

THE COALITION FOR OUTDOOR ACCESS

AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION | ANGLER'S COVEY
ASSOCIATION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AND EDUCATION
THE MOUNTAINEERS | NOLS | OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
REI | THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY | THE YMCA

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NEW LEGISLATION WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR ALL AMERICANS TO ACCESS AND ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

SENATORS HEINRICH AND CAPITO PRAISED BY OUTDOOR ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES FOR NEW PROPOSAL THAT WOULD IMPROVE RECREATIONAL PERMITTING ON PUBLIC LANDS

Washington, DC -- Outdoor organizations and businesses from across the country applauded the introduction of the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act (SOAR Act), and praised Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) today for their leadership in increasing recreational access to America's public lands. This bipartisan legislation would increase access by improving the recreational outfitter and guide permitting systems of the federal land agencies. If enacted, the SOAR Act will positively impact a wide range of organizations that provide guided recreational opportunities on federal lands, including outfitter-guide businesses, non-profit outdoor leadership organizations, university recreation programs, and volunteer-based clubs.

The SOAR Act is supported by the Coalition for Outdoor Access, an alliance of organizations and businesses with an interest in the recreational permitting systems on federal lands and waters. Members of the COA Steering Committee offered the following comments on the introduction of the SOAR Act:

"REI operates outdoor programs across the country and we support hundreds of vendors and nonprofits who do the same. The outdoor provider community has consistently struggled with the complexity of the federal recreational permit system," said Rebecca Bear, Director, REI Outdoor Programs and Experiences. "Streamlining the application process will help outdoor organizations more rapidly get people outside and promote an outdoor life. REI and our 17 million members are grateful for Senator Heinrich and Capito's leadership."

"Outdated regulations in the permitting system have made it time consuming, unpredictable, and in many cases—impossible—for outdoor organizations and businesses to provide outdoor experiences on public lands," said Alex Kosseff, Executive Director at the American Mountain Guides Association. "The Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act removes old roadblocks to facilitated outdoor recreation and enables more Americans to get outside and enjoy public lands."

"As a volunteer-driven nonprofit outdoor education and conservation organization, The Mountaineers have been getting people outside responsibly for over a century," said CEO Tom Vogl. "Streamlining the permitting process will enable more people to get outside safely and responsibly through organized experiences facilitated by outdoor leaders and educators."

David Leinweber, owner of Angler's Covey views this bill as a positive development for his business. "As a small outfitting business my infrastructure is public lands. Any business needs predictability and the ability to grow and this bill provides some key aspects to help my company predict the future in providing facilitated recreation services in demand on public lands."

"Colleges, universities, MWR and municipalities have often been unable to run outdoor programs because of the financial costs associated with federal insurance requirements," said Jeannette Stawski, Executive Director of Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education. "The SOAR Act will help college and university programs grow and will give students across the country more opportunities to enjoy and experience public lands."

"Creating more opportunities for people from all walks of life to have educational and recreational experiences outdoors is what NOLS is about," said John Gans, NOLS President." We are proud to be a part of this broad effort to reduce barriers to our shared public lands. In an increasingly urban society, it is essential that our citizens have opportunities to visit and come to know their public lands."

"Accessing America's public lands will be a lot easier when this bill passes," said Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society. "Senators Heinrich and Capito deserve a lot of credit for developing a bill that eliminates bureaucratic red tape making it easier for youth programs, university recreation programs, nonprofit organizations and outfitters and guides to obtain recreational permits for public lands. The Wilderness Society is committed to connecting more Americans with the outdoors and this bill will help do just that."

"Thank you to Senators Heinrich and Capito for their efforts to simplify the recreational permitting process through the SOAR Act," said Kevin Washington, President and CEO, YMCA of the USA. "Outdoor recreation helps children build positive relationships and develop a sense of achievement and belonging. Easing the currently complicated and restrictive process will enable youth-serving organizations like the Y to share nature's wonders with many more kids and families and instill in our youth a lifelong appreciation for the outdoors."

"From the smallest rural towns to the most densely populated cities, outdoor recreation makes America stronger. The outdoor recreation economy is a vital economic sector with \$887 billion in consumer spending and contributes 7.6 million good paying jobs," said Patricia Rojas-Ungar, Vice President of Government Affairs at Outdoor Industry Association. "Senators Heinrich and Capito deserve a lot of credit for developing a bill that is both good for public lands and good for business."

Current List of SOAR Act Supporting Organizations

Aerie Backcountry Medicine Alaska Guide Collective American Alpine Institute American Hiking Society America Outdoors Association American Alpine Club American Fly Fishing Trade Association American Mountain Guides Association American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education Angler's Covey Appalachian Mountain Guides Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education Association for Experiential Education Avid4 Adventure Chicks Climbing and Skiing Colorado Mountain School Colorado River Outfitters Association Dude Ranchers Association Exum Mountain Guides	Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce Los Alamos Mountaineers Mazamas Middle Fork Outfitters Association Montana Alpine Guides Montana Outfitters and Guides Association Montana Wilderness School Mountain Skills Rock Guides Nantahala Outdoor Center National Outdoor Leadership School New Mexico Council of Guides and Outfitters New River Mountain Guides New Mexico Wild Oregon Outfitters and Guides Association	Outdoor Alliance Outdoor Industry Association Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Outdoor Research REI Rising Tide Associates Santa Fe Climbing Center Seneca Rocks Climbing School Sierra Mountain Center Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance Suntoucher Mountain Guides Transforming Youth Outdoors The Mountaineers Utah Guides and Outfitters Association West Virginia Professional River Outfitters Western Spirit Cycling Wilderness Society Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association YMCA of Los Angeles YMCA of the USA
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