

March 13th, 2023

Dear Secretaries Raimondo, Vilsack, Haaland, and Austin,

Last year's launch of the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) represents a promising next step in our shared goal of expanding access to outdoor recreation for all Americans. Ensuring that everyone can get outside and enjoy all that nature has to offer is a top priority.

As you know, outdoor recreation is a vibrant part of our economy, contributing \$11.6 billion in economic activity in 2021 alone. This impact is also reflected in the millions of visitors who access our treasured federal lands each year – with more than 312 million visits to National Park Service facilities last year, and another 156 million visits to U.S. Forest Service lands in 2021. Outdoor recreation especially bolsters our rural communities – last year, visitors spent \$20.5 billion in communities within 60 miles of a unit of the National Park System. Beyond our National Park System, Forest Service land provides about 60% of total downhill ski capacity in the U.S., which in turn contributes \$2.7 billion annually to the nation's gross domestic product. In total, more than 4.5 million Americans rely on outdoor recreation for employment.

The value of outdoor recreation stretches beyond the economic advantages – there are also countless health benefits, including behavioral health. Studies show that being outside in green spaces supports an active lifestyle, which is proven to increase life expectancy, improve sleep quality, and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease. The outdoors also provide a space for togetherness and make it easier for friends, families, and communities to spend time in nature together, helping strengthen bonds and alleviate feelings of isolation.

Several states have established their own dedicated office to maximize the many economic, health, and societal benefits the outdoor recreation sector provides. FICOR is uniquely positioned to complement and enhance the work of existing or new state outdoor recreation offices and to help expand access to nature for all Americans. Together with state leaders, FICOR can make crucial improvements in improving equitable access to the outdoors for communities and ensure that outdoor recreation remains a thriving industry for generations to come.

Today, I write to request an update on FICOR's activities thus far and priorities going forward.

- What is FICOR doing to further federal coordination in relation to the outdoor recreation industry?
- How is FICOR evaluating its own progress to meet the President's directive to create more safe, affordable, and equitable opportunities for Americans to get outdoors?
- How is FICOR working with states, Tribes, and local governments to improve outdoor recreational opportunities?

- In our shared goal to increase access to outdoor recreation, are there additional authorities that could enable FICOR to be more effective?
- In what other ways might we be able to support your work?

I look forward to working together to improve access to outdoor recreation nationwide, especially in communities that have been historically limited in their green spaces and recreation opportunities. It is key that all Americans are able to get outside and enjoy our prized landscapes.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue – I eagerly anticipate hearing from you on FICOR’s actions and future plans soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Hickenlooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Hickenlooper
United States Senator