



2024 UNITED STATES FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

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ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES

Conservation Funding

Great American Outdoors Act Implementation

BHA will work with the departments of Interior and Agriculture to ensure the integrity of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and funding allocations established under the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 and the Great American Outdoors Act signed into law in 2020.

Access and Opportunity

Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA)

BHA will work with the administration, including all public land management agencies, to elevate usage of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act which was permanently authorized in 2018. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) utilizes this authority in 11 Western states and Alaska to identify and sell unneeded BLM lands to increase funding allocations for high-priority private lands that are landlocked by public lands or high-priority lands adjacent to public lands. Consolidating private inholdings connects migration corridors and wildlife habitat, enhances public access, and creates management efficiencies. BHA will encourage the prioritization of lands that improve access for recreational users like hunters and anglers and reduce habitat fragmentation.

Task Force on Outdoor Recreation for Veterans

BHA and our [Armed Forces Initiative](#) support the establishment of the interagency Task Force on Outdoor Recreation for Veterans which was enacted into law under the Veterans COMPACT Act in 2020 and we urge the inclusion of relevant federal land management agency professionals as task force members.

For many U.S. veterans, hunting and fishing in America's backcountry are meaningful ways to reconnect and readjust during their return to civilian life. The task force will facilitate increased opportunities for veterans to access and enjoy our public lands by collaborating with multiple federal agencies to better understand the connection between our veterans and the outdoors. It will also facilitate increased support for these brave men and women to access our public lands and waters.

BHA encourages the secretary of Veterans Affairs to include public land management experts, specifically those who recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters and anglers as members of the task force. We believe they will add critical capacity, help identify opportunities and barriers,





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and aid in developing recommendations to better facilitate the use of public lands and waters for promoting the health and wellness of our veterans.

National Wildlife Refuge System Hunting and Fishing Expansion

In June 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) implemented the expansion of 48 new public hunting and fishing opportunities within the National Wildlife Refuge System. The public has access to hunting opportunities on a total of 436 units within the Refuge System and fishing opportunities on 378 units. BHA and our partners jointly developed a report, [National Wildlife Refuges: A Hunting and Fishing Perspective](#), that guides our policy recommendations. We continue to engage with partners and stakeholders to support USFWS efforts to expand public access, ensure that decisions on the use of lead are informed by the best available science, and advocate for new hunting and fishing opportunities.

Modernizing Access to our Public Land (MAPLand) Act

BHA encourages the administration to work with the BLM, USFWS, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) leaders in implementing the MAPLand Act. This law authorizes between \$1.5-5.5 million annually each for the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of the Army to modernize map records from paper to a standard, online database. BHA will work with public land management agencies to implement the MAPLand Act and encourages both the administration and Congress to prioritize funding for this law.

Currently, more than 9.5 million acres of public lands in the West are landlocked – surrounded by private lands – and inaccessible. Due to the MAPLand Act, public land management agencies are required to collect data on accessible public lands so that this information can be made available to hunters, anglers and other outdoor recreationists. This new wealth of information will allow hunters and anglers to discover new opportunities on our public lands and waters all while boosting our nation's \$1.1 trillion outdoor recreation economy.

Lands and Waters Conservation

America the Beautiful and 30 by 30

BHA supports the laudable goal of protecting 30 percent of our lands and waters by the year 2030. We share the commitment to conserve our lands and waters, protect biodiversity and advance durable policy solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. It will also be critical for state, tribal and federal land and wildlife management agencies to retain their authority to make science-based management decisions and set hunting and fishing regulations. By working together to approach our shared interests in 30 by 30, we can include all stakeholders and address uncertainties that may generate unnecessary concerns while building greater support at the same time.





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As an organization that has invested countless staff and volunteer hours in defending bedrock environmental laws like the Antiquities Act, the Wilderness Act, the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act and advancing new collaborative conservation designations across the country including the expansion of our National Wildlife Refuge System (a proud legacy created and funded in large part by waterfowl hunters), BHA is intimately familiar with the benefits of permanent conservation protections conceived and implemented in thoughtful ways. These approaches can achieve success by including important stakeholders up front in order to create collaborative investments and marshal support from diverse constituencies.

For the reasons stated above, we encourage the administration and Congress to consider the recommendations our community has outlined on our [Hunt Fish 30x30](#) platform. Our policy guidance will help decision-makers establish clear definitions for protected areas and avoid unintended consequences that would unwittingly erode or eliminate our outdoor traditions. Additionally, in collaboration with our partners BHA has established a set of policy tenets for designating new national monuments that will ensure new designations have the support of hunters and anglers, [National Monuments: A hunting and fishing perspective](#).

Sportsmen and women understand that wildlife managers need the tools, funding and flexibility to make the best possible decisions that are informed by science and insulated from politics. We also know that restoration efforts for sensitive fish and wildlife habitats and individual species recovery efforts can demand management prescriptions that modify recreational activities, including hunting and fishing. We ask that hunters, anglers and other stakeholders be included and that we integrate thoughtful policy language that reinforces the existing authority of state, tribal, and federal fish and wildlife management agencies by favoring specificity over ambiguity.

Natural Resources Management

E-bikes

While BHA and other partners have made progress towards improving e-bike policies with federal land managers at the USFS and the BLM, we will continue advancing policy directives regarding the expanded use of e-bikes on public lands to ensure that non-motorized routes remain off limits to all classes of e-bikes and require that any future e-bike usage on routes be guided by travel management planning processes.

