

**STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS**

Regarding

**H.R. 930, Ski Hill Resources for Economic Development (SHRED) Act
H.R. 1380, Protecting America's Rock Climbing (PARC) Act
H.R. 1667, Ouachita National Forest Overnight Camping Act
H.R. 1642, Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recreation Pass Act
H.R. 1319, Biking On Long-Distance Trails (BOLT) Act
H.R. 1614, Range Access Act
H.R. 1576, the Federal Interior Land Media (FILM) Act
H.R. 1527, Simplifying Outdoor Access to Recreation (SOAR) Act**

March 28, 2023

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, regarding various Federal land management bills.

USDA appreciates the recognition by this Subcommittee of the importance of recreation on Federal lands to our national economy, as well as the sustained interest in finding solutions to recreation management challenges. We understand these challenges, and we know that we can further enhance recreation opportunities on Federal lands. Seeking to continue the momentum built through the Great America Outdoors Act and the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Forest Service has initiated a national strategy and action plan called Reimagine Recreation. The Forest Service is also a foundational member of Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR), which is partnering across all land and water management agencies to better coordinate delivery of opportunities and access for outdoor recreation. This effort will clarify and change the way we deliver recreation opportunities. We are building our vision by engaging with new and diverse audiences. Our goal is to develop a national recreation action plan by the end of this year that sets clear priorities for the agency and identifies the conditions and pathways to get us there. We look forward to keeping you apprised of this effort and believe it can address many of the issues targeted by the proposed legislation we are discussing today.

Concerning the bills that are the subject of this hearing:

USDA supports H.R. 930 (the SHRED Act) and supports the intent of the Range Access, SOAR and BOLT Acts, as well as the Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recreation Pass Act. USDA opposes the PARC Act because we are in the midst of policy development that is required

by existing legislation and believe this legislation is unnecessary. Given there is pending litigation associated with issues addressed by the FILM Act that may affect the proposed legislation, USDA would also like to work with the Subcommittee on the topic of commercial filming. On H.R. 1667, USDA would like to work with the Subcommittee to address the concerns expressed below and make future management of the Albert Pike Recreation Area safe and enjoyable for the public. USDA defers to the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) as to the effects of these bills on any DOI bureaus and the federal lands under their jurisdiction.

Background

The USDA Forest Service manages 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands, comprising 193 million acres in 41 states and Puerto Rico. National forest and grassland outdoor recreation offers the widest possible array of opportunities to experience Federal lands, which are home to three million acres of lakes, 400,000 miles of streams, 122 Wild and Scenic Rivers for rafting, kayaking and other watersports, and 159,000 miles of trails for horseback riding, hiking, snowmobiling, mountain biking, and more.

The Forest Service is deeply committed to connecting all Americans to the outdoors, and we value the important role played by outfitters and guides, resorts, non-profit organizations, and other concessioners in connecting people to recreation opportunities in the national forests and grasslands. Outdoor recreation attracts people to visit, live, and work in gateway and rural communities and supports the health, well-being, and economic vitality of those communities. In fiscal year 2021, recreation on National Forest System lands contributed more than \$13.7 billion to America's gross domestic product and supported more than 161,500 full and part-time jobs, the vast majority of which are in gateway and rural communities.¹

In fiscal year 2021, there were 156 million recreation visits to national forests and grasslands. When we include the number of people who pass through these beautiful forests and grasslands to enjoy the scenery and travel on scenic roads and byways, that number increases to 456 million visits. Recreation pressure has been particularly significant in national forests close to urban areas.

Moreover, the recreation program on National Forest System lands sustains more private sector jobs per program dollar than any other Forest Service program and provides the single largest economic stimulus for many local communities adjacent to or within National Forest System boundaries. Outdoor recreation opportunities and amenities are consistently ranked as one of the primary reasons people move to rural towns and can be a leading contributor to small town economies. The Forest Service administers over 30,000 commercial recreation special use authorizations for activities that generate nearly \$2 billion in revenue for special use authorization holders. In particular, the Forest Service administers 127 ski area permits and approximately 8,000 outfitting and guiding permits.

