitalization for fossil fuel-dependent communities.*

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the leasing reform measures proposed in Section 28, including reducing the frequency of lease sales, increasing royalty rates, and establishing fees to disincentivize speculative leasing. These reforms, taken together, will help to curb the market distortions that come from giving away public resources at artificially low rates and help to ensure that communities and



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organizations like ours will have better opportunities to identify and mitigate conflicts with other resource values, including recreation.

Additionally, we strongly support efforts to ensure a just transition for fossil fuel-dependent communities. Outdoor recreation opportunities can and will play an important role in community revitalization, both through the outdoor recreation economy and as amenities that help communities attract businesses and workers in a diverse array of industries while simultaneously improving the quality of life for existing residents. While we see the potential for communities to use revenues provided under this section to develop outdoor recreation infrastructure and opportunities, we believe this section could be strengthened by a specific acknowledgment of outdoor recreation opportunities and infrastructure in Section 29(e)(1).

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On behalf of the human-powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for your work in advancing this important bill. We look forward to working with you to support a healthy environment for all people.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Policy Director  
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance  
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund  
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers  
Jamie Logan, Interim Director, American Alpine Club



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Kaleen Deatherage, Interim Executive Director, the Mazamas  
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club  
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