Forest Health

BHA advocates for the science-based management of our forest systems to maintain a diversity of forest age-class structures, which, in turn, will promote forest health and habitat suitable for native wildlife populations. We encourage the administration to incorporate and implement





management practices to maintain diverse forest age classes ranging from early successional to old-growth and reduce the prevalence of monocultures. To accomplish this goal, BHA recommends the following:

- Applying information on natural disturbance regimes to guide the size, arrangement and structure of habitat management units, modified as applicable in response to wildlife habitat management goals and to factors such as climate change, invasive species and diseases.
- Including and implementing prescribed fire as a management tool in fire-dependent forest communities that simulates historic disturbance regimes in factors such as size, intensity, seasonal timing and frequency.
- Using timber harvest to replace the natural disturbances that no longer function as they did historically, such as stand replacing fires, beaver activity and ice storms.
- Implementing an education and outreach effort to inform stakeholders on the importance of science-based forest management to achieve wildlife habitat objectives for the full suite of species and habitats.

The Cottonwood Environmental Law Center v. United States Forest Service (Cottonwood) decision, delivered in 2015 by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, has resulted in costly duplicative consultation at the programmatic level for Land Management and Forest Management Plans. In turn this has had serious negative impacts for proposed wildlife habitat enhancement and wildfire fuels reduction projects. It is clear that a legislative solution is necessary to address the costly and duplicative delays in forest management projects, which would be provided by (S. 1540) advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee via voice vote earlier in the 118th Congress. Bipartisan support for a solution has persisted through both the Obama administration which petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn the case and Trump administration which initiated a rulemaking process to address the issue.

Additionally, BHA is working with partners to ensure that the administration prioritizes action on stalled forest plan revision processes and take up new forest planning efforts in strategic geographies. While BHA remains unequivocally committed to maintaining the integrity of pristine areas like those designated as wilderness, roadless areas, and wild and scenic rivers, it is critical that we don't overlook the need for active management across our system of public lands and waters in order to ensure healthy forest structure and the majority of wildlife populations that require early successional habitat for some or all their life cycles.

[View BHA's North American Policy Statement: Forest Vegetation and Route Management.](#)





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Climate Change

BHA recognizes the importance of addressing impacts to fish and wildlife populations from climate change. We have a collective obligation to advance policies that prioritize carbon sequestration and long-term adaptation strategies. It is imperative that we invest in ocean health and forest, grassland and wetland restoration to store large volumes of carbon, build more resilient ecological systems and improve management practices to enhance habitat conditions and protect water resources for wildlife and people. Additionally, we've been working with our partners to establish a united commitment on climate change and look forward to working with the administration and Congress to combat its impacts. Visit our [Conservationists for Climate Solutions](#) coalition website which acknowledges threats, identifies opportunities and aims to advance strategic solutions.

[View BHA's North American Policy Statement: Climate Change.](#)

Infrastructure and Transportation

BHA will be working with the administration and Congress to advance implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act including dedicated investments in wildlife migration corridors and habitat connectivity projects, surface and water transportation infrastructure that benefits fish and wildlife, wildfire and drought resilience, water conservation and programs like the Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Program on USFS lands.

Wildlife Corridors

BHA asks the administration to create a cross-jurisdictional commitment to building on the Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3362 by identifying wildlife corridors in collaboration with state agency efforts. It is critical that additional programmatic funding is allocated/appropriated for the implementation of SO 3362. We support the establishment of programs under the Federal Highway Administration that coordinate projects with states to prioritize migratory corridor connectivity. Additionally, we encourage the administration to implement policies that elevate consideration for migratory corridors in forest plans and resource management plans, all while complementing state-based efforts and ongoing corridor identification and designation.

Prioritizing migratory corridors will address the increase of wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC), an issue that threatens the safety of all motorists and costs American taxpayers significantly. More than 1 million collisions occur annually between cars and large animals, including big-game species like elk, mule deer, whitetail deer and others. Infrastructure that facilitates safe wildlife crossings can save the lives of both humans and animals. We recommend providing administrative guidance in coordination with efforts by state fish and wildlife agencies and





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tribal nations to develop priority project lists that aim to reduce WVC and improve habitat connectivity.

With the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed into law in 2021, the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program was created and appropriated \$350 million over five years. This is a competitive grant program aimed at reducing WVCs on highways and roads. It also seeks to improve habitat connectivity for fish and wildlife which is particularly important to sustaining the wildlife migration corridors of big-game species like mule deer, elk and pronghorn. BHA will work to ensure the successful implementation of this program.

Lastly, while we remain encouraged by congressional interest in advancing legislation to support wildlife migration corridors, we caution lawmakers against establishing separate programs or designations. Instead, we urge Congress to invest in existing programs and management agency priorities with proven track-records while improving cross-jurisdictional collaboration between federal, state and tribal agencies.

Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP)

BHA supports the Department of Transportation's Federal Lands Transportation Program, which provides funding for the construction and maintenance of roads across national forests and other public lands. Maintaining existing roads and thoughtfully planning new road construction is important to hunters and anglers. Roads contribute to a significant portion of the estimated \$6 billion USFS maintenance backlog and are often the primary source of sedimentation in coldwater fisheries that threaten habitat for trout and salmon species. By prioritizing projects that maintain existing roads and properly decommission roads no longer in use, we can improve fish and wildlife habitat and enhance access to recreational activities, including hunting and fishing, on our public lands and waters.