These permits enable private sector professionals and educational institutions to lead a range of activities on National Forest System lands, from whitewater rafting, downhill skiing, horseback riding, and big game hunting to educational trips for youth in the wilderness and scenic jeep

¹ 2021 National Visitor Use Monitoring survey. These numbers reflect total benefits (direct, indirect, and induced).

top of the mountain, forest managers can develop and manage National Forest System lands, and the Forest Service can help develop local businesses and create jobs and income for local communities. Forest Service permit holders help connect Americans to their natural world and these connections have proven benefits for mental health and overall wellbeing.

H.R. 930: Ski Hill Resources for Economic Development (SHRED) Act

The SHRED Act would amend the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 to establish an account for ski area permit fees and to authorize the Forest Service to deposit ski area permit fee revenues into that account and retain and spend the revenues for specified purposes.

USDA supports the SHRED Act. The authority to retain and spend ski area permit fees would improve customer service through improved ski area permit administration. This bill would increase efficiencies in administering ski area permits and support staff training, coordinating wildfire preparedness, and providing avalanche-related safety education. The SHRED Act also would provide for some of the retained permit fee revenues to be used for administration of other types of commercial recreation permits, visitor services, and other purposes.

In 2021, \$77 million in ski area permit fees were collected by the Agency. The current ten-year average for annual ski area permit fees is \$44 million. Based on the formula in the bill, 100% of the ski area permit fees would be retained by the Forest Service annually. Retained ski area permit fees would be used to improve administration of recreation opportunities that contribute to local economic activity across 127 ski resort communities on National Forest System lands, primarily in rural areas, in 14 states. These recreation opportunities spur industry growth and generate revenue for ski areas.

H.R. 1380: Protecting America's Rock Climbing (PARC) Act

H.R. 1380 would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior each to issue guidance on climbing management in wilderness areas under each Secretary's jurisdiction. The guidance would have to recognize the appropriateness in wilderness areas of "allowable activities," which are defined in the bill to include recreational climbing, the placement, use and maintenance of fixed anchors, and the use of other equipment necessary for recreational climbing. The bill specifies that allowable activities are appropriate only if undertaken in accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 *et. seq.*), other applicable laws and regulations, and any terms and conditions deemed necessary by each Secretary. Prior to any management action affecting "allowable activities" in wilderness, the public would have to be given notice and opportunity to comment. However, no guidance or public notice and comment would be required in the case of an "emergency action," defined as a time-sensitive action with a duration of less than two years that is necessary to protect natural resources or public health and safety.

Climbing is a growing sport, with approximately 10 million Americans participating. We recognize that climbing is an appropriate activity in wilderness when conducted in accordance with applicable law and Forest Service directives and consistent with the applicable land management plan and climbing management plan. While almost one-third of all climbing

USDA opposes the PARC Act. In 2021, Congress required the Agency, through the Consolidated Appropriations Act to develop guidance on climbing opportunities on national forests and grasslands, including the application of the Wilderness Act and appropriate use of fixed anchors and fixed equipment in wilderness. In response, the Agency has been developing the guidance, in consultation with the U.S. Department of the Interior, and will publish the proposed guidance for public comment, as required by existing law. The Forest Service anticipates publishing the proposed policy for public comment later this spring. Tribal consultation on the proposed policy has already been completed. Because of the existing statutory requirement to develop the policy and its ongoing development, USDA does not believe legislation is necessary to accomplish the intent of this bill. We believe the directive currently under development will lead to climbing management plans that balance cultural and ecological objectives consistent with the agency's multiple-use mandate and the Wilderness Act. USDA has strong concerns about ambiguity of terms in the bill and constraints on the Forest Service's ability to address emergencies based on the definition of the term "emergency action" in the bill. Furthermore, creating new definitions for allowable uses in wilderness areas, as H.R. 1380 would do, has the practical effect of amending the Wilderness Act, which could have serious and harmful consequences for the management of wilderness areas across the nation.

H.R. 1667: Ouachita National Forest Overnight Camping Act

H.R. 1667 would require the Forest Service to identify areas within the Albert Pike Recreation Area on the Ouachita National Forest in Arkansas that may be suitable for overnight camping within six months of enactment. Within two years of enactment, the bill would require the Agency to select and establish campsites and related facilities for public use from identified areas. The bill would require the Forest Service to ensure that at least 54 campsites are available, that each campsite and related facilities are located outside the 1 percent annual exceedance probability flood elevation (100-year floodplain), and that at least 8 campsites have electric and water hookups. H.R. 1667 also would require the Forest Service to open within 30 days of enactment each existing campsite in the Albert Pike Recreation Area that is located outside the 100-year floodplain.

