

TESTIMONY OF BRADY ROBINSON, ACCESS FUND AND OUTDOOR ALLIANCE  
 UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,  
 ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES  
 PUBLIC WITNESS HEARING, APRIL 14, 2011

**Executive Summary of Outdoor Alliance’s FY2012 Budget Recommendations:**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program and Funding Recommendations</b>
Dept. of Agriculture Forest Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Management Planning/Assessment/Monitoring: \$205 million</li> <li>• Recreation Management, Heritage and Wilderness: \$290 million</li> <li>• Capital Improvements &amp; Maintenance/Trails: \$349 million</li> <li>• Integrated Resource Restoration: \$854 million</li> </ul>
Dept. of the Interior National Park Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park Operations: \$2.3 billion</li> <li>• National Recreation and Preservation: \$51.5 million</li> <li>• Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program: \$10 million</li> </ul>
Dept. of the Interior Bureau of Land Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation Management: \$77 million</li> <li>• National Landscape Conservation System: \$39.3 million</li> </ul>
DOI and USDA Jointly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal LWCF: \$900 million (including)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stateside: \$200 million</li> <li>Forest Legacy Program: \$59 million</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Wild and Scenic Rivers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BLM: \$9.3 million; USFS: \$19 million; NPS \$1 million</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Brady Robinson and I serve as the Executive Director of the Access Fund, a national non-profit organization dedicated to climbing and mountaineering access and conservation. The Access Fund is a founding member of the Outdoor Alliance (OA), a coalition of six national, member-based organizations devoted to conservation and stewardship of our nation’s public lands and waters through responsible human-powered outdoor recreation. OA includes: Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Hiking Society, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, and Winter Wildlands Alliance, and represents the interests of millions Americans who hike, paddle, climb, mountain bike, ski and snow shoe on our nation’s public lands and waters. Our collective direct membership is over 100,000, and we have a network of almost 1,400 local clubs covering every state in the country.

The Outdoor Alliance has extensive experience working with federal land managers across the country concerning recreation and conservation policies. Our experience shows that adequate funding for the National Park Service, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management is required to support public access and enjoyment of the cherished public lands and rivers they manage. While federal land managers are integrating recreation, conservation, and restoration programs to more efficiently and effectively manage our public lands for the benefit of all Americans, it is also clear that budget cuts to these agencies would mean less access to and conservation of our public land. Under-funded and under-staffed land managers, when forced to

make resource protection and visitor use decisions, are much more likely to close or highly restrict public access. This problem concerns Outdoor Alliance activities but also hunters and anglers. My organization, the Access Fund, has seen this dynamic at numerous locations across the country such as Williamson Rock in the Angeles National Forest, Christmas Tree Pass at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and at Castle Rocks in Idaho's BLM Burley Field Office. The Outdoor Alliance believes that with the guidance and momentum of the America's Great Outdoors initiative the agencies are poised—if given adequate resources—to enhance public enjoyment of high quality public lands and waters like never before.

The Outdoor Alliance supports a common sense budget approach that will adequately fund Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture activities that are essential to providing public recreation access to high quality public lands and waters. These activities support the \$730 billion annual outdoor recreation economy and are critical in reconnecting our youth and our increasingly diverse citizenry with nature. To achieve these goals, we offer the following budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2012.

### **Department of Agriculture - Forest Service**

Recreation on national forest lands greatly supports local economies and employment. The 2010 National Visitor Use Monitoring Report found that spending by recreation visitors in areas near national forests totals almost \$13 billion annually. Protecting these economic benefits requires an adequately funded planning process, an effective infrastructure of trails and roads, and protected natural landscapes and rivers. Forest Service land management plans (with appropriate inventory and monitoring efforts) are critical to respond to existing and developing management challenges, and to inform intelligent and strategic forest management that allows for responsible recreational access. Forest plans must be maintained and revised repeatedly to maintain relevancy, and updated inventory and monitoring data is critical for present-day planning and management challenges. In the last eight years funding for Forest Service planning has dropped by over one-third, and we've seen associated unmet issues and obligations that have led directly to restrictions of various OA activities. To maintain a basic planning program that is able to respond to today's management challenges, OA requests at least the Administration's requested budget of \$205 million for **Land Management Planning, Assessment & Monitoring**.

The **Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness** program oversees all recreation on National Forest lands, and yet this program is also chronically under-funded and understaffed. OA supports at least the President's allocation of \$290 million that will permit the Forest Service to prioritize resources and facilities, maintain current on-the-ground staff, and continue basic recreation resource analyses and planning. Additionally, this funding level will assist in leveraging partnerships with the human-powered recreation community, who devote many thousands of volunteer hours to conservation and stewardship projects on our national forests.

The National Forest System serves over 50 million visitors annually who participate in activities such as cross-country skiing, hiking, climbing, boating, and mountain biking across. Over 153,000 miles of trails support these activities, but the Forest Service struggles with maintenance backlogs in the billions of dollars. OA believes that \$349.9 million in FY12 for **Capital Improvements and Maintenance** is the basic support needed to avoid adding to the

massive deferred maintenance backlog, improve non-motorized trail infrastructure, mitigate resource impacts, and provide high-quality recreational experiences on Forest Service lands.

