

ORR OUTDOOR RECREATION ROUNDTABLE



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Outdoor recreation is a crucial part of the American economy. Annually, it generates \$778 billion in output, comprises 2.2 percent of the United States GDP and supports 5.2 million jobs – many of which are in rural communities. The outdoor industry has also been growing faster than the economy as a whole in every indicator, and at a time when there has been unprecedented economic growth.

While the overall industry is a major force, it is mostly made up of small businesses that are vital to the health and economic well-being of their communities, many in rural areas. Many of these businesses closed their doors early to be good members of their communities. However, they are now suffering and in danger of failing because of the COVID-19 outbreak and the ensuing efforts to mitigate the virus' spread, including social distancing, travel restrictions, caps on group size and more.

To help alleviate these concerns, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable – the nation's leading coalition of outdoor recreation trade associations, made up of 32 national trade associations serving more than 100,000 businesses – writes regarding a potential federal aid package to support small businesses around the country and protect their employees. Outdoor recreation businesses are often lifelines for their communities, providing jobs and economic stability. However, they rely on trips and travel bringing a steady stream of visitors to our public lands and waters, accessibility to recreation assets, adequate recreation infrastructure, and the certainty of manufacturing and trade, all of which have been interrupted by COVID-19.

The mental and physical health benefits of outdoor recreation are well known. Studies have shown that healthy, active outdoor recreation helps combat obesity, depression, diabetes and more. As people grapple with the effects of social distancing, outdoor recreation can be an essential outlet. Hiking, biking, paddling, boating, fishing, camping, SCUBA diving, ATVing, horseback riding and more can all be

engaged in while adhering to CDC guidelines for social distancing and preventing the spread of COVID-19.

You have already taken decisive action to support these businesses, communities and activities by committing to improving vital federal land and water management agency infrastructure through the Great American Outdoors Act (S.3422), and we ask that you take additional steps to ensure this vital sector of the economy can continue to drive economic growth when the dust settles:

- **Include the Outdoor Recreation Industry in any stimulus packages.** Outdoor recreation is a strong, vital and growing part of the American economy, but it relies on thousands of small business, and access to public lands and waters. These businesses are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19, as trips are cancelled, revenue dries up and they are forced to close their doors and lay off staff. As crucial and definitive parts of their local economies, they should be included in economic stimulus packages devised by your administration.
- **Keep outdoor areas open and accessible if it can be done safely and within CDC guidelines.** Outdoor recreation businesses – and the communities they support – rely on access to public lands and waters to survive. As long as these areas can be kept open and in compliance with CDC guidelines, federal agencies should avoid their closure. Private partners can be of great assistance in this matter and where appropriate, federal agencies should work with – and solicit help and support from – their partners before making closure decisions.
- **Deem outdoor recreation businesses as “essential.”** Outdoor recreation businesses provide essential services to their communities and the nation as a whole. These businesses are often the economic drivers of their communities and provide opportunities for Americans to enjoy healthy activities that connect them with their natural heritage and cultural resources. In addition to the broad benefits, outdoor businesses provide more specific essential services. For example, many private campgrounds provide LP gas used for home heating and RVs are relied upon for temporary living quarters and mobile clinics, portable office and lab trailers, temporary quarantine units and bathroom and shower trailers. At a time when doctors are telling people to get outside for Vitamin D, stress relief, exercise and mental health, we need to ensure our businesses are there to support American’s health and quality of life.
- **Suspend tariffs immediately.** Suspending tariffs placed on imports essential to our industry under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act and Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 would inject billions of dollars into the economy more quickly than other measures and provide immediate relief to small business owners across the country in these uncertain times. This could be done without further authorization from Congress. We also encourage the removal of global retaliatory efforts to spur economic growth.
- **Support Trade Associations.** The nonprofit trade associations that support and advocate for these businesses and the outdoor recreation economy at large face significant challenges. The cancellation of conferences, trade shows and other events crucial to the financial health of these organizations severely decreases their ability to support the buying and selling of product and to advocate for their members. These gatherings depend on in-person attendance at convention centers, hotels and other facilities, but are impossible given social distancing guidelines. We urge you to provide financial assistance for associations, nonprofits and other tax-exempt organizations whose survival is placed in jeopardy by COVID-19.

We appreciate your attention to, and consideration of these important issues. We look forward to working with you to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the nation's citizens, small businesses and economy.

Sincerely,

America Outdoors
American Horse Council
American Mountain Guides Association
American Sportfishing Association
Archery Trade Association
Association of Marina Industries
Boat Owners Association of the United States
CHM Government Services
The Corps Network
Diving Equipment and Marketing Association
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
Motorcycle Industry Council
National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
National Forest Recreation Association
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Park Hospitality Association
Outdoor Industry Association
PeopleForBikes
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
RV Dealers Association
RV Industry Association
Snowsports Industries America
Specialty Equipment Market Association
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
Sports & Fitness Industry Association