The Forest Service is deeply committed to connecting all Americans to the outdoors and values the important role camping plays in connecting visitors to nature and recreation opportunities in the national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service also agrees developed campsites should be located outside the 100-year floodplain for visitor safety reasons.

The landscape and weather patterns of the Ouachita National Forest present a very high risk of flash flooding in and near the Albert Pike Recreation Area. Existing developed campsites in the Albert Pike Recreation Area are located in the 100-year floodplain. A tragic flood in 2010 inundated the entire area, exceeding the 100-year floodplain, taking the lives of 20 people camping in the area and leading to multiple lawsuits against the United States.

To address public safety concerns and minimize potential liability of the United States, developed campsites in the Albert Pike Recreation Area must be outside the existing 100-year

floodplain and above the documented elevation of previous flooding. However, it is questionable whether the Albert Pike Recreation Area can accommodate 54 campsites, or even the existing number of campsites, outside the existing 100-year floodplain. Although there is a small amount of acreage in the area that is outside the existing 100-year flood plain which could accommodate some campsites, the access road to that acreage would be in the existing 100-year flood plain, creating a risk of potential entrapment endangering the public and first responders. Twice since last fall, the bridge accessing parts of the area has been under water from storms.

Even assuming the Albert Pike Recreation Area has the potential to accommodate existing and additional campsites outside the existing 100-year floodplain, making that determination would require a site assessment and suitability analysis. The time needed to conduct a site assessment and suitability analysis, obtain the requisite funding, and reconstruct existing campsites and construct new campsites outside the existing 100-year floodplain would exceed the timeframe specified in the bill.

The Ouachita National Forest has campgrounds in the vicinity of the Albert Pike Recreation Area that are not at capacity and that have desirable amenities. USDA would like to work with the Subcommittee and bill sponsors to explore how best to ensure that the Albert Pike Recreation Area provides safe and enjoyable recreation experiences for the public while minimizing the potential liability of the United States.

H.R. 1642: Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recreation Pass Act

H.R. 1642, the Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Recreation Pass Act, would amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) to provide for an annual National Recreational Pass free of charge for law enforcement officers and firefighters who provide adequate proof of eligibility as determined by the Secretary concerned. The bill defines a “firefighter” as any employee of the Federal Government, a State, a unit of local government, or an Indian Tribe who performs work directly related to suppressing fires, including wildland fires. A “law enforcement officer” is defined as any officer, agent, or employee of the Federal Government, a State, a unit of local government, or an Indian Tribe authorized by law or by a governmental agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, or investigation of any violation of criminal law or who is authorized by law to supervise sentenced criminal offenders.

FLREA authorizes the Federal land management agencies to retain and spend the recreation fee revenues they collect, primarily at the sites where they are collected and can directly benefit visitors to those sites. It is important to consider a balanced approach to Federal recreation passes and the impact that free Federal recreation passes have on Federal land management agencies’ ability to offer the high-quality recreation services the public has come to expect. USDA works closely with other Federal land management agencies to support Federal lands across the nation, including the State of California, where FLREA is especially beneficial. USDA appreciates the intent of this bill, and we would like to work with the bill sponsor and the Subcommittee to see how we can best meet the goals of the proposed legislation.

Notably, over 20 percent of all Americans (58 to 79 million) are eligible for a free or low-cost Annual or Lifetime America the Beautiful—National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass,

including the annual Military Pass, lifetime Access Pass, 4th Grade Every Kid Outdoors Pass, annual and lifetime Senior Passes, and most recently, launched just last November, the new lifetime Veterans and Gold Star Families Pass. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, as of 2022, nearly 25 percent of law enforcement officers are veterans and would qualify for the lifetime Veterans and Gold Star Families Pass.

