

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 6, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on ENR
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget
604 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Chair Sanders, and Chair Manchin:

It is imperative that the Budget and the Budget Reconciliation process include significant funding for the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service programs within the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources jurisdiction. Without that funding it will appear the American West, and the millions of people who call it home, have been abandoned at a time when the rest of the country is seeing generational investments in their future.

We know our allies among Democratic senators to our east appreciate the importance of creating jobs throughout America and the significance of public lands as a major source of our country's clean air and water. Our publicly-owned lands are America's infrastructure just as much as bridges and tunnels. In addition, the Department is critical in supporting local communities and businesses to secure a sustainable water future during an unprecedented drought across the West.

Democrats have always understood the importance of federal investments in our public lands and how these natural treasures support local economies and jobs, recreation, agriculture, and clean air and water. There are a critical number of jobs tied to improving wildfire resiliency and forest health and helping to provide clean water, sustainable grazing, and wood products for rural businesses. We have yet to fully tap the potential of these jobs, but we should. We are working to support and create programs to put people to work in rural communities, which are suffering simultaneously from a global pandemic, a devastating wildfire season and decades of inconsistent and insufficient investment in our public lands.

The truth is in the numbers. Multiple economic studies show that rural communities serving as gateways to public lands have more jobs and steadier economies compared to rural communities

that are not. Nationwide, outdoor recreation alone generates \$887 billion in annual consumer spending and 7.6 million American jobs. And we know the creation of public lands jobs will generate millions in local economic benefits.

And the truth is in the people. Our public lands and the states that support them are jobs magnets. There are towns all over the west whose boom and bust cycles were reliant on only one or two extractive industries. Today, with rivers running through their hearts and nearby mountains and forests, these once boom/bust towns are some of the fastest growing cities in the country. They bustle with trade-based businesses, breweries, restaurants, parks, and light manufacturing.

More needs to be done to support and improve our national treasures to be enjoyed for generations to come. These investments keep us from loving these places to death while giving our country the economic boost it needs. As families across the country struggle to make ends meet, a major federal investment in the restoration and sustainable management of our public lands would make a difference.

We look forward to working with you and the caucus to achieve this important work.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



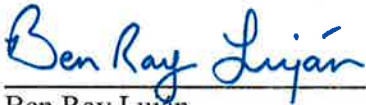
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Cc: President Biden