Nature-based Infrastructure

We most commonly depend on traditional structures, including dams and bridges, but BHA encourages the administration to utilize new funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to elevate the value of investing in nontraditional infrastructure like riparian areas, expanding floodplains and restoring fish passages. Nature-based infrastructure is cost effective and provides long-term stability for hunter and angler opportunities, fish and wildlife and our nation's \$1.1 trillion outdoor recreation industry.

Wildlife Disease

Chronic Wasting Disease

Found in cervid populations such as deer, elk and moose, chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy prion disease that is always fatal and undetectable in





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live specimens. BHA encourages the administration to research and collaborate with state and federal wildlife managers and agriculture agencies, including the Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Congress and all stakeholders on identifying strategic policies to combat CWD. Signed into law in 2022, the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act is the largest federal effort taken to address CWD, authorizing \$70 million of annual funding for coordinated management between USDA and state wildlife agencies and departments of agriculture. BHA encourages Congress to appropriate adequate funding levels to support implementation.

[View BHA's North American Policy Statement: Chronic Wasting Disease \(CWD\).](#)

Wild Sheep

BHA encourages the administration, management agencies, conservation organizations and other stakeholders to work together to develop and employ progressive standards that create policies that advance wild sheep population recovery and interconnectivity on public lands. We also encourage the administration to reinstate the Full Curl Program and rehire a full-time coordinator to facilitate interagency collaboration and implementation of policies that strengthen wild sheep populations.

[View BHA's North American Policy Statement: Reducing Conflict Between Wild Sheep and Domestic Sheep and Goats on Public Lands.](#)

Greater Sage-grouse

Sagebrush country is a critical western ecosystem comprised of approximately 120 million acres supporting more than 350 species of conservation concern and provides one of the most awe-inspiring landscapes of North America. Millions of Americans across the West live, work, and recreate in this landscape. Unfortunately, this fragile, arid landscape has been fragmented and degraded by development, invasive species, and devastating wildfires largely driven by invasive annual grasses.

The greater sage-grouse has become an iconic representation of the American West but these impacts to their habitat are alarming. An estimated 16 million sage-grouse used to roam the sagebrush steppe. Today, sagebrush habitat has declined by 50% from just a century ago and in 2021 a U.S. Geological Survey report estimated that grouse populations have dropped 80% since 1965 and continue to shrink by 2-3% every year.

As a community of conservation minded hunters and public lands advocates, BHA continues to work with the BLM, USFS, USFWS, western states, our partners and other stakeholders to improve conservation efforts and ensure that future management decisions are guided by





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science in the hands of biologists and sheltered from interference by politicians and outsiders motivated by special interests. It will be important to revisit and amend conservation and management plans and develop strategic policies that integrate new information and science.

BHA also supports the removal of the harmful sage-grouse rider to the annual appropriations bill that compromises the USFWS ability to utilize important conservation tools within the Endangered Species Act. This rider ties the hands of wildlife managers and threatens the livelihood of rural communities that depend on sagebrush country for economic stability. We will continue to advocate against any limiting sage-grouse rider language in the federal appropriations process for the coming fiscal year.

Free-roaming Horses and Burros

As of 2022, more than 82,000 feral horses and burros roam lands managed by the BLM, about three times the agency's population goal. Over half live in Nevada, the most arid state in the nation, where their ecological impacts are devastating. Desertification and massive loss of habitat for critters ranging from pollinators and other insects to greater sage grouse, elk, mule deer and pronghorn threaten the natural balance for native species across all taxa.

We rely on the North American Model of Conservation to guide our decisions regarding wildlife and wild places. Feral horses and burros are unlike wildlife or livestock, which are managed either by state and federal agencies or livestock owners and are federally protected under the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. Unfortunately, the BLM lacks adequate resources to execute the management framework to oversee population growth while remaining fiscally sustainable, and state wildlife management agencies in Western states shoulder much of the burden. BHA is working with our chapter leaders, state and federal management agencies, and conservation partners to advocate for the appropriation of more program resources and long-term solutions that effectively address these challenges with cost-efficient policy strategies.

[View BHA's North American Policy Statement: U.S. Feral Horse and Burro Management.](#)

Clean Water Act

The Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision in 2023 resulted in the elimination of safeguards for almost all of the nation's wetlands and drastically reduced the EPA's authority to protect other wetlands and waterways that provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Ruling that the dredge and fill provision in the Clean Water Act only applies to wetlands connected to permanent bodies of water – streams, rivers, lakes – by a constant surface connection to other waters, such as large rivers, lakes or oceans, and streams that flow only after a rainfall or flow intermittently into a temporary stream. This eliminates Clean Water Act





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protections for ephemeral streams and threatens the future of intermittent streams with seasonal flow fluctuations. Now, approximately 50% of wetlands and 60% of stream miles in the United States are vulnerable to pollution, harming our clean drinking water and America's hunting and fishing heritage.

Hunters and anglers know better than anyone that our streams and wetlands are inextricably linked to the health of fish, wildlife and their habitats in addition to ensuring that our outdoor traditions endure into the future. BHA will continue to work with the administration and Congress through new and innovative means to restore critical safeguards and support our legacy of stewardship for clean water that fish and wildlife rely on.