H.R. 1319: Biking On Long-Distance Trails Act

H.R. 1319, the Biking on Long-Distance Trails (BOLT) Act, would require the Federal land management agencies to identify at least 10 long-distance bike trails on the Federal lands they manage and to identify at least 10 areas where long-distance bike trails could be developed or completed on the Federal lands they manage. Long-distance bike trails are defined as trails being at least 80 miles in length that are available to mountain biking, road biking, touring, or cyclo-cross. The bill would provide for maps and other bike trail identification materials and would require submission of a report to congress within two years of enactment on the identified bike trails.

USDA supports the goal of H.R. 1319 to identify and promote long-distance biking opportunities on National Forest System lands. Consistent with its multiple-use mission, the Forest Service considers mountain biking in the context of all possible uses of National Forest System trails, including hiking, horseback riding, and off-highway vehicle use. National Forest System lands provide numerous long-distance biking opportunities on local as well as regionally and nationally recognized trails such as the Colorado Trail, several National Recreation Trails, the Arizona National Scenic Trail, and portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss existing biking opportunities on National Forest System lands and to work on technical improvements to the bill. For example, we would like to clarify expectations regarding each Secretary's contribution towards identifying and developing long-distance bike trails, including the development of maps and signage. We also note that there are costs associated with this bill. We estimate signage for each long-distance bike trail could cost up to \$10,000, with development of maps and other information costing an additional \$2,000 to 5,000 per trail. If new trail construction is needed, it would cost an additional \$20,000 to \$25,000 per mile.

H.R. 1614 Range Access Act

H.R. 1614, the Range Access Act, would require the Forest Service within 1 year of enactment to identify each national forest that has an existing target range meeting criteria specified in the bill. The bill would also require the Forest Service to identify each national forest that does not have a target range meeting those criteria and determine whether establishment of such a target range is prevented by existing law or the applicable land management plan. For each national forest where establishment of such a target range is not prevented by law or the applicable land management plan, the Forest Service would have to identify a suitable location for the target range based upon criteria specified in the bill and construct the target range within five years, subject to availability of appropriations, modify an existing target range to meet the bill's criteria, or enter into an agreement with another entity to establish or maintain such a target range. The Forest Service would be prohibited from requiring a user to pay a fee for use of a

target range designated under the bill. Furthermore, prior to issuance of a non-emergency order prohibiting recreational shooting under the Dingell Act (16 U.S.C. 7913), the bill would require the Forest Service to seek to ensure that a target range meeting the criteria of the bill or an equivalent target range adjacent to National Forest System lands is available to the public. The bill would also apply to the U.S. Department of the Interior with respect to Federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

USDA supports the intent of H.R. 1614 to support target ranges on National Forest System lands. However, we have serious concerns with the bill as written, including the safety of those enjoying the sport as well as of those nearby, and we would welcome an opportunity to work with the bill sponsor and the Subcommittee on how best to support target ranges on National Forest System lands while addressing public safety concerns.

The Forest Service already has authority to identify appropriate sites for construction and operation of target ranges on National Forest System lands and is doing so where there is adequate demand, a suitable site, and available funding. H.R. 1614 would overlap with Section 4 of the Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act, which facilitates the establishment of additional or expanded target ranges on Federal land. Assessing and ensuring site suitability for target ranges is critical because of the potential tort liability concerns they present, particularly if they are located close to homes, schools, or popular trails. Site selection may also be affected by environmental concerns associated with wildlife habitat and impacts of spent bullets.

Cost is also an important consideration. There are over 130 target ranges on National Forest System lands, which collectively need \$1.3 million in deferred maintenance. A target range being constructed in the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland will cost \$4 million to complete, with estimated annual operating and maintenance costs of \$60,000 to \$75,000. H.R. 1614's prohibition on charging use fees would eliminate an important funding source for construction, operation, and maintenance costs. FLREA authorizes the Forest Service to charge recreation fees for the use of target ranges operated and maintained by the Forest Service, which can be retained and spent by the Forest Service. The Agency has authority under other Federal statutes to charge a land use fee to concessioners that operate and maintain target ranges on National Forest System lands. Public use fees and concessioner land use fees are vital to financing the safe and effective operation and maintenance of target ranges. For these reasons, USDA is very concerned about the prohibition in the bill on charging fees for use of these facilities.

