

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Mike Lee  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Energy & Natural  
Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building Washington,  
D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Energy & Natural  
Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Lee and Westerman and Ranking Members Heinrich and Huffman:

As businesses that significantly contribute to the \$1.2 trillion outdoor economy, we rely on and support the long-term conservation of America's public lands, and we urge Congress and the Trump administration to ensure our public lands remain publicly owned and accessible for generations to come.

We recognize that challenging decisions are being made toward stated goals of fiscal austerity, but we write to make clear: public lands should not be sold to pay down national debt or to balance the budget as part of the budget reconciliation process. Recent sentiment describing our nation's natural resources as "national assets" and calling for "unleash[ing] America's balance sheet," give rise to concerns about the potential sale of public lands. While we may not agree on every use of public lands, we hope Congress and the Administration will, at minimum, keep them on the balance sheet.

### **Public Lands Are Popular**

According to The Outdoor Industry Association's 2024 Outdoor Participation Trends Report, 175.8 million Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2024 — that's 57.3% of all Americans aged six and older. In that same year, almost 332 million visitors were recorded having visited a national park, a new record. Recreation is becoming more and more popular across all constituencies across the United States - for anglers, cyclists, hikers, hunters, and more.



Moreover, the annual “Conservation in the West” poll carried out by Colorado College showed that 72% of respondents in the eight Western states included in the poll preferred that their Member of Congress supported “ensuring we protect sources of clean water, our air quality and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities to visit and recreate on our national public lands.” Lawmakers across the West consistently emphasize the importance of listening to local voices when it comes to public lands management, and these local voices show strong support for public lands protections.

We also respectfully submit that the most notable prior proposals from Congress to sell large swaths of our nation’s public lands were met with substantial public blowback, resulting in the formal withdrawal of those proposals.

## **Preserving Public Lands is a Sound Investment**

The outdoor recreation industry is an economic engine, generating over \$1 trillion annually to the nation’s Gross Domestic Product. This is more notable when one considers that the Federal government only spent ~\$12.5 billion in discretionary spending for the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service combined in FY2024. These funds went to managing public lands across the country for recreation access, resource extraction, habitat protection, and public benefits like drinking water and flood control. Public lands more than pay for themselves in these economic and community benefits.

From the unique perspective of the business community, we see first-hand as our customers visit public lands and drive economic growth that is reliant on consistent and safe access to protected public lands and waters. In addition, as employers, we have seen the incredible benefits of access to public lands and recreation as a key recruitment and retention tool for not only the outdoor industry, but for companies of all sizes in technology, finance, and more. We rely on the outdoors to attract employees to come work at our companies, and even to test our product.

Many of our businesses are either based in the West or we sell products in the region, and we understand some of the nuances that have emerged around gateway communities. There are challenges that need to be addressed around affordability, crowding, and stewardship. However, a large-scale sale or transfer of public lands is not the simple answer and will have permanent impacts on outdoor recreation access, local and national economies, and on the health of landscapes and communities across the West. We support the protection of public lands for our businesses, for our customers, for our employees, and for all Americans to enjoy for generations to come. We support continuity in managing these through our federal land management agencies who provide consistent resourcing, permitting, regulations and standardized impact processes across landscapes.





Any effort to pull away from this ownership framework through large-scale land transfers or private contracts would be detrimental to access, sustainable use of these lands, and the health of our vibrant, trillion-dollar, outdoor economy.

Respectfully,

Paul Hendricks  
Executive Director  
The Conservation Alliance

**In partnership with the following businesses and organizations:**

**Alpenglowsports**

Tahoma, California

**CGPR**

Marblehead, Massachusetts

**American Outdoor Products**

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# The Conservation Alliance

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Seattle, Washington

**Great Outdoor Store**

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**Swen Products/Sven-Saw**

Minneapolis, Minnesota

**The Base Camp**

Billings, Montana

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# The Conservation Alliance

## **The Forest Group**

Lotus, California

## **Toad&Co.**

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## **TripOutside**

Durango, Colorado

## **Verde Brand Communications**

Durango, Colorado

## **Zephyr Adventures**

Red Lodge, Montana

CC    Senate Majority Leader John Thune  
      Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer  
      Senate Budget Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham  
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      Speaker of the House Mike Johnson  
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      House Budget Committee Ranking Member Brendan Boyle

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