CONGRESSIONAL PRIORITIES

Conservation Funding

With recent appropriations cycles resulting in a both frequent and lengthy continuing resolutions (CR's) BHA understands that funding a proper fiscal year 2025 budget is more important than ever. We encourage the administration to coordinate with Congress and encourage investments in natural resource programs that sustain fish and wildlife habitat, drive hunting and fishing opportunities, enhance sportsmen's and women's access, and create economic stability in America. Investments in active management, forest and range health, and habitat improvement programs now will avoid costly consequences in the future.

As the only system of federal public lands focused primarily on wildlife conservation and habitat, the National Wildlife Refuge System requires a substantial increase in appropriated funding to effectively fulfill its conservation mission and provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation. While visitation has increased 38% over the last thirteen years and the USFWS has been charged with 2 million new acres of land, the Refuge System's budget has only increased 3%.

Full and permanent authorization of funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was one of the greatest conservation successes in modern history. However, with a significant project backlog, the demand for LWCF project funding far exceeds the annual available floor of \$900 million, a level that was initially authorized in 1978 when the purchasing power of that amount was more than four times what it is today. BHA recommends an additional \$450 million in discretionary spending to accompany the mandatory allocations provided by the Great American Outdoors Act.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act



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BHA supports legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This bill would dedicate approximately \$1.4 billion annually to state and Tribal fish and wildlife agencies to proactively manage and prevent at-risk species from being added to the federal list of threatened or endangered species. The legislation is the bipartisan product of decades of hard work by devoted sportsmen and women, conservationists and business leaders who share an interest in securing funds needed to reverse population declines of at-risk species.

State fish and wildlife agencies have demonstrated the ability to successfully restore habitat for multiple game species, including tule elk in California, harlequin ducks in Montana, Northern pintails in Kansas and many others. While not all at-risk species are game species, they do share the same habitat with critical game animals like mallards, mule deer, pronghorn and wild trout. Improving habitat for one species provides benefits all of them, including wild game.

Additionally, this investment will reduce billions of taxpayer dollars protecting species listed under the Endangered Species Act, and it will enhance multiple use opportunities that would otherwise be cut off by ESA restrictions.

Outdoor Legacy Fund

BHA supports the creation of new revenue mechanisms for investing in our natural resources by expanding the base of consumers contributing to conservation funding beyond hunters and anglers. While outdoor gear manufacturers are already burdened with extremely high tariffs, it is clear we need to explore this conversation and do so thoughtfully with engagement from the outdoor recreation industry. Whether it is directing a percentage of existing tariffs into an Outdoor Legacy Fund or reducing/eliminating tariffs and exploring new excise tax models based on the successful Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts that hunters and anglers fund within the Wildlife & Sportfish Restoration Program, there are innovative ideas to explore with decision-makers that bring all outdoor recreationists to the table to increase investments in our natural resources.

Access and Opportunity

MAPWaters Act

New legislation was introduced in the 118th Congress following the enactment of the MAPLand Act into law in 2022, the Modernizing Access to Our Public (MAP)Waters Act. Building on the success of the MAPLand Act, this legislation would modernize and make available data regarding regulations on federal waters managed by NPS, BLM, USFWS, USFS, and Reclamation. Hunters and anglers who rely on opportunities provided by public waters will benefit greatly, which is why BHA supports digitizing and making readily accessible information such as watercraft restrictions, fishing regulations, and the geographic boundaries those are associated with.





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Outdoor Recreation

Comprehensive outdoor recreation legislation was advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee via voice vote on America's Outdoor Recreation Act earlier in the 118th Congress. Companion legislation more recently introduced, the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act, would provide important benefits for sportsmen and women by modernizing the management of our lands and waters and in turn improving public access and opportunities. These packages include several policies long supported by BHA including the following:

- Streamlining recreation permitting, access and fees for public lands and waters
- Improving outdoor recreation data and infrastructure
- Prioritizing finalizing travel management plans for the BLM and USFS
- Ending the waste of non-native animal antlers, horns and capes harvested by volunteers on National Park System land
- Prioritizing finalizing travel management plans for the BLM and USFS
- Ensuring that each BLM district and national forest has a designated shooting range
- Establishing a grant program for the inspection and decontamination of watercraft to avoid the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Responsible Mining and Energy Development

Sensible Mining

We recommend the administration and Congress prioritize the modernization of the General Mining Act of 1872 and develop balanced policies for critical minerals. Hardrock mining and associated abandoned mines represent the largest source of pollution in the United States, with an estimated 40% of watersheds in the West contaminated by mine tailings and runoff. Toxic waste, such as cyanide and sulfuric acid, destroys our streams, lakes, wetlands and other waterways. This leads to serious damage to our pristine fish and wildlife habitat and pollutes our drinking water, causing health risks for communities.

The administration's Principles for Domestic Mining Reform, released in 2022, acknowledged the critical importance of adopting fair royalties which can be invested in the cleanup and mitigation of abandoned hardrock mine sites. These principles also highlighted the need for Good Samaritan legislation to create legal protection for entities such as state agencies, local governments and nonprofits, allowing them to clean up abandoned hardrock mine sites without assuming liability. BHA supports the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act, introduced earlier in the 118th Congress. This would facilitate private investments to fill resource and capacity gaps to improve water quality as well as fish and wildlife habitat.





