



TESTIMONY OF FRANK HUGELMEYER  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify.

As president and CEO of Outdoor Industry Association, title sponsor of the world's largest outdoor products tradeshow, which serves 4,000 manufacturers and retailers in the active outdoor recreation industry, there are three thoughts I want to discuss:

1) As Congress struggles with budgets, declining revenues and economic recovery, I urge you to support a balanced economic approach. The outdoor industry is a large and diverse sector that creates jobs and bolsters tax revenues at all levels.

In the U.S., the industry has an annual \$730 billion economic impact, employs 6.5 million Americans and contributes \$88 billion in state and national tax revenue, enough to fund the entire Department of Interior budget for several years.

2) Outdoor recreation is growing and vital to every community – urban and rural. At nearly \$300 billion in annual retail sales and services,

our industry prospered during and after the recession, when others have not, and is leading America's recovery. In 2010, our world-class specialty outdoor industry grew by 6%, boosting jobs and tax revenues from Washington D.C. to Coeur d'Alene.

3) I ask you to approach H.R. 1581 as a responsible CEO. It is bad business to make a sweeping decision based on 30-year-old data. Unfortunately, this bill does just that — it releases all Wilderness Study Areas and Roadless Areas without understanding the true consequences for communities and the industry.

Our nation's protected lands and waters attract millions of tourists, recreationists and sportsmen. They support sustainable and dependable economies in rural and gateway communities, balancing the negative effects of boom and bust industries so common on 75% of the federal estate.

Back in the 1950s, policy makers viewed oil, gas and timber as the only economically-productive use of our lands. This old world view no longer holds true and dates back before the innovative outdoor industry broadly existed. Today, protected lands support an entrepreneur-led and dynamic economic engine that must be given equal consideration to the extractive industries. America's healthiest local economies now offer a balanced mix of extractive, agricultural, recreation, tourism and other jobs.

Like a good retailer provides a wide array of products, the federal estate must also continue to offer the full spectrum of recreational zones, from multi-use high access trails to roadless and wilderness areas. Preserving a diverse public infrastructure enables the American public to choose from, and outdoor businesses to provide, the widest selection of experiences and adventures.

The new value proposition of our nation's public lands requires a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach that prioritizes protections where the recreational value is high. So what is our recommendation?

- In 2001, the American people voted overwhelmingly for the protection and enjoyment of Roadless Areas. The Roadless Rule was founded after careful inventories, agency planning and nearly 600 public hearings. The sheer volume of public comment makes it the most vetted – and supported – USDA rulemaking ever. The American people have spoken, and we urge you to stand by this decision.
- While Wilderness Study Areas have been in limbo, it is not in the nation's best interest to make a single sweeping decision. Outdoor businesses support efforts to move forward on wilderness review and designation, and recognize the value of collaborative resource management plans. Following this approach will ensure that significant recreation areas are not lost. However, until

progress is made on this front, protections for these Wilderness Study Areas must remain in place.

At the heart of this matter are the hundreds of millions of Americans who spend time in the outdoors hiking, biking, camping, paddling, hunting, fishing, or wildlife viewing. Our nation is blessed to have these lands and activities, and it is part of the core American experience to enjoy them.

In conclusion, the outdoor industry will work hard to serve the nation in these challenging times by maintaining our current growth trajectory. We only ask that you do not pass harmful legislation like H.R. 1581 which puts thousands of outdoor businesses on the defensive and in the position of having to defend the very infrastructure upon which their economy and customers depend.

Thank you for your time and attention today.