Our national forests are interspersed with old roads that receive little or no use yet cause serious environmental impacts and pose long-term financial threats. Removing old and unused roads and investing in the roads used by hikers, climbers, anglers, hunters, bicyclists, and boaters is good for recreation, good for the environment, creates jobs, and improves water quality benefitting downstream users. Since its creation in 2007, the **Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Fund** has improved over 12,000 acres of watershed, maintained 3,170 miles of trails, improved 10,959 miles of authorized roads, and decommissioned 2,970 miles of unauthorized roads. The Legacy Roads initiative creates or retains approximately 1,500 jobs every year which provide a significant economic stimulus to rural America. OA supports FY12 appropriation of \$854 million for the **Integrated Resource Restoration** budget line for the restoration and management of priority watersheds, with at least \$75 million of that allocated to continue the important work of the Legacy Roads and Trails program.

### **Department of the Interior - National Park Service**

Our national parks offer an array of world-class opportunities to recreate. Many of America's national parks serve as iconic locations for Outdoor Alliance activities, and enthusiasts travel from all over the world to climb, hike, boat, bike, and ski in places like Yosemite, Grand Canyon, and Grand Teton. OA supports the President's proposed FY12 appropriation of \$2.3 billion for the **Operation of the National Park System**, including \$51.5 million for **National Recreation and Preservation**. For over 20 years, the **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA)** program has helped people build parks and trails and preserve open space and river corridors in their local communities. RTCA leverages federal funding by assisting locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the country to create important community infrastructure, encourage volunteerism and environmental stewardship, and connect families and children to close-to-home recreation opportunities. Further, RTCA helps reconnect Americans—especially kids—with the outdoors as part of the America's Great Outdoors initiative. OA believes that an RTCA appropriation of \$10 million for FY12 would allow this essential capacity-building conservation and recreation program to continue.

### **Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management**

Many OA members recreate on BLM lands across the country. Opportunities to recreate on BLM lands—such as mountain biking in Utah and climbing in California—are considered some of the most highly-valued in the country. Outdoor Alliance agrees with the Administration that the BLM is uniquely positioned to contribute to the success of the America's Great Outdoors initiative and its goals of reconnecting Americans to these superlative recreation resources and re-igniting the passions of the public for their outdoor legacy. We support a \$77 million FY12 budget for **Recreation Management** that will enable BLM to strengthen its protection and management of popular, high quality recreation areas.

The Outdoor Alliance has long valued the high-quality recreation opportunities found specifically within the BLM's **National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS)** which

represent some of the best human-powered recreation in the American West. Examples include: rock climbing at Red Rocks National Conservation Area in Nevada; mountain biking the Loop Road at Steens Mountain in Oregon; boating the Rogue Wild and Scenic River, also in Oregon; backcountry skiing at Gunnison Gorge NCA in Colorado; and hiking “the Wave” at Vermillion Cliffs National Monument in Utah. OA believes that funding of \$39.3 million for NLCS programs is necessary to hire essential management staff, monitor and protect natural and recreational resources, prevent resource damage, and allow for a quality visitor experience.

### **Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture**

The **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** Act of 1965 directed Congress to allocate royalties from offshore oil and gas development for the purchase of land, waterways, wetlands, and other resource lands and to provide matching grant assistance for state and local projects. The LWCF also addresses the nation's growing desire to preserve natural areas, and provide the recreational opportunities enjoyed by the Outdoor Alliance membership. LWCF landscapes also offer significant environmental, economic and cultural benefits: clean drinking water and protected fisheries; protection from wildfires and flooding; tourism dollars in rural communities; and access to out-of-doors recreation opportunities.

In 1972 Congress authorized \$900 million to be used each year for LWCF projects out of more than \$6 billion in federal revenue collected annually from offshore oil and gas leases. However, federal budgets have historically fallen far short of the support needed for these important and popular projects. Yet, the LWCF has long enjoyed strong and bipartisan support. Last Congress the House of Representatives passed the CLEAR Act (H.R. 3534) which included a provision dedicating full funding of LWCF at \$900 million each year. Bipartisan Senate legislation (S.2747) also provided full and dedicated funding for the LWCF at the authorized level of \$900 million annually. Outdoor Alliance supports the President’s stated goal of fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund by 2014 and we request the subcommittee fund federal LWCF at \$900 million and stateside LWCF at \$200 million for FY12 to match State funds.

**Wild and Scenic Rivers** offer Americans some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities on federal lands and is a core component of the America’s Great Outdoors initiative. Explicitly funding Wild and Scenic River program staff and activities within each agency would ensure that agencies have the capacity to protect these rivers and provide world-class recreation opportunities. We support the Administration’s proposed \$9.3 million for the BLM Wild and Scenic River Program, request that a new line item for the Forest Service Wild and Scenic Rivers program be funded at \$19 million out of the Recreation Management, Heritage and Wilderness budget, and that the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program line item in the NPS budget be funded at no less than \$1 million to complement the Park Unit, Partnership Rivers, and Special Resource Studies budget lines.

\* \* \*

Thank you for considering these suggestions.