



September 11, 2018

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

The undersigned organizations representing the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR), a coalition of leading U.S. outdoor recreation trade associations, are writing to thank you for your leadership in championing the “Restore our Parks and Public Lands Act” (H.R. 6510).

The outdoor recreation economy accounts for \$887 billion in consumer spending, makes up 2 percent of the U.S. GDP and is growing faster than the economy as a whole. The outdoor recreation economy is among our Nation’s leading economic sectors, and public lands and waters are the backbone of our industry. These public areas provide significant economic benefits, particularly for nearby rural communities, and proper maintenance is essential towards providing access and ensuring that the full economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry is realized.

Roads, buildings, trails, campgrounds, water systems and more recreational infrastructure suffer from accumulating deferred maintenance that negatively impacts visitor access, enjoyment, and safety on public lands for the rapidly growing community of outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

Federal lands and waters cannot return to sound condition without substantial efforts. We applaud your bi-partisan collaboration in developing a proposal to address the nearly \$16 billion maintenance backlog in the national park system and other federal lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management, as well as the consideration to not adversely impact the Land and Water Conservation Fund, payments to states associated with onshore and offshore oil and gas revenues, and the Reclamation Fund. However, it’s important to note that the damaging effects of deferred maintenance extends beyond federal land management agencies managed by the Department of the Interior.

While the Park Service holds the largest share of the overall backlog, all four major land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service (FS), face mounting deferred maintenance backlogs that negatively impact outdoor recreational pursuits and the associated economic benefits. In the wake of the worst fire season in U.S. history, it’s imperative that Congress addresses the agency’s \$5.49 billion maintenance backlog to ensure that recreation remains viable to meet ever growing demands for outdoor recreation opportunities on FS lands.

84 million people annually enjoy the 158,600 miles of trails managed by the FS, which generates \$9 billion in annual visitor spending and supports 143,000 jobs. Maintenance of FS routes is imperative to the outdoor recreation industry because these agency’s sustainable multiple-use management concept supports a variety of activities and programs. When one FS road or trail goes out of service, it is indefinitely placed on the backlog and can negatively impact a number of outdoor recreational pursuits. Without including the FS in the solution, the agency will continue to be limited in its ability to carry out the multiple-use approach that enables prioritization of shared conservation stewardship, putting Americans back to work, and serving the American public.



In addition to new federal financing to address the maintenance backlog, policies to effectively prioritize resources and facilitate public-private partnerships would help ease the maintenance backlog and significantly enhance the experience for visitors to public lands and waters.

The longer this systemic problem continues, the more challenging it will become for the Department of the Interior and the FS to manage public lands and waters in a way that maximizes opportunities for recreational and conservation activities.

Thank you for your consideration and swift passage of this bill through committee. We look forward to working with you to achieving a historic and important step forward for places all Americans cherish.

Sincerely,

Association of Marina Industries
BoatU.S.
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
Marine Retailers Association
Motorcycle Industry Council
National Marine Manufacturers Association
Outdoor Industry Association
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
RV Industry Association
Specialty Equipment Market Association
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
The Corps Network
National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds
National Park Hospitality Association
National RV Dealers Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation