WE STAND FOR PUBLIC LANDS
A Playbook for Advocates
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Cover photo: Brooklyn Bell
Photo, this page: Christian Beckwith
On May 11, 2017, in Washington, D.C., Access Fund—the national advocacy organization that protects America’s climbing—and The American Alpine Club—which has been advocating on behalf of climbers since 1902—organized Climb the Hill, a lobbying event in support of public lands. With a team of 50 climbers—including Tommy Caldwell, Sasha DiGiulian, Alex Honnold, Kai Lightner and Libby Sauter—they dispersed throughout Capitol Hill to meet with members of Congress and leaders of the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service. Over the course of the day, they attended 50 meetings with elected officials and agency leaders, advocating for appropriate funding levels and balanced land management policies to support outdoor recreation and conservation. The initiative was honored for its impact, innovation and replicability as a 2017 SHIFT Award Official Selection in the Non-Profit Leadership category.

This playbook is an adaptation of the guide the two organizations gave to the climbers for their meetings. It is reprinted here as a collaboration between The American Alpine Club, Access Fund, Outdoor Alliance, The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and SHIFT, and made possible by the generous support of Adidas Outdoor.
THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LANDS TO RECREATIONISTS
BACKGROUND

The majority of outdoor recreation takes place on federally managed public lands, including our National Parks, National Forests, and Bureau of Land Management lands. We must conserve and keep public these exceptional places, which are among our country’s greatest assets.

Today, Americans are experiencing unprecedented attacks on our public lands. Both state and federal lawmakers have introduced measures threatening to sell off millions of acres, weaken public management, underfund land management agencies, and increase land development at the cost of public access. These measures threaten the lands and waters themselves, the outdoor recreation we enjoy upon them, and the fundamental American notion that our public lands belong to everyone.

MESSAGE POINTS

- Recreating on our public lands makes for healthier citizens, inspires stewardship of the natural world, and provides a higher quality of life.
- We oppose any measure to transfer, privatize, or weaken public ownership of public lands.
- State ownership puts access at risk: of the 64.2 million acres of public lands transferred to 11 western states, 25.4 million acres have been sold (Sportsmenaccess.org).
- Public lands are the backbone of the outdoor recreation economy, which generates $887 billion in consumer spending and 7.6 million jobs annually (Outdoor Industry Association’s 2017 Outdoor Recreation Economy Report).

ASK YOUR ELECTEDS TO

- Keep public lands in public hands. Please oppose bills that transfer public lands or public land management to the states or private interests.
- Please support the Recreation Not Red-Tape (RNR) Act, which creates a new organic designation—National Recreation Areas (NRA)—that management agencies can apply to public lands with high recreation value.
- Support public lands by joining the Outdoor Recreation Caucus.
- For members of the US House of Representatives: Please support Representative Lowenthal’s Resolution (H.Con.Res.27) acknowledging that public lands are national treasures that belong to all Americans.
A STRONG RECREATION ECONOMY
BACKGROUND
As an economic powerhouse, the outdoor recreation industry is emerging as a political force, particularly in the debate about public lands protections and recreation assets. The outdoor industry—defined by bike, snow, trail, and water sports as well as camping, fishing, hunting, motorcycling, off-roading and wildlife viewing—is among our country’s largest economic sectors. The Outdoor Industry Association’s most recent Outdoor Recreation Economy report indicates that the strength of the outdoor recreation economy continues to grow, outpacing many conventional sectors of the American economy. The recreation economy promises continued prosperity to communities that protect and invest in recreation assets.

As an economic powerhouse, the outdoor recreation industry is emerging as a political force, particularly in the debate about public land protection and recreation assets.

MESSAGE POINTS
● The recreation economy supports $887 billion in direct consumer spending, 7.6 million American jobs, and $124.5 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue.
● Many communities across the country develop, protect, and enhance recreation assets such as recreation areas and national monuments to diversify and grow local economies.
● Recreation is a renewable resource for our public lands, and has equal protection under the Multiple Use - Sustained Yield Act of 1960 with other land uses like timber, energy, range, water, and wildlife. Policies need to balance these uses, not prioritize one at the expense of others.
● Outdoor enthusiasts: thank your elected officials for their support of the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016 (REC Act), which directs the government to quantify the outdoor recreation industry’s jobs and economic contributions and account for these numbers in the United States GDP.