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The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act created a new Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program to inventory, assess and reclaim abandoned hardrock mine sites. Authorized for \$3 billion, this program received no appropriated funding. BHA supports robustly funding this program through an appropriations line item that would restore fish and wildlife habitat contaminated by mine tailings and runoff.

BHA and our partners jointly developed a report, [Critical Minerals: A Conservation Perspective](#), that guides timely policy recommendations. We understand that mining, especially for critical minerals, is necessary. We believe, however, that it can and must be done responsibly with smart planning, stakeholder collaboration and careful implementation and development. Reforming our current mining laws through a balanced approach will allow fish and wildlife and our outdoor traditions to coexist with energy development and reduce impacts on our natural treasures.

[View BHA's policy recommendations for Sensible Mining: Balancing Habitat and Industry.](#)

Renewable Energy Development

The demand for renewable and clean energy is growing. We need to ensure that projects are responsibly sited on our public lands to avoid sensitive wildlife habitat including migration corridors and flyways. This will require industry, states and land and wildlife managers to collaborate and identify public lands with low fish and wildlife habitat impact. Some of these landscapes for development include abandoned mine sites, rooftops, parking lots, brownfields and former industrial sites.

BHA supports legislation reintroduced earlier in the 118th Congress, the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act, which would seek to responsibly site solar, wind and geothermal energy development on public lands and prioritize considerations for fish and wildlife habitat that avoid and mitigate impacts up front. It would direct existing and future development away from wildlife conflicts without incentivizing unplanned development or prioritizing renewable energy over any other traditional energy projects. It also would create a conservation fund for which 25% of industry revenues generated from wind and solar development on public lands would fund fish and wildlife habitat restoration.

Lands and Waters Conservation

Grassland Habitat Restoration and Protection

North America's grasslands are one of the most threatened ecosystems – and provide critical habitat for wildlife. They include tallgrass, mixed grass, and shortgrass prairies, sagebrush shrub-steppe and savanna grasslands. More than 50 million acres of grassland have been lost in





the last decade, and sagebrush now occupies less than 55% of its historical landscape. This in turn reflects a threat to grassland species, such as upland gamebirds including grouse and quail as well as big game species like pronghorn and mule deer. Since the 1960s, grassland bird populations have declined by more than 40%. Species like the popular bobwhite quail have seen an even greater population decline of nearly 85%.

Legislation introduced in the 117th Congress, the North American Grasslands Conservation Act, would invest in grants designed to provide landowners voluntary, flexible economic incentives and opportunities to improve and conserve our disappearing grasslands. It would do so through funding for conservation activities, such as restoring native grasses, controlling invasive species, managing with prescribed fire and fighting conifer tree encroachment. By investing in voluntary conservation programs this proposal would restore and protect grassland habitat that is currently threatened by conversion to croplands, lost to residential and commercial development and fragmented by invasive species. BHA continues to work closely with our partners and congressional leaders to reintroduce and advance this important legislation.

PRIORITY LANDSCAPES

Alaska

Tongass National Forest

Following efforts by the state of Alaska and the previous administration to facilitate increased development of and industrial access to roadless lands in the state, the USFS, under USDA, embarked upon a rulemaking process to develop an Alaska specific version of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which completely eliminated protections for the Tongass National Forest in 2020.

BHA strongly supported the decision by the USFS in 2023 to repeal the Alaska Roadless Rule, reinstating roadless protections for more than 9 million acres of the Tongass. Complementing that work, this administration's Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy will end large-scale old-growth timber sales in the Tongass, focusing management practices instead on restoration, outdoor recreation opportunities and addressing factors such as climate change. BHA also supports legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Roadless Area Conservation Act, that would codify roadless rule protections and permanently protect the Tongass.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

BHA applauded the administration's actions to temporarily halt and reverse oil and gas development on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, including both the





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pause of leasing activities and decision to suspend leases, as well as the initiation of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. However, the 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act requires oil and gas leasing in the Arctic Refuge by law, with a second lease sale to be held before the end of 2024. Legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Arctic Refuge Protection Act, would repeal the oil and gas leasing program in the Arctic Refuge as well as permanently protect the region by designating the 1.5-million-acre coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge as wilderness.

Located in Alaska's farthest northeast corner, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1960 by President Eisenhower "for the purpose of preserving unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values." Its 19.5 million acres, 8 million of which are federally protected wilderness, are home to iconic game species including grizzly bears, Dall sheep and caribou. The Refuge is a crucial part of the longest land migration on earth: the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. It is crucial that this wild habitat remains managed for the benefit of fish, wildlife and future generations of American sportsmen and women.

National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska

The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) covers roughly 23.6 million acres of the Western Arctic, making it the single largest tract of public land in the nation, bordering the Chukchi Sea to the west and the Beaufort Sea to the north. The scale of this landscape is rivaled only by that of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

BHA supports the rulemaking process initiated by the BLM in 2023 to strengthen oil and gas regulations in the NPR-A and maximize the conservation of the approximately 13 million acres with the highest conservation value, designated Special Areas, while still allowing for development on more than 11 million acres. Further, BHA encourages the administration to coordinate with Congress to permanently protect Special Areas, including the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, from development.

Found across Alaska's far north are numerous species of mammals, birds, and fish that are pursued by hunters and anglers. Opportunities to hunt nomadic caribou from the Teshekpuk herd in the NPR-A give people a chance to witness thousands of animals pulsing across the tundra. The Teshekpuk Lake Special Area in the NPR-A is critical summer nesting habitat for tens of thousands of greater white-fronted geese, Pacific black brant, cackling geese and snow geese. It has been labeled the most important goose molting area in the Arctic – not just Alaska's Arctic, but in the entire world. Other species of waterfowl in this Arctic region that migrate to North America's flyways include all four species of eiders, tundra swans, wigeon, pintail, longtail duck, canvasback, teal, merganser and others.





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Bristol Bay

Bristol Bay is an unparalleled watershed that provides dependable employment for more than 14,000 people who currently rely on the landscape for renowned sportfishing, hunting and its outdoor recreation economy. Bristol Bay's rich natural resources are Alaska's economic lifeblood. Moreover, this watershed is foundational to the cultural heritage of Native Alaskans. However, the proposed Pebble Mine, an open-pit copper and gold mine, threatens this unique and treasured landscape.

BHA strongly supported the decision by the EPA in 2023 to issue its final determination under section 404c of the Clean Water Act, permanently veto mining in the region by issuing a preemptive permit denial that will protect Bristol Bay from Pebble Mine or any other proposed mining in the future. We further recommend collaborating with Congress to develop additional durability for Bristol Bay by considering legislative proposals such as designating Bristol Bay as a National Fisheries Area.

Ambler Road

The BLM is on the brink of highly consequential land-use planning decisions in Alaska. Efforts to erode protective measures that have focused mining in more appropriate areas have kept 50 million acres of Alaska's wild country intact for 40 years continue to threaten sensitive fish and wildlife habitat. The development of the proposed 211-mile-long Ambler Road alone would significantly compromise the 110-mile-long designated portion Kobuk River which is part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. The potential short-term economic benefits of building this road do not warrant the permanent risks to fish and wildlife populations. The degradation of the world's foremost sheefish fishery in the Kobuk in addition to chum salmon stocks that contribute to the Kotzebue Sound commercial fishery would be certain and the impacts to commercial, recreational, and subsistence anglers would have devastating consequences to local economies and traditions. The irreversible impacts to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd by fragmenting their habitat and migration corridors are unacceptable. Residents of Northwest Alaska, including subsistence communities, rely on this critical caribou herd for food security.

The southern Brooks Range is a treasured landscape that provides incredible wilderness experiences that are increasingly threatened with misguided development. Apart from the robust populations of fish and wildlife the construction of Ambler Road would diminish, these unique lands and waters represent the type of freedom and economic benefit that will continue forever as long as we make good decisions now that are informed by an ethical obligation to the continued stewardship of our natural resources.

California

Mojave National Preserve Expansion



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Located in the eastern Mojave Desert, in 2016 the designation of the Castle Mountains National Monument by the Obama administration shifted jurisdiction from the Bureau of Land Management to the National Park Service. This change made prohibited hunting within the Castle Mountains. We encourage Congress to restore hunting access by transferring the lands included in the existing Castle Mountains National Monument to the adjacent Mojave National Preserve. This expansion would maintain the conservation protections for this important landscape afforded by the monument designation while restoring hunting access and improving management across the Mojave Desert.

Los Padres National Forest and Waterway Designations

Legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, both the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act and the PUBLIC Lands Act (advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee earlier in the 118th Congress), would expand wilderness by nearly 250,000 acres and add 250 miles of waterways to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System in central California. With the threat of increasing urbanization along California's coast and inland communities, it is vital that public land users from all backgrounds of economic and social class have access to outdoor activities.

San Gabriel Designations

Both the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act and the PUBLIC Lands Act, each reintroduced in the 118th Congress, would add over 30,000 acres of wilderness, designate 45 miles of river to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System and establish a national recreation area. These additional protections seek to maintain the untamed nature of the West by limiting commercial development activities and motorized vehicles and retaining critical hunting, fishing and outdoor recreational access within proximity – an important element given the proximity to major metropolitan populations.

This legislation also would expand the boundaries of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument to include western areas of the Arroyo Seco in the Angeles National Forest – a watershed of the Los Angeles River once populated with Southern California steelhead just north of the Rose Bowl where returning steelhead have been confirmed in recent years, representing a unique restoration opportunity. BHA has also encouraged the use of the Antiquities Act by the administration to expand the San Gabriel National Monument. Doing so would conserve terrestrial habitat for bighorn sheep, black bear, California and mountain quail and other game species important to hunters.

Northwest Land Establishments and Wildfire Management

Legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, both the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act and the PUBLIC Lands Act, would provide critical





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provisions that support hunting, fishing, public access and other recreational opportunities, while pursuing fire resilient management practices that benefit local communities in northern California. This legislation would also enhance wildfire management by requiring federal agencies to coordinate on policies and practices in and around wilderness areas, creating greater coordination across multiple jurisdictions; authorize a study for the Bigfoot National Recreation Trail, which would expand public access; and designate 379 miles of new wild and scenic rivers.

Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument Expansion

The creation of Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in 2015 provided an example of conservation that protected habitat and preserved access for hunters and anglers and was supported by BHA. Legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument Expansion Act, would expand the national monument through the transfer of 3,925 acres of adjacent BLM-administered public lands. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee advanced this legislation via voice vote earlier in the 118th Congress. This would provide an excellent precedent for how to effectively conserve public land without altering recreational opportunities for hunting and angling, which are a critical component of conservation funding and policy.

BHA has also encouraged the use of the Antiquities Act by the administration to expand the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument.

Chuckwalla National Monument Designation

Stretching west from the Coachella Valley region to the Colorado River in the east, a vast expanse of southern California desert provides habitat for iconic desert bighorn sheep as well as burro and mule deer populations, and is being analyzed by the USFWS for the reestablishment of a nonessential experimental population of Sonoran pronghorn. Legislation introduced earlier in the 118th Congress, the Chuckwalla National Monument Establishment and Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act, would establish a national monument that permanently protects approximately 660,000 acres of public lands managed by the BLM across the region. The push to conserve this landscape has attracted a diverse slate of supporters, including from Tribes, area businesses and local residents, as well as hunters and anglers. BHA has also encouraged the use of the Antiquities Act by the administration to establish this national monument.

Medicine Lake Highlands Aquifer National Monument Designation

The unique geological formation of Medicine Lake Highlands Aquifer, found in the crater of an ancient volcano provides the source for some of the richest terrestrial and aquatic habitats in all of California. Designated a Wild and Heritage Trout Water by the California Department of





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Fish and Wildlife, the Fall River is dependent on spring-fed flows from the Medicine Lake Highlands Aquifer. Deer and elk also rely upon important habitat here. A national monument encompassing approximately 200,000 acres would permanently conserve the region's important resources, benefiting fish and wildlife habitat. BHA has encouraged the use of the Antiquities Act by the administration to establish this national monument.

Colorado

Continental Divide, San Juan Mountains, Thompson Divide and Curecanti Designations

BHA supports the conservation of more than 400,000 acres of unrivaled public lands across Colorado, containing headwaters, migration corridors and ranges critical to the health of species including Colorado River cutthroat trout, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, desert bighorn sheep and many other species. Legislation introduced in the 118th Congress and advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act, would permanently protect these regions and benefit sportsmen and women.

The designation of the Camp Hale – Continental Divide National Monument was the first for this administration. The USFS will manage the more than 53,000 acres of this monument and we encourage the swift implementation of a management plan that prioritizes wildlife as well as recreation and access for hunters and anglers. Additionally, we support the joint BLM and USFS proposed 20-year mineral withdrawal of 225,000 acres of the Thompson Divide region. While we applaud the administration's actions to protect some of the landscapes identified in the CORE Act, we have more work to do in Congress to secure greater certainty for the remaining areas.

Dolores River

After more than a decade of discussion and collaboration, the Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act was advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee via voice vote earlier in the 118th Congress. This bill would establish the Dolores River National Conservation Area and Dolores River Special Management Area conserving a total of 68,000 acres of public land in Southwest Colorado. These areas will be managed to conserve, protect, and enhance native fish, wildlife, and recreational resources, among others.

Minnesota

Superior National Forest Mineral Withdrawal

BHA supports permanently suspending all mineral and permitting activity in the watershed of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and we applauded the 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal of 225,000 acres initiated by the USFS in 2023. Legislation





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reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act, would permanently protect the BWCAW from nickel and copper mining through a withdrawal of 234,000 acres of the watershed.

The BWCAW is America's most visited wilderness area. It offers an array of outdoor opportunities, ranging from phenomenal fishing for lake trout, smallmouth bass, pike and walleye in its seemingly endless string of quiet waters to unique backcountry hunts for white-tailed deer, black bear and grouse in its vast tracts of unpressured forest land.

Montana

Lolo National Forest Protections and Wilderness Area Expansions

More than a decade of local collaboration by a variety of stakeholder groups in Montana has resulted in the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act being advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the first time earlier the 118th Congress. This broadly supported approach to natural resource policy benefits local communities and economies and is representative of the successful partnership that has been a part of the Blackfoot and Seeley/Swan valleys for decades. The three components of this legislation – timber/restoration, recreation and conservation – would mean expedited forest management, the creation of recreation areas for mountain biking and snowmobiling, and the protection of roughly 80,000 acres of essential fish and wildlife habitat.

Upper Missouri River and Yellowstone River Watersheds Designations

Legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Montana Headwaters Legacy Act, would designate 384 miles of Montana's rivers as wild and scenic, nearly doubling the state's protected river segments. Montana's legendary rivers including the Gallatin, Yellowstone and Madison provide remarkable opportunities for anglers to pursue trout. These additions to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System would mean that public access and many traditional uses of these rivers continue, but would ensure that these waterways remain undammed, wild, clean and free flowing, forever.

New Mexico

Gila National Forest Designations

The Gila National Forest encompasses the Aldo Leopold Wilderness, Blue Range Wilderness and the nation's first designated wilderness area, the storied Gila. Reintroduced in the 118th Congress and advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act, would enhance access to hunting, angling and other outdoor activities by safeguarding pristine waters in the region. This legislation would permanently conserve 446 miles of waterways by establishing them as wild and scenic.





