



NEWS

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SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS AND RECREATION INDUSTRY LEADERS DISCUSS RECREATION EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENTS



Senior officials from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Forest Service met with more than 30 representatives of the outdoor recreation industry at Shenandoah National Park April 24 to discuss improving visitor experiences on America’s public lands and waters. The meeting was hosted by the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable (ORIR) at

Skyland Resort – operated by National Park concessioner Delaware North.

Outdoor recreation is big business, generating \$646 billion in direct spending and supporting 6+ million jobs across all 50 states. At Skyland Resort, ORIR members, key recreation company CEOs and senior administration officials discussed how improved infrastructure and increased opportunities for innovation and public-private partnerships will give more people the chance to enjoy healthy, active fun on their public lands and waters, while helping outdoor recreation continue to grow as a powerful and positive force in America.

“No team wins by itself, and when you get right down to it, public-private partnerships are where success is going to happen.” said Jim Houser, Delaware North President for Sportservice, Parks & Resorts and Patina Restaurant Group.

DOI Senior White House Advisor Doug Domenech outlined key goals and challenges, and emphasized the need to expand access on public lands and waters, saying, “the

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Roosevelt Arch says 'For the benefit and enjoyment of the people,' and bringing people back to the equation is clearly an important issue."

Meeting participants identified access as a crucial area where the private sector can help federal partners improve visitor experiences in the great outdoors. They discussed the negative impact of access restrictions and the value of adopting practices to help enhance access to public lands and waters, including a "yes first" mentality, the streamlining of permitting processes, and closer management partnerships with state fish and wildlife agencies and the recreation industry.

Participants also discussed the importance of providing visitors with world-class experiences in these world-class places, and the role private industry can play in upgrading facilities, increasing connectivity, implementing electronic passes, modernizing campsites, and more.

Industry members offered their ideas on reducing the multi-billion-dollar maintenance backlog plaguing the public lands. Suggestions included longer concessions contracts, extended service hours and seasons, restructured fee retention, reduced barriers to private investment, more efficient fee collection and a reassessment of backlog needs.

"Our gathering at Shenandoah produced the most robust national level discussion of partnerships and visitor experiences I've ever witnessed," said Derrick Crandall, President of the American Recreation Coalition. "But most importantly, the meeting ended with an excitement about moving forward, moving from dealing with challenges to working as partners for a bright future for outdoor fun built around public and private partners excited by our respective assets and talents. The fun part is that there was unanimity in spirit among our participants."

The recreation industry representatives emphasized their commitment to helping DOI overcome its current challenges. Providing support for DOI funding in the FY2018 budget, encouraging a Recreation Title in upcoming infrastructure legislation and prioritizing the REC Act were just some of the ideas offered during the discussion. They also discussed how public-private partnerships can help promote awareness and support for America's outdoors by capitalizing on industry efforts like Go RVing, Discover Boating and TakeMeFishing to spread the word about great opportunities on public lands and waters. ORIR members noted that their trade shows -- the eight largest recreation trade shows in the country -- would provide a perfect opportunity to enhance communications between DOI and the nation's recreation community.

"There is extraordinary opportunity," said Frank Hugelmeyer, Recreation Vehicle Industry Association President and an ORIR member. "Never before has an industry coalition with all outdoor recreation sectors come together with a unified voice to offer its assistance in improving visitor experiences on America's public land and waters. Our

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great outdoors are a unifying force in an era of political divisions, and the outdoor recreation industry stands ready to join forces with Secretary Zinke and the Department of the Interior in providing healthy, active outdoor fun on America's great outdoors."

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About the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable:

OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE – is a coalition of America's leading outdoor recreation trade associations working to promote the policy and legislative reforms needed to grow the outdoor recreation economy. Roundtable members represent the thousands of U.S. businesses that produce vehicles, equipment, gear, apparel and services for the millions of Americans who enjoy our nation's parks, waterways, byways, trails and outdoor spaces. Combined, the various business sectors within the outdoor recreation industry generate \$646 billion-per-year in economic activity and provide an estimated 6.1 million direct jobs. Coalition members produce the eight largest recreation tradeshow in the U.S. and their members annually contribute \$40 billion in federal excise tax, sales tax and duties.