

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

July 11, 2022

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Chairman Jim McGovern
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Rules
Washington, DC

Chairman Adam Smith
U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC

Re: National Defense Authorization Act Public Land Amendments

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Chairman McGovern, and Chairman Smith,

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, we write to express support for two public lands amendments to H.R. 7900, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023. Amendments #875 and #254 will protect important landscapes and outdoor recreation opportunities in Arizona, California, Colorado, and Washington, and will help support America's growing \$374 billion outdoor recreation economy. We strongly support adding these lands provisions to the NDAA.

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



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bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

The bills included in these amendments all reflect years of thoughtful development and input from a wide array of stakeholders, including the recreation community. Importantly, these bills were developed to preserve and expand access to important recreational resources like trails, rivers, climbing areas, campgrounds, and more. This type of collaborative process is essential for ensuring durable, successful outcomes for both recreation and conservation.

More detail on the landscapes protected by Amendments #875 and #254 is provided below, along with information about the recreational resources protected by each bill.

Amendment 875: Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the following six bills, which are included within the Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act:

- **Central Coast Heritage Protection Act:** The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act protects 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. 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 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. This 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 bill would mandate that the Forest Service conduct future studies for



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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.

- **Colorado Wilderness Act:** The Colorado Wilderness Act protects important landscapes in Colorado for their conservation and recreation values. The bill protects Handies Peak and Redcloud Peak, two 14ers with spectacular views of the San Juan Mountains. The Norwood Canyon area benefits paddling opportunities on the San Miguel River and protects the area's unique geology, and the bill also provides important protections for paddling on the Dolores River. Importantly, Outdoor Alliance supports this bill in part because of specific efforts Rep. DeGette has made to ensure that protection of conservation and recreation values move forward in harmony. Because some forms of sustainable outdoor recreation are not compatible with a Wilderness designation, it is essential that Wilderness bills move forward with careful regard for important existing and prospective recreational values. We greatly appreciate the careful efforts that have been made to ensure the bill does not close or impair access for valued areas. We strongly support and appreciate, as well, the inclusion of language to ensure that fixed anchors for climbing are managed appropriately within Wilderness.
- **Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act:** The Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act was 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. This bill will 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 benefit northwest California by expanding 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



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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.

- **Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act:** The Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act will expand the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by 191,000 acres. The bill will support recreation and conservation planning as well as needed capital improvements on public lands surrounding the San Fernando Valley and the greater Los Angeles area. Importantly, the bill will help facilitate equitable access to the outdoors within and around one of the nation’s most populous metropolitan areas. More than half of Los Angeles County, including some of the areas covered by the proposed National Recreation Area Expansion, is considered “park poor”, with the vast majority of these areas located in communities of color. The Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act will expand outdoor access in areas where it is needed the most, while giving the NPS the authority to better facilitate a positive outdoor experience in those areas.
- **San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act:** The San Gabriel Mountains National Monument represents 70 percent of the open space in the Los Angeles metropolitan region and provides 30 percent of the region’s drinking water. The San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act will 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 bill would increase opportunities for Angelenos to enjoy the outdoors by expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by nearly 110,000 acres to include the western portions of the Angeles National Forest. We especially appreciate the various designations included in the bill that allow for multiple recreational uses. The San Gabriel foothills are an important urban/wild buffer zone and the gateway to the mountains for many millions



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of Angelenos who otherwise have limited access to open space and outdoor recreation. The establishment of a 51,000-acre National Recreation Area along the foothills and San Gabriel River corridor and Puente Hills will not only help improve that access, but will also ensure that these highly popular and heavily used areas receive the resources they need to be managed and maintained in a sustainable manner for the safety and enjoyment of all. 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.

- **Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:** The Wild Olympics legislation will protect 126,500 acres of Wilderness and 464 river miles as Wild and Scenic on the Olympic Peninsula and preserve salmon streams and wild lands adjacent to Olympic National Park. In addition to protecting conservation values, the bill protects hundreds of miles of trails, scores of climbing sites, dozens of whitewater paddling destinations, and valued backcountry ski terrain. Proposed additions to the Mount Skokomish Wilderness will protect scrambling and climbing objectives such as Mount Washington, Mount Pershing, Jefferson Peak, Mount Ellinor, and the nearby Ellinor Towers. In the spring, Mount Ellinor is known as a destination for backcountry skiers. For whitewater paddlers, the region is unique because the watersheds that radiate out from the Olympic Mountains receive several feet of precipitation each year, providing an incredible number of river miles in a small geographic area. Dozens of whitewater runs pass through towering ancient forests and moss-covered gorges. The rivers also serve as a conveyor belt for sand that forms the beaches and surf breaks on the wild Washington Coast. Because of the collaborative approach employed in the bill's development, embracing input from local and national mountain biking stakeholders among others, the legislation enjoys broad support from the mountain biking community. We are particularly pleased to support legislation that designates Wilderness while also using other protective designations where appropriate. The mountain biking loop trail along the Dungeness River passes through ancient forests and along the banks of a wild river. By including the trail within the Wild and Scenic river corridor but outside of proposed Wilderness, a designation is applied that will protect and enhance the mountain biking experience alongside conservation values.



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Amendment #254: CORE Act and Grand Canyon

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the following bills, which are included in Amendment #254:

- **Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE)** Our organizations strongly support the thoughtful protections embodied in the CORE Act. In addition to its essential protections for conservation values, the bill also protects hundreds of miles of trails, scores of climbing sites, more than 20 miles of whitewater paddling, and valued backcountry ski terrain. In the San Juans, the Sheep Mountain Special Management Area protects backcountry ski terrain near Lizard Head Pass and creates management for the Ophir Valley area for new mountain biking trails near the town of Ophir. The Liberty Bell and Whitehouse Wilderness additions protect world-class hiking and climbing opportunities in the iconic Mount Sneffels range while allowing for a trail corridor for the iconic Liberty Bell/Hardrock 100 trail. The Tenmile Wilderness and Recreation Management Areas provide opportunities for long ridgeline technical traverses, challenging backcountry ski terrain, and world class mountain biking, and the Spraddle Creek Wilderness addition provides a primitive backcountry area in close proximity to downtown Vail while keeping the future mountain bike extension of the North Vail Trail viable. All of the proposed designations in the CORE Act have been carefully vetted by recreation groups, and designations protect and enhance recreational opportunities like hiking, climbing, skiing, and mountain biking. The mineral withdrawals and resource protections in this bill further preserve the scenic and natural qualities of these landscapes. Because of the collaborative approach employed in the bill's development, embracing input from local and national mountain biking stakeholders among others, the legislation enjoys broad support from the mountain biking community. This approach—embracing alternative designations where appropriate to protect both existing and prospective mountain biking opportunities—should be considered a model for other protective designation efforts around the country.
- **Grand Canyon Protection Act:** The Grand Canyon of the Colorado and its surrounding landscape is an American icon. The area contains innumerable attributes and features of geologic, historic, scientific, and ecological value. It also supports a wide diversity of recreational pursuits that allow visitors to experience this one-of-a-kind landscape, and the importance and prominence of this area is difficult to overstate. Our community strongly



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supports measures intended to protect the Grand Canyon, its surrounding environment, and visitors through the mineral withdrawal prescribed in the Grand Canyon Protection Act. Among other benefits, these withdrawals will help to protect water quality and the visitor experience, as well as directly protect trails and climbing areas within the withdrawal area. Our community was actively engaged in supporting a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal for lands covered by the bill, and the Department of the Interior announced that withdrawal in 2012, protecting roughly one million acres of public land surrounding Grand Canyon National Park from any mining activity. The future status of that withdrawal has come under threat, however, and Congress should make these protections permanent.

Thank you for your work in advancing these important amendments to the NDAA. We look forward to working with you to advance these bills and others in support of recreation and conservation values on our public lands and waters.

Best regards,



Adam Cramer
CEO
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
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