

United States Tour Operators Association ♦ Outdoor Industry Association  
National Wildlife Refuge Association ♦ National Parks Conservation Association  
International Inbound Travel Association ♦ National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Pew Charitable Trusts ♦ Defenders of Wildlife ♦ The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks  
Public Lands Alliance ♦ The Wilderness Society ♦ Southeast Tourism Society ♦ One Hundred Miles  
Friends of Hot Springs National Park ♦ Washington's National Park Fund ♦ Skai International—US  
Atomic Heritage Foundation ♦ Western National Parks Association ♦ St. Croix River Association  
Friends of Women's Rights National Historical Park ♦ The Corps Network  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy ♦ American Society of Landscape Architects

Conservancy of Southwest Florida ♦ Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, Inc. ♦ Everglades Trust  
Everglades Foundation ♦ Timucuan Park Foundation ♦ Tropical Audubon Society  
Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation

American Recreation Coalition ♦ National Parks Hospitality Association  
Association of Marina Industries ♦ BoatU.S. ♦ International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association  
Marine Retailers Association of America ♦ Motorcycle Industry Council  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds (ARVC) ♦ National Shooting Sports Foundation  
PeopleForBikes ♦ Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association  
Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association ♦ Recreation Vehicle Industry Association  
Specialty Equipment Market Association ♦ Specialty Vehicle Institute of America

Secretary Ryan Zinke, Department of the Interior

Director Mick Mulvaney, White House Office of Management and Budget

October 2, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke and Director Mulvaney:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing millions of Americans, are dismayed by the devastation recent natural disasters have caused to communities in Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas, the U.S. Virgin Islands and beyond. We commend the many staff at the Department of the Interior (DOI) for their work over the last several weeks to support search and rescue, public safety and security, and damage assessments in areas damaged by these storms.

Today, we write with deep concern about the threat to funding for DOI agencies if they must absorb the enormous costs associated with Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria—on top of this summer's costly wildfires—and urge you to include these needs in your requests to Congress for the next upcoming disaster supplemental appropriations bill.

As you know, DOI agencies protect the lands and waters that host our natural and historic heritage and wildlife, all while providing public access and supporting the recreational and tourism economies that are critical to gateway communities. National parks, wildlife refuges and other federal lands play an important role in supporting local economies by fostering these robust recreational and tourism opportunities. The outdoor recreation industry alone supports consumers spending of \$887 billion annually and 7.6 million American jobs. The recreation assets that have been damaged or destroyed are

important to these recovering communities as they try to rebuild healthy communities and bring back tourism and robust economies.

While the health and safety of local communities should remain a priority for additional disaster supplemental funding, dozens of National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests and areas managed by the National Park Service are also facing costly repairs. Damaged and destroyed infrastructure includes staff housing, visitor centers, historic structures, levees, boardwalks, docks, trails, roads, parking lots, dams, bridges, lodging, food services and other infrastructure important to visitors and integral to the safety and success of these sites.

Critically, many areas have also witnessed natural habitat seriously harmed by the storms, threatening water quality, wildlife habitat and the ability of these areas to protect communities and ecosystems from future storm surges.

Concessioners and nonprofit partners operating within parks have lost both facilities and inventory, which will impact tourism. Concessioners and businesses surrounding these protected lands are also responsible for repairs and reconstruction efforts needed for reopening of these areas even as their revenue stream has been stopped—in some cases for years to come.

The agencies responsible for protecting and restoring these lands and waters are already facing challenges of inadequate budgets and have been transferring hundreds of staff from throughout the country to aid in recovery. Those staff have subsequently been unavailable to perform other needed work. On top of these challenges, these agencies are contending with damage of such magnitude that it is estimated to be on the scale of their entire annual budgets for maintenance and repairs. We are grateful for the administration's commitment to infrastructure repairs. Absorbing the costs of these disasters would only set back efforts to address other longstanding infrastructure needs, as well as challenge operations.

In 2013, Congress wisely included public lands reconstruction needs in the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013. Critically, the bill included not only funds specifically dedicated to wildlife refuges and national park lands, but also to an interagency DOI fund to support resiliency projects. Ultimately, those 2013 funds supported projects including mapping to improve resilience of coastal habitat and infrastructure; projects to restore fish habitat and reduce the risks of downstream flooding and the potential for catastrophic dam breaches; storm surge dune protections for nearby communities; and marsh restoration to give resiliency to high storm surge and tidal events, among others. These supplementals also dedicated funds towards damage assessments and surveys of historic resources and grants for the restoration of historic structures.

In your requests to Congress for upcoming disaster supplemental funding bills, we urge not only amounts sufficient to cover the costs to repair and rebuild ecosystems, infrastructure and historically significant structures, but also funds dedicated toward building resiliency to better safeguard these sites and communities. Furthermore, these bills should be focused on recovery and avoid environmentally damaging policy riders.

We also ask these bills support rebuilding the tourism industry centered on these areas. The need for innovative, long term partnerships is acute.

In addition to hurricane damage, our public lands have also been devastated by recent wildfires. We appreciate recent remarks by Secretary Purdue about the importance of addressing wildfire funding needs and urge you to work with him to support a permanent funding solution to fire borrowing.

In conclusion, we urge you to ensure the next disaster supplemental appropriations bill not only provide shelter, power and other basic necessities to struggling communities, but also support the recovery of our public lands and their historic and natural resources, build resilience, and restore the integrity of the recreation and tourism economies.

Thank you in advance for supporting our fellow Americans and our public lands during this time of need.

Sincerely,

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