

## PRESS RELEASE

### EXPERT PANEL URGES PROMPT ACTION TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION OF OUTDOOR RESOURCES

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WASHINGTON — A wide-ranging review of how Americans engage with and value the nation's land and water resources and its outdoor recreation assets calls for a comprehensive overhaul of programs and policies to safeguard these resources for future generations and to meet the needs of a growing population.

The report by the private, bipartisan Outdoor Resources Review Group (ORRG) is being presented today (July 6) at a Capitol Hill briefing to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-New Mexico) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee), who served as honorary co-chairs of the project.

In its report, the task force analyzed efforts to conserve and protect the nation's outdoor heritage — including parks, wildlife refuges, and open space. The report draws a strong link between the availability and quality of these resources and the health of Americans, the economy, and communities nationwide. It also points to the tremendous hurdle in securing adequate funding for parks, recreation, and related purposes at the state and local levels, which are on the front line in providing these services.

In the foreword to the report, Senators Bingaman and Alexander said, "Americans all across the country, of all backgrounds and of all political views, care deeply about the health of our land and water resources – the wildlife, parks, forests, farms and ranchlands, and historic places that have sustained and enriched us as a people over generations....We are past due for a serious look at where we stand as a country in achieving our goal of safeguarding these resources.... Today, with a new President and a new Administration, we have the opportunity to put our conservation efforts on solid footing for generations to follow."

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“Healthy, productive land and water resources, wildlife habitat, parks and open space, culturally and historically significant landscapes, and available and accessible recreation lands are fundamental to the American way of life and our future prosperity,” the report notes. “At stake now and for future generations is the health of our people, our economy, our communities, and the lands and waters on which we depend, in short, the quality of life we enjoy in our cities and towns and rural places.”

### **Needed: Sustainable Funding Stream**

A key proposal in the report, which is flagged for further study, is the development of an independent conservation trust within the federal establishment, with dedicated and sustained funding reaching \$5 billion annually. One potential funding source, the report suggests, could be a percentage of royalties and revenues collected from development of new renewable and conventional energy resources and transmission capacity on public lands and on the outer continental shelf. The report anticipates conflicts over specific projects if a substantial push is made to develop energy resources on public lands that are valued as wildlife habitat or for recreation. It also calls for a national climate program to help fund the adaptation of land and water resources in a warming world.

The ORRG report is the first major assessment of outdoor resources since the President’s Commission on Americans Outdoors in 1987.

In the more than 20 years since that study, a wide range of outdoor pursuits — including such activities as bird watching, water-related sports, rock climbing, mountain biking, and off-road vehicles — have grown in popularity, even as more traditional activities such as hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing retain strong core followings. The report recommends creating a new nationwide system of “Blueways” and water trails to energize grassroots activity to improve water quality and water-related recreation opportunities.

The 17-member ORRG task force (see attached list) was organized by Henry Diamond, partner at Beveridge & Diamond, P.C., an environmental law firm headquartered in Washington, and former commissioner of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation; Patrick Noonan, chairman emeritus of The Conservation Fund; and Gilbert Grosvenor, chairman of the board of the National Geographic Society.

The panel’s findings and recommendations were informed by analysis from a year-long research effort by Resources for the Future (RFF) examining trends in recreational land use and new issues affecting recreation, conservation, and open space. RFF is releasing its research report later this year.

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### **Trends and Changes Affecting Outdoor Resources**

The ORRG report identifies a number of recreational trends, policy failures, and technological changes that have affected outdoor resources. Among the findings and recommendations:

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), created in 1965, has declined in significance and utility, a victim of undependable appropriations. This has made it difficult for public agencies to plan for and develop needed park and recreation lands and related facilities for outdoor use. The group recommends funding LWCF at its highest authorized level, adjusted for inflation, that is, at \$3.2 billion a year, with a share guaranteed to the states and, in turn, to urban areas. By 2015, when the fund's statutory authority expires, a new funding mechanism will be needed to ensure that demand can be met, including for a projected population increase of 100 million more Americans by 2040.
- Federal, state, and local funding and planning for conservation goals is fragmented and inefficient. Better coordination among numerous programs and jurisdictions is needed to meet recreational priorities. New technologies, such as geo-spatial mapping tools, offer a proven way to array large amounts of information to aid in planning and to provide transparency for outdoor resource investments.
- Both children and adults are struggling with obesity and related health problems. Participation in outdoor recreation activities is fundamental to overcoming these problems, but modern lifestyles, reduced vacation time, changing family structures, and a lack of parks and recreation areas near where people live have made such participation more difficult. More attention to these problems is needed, including vigorous promotion of outdoor activities, especially in schools, to reconnect individuals at an early age to nature and physical pursuits.
- Public / private partnerships offer a proven way to protect land and water resources and advance outdoor recreation. Entrepreneurial land trusts in states and localities have protected millions of acres of land and wildlife habitat, according to the Land Trust Alliance. Local conservancies have protected and restored parks and open space for public use. Such efforts can supplement governmental programs, particularly when public budgets are insufficient.
- Development of outdoor recreation facilities, it appears, has not kept pace with population growth, demographic changes, and participation rates. Moreover, trends in technology and travel that could not have been forecast a generation ago — including such activities as eco-tourism and geo-tourism — require further analysis of the implications for the supply of and demand for outdoor resources.

Financial support for the ORRG work was provided by the Laurance S. Rockefeller Fund, the American Conservation Association, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The project also worked closely with The Conservation Fund and the National Geographic Society, which provided additional resources and support.

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## OUTDOOR RESOURCES REVIEW GROUP

### Honorary Co-Chairs

- Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-New Mexico)
- Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee)

### Members

- Carol Ash  
Commissioner, New York Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Former Director, Palisades Interstate Park Commission
- John Berry<sup>1</sup>  
Former Director, National Zoological Park  
Former Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget,  
U.S. Department of the Interior
- Phil Bredesen  
Governor, State of Tennessee
- Derrick Crandall  
President and CEO, American Recreation Coalition  
Member, President's Commission on Americans Outdoors
- Henry Diamond  
Partner, Beveridge & Diamond, P.C.  
Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission  
Former Commissioner, New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- Yvonne Ferrell  
Executive Director, National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison  
Officers  
Former Director of Parks, Idaho
- Gilbert Grosvenor  
Chairman, National Geographic Society  
Member, President's Commission on Americans Outdoors

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<sup>1</sup> Resigned from the group in April 2009 to accept a presidential appointment.

- Michael Mantell  
 Founder, Resources Law Group  
 Board Member, Wilderness Society and Resources for the Future
- Patrick Noonan  
 Chairman Emeritus, The Conservation Fund  
 Member, President's Commission on Americans Outdoors
- William K. Reilly  
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- Mark Sanford  
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- Cathy Douglas Stone  
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 Member, National Science Board  
 Former Astronaut
- Douglas Wheeler  
 Partner, Hogan & Hartson LLP  
 Former Chairman, National Park System Advisory Board  
 Former Secretary, California Department of Natural Resources
- Steven Williams  
 President, Wildlife Management Institute  
 Former Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Joseph Wynns  
 Trustee, National Recreation and Park Association  
 Former Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, Indianapolis, Indiana