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The area is home to a diverse watershed and one of the last free-flowing river systems in the Southwest. It sustains critical habitat for the Gila trout, one of New Mexico's two revered native trout species. Native Gila trout are threatened and rely on mountain stream strongholds, including Whitewater Creek, Spruce Creek and the Upper West Fork, among others, for their recovery and survival. In addition, the Middle Fork and West Fork of the Gila River and the San Francisco River provide critical habitat for other native fish species.

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument Wilderness Designation

Established as a national monument under the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, this landscape provides wildlife corridors and winter range for elk as well as important habitat for mule deer, pronghorn, black bears and mountain lions. Reintroduced in the 118th Congress, and advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee via voice vote, the Cerro de la Olla Wilderness Establishment Act would designate 13,000 acres in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument as wilderness while maintaining current access routes. Hunters and anglers, as well as other recreationists, would benefit from permanent protections for this region so that future generations can enjoy the same high- quality experiences afforded by these lands, waters and wildlife.

Pecos Watershed Mineral Withdrawal

As the Pecos River flows through the Santa Fe National Forest it provides important coldwater for trout and supports wildlife habitat valued for high quality elk and mule deer hunting, as well as opportunities to pursue bighorn sheep, black bear, dusky grouse, and wild turkey. Mine waste spilled in the past resulted in decades of damage to the Pecos River and surrounding ecosystem. Reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act was advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This legislation would withdraw 166,600 acres in the Pecos Watershed from mineral development this legislation would ensure that the Pecos River is protected from future threats and continues to provide healthy, intact fish and wildlife habitat enjoyed by hunters and anglers.

With support of congressional leaders, BHA is also encouraging the administration to protect this region through their authority to create a 20-year mineral withdrawal.

Nevada

Ruby Mountain Ranger District Protection

This landscape, located in Elko County, is home to the largest mule deer herd in Nevada and is critical habitat for iconic game species, like the Greater sage-grouse and Lahontan cutthroat trout. Reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Ruby Mountains Protection Act was advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This legislation would permanently





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conserve approximately 309,000 acres of National Forest System lands in the Ruby Mountain Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest by withdrawing it from future oil and gas leasing. Additionally, it would extend a mineral withdrawal to the nearly 40,000-acre Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

With support of congressional leaders, BHA is also encouraging the administration to protect this region through their authority to create a 20-year mineral withdrawal. BHA is committed to securing certainty for this important landscape and the fish and wildlife that it supports.

Oregon

Malheur County Land and Water Designations and Stakeholder Engagement

Known for its picturesque landscape, with thousand-foot sheer cliffs and volcanic tuff formations, Oregon's Owyhee canyon country is home to native Redband trout, chukar, mule deer, elk, large unbroken prairie for the Greater sage-grouse and the largest free-roaming herd of California bighorn sheep. Hunters and anglers value this wildlife rich landscape and are working locally with important stakeholders to discuss the best way to secure long-term conservation policies that protect its rugged character, solitude and the hunting and angling opportunities that drive family traditions. The Owyhee Plateau is a landscape that should be safeguarded for future generations of American sportsmen and women and legislation reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee (CEO) Act, would lead to durable policies that protect and improve management for the wild and rugged natural resources in the Owyhees. This legislation was advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee via voice vote.

Meaningful conservation for this landscape is long overdue and ensuring that occurs is a high priority for BHA as we continue to seek the best opportunity to do so. In addition to supporting the Malheur CEO Act, BHA is encouraging the administration to consider a national monument designation through the use of the Antiquities Act, in the absence of congressional action.

Wild Rogue Wilderness Area Expansion – Southwestern Oregon Mineral Withdrawal

The Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act was reintroduced in the 118th Congress and advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This legislation would expand the Wild Rogue Wilderness by nearly 60,000 acres as well as establish two new recreation areas, the Rogue Canyon Recreation Area and the Molalla Recreation Area, conserving more than 128,000 acres of public lands and waters.

Additionally, the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act would permanently protect more than 100,000 acres of public lands near Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area from mining by extending permanent protections granted under the twenty-year Southwestern Oregon Mineral





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Withdrawal. Also reintroduced in the 118th Congress, the Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act would make this permanent mineral withdrawal, conserving headwaters important for fish and wildlife habitat.

Smith River Designations

The Smith River remains one of the largest undammed river systems in the United States, and this watershed is one of the last remaining salmon strongholds on the Pacific Coast. Protecting cold, clear, free flowing water for these native fish is necessary to recover and restore their populations. The Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion was reintroduced in the 118th Congress and advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This legislation would expand the existing Smith River National Recreation Area by 58,000 acres in addition to designating 74 miles of waterways as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This would protect critically important rivers, streams and lands adjacent to the North Fork Smith River watershed and in turn benefit fish and wildlife habitat as well as the local recreation economy.

Washington

Olympic National Forest Designations

The Olympic Peninsula is a unique region with old-growth forest and important headwaters that provide backcountry experiences for hunters and anglers. It provides habitat for Roosevelt elk and black-tailed deer, as well as spawning grounds for native fish species including salmon, steelhead, coastal cutthroat trout and bull trout. The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was reintroduced in the 118th Congress and advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This legislation would designate 464 miles of wild and scenic rivers and create 126,000 acres of wilderness in the Olympic National Forest while maintaining existing road access. Safeguarding these unique areas in Washington would enhance hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation activities in addition to helping restore thriving wild salmon and steelhead habitat.

