



Empowering all to enjoy, share, and preserve the hiking experience

May 3, 2022

Statement in Support of America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2022 (S. 3266) Sections

Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of American Hiking Society and the 57 million strong hiking community who enjoy the trails and green spaces in their communities, we write in support of the committee's advancement of the *America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2022* (S. 3266), and the sections highlighted below, which will support hikers, trails, public lands, and the outdoors by expanding outdoor recreation access and bringing much needed improvements how the public accesses these spaces.¹

Section 406: Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (Outdoors for All Act)

Section 406 would establish under law the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program administered under the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Since its establishment in 2014, ORLP has made progress in expanding access to outdoor spaces for urban areas and low-income communities. The permanent authorization of this program is needed to ensure that our nation's natural spaces are available and accessible to all hikers, especially communities of color whose access to and inclusion in outdoor recreation have been disproportionately negatively impacted by geography, socio-economic status, and other factors. ORLP is a must to ensure that our nation's trails, public lands, parks, and open spaces are accessible for all communities for generations to come.

Various Sections (202-3, 207-8, 311-5, 321-5) (Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act (SOAR Act))

The SOAR Act sections will make world-class and close-to-home outdoor experiences more accessible by updating the permitting system that guides and outfitters need to operate trips across public lands. The SOAR Act will increase opportunities for guided recreation on public lands by improving the outfitter-guide permitting systems of the federal land management agencies. By expanding guided recreation, Congress can provide more opportunities for first time visitors to experience public lands in a positive way and help develop lifelong connections to the outdoors.

Section 327: Interagency Report on Special Recreation Permits for Underserved Communities

Section 327 will ensure all communities are benefiting from the outdoor recreation opportunities provided by special recreation permits. Special recreation permits often give hikers, other recreation users, and visitors to public lands their first experience in the outdoors through guides, outfitters, and organized group trips. Identifying ways that special recreation permits can more effectively serve communities that have historically lacked or been denied access is essential in realizing an outdoors for all. Specifically, this section would study the barriers that recreation service providers operating in or providing services to underserved communities face when accessing our public lands recreation permitting system, and how to

¹ Sections not included in the letter don't indicate opposition.

best improve the current permitting process to better facilitate access for recreational service providers serving diverse communities, including underserved and low-income individuals.

Section 121. Biking on Long-Distance Trails

We commend the committee's commitment to increasing access to quality outdoor recreation activities for all user types. We thank the committee for its commitment to ensuring enjoyable use by all user types by including language in Section 121 to address potential conflict avoidance by directing the Secretary to ensure that the identification of long-distance bike trails do not conflict with an existing trail use.

Subtitle D- Engagement (Sec. 141, 143, 144, 146, 147)

American Hiking supports and applauds the efforts to expand recreation opportunities on public lands (Sec. 141), improve access to information on trail and other closures (Sec. 143), prioritize outdoor recreation data collection (Sec. 144), and expand access for youth, Servicemembers and Veterans (Sec. 146 and 147). These provisions will help to improve the experience of all hikers and guide future opportunities for the hikers, trail users, and all recreation users on public lands.

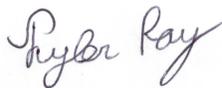
Sections 204: Online Collection of Certain Recreation Fees and Section 205: Online Purchases and Establishment of a Digital Version of America the Beautiful–The National Parks and Federal Recreational Passes

Improvements to online access for payment of entrance fees, passes, and recreation permits and the creation of a digital pass will expand access and improve accessibility of federally managed lands for all users, especially new users who have contributed to increased visitation in the last few years. We applaud the committee's efforts to modernize the visitor experience to bring our public lands into the 21st century.

We thank the committee for advancing S.3266 out of committee and urge prompt floor consideration.

Please contact Tyler Ray, Senior Director for Programs and Advocacy, tray@americanhiking.org with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tyler Ray".

Tyler Ray
Senior Director for Programs and Advocacy
American Hiking Society