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May 26, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy:

Thank you for your efforts to address the unprecedented challenges our country is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Congress continues to consider ways to help the nation regain its economic footing, we hope that investment in the restoration of our nation's aging national parks and public lands will be part of the solution.

The advancement of the Great American Outdoors Act (S. 3422) would direct up to \$9 billion over a five year period to fix priority repair projects in national parks, other public lands agencies, and Bureau of Indian Education schools, and would generate thousands of infrastructure-related jobs at a time when job creation is of the utmost importance in our country. The legislation has overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress and is supported by the Administration. Across the country, more than 800 local, state, and national groups including gateway communities, veterans' organizations, contractors, state and regional tourism societies, preservation societies, conservation groups, the recreation industry, unions, and local businesses support S. 3422.

The last significant congressional investment in our National Park System was over 50 years ago during the Mission 66 initiative, a program that constructed and updated roads, comfort stations, visitor centers, and other facilities within park units. Congress allocated nearly \$1 billion over five years for the program, the equivalent to approximately \$8 billion in today's dollars when adjusted for inflation (based on <http://www.dollartimes.com/inflation/inflation.php?amount=1&year=1985>). And this now aging infrastructure, combined with record visitation at many park sites and inconsistent annual maintenance funding over decades, has resulted in a National Park Service repair backlog of almost \$12 billion (FY2018 data).

Investment in our national parks has a high rate of return: national park visitors spend billions of dollars each year at local businesses, hotels, gas stations and restaurants, supporting nearly 330,000



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jobs, and contributing over \$40 billion in total national economic output each year. As a whole, America's outdoor recreation economy supports over 5 million American jobs and contributes over \$775 billion to the nation's annual economic output.

Enacting the Great American Outdoors Act, especially now, will help create jobs and will ensure the preservation of park resources that local and state economies depend on. Thank you for your consideration of our request and your diligent work to get Americans back to work.

Sincerely,

Marcia Argust  
Restore America's Parks  
The Pew Charitable Trusts