ASK YOUR ELECTEDS TO
● Defend laws that are foundational to the outdoor industry, like the Antiquities Act and Wilderness Act, and ensure that established land designations and protections for recreation assets on America’s public lands are not harmed.
● Guard against laws and policies that would enable the transfer of our federal public lands to the states, and work to keep public lands public.
● Oppose budgets that would devastate land management agencies and programs key to the outdoor recreation economy.
● Advance a wildfire suppression budget fix that avoids cutting into recreation funding.
● Advance permitting legislation and other recreation-related bills as part of a larger recreation package.
● Address the maintenance backlog on public lands including new recreation infrastructure (roads, bridges, trails, and bike lanes) through the federal infrastructure package.
● Support long-term reauthorization and full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
● Join Outdoor Recreation Caucuses in the Senate/House.
● Join the Lowenthal Resolution.
FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES
BACKGROUND

Each year, members of Congress and the President make budgetary decisions about how federal tax dollars and fees are distributed to land management agencies. These funds support our public lands, from planning initiatives to trail maintenance projects. Adequate funding for public lands is critical for supporting outdoor recreation and keeping wild places protected.

However, for more than twenty years, funding for natural resources and recreation has steadily declined and is currently only 1% of the federal budget. We are facing a $20 billion backlog on public lands and waters maintenance. Continued neglect of our country’s public lands infrastructure will result in crumbling roads, bridges, and trails in our national parks and forests. Reduced funding can also lead to access restrictions. For example, two of the most popular climbing areas at Indian Creek in Utah are currently closed because the BLM cannot hire staff to monitor for endangered species.

Additionally, wildfire response costs are soaring due to hotter temperatures, longer fire seasons, and the rising costs for suppression. In the last several years, more than 50% of the Forest Service’s budget has been consumed by fighting wildfires. As a result, other important management and recreation projects and obligations are often delayed, ignored, or terminated.

MESSAGE POINTS

- Reducing land management agency budgets results in negative impacts on ecological health, recreational experiences, and public access.
- Stable, long-term funding for public lands management is essential for outdoor recreation and environmental conservation.
- Funding for recreation infrastructure is critical to supporting the outdoor recreation economy.
- The cost of federal wildfire suppression erodes agency budgets and negatively impacts outdoor recreation.

ASK YOUR ELECTEDS TO

- Support increased funding for natural resources and environment programs.
- Support increased federal appropriations for land management agencies.
- Reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund through bi-partisan proposals.
- Establish a long-term, sustainable solution to wildfire suppression funding.
- Address the maintenance backlog on our public lands by supporting the National Park Service Legacy Act (Senate Bill 751), bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Senators Mark R. Warner (D-VA) and Rob Portman (R-OH).
WE STAND FOR PUBLIC LANDS

WELCOME TO YOUR PUBLIC LANDS

LAND OF MANY USES
IN THE WEST

47%
OF OUR LANDS ARE OWNED BY THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. THESE LANDS ARE MANAGED FOR MANY USES, INCLUDING WILDLIFE HABITAT, OUTDOOR RECREATION, AND RESOURCE EXTRACTION.

PUBLIC LANDS SUPPORT DIVERSE ECONOMIES THAT INCLUDE

$887,000,000,000
IN OUTDOOR RECREATION SPENDING EVERY YEAR

Big Bucks

Employment

Local Benefit

Outdoor recreation is a critical U.S. jobs sector.

7.6 million

Americans rely on the outdoor industry for employment.

$59.2 billion
in tax revenue

Communities across the country recognize the benefit to local economies through increased tax revenues and a high quality of life.
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF
America's public lands were handed over to INDIVIDUAL STATES?

AMERICA'S LANDS & STATE LANDS
THEY'RE NOT THE SAME
In most cases outdoor recreation is more restricted on state lands than on America's public lands:

- Campfires are restricted in Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Montana.
- Public hunting can be prohibited when it interferes with the ability of states to maximize revenue. Over 80% of Colorado lands are closed to hunting.
- Camping is restricted in Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Montana.
- Off-road vehicle use is prohibited in Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and New Mexico.
- Recreational shooting is prohibited in Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico.

STATES WOULD LOSE $452 million in Payment in Lieu of Tax dollars and thousands of high-paying jobs.

MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC LANDS IS EXPENSIVE
The cost of wildfire suppression alone, a $1.7 billion burden on the Forest Service in 2015, would break most state budgets.