H.R. 1576, the Federal Interior Land Media Act or "FILM Act"

H.R. 1576, the Federal Interior Land Media Act or "FILM Act," would preclude USDA from requiring a permit or land use fee for filming or still photography, regardless of the distribution platform, if the filming or still photography meets certain criteria, including occurring in a location where the public is allowed, compliance with visitor use policies, not impeding the experience of other visitors, not disturbing resource values and wildlife, not requiring the exclusive use of a site, compliance with Federal, State, and local law, and not involving a group larger than six individuals. The bill would allow USDA to require a permit and land use fee for

filming that occurs in an area not generally open to the public, the agency accrues additional administrative costs associated with the filming, the filming occurs in a high-volume area, a set or staging equipment is required, or the filming involves a group of eight or more individuals. The bill would establish a new “de minimus” category under which a permit would be automatically issued upon submission of an application for groups of six to eight individuals that meet the other criteria in the bill. The bill deems that it creates no conflict with the Wilderness Act of 1964.

In *Price v. Garland*, a federal district court ruled that aspects of the statute authorizing permits and fees for filming and still photography on National Park Service lands violate the First Amendment. On appeal of the case, the Federal government prevailed on its argument that the statute is constitutional. However, the case is still pending, with a petition for a writ of certiorari before the Supreme Court. The National Park Service’s filming and still photography statute is identical to the filming and still photography statute for the Forest Service and other Federal land management agencies.

In addition to USDA's concerns that this bill’s approach to authorizing filming and still photography on Federal lands would create confusion for permit administrators and the public and could cause resource damage, resolution of the pending litigation will better inform the proposed legislation. We would therefore appreciate the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee and bill sponsors on potential improvements to the existing authority for issuing filming and still photography permits on Federal lands.

H.R. 1527: Simplifying Outdoor Access to Recreation (SOAR) Act

USDA generally supports the intent of H.R. 1527, the SOAR Act, to improve access to outdoor recreation through use of special recreation permits on Federal lands and waters. Since this bill was first introduced several years ago, the Forest Service has made great progress in meeting this intent through administrative improvements to increase the level of customer service provided to the Agency’s permit holders and prospective applicants. For instance, the Agency continues to expand its capabilities with online permitting, and a current rulemaking effort will update the cost recovery regulations for special use permitting. Due to these intervening developments to address issues raised by the SOAR Act, USDA would like to work with the bill sponsors and Subcommittee on technical improvements to address any remaining issues in a manner that will be both administratively efficient and provide good customer service to the public.

Title 1 – Modernizing Recreation Permitting

USDA supports the overall intent of Title I and has been working since 2016, in conjunction with many trade and industry partners, to modernize the Forest Service’s recreation permitting program. Although we support the intent of this Title, we would like to work with the Subcommittee and bill sponsor to ensure that the language accomplishes its intent.

Section 103: Permitting Process Improvements and Section 104: Permit Flexibilities

USDA supports the overall intent of these sections. Since 2016, the Forest Service has taken steps to implement several of the objectives of these sections, including reducing the number of

expired permits by approximately 50 percent. Specifically, the Agency has conducted a Lean Six Sigma Analysis of its permitting process and is implementing recommended actions, many of which align with the intent of this bill. The Agency has also piloted an online application platform for special use permits and plans to continue expanding the capabilities of this digital platform as part of OMB's High Impact Service Provider initiative.

We would like to work with the bill sponsor and Subcommittee to ensure the language in these sections accomplishes their intent, considers existing program delivery, and allows sufficient time to complete ongoing revision of the Agency's regulations and policies. In addition, we want to ensure the language allows us to address visitor capacity issues, such as use conflicts and resource impacts, as appropriate or necessary.

Section 105: Permit Administration

This section would require the Forest Service to notify the public online of available permit opportunities and the status of permit applications. We would like to work with the Subcommittee and bill sponsor to ensure that the Agency's current practices and processes for operating seasons and prospectuses provide adequate notification of permit opportunities within the Agency's existing funding and staffing capabilities.

Section 106: Permits for Multijurisdictional Trips

We understand that the intent of this section is to authorize the issuance of a single joint permit for multijurisdictional trips issued by the lead agency under only the lead agency's authorities. To achieve this intent, technical changes are needed to apply the lead agency's authorities to Federal lands covered by the permit that are under the jurisdiction of another Federal agency. Under existing authority in the Service First statute, the lead agency merely has the delegated authority to issue and administer a separate permit for use of another Federal agency's lands under the laws applicable to that Federal agency, rather than a single joint permit that covers Federal lands administered by more than one Federal agency. We want to work with the Subcommittee to confirm the intent of this section and ensure that it aligns with that intent.

