

ISSUE: **New National Commission on Americans Outdoors**

BACKGROUND:

In the late 1950's, rising public interest in outdoor recreation prompted the creation of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, chaired by Laurance Rockefeller and comprised of 15 prominent Americans, including eight Members of Congress. Its 1962 report was a blueprint for Federal legislation and policies for more than ten years, and was the catalyst for such vital programs as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the National Wilderness Preservation System, national rivers and trails systems and more.

By 1981, changes in demand and governmental capabilities placed Federal recreation programs in jeopardy, and leaders of the recreation and conservation communities united to call for a second national recreation policy review. President Ronald Reagan acted to establish a new commission, the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, which worked from 1985 to 1987. Led by then-Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, this 15-member commission included four Members of Congress and other distinguished leaders. PCAO recommendations led to establishment of the national scenic byways program, to a surge in the greenways effort, to major volunteer and outdoor ethics efforts and to new funding based upon fees and use of federal motorfuel excise taxes.

Although understanding of the value of America's Great Outdoors to combat health, education and economic ills has increased, actual usage of public lands and waters has not kept pace with population growth. Moreover, changes in technology and lifestyles makes a new look at how active, healthy outdoor opportunities can remain an important part of the American lifestyle. ***Last Child in the Woods*** offers vivid testimony to the challenges we face.

ACTION NEEDED:

U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander recently called for the creation of a new national commission on Americans outdoors to collect ideas and information, to identify innovative programs at the local, state and federal levels which are protecting outdoor resources while delivering benefits to the nation and to unify recreation and conservation interests. ***We ask your support of this initiative.***

MORE INFORMATION:

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