

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
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

Senator Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
Senator Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader
Congressman Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House
Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader
Senator Thad Cochran, Chairman, Committee on
Appropriations
Senator Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member,
Committee on Appropriations
Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chair, Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
& Related Agencies

Senator Tom Udall, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment & Related
Agencies
Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chair,
Committee on Appropriations
Congresswoman Nita Lowey, Ranking Member,
Committee on Appropriations
Congressman Ken Calvert, Chair, Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
& Related Agencies
Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Ranking
Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies

October 2, 2017

Dear Senator/Representative:

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 federal public lands agencies if they must absorb the enormous costs associated with Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, as well as this year's

costly wildfires. While we urge timely relief for the many communities, families and businesses affected by these disasters, we also request inclusion of our public lands agencies in the next disaster supplemental appropriations bill. These agencies protect our lands and waters that host our natural and historic heritage, wildlife, and communities, while providing public access and vital support for the recreational and tourism economies locally and nationally.

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 investments in public lands infrastructure repairs in recent appropriations bills. Absorbing the costs of these disasters would only set back these efforts to address other longstanding infrastructure needs, as well as challenge operations.

We commend Congress for the inclusion of 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 upcoming disaster supplemental funding bills, we urge not only including 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. To date, the U.S. Forest Service has spent more than ever before on a single fire season—exceeding \$2 billion this season. Even with the first supplemental, more is desperately needed to support fire suppression. Approximately 2.2 million acres have burned and without a wildfire funding fix yet passed through Congress, the agency needs supplemental funding to ensure both this fire season and regular programming and staff can be supported. We ask you to consider including these funds in a disaster supplemental appropriations bill.

In conclusion, we urge you to ensure that the next disaster supplemental appropriation bills not only provide shelter, power and other basic necessities to struggling communities, but also support the recovery of our public lands, their historic and natural resources, the need for their resilience, and 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,

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
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
Skal 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