

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

February 25, 2020

Rep. Raúl Grijalva
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Rob Bishop
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Outdoor recreation community support for H.R. 5435, the American Public Lands and Waters Climate Solution Act

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop:

On behalf of the human powered outdoor recreation community, we write to express our support for H.R. 5435, the American Public Lands and Waters Climate Solution 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.

Our organizations and the community we represent are deeply concerned about the accelerating effects of climate change. While the effects on outdoor recreation represent a small part of the grave set of impacts occurring as a result of climate change, these effects will impair the quality of the outdoor recreation experience; cause health and safety concerns for recreationists; and inhibit the outdoor recreation economy. Moreover, as a community of avid students of conditions in



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the outdoors—from changing river flow patterns, to changes in snowpacks and glaciers, to coastal erosion—outdoor recreationists often have a unique view into changes occurring on our public lands and waters.

We recognize, as well, that the actions necessary to address climate change will require changes to the management of public lands and waters, and that our community has a responsibility to support a transition to renewable energy sources that also protects other resource values, including recreation and conservation. The outdoor recreation economy and the ability of outdoor recreation opportunities to attract new business opportunities to rural communities also may play a role in facilitating economic growth for historically extraction dependent communities.

We strongly support an approach to making public lands and waters a part of climate solutions that:

- Recognizes the important role of conservation in mitigating the effects of climate change and sequestering atmospheric carbon, as exemplified by the House’s recent passage of the Protect America’s Wilderness Act and initiatives like Rep. Haaland’s H. Res. 835, setting a national goal of conserving at least 30 percent of the land and ocean in the U.S. by 2030;
- Ensures that public lands and waters are developed thoughtfully and sustainably for renewable energy, as exemplified by H.R. 3794, the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act, reported with strong bipartisan support by this committee last year; and
- Takes aggressive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from public lands, as proposed by H.R. 5435, the American Public Lands and Waters Climate Solution Act.

Given that our public lands and waters are both significantly affected by climate change and a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, we commend the committee’s attention to addressing the role of public lands and waters in climate solutions and strongly support H.R. 5435. It is imperative that our country aggressively reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and public lands and waters are both a significant source of emissions and an area where the federal government can appropriately take ambitious action. The proposed schedule of increasing emissions cuts, culminating with a goal of net zero emissions by 2040, appears both



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achievable and responsive to the urgency of the climate crisis. Given the urgency of immediate action, we hope the committee and Congress more broadly will look for opportunities to move even more aggressively in making public lands and waters a part of climate solutions.

Additionally, we appreciate the immediate one-year pause in new fossil fuel leasing. In addition to the clear climate ramifications of additional fossil fuel development, speculative leasing is currently having a significant impact on conservation and recreation values across the West, and it is entirely appropriate the Department of Interior pause and develop a more measured approach to any new leasing activity.

We also strongly support:

- The requirement for land management agencies to proactively develop plans to achieve emissions reductions;
- The inclusions of provisions aimed at ensuring that agencies meets emissions reductions targets;
- The bill's attentiveness to both environmental justice communities and communities and workers dependent on existing fossil fuel development activities; and
- The focus on oceans as well as public lands.

We also greatly appreciate the requirement in Section 5(f)(7) that the Public Lands Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy include consideration of “the impacts of climate change on recreation on public lands and the outdoor recreation economy.” In light of the direct conflict that can occur between fossil energy development and recreation, as well as the important contribution that outdoor recreation opportunities can make in supporting local economies—both through the traditional outdoor recreation economy and as a draw for employers, entrepreneurs, and high-skill workers in diverse industries—we suggest amending this section to read:

(7) The impacts of climate change and fossil fuel development on recreation on public lands and waters and the outdoor recreation economy, as well as the potential for outdoor recreation opportunities to support economic diversification of fossil fuel transition communities.



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Similarly, while we read Section 7, Economic Revitalization for Fossil Fuel Dependent Communities, to envision outdoor recreation amenity development as an appropriate use of funds and method for achieving economic development in transitioning communities, the committee should consider making this explicit in Section (c).

Additionally, in light of the important role of outdoor recreation opportunities in supporting diverse economic activity, the committee may consider whether adding a representative from the outdoor recreation community to the Just Transition Advisory Committee under Section (7)(e)(4)(E) would be of utility.

H.R. 5859, the Trillion Trees Act

The outdoor recreation community supports the goal of managing forested public lands to support carbon sequestration. As written, however, H.R. 5859 does not advance this objective and includes numerous deeply problematic aspects. In particular, we are concerned that:

- In general, the bill ignores the important role of protecting existing forests, particularly old growth, in favor of ramping up logging and monoculture replanting;
- The bill does not appear to reflect the science with regard to lifecycle carbon emissions from forestry activities as contrasted with the efficacy of conservation;
- The bill would radically undercut the role of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in forest management decision-making, making decisions less likely to reflect sound science and reducing the role of public engagement.

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On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding a hearing to consider H.R. 5435, the American Public Lands and Waters Climate Solution Act. We strongly support the committee in its efforts to make public lands and waters a part of climate solutions and look forward to working in support of this important bill.



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Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Executive Director, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Interim 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
Phil Powers, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club
Mitsu Iwasaki, Executive Director, the Mazamas
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