A study of land seizure in Idaho predicts that the state would lose $111 million annually.
Of the 64.2 million acres given to the 11 Western states at statehood, 25.4 million acres have been sold.

If history is any indication, many of these lands will be closed to the public or sold off by the states.

This Land For Sale

It doesn't matter how many promises are made, financial realities would force states to sell off your public lands.

There Is A Better Way

We live in a democracy where Americans have been rolling up their sleeves and solving problems for more than two centuries. Instead of considering the unworkable idea of land seizure, it is time for stakeholders to find common ground to improve the management of our treasured public lands.

Get involved today, and tell your state and federal lawmakers that America's public lands are not for sale. Urge them to reject any proposed seizure of these lands by signing the petition at sportmensaccess.org

Paid for by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
WE STAND FOR PUBLIC LANDS

THE SHIFT

PRINCIPLES

Photo: Aaron Nydam
Outdoor recreation and conservation require that a diversity of lands and waters be publicly owned, available for public access, and well-stewarded. The uniquely American public land heritage is a privilege and a birthright. Stewardship of our public lands – including waters and wildlife – is our responsibility.

Recreation and conservation need each other. Both are beneficial to economic well-being, quality of life and personal health. Outdoor recreation helps people understand the importance of healthy, intact ecosystems, which builds support for their protection and stewardship. Conservation protects the natural resources and wild places upon which outdoor recreation depends.

The future of our public lands depends on support from all Americans. Outdoor recreation and conservation must reflect, respect and value the demographic and cultural diversity of our country if they are to engage a coalition of stakeholders broad enough to insure the health and wellbeing of our public lands.

This requires that they be relevant to all citizens, regardless of ability, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation, including the 85% of Americans who live in urban areas as well as the private landowners whose lands provide connectivity and full-landscape solutions.

Outdoor users are responsible for avoiding and minimizing the impacts of their use. All recreation has impact. Ethical outdoor behavior that demonstrates respect for lands, waters, and wildlife and that respects the value of connecting all people to the outdoors is critical and must be developed in all users and in future generations. Responsible recreation – which fosters and is informed by a conservation ethic while promoting diverse, inclusive and next-generation engagement – is essential.

Proactive, professional planning and management, combined with public education, is necessary to care for the land and provide a diversity of quality recreation opportunities. Active public engagement in crafting solutions is necessary to ensure solutions are fair and can be effectively implemented. A broad landscape approach is necessary to make better decisions about which activities are best suited for which locations and provide a spectrum of opportunities to serve diverse interests.

Physical, biological and social science must inform the management of recreation. Management decisions should be grounded in the best available scientific information to ensure the protection of natural areas and the sustainability of resources while maintaining and enhancing the quality of outdoor recreation experiences.

Stable, long-term, and diverse funding sources are essential to protect the environment and support outdoor recreation. Land management agencies need adequate funding from federal, state, and local government sources, supplemented by (but not replaced by) new and non-traditional funding from private and nonprofit sources.

Learn more about The SHIFT Principles at:
http://shiftjh.org/the-principles-for-advancing-outdoor-recreation-and-conservation/
1. VOTE
The people in office decide stuff.
You decide who’s in office.

2. STAY INFORMED
Find and follow reliable news sources on the
issues you care about.

3. LEARN ABOUT ADVOCACY
There are a million ways to make your voice
heard and make policy better.

4. GET SOCIAL
Let your friends and family know how
important public lands are and what they
can do to get involved.

5. WRITE YOUR LAWMAKER
You write emails all the time, right? Writing
your lawmakers is an effective way to
advocate for public lands.

6. CALL YOUR LAWMAKER
And tell them to protect public lands. Their
phone numbers are publicly available, and
they expect to hear from you.

7. MEET YOUR LAWMAKER
Tell your lawmakers how you feel about
public lands in person. Go to events like
town hall meetings, constituent coffees, and
meetings at their local offices.

8. WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR
Lawmakers pay attention to local papers,
and local papers love to publish your
opinions.

9. BECOME A MEMBER
Find an organization that represents you
and your passion. Being a dues-paying
member doesn’t just help organizations
keep the lights on; it’s also an essential
marker of a group’s credibility that helps
them work with decision makers.

10. RUN FOR OFFICE
It’s not as crazy as it sounds, we promise.
We need more people who care about public
lands to stand up and serve. Isn’t that you?

Interactive tools, step-by-step guides,
and many other resources that will make
each of the above as easy as possible are
available at: