

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE



October 14, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Impacts of the Federal Government Shutdown on Our Public Lands

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, Minority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Pelosi,

As national and major regional organizations, Outdoor Alliance (a coalition of Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association and Winter Wildlands Alliance), American Alpine Club, Appalachian Mountain Club, The Colorado Mountain Club, The Mountaineers, and Mazamas represent the interests of the human powered outdoor recreation community.*

Being denied access to public lands is an especially concrete example of how the shutdown impacts American citizens from both an economic¹ and quality of life perspective. From what we hear from our members, who cover the entire political spectrum, they are upset and they are angry. Although many of them have already shared their sentiments with their own Senators and Representatives, we felt that there is some utility in summarizing a few key themes and examples of how the shutdown continues to impact Americans and how they relate to and connect with their public lands.

¹ By some estimates, communities around National Parks lose \$76 million every day the parks remain closed. <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/10/01/tourism-imperiled-as-shutdown-closes-monuments-parks-and-museums>.

National Parks Closed

Although a few states rallied funding to reopen (temporarily) 12 park units, the 389 other units of the National Park System are closed to climbing, paddling, hiking, mountain biking and any other outdoor recreation activity.

Considerable planning and patience goes into trips that take advantage of the unique experiences our National Parks offer. For example, opportunities to kayak or raft the Grand Canyon in Arizona are distributed through a highly competitive lottery and highly coveted launch dates are awarded a year in advance. The trip takes three weeks and is a massive logistical challenge. At the beginning of the shutdown, the National Park Service staffed the entrance to the boat launch and denied entry to all those who had launch permits. Although opened by way of state funds for a week, Grand Canyon National Park will be shutdown (again) on Friday. While a "short-term" closure may not seem like a big deal, it has been rather demoralizing to those who have planned and trained for months or years for that special once-in-a-lifetime trip.

Stewardship Energies Frustrated

Negative effects are also felt on volunteer efforts to build and maintain the trail systems on our public lands. For example, the Forest Service's Kaibab Ranger District has canceled a volunteer workday to extend the iconic Rainbow Rim Trail that would have pulled volunteers from around the region. Additionally, the shutdown is further delaying disaster recovery for trails that were lost in flooding on the Front Range of Colorado. In other areas mountain bikers, paddlers, and hikers had been engaged in trail planning efforts that have been suspended. With winter fast approaching, field surveys will be delayed another season and opportunities for local contractors to start work on these projects will be diminished.

Events Canceled

The government shutdown has had a negative effect on revenue from mountain biking, whitewater kayak races, and other activities, as several events have been canceled or altered. Fall is also a time when many school programs visit public lands, and with the shutdown these educational opportunities have been canceled. When an event is canceled, not only is the direct revenue lost but also the even more substantial "ripple" effect dollars those participants and their families spend in the communities hosting the events. In addition non-federal staff that manage events or provide educational opportunities on public lands are being laid off.

Citizens Impacted Personally

As impassioned as the dialog has been within the human powered community regarding the shutdown, this perspective from a California climber captures our community's general sentiment:

The most frustrating failures in climbing are those which are avoidable. So too are those in politics. Values such as freedom, exploration, and adventure of our open spaces are not qualities held exclusively by climbers. I believe they are in the fabric of our country. To be restricted from exercising these values due to politics, even for rock climbing, is

shameful. My heart goes out to those who are feeling the economic and not just recreational impact.

- Kevin Jorgeson, Athlete and President of Pro Climbers International

Moving Forward

Although we do not have any answers as to how to resolve the differences triggering the government shutdown, we know that as it relates to our public lands, the shutdown is having a very real social and economic impact on the American people. We are confident that these differences can be resolved and we challenge you to resolve them quickly and carefully.

Thank you for considering our perspectives.

Brady Robinson
Executive Director
Access Fund

Mark Singleton
Executive Director
American Whitewater

Wade Blackwood
Executive Director
American Canoe Association

Mark Menlove
Executive Director
Winter Wildlands Alliance

Mike Van Abel
Executive Director
International Mountain Bicycling Association

Adam Cramer
Policy Architect
Outdoor Alliance

Katie Blackett
Chief Executive Officer
The Colorado Mountain Club

Martinique Grigg
Executive Director
The Mountaineers

John Judge
President
Appalachian Mountain Club

Phil Powers
Executive Director
American Alpine Club

Lee Davis
Executive Director
Mazamas

* Outdoor Alliance, a coalition of five national, member-based organizations includes: Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, and Winter Wildlands Alliance, and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who hike, paddle, climb, mountain bike, ski and snowshoe on our nation's public lands, waters and snowscapes. Collectively, OA has members in all fifty states and a network of almost 1,100 local clubs and advocacy groups across the nation.

Established in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the country. AMC's mission is to promote the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the mountains, forests, waters, and trails of the Appalachian region. More

than 100,000 members, advocates, and supporters from Maine to Washington, D.C. promote this mission with great enthusiasm.

The Mountaineers with 10,000 members in the Puget Sound Region of Washington State is one of the oldest and largest muscle-powered outdoor recreation and conservation organizations in the nation. Founded in Seattle in 1906, The Mountaineers have supported protection and enjoyment of our public lands since our inception.

The Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) is the oldest outdoor education, recreation, and conservation organization in Colorado. Founded in 1912, CMC boasts 8,000 members and 14 chapters across the state. CMC offers a wide range of opportunities for the public to explore, observe, and learn about the Southern Rockies, while simultaneously leading efforts to protect the species, habitats, and wildness of our public lands.

Established in 1902, the American Alpine Club (AAC) is dedicated to supporting American endeavors in mountain and crag environments around the world. The AAC provides benefits to members; conservation and research funding; produces the *American Alpine Journal* and houses a 60,000 volume mountaineering library and museum at its headquarters in Golden, Colorado. The AAC is the U.S. representative to the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation.

Formed on the summit of Mt. Hood in 1894, Mazamas is one of the most active and respected mountaineering clubs in North America with a membership of 3,500 and programs that reach over 6,000 people annually. Mazamas' mission is to promote mountaineering through our programs with the aim of creating *lifetimes of enjoying and protecting the mountains*. Through its education programs, Mazamas creates over 400 new climbers per year and organizes over 20,000 days of activity in the alpine environment.