Section 107: Forest Service Permit Use Reviews

We would like to work with the Subcommittee to confirm the appropriate scope of this section so that it applies only to outfitting and guiding permits and to ensure that it does not duplicate existing Forest Service policy.

Section 108: Liability

Subsection (a) of section 108 would preclude the Forest Service from regulating waivers of liability for outfitting and guiding permits and recreation event permits. Subsection (b) would exempt state agencies and other entities from indemnifying the United States if they are precluded by state or local law from doing so. Since environmental liability is not limited by state law, we recommend that the limitations on indemnity apply only to tort liability, not environmental liability. We would like to work with the Subcommittee to make targeted changes

regarding liability and indemnification to ensure proper implementation and protect the interests of the United States.

Section 109: Cost Recovery Reform

USDA supports efforts to responsibly apply cost recovery for processing permit applications. However, section 109 would reduce the Forest Service's ability to process simple and complex permit applications. Cost recovery has provided more resources to the Forest Service, enabling the Agency to enhance customer service by processing applications faster. Currently, commercial recreation service providers are exempt from cost recovery fees under Forest Service regulations for applications that take 50 hours or less to process. The Agency is undertaking a rulemaking effort to update the cost recovery regulations and remove the exemption for commercial recreation service providers. This proposed revision would help the Agency increase the level of customer service provided to permit holders and prospective applicants and would treat commercial recreation service providers the same as non-recreation commercial service providers.

Expanding the scope of the cost recovery fee exemption as proposed in the bill would provide a significant benefit to large commercial recreation service providers by exempting the first 50 hours from a cost recovery fee for complex applications that require more than 50 hours to process. By substantially reducing the amount of cost recovery revenues available for collection, retention, and expenditure, this bill would adversely affect the Agency's ability to staff the processing of applications, thereby undermining the efficiencies gained from other provisions in the bill and revisions to the Forest Service's NEPA regulations. These efficiencies will sufficiently reduce processing times such that limitations on the Forest Service's cost recovery authority are unnecessary. We would like to work with the Subcommittee and bill sponsors to enhance the Agency's authority under the bill to recover costs for processing permit applications.

Section 110: Extension of Recreation Special Use Permits

This provision would provide for renewal of an existing permit rather than issuance of a new permit upon expiration, which is the Agency's current practice. We would like to work with the Subcommittee to preserve the Agency's ability to update permit forms, including new terms as necessary or appropriate, when a permit expires. This ability is particularly important when a permit has been in effect for many years. Additionally, priority use outfitting and guiding permits are currently renewable. Under the Administrative Procedure Act, there is no disruption of service upon expiration of an existing permit if a timely application has been submitted, as the existing permit remains in effect pending disposition of the application. We would like to work with the Subcommittee to ensure this section does not duplicate existing authority that is being fully and effectively utilized.

Title II – Making Recreation a Priority

USDA is generally supportive of Title II but would like to work with the Subcommittee to ensure its provisions align with implementation of other Administration priorities, such as addressing

climate change and racial equity. We are also concerned the provision on recreation performance metrics could be interpreted as impairing the multiple-use mission of the Forest Service under the Multiple Use–Sustained Yield Act to the extent the provision purports to establish a statutory preference for recreation.

Title III – Maintenance of Public Land

USDA supports the intent of Title III and looks forward to working with the Subcommittee to ensure its provisions would include traditional and non-traditional partners undertaking this important work. We would like to work with the Subcommittee and bill sponsors to ensure that current Agency programs implemented under the Volunteers in the National Forests Act and existing cooperative authorities are not duplicated.

Conclusion

USDA appreciates the recognition by this Subcommittee of the importance of recreation on Federal lands to the national economy as well as the Subcommittee’s sustained interest in finding solutions to recreation management challenges on Federal lands. We welcome opportunities to work with this Subcommittee and bill sponsors where we have noted concerns and the need for technical improvements on these bills. I look forward to your questions.