The U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

1324 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the Committee:

The undersigned recreation groups and businesses strongly urge you to include the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the *Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act* (H.R. 1225).

Outdoor recreation accounts for 2.2 percent of United States Gross Domestic Product, supports 4.5 million American jobs and contributes $734 billion in economic output, surpassing other sectors such as agriculture, petroleum, coal, and computer and electronic products.

While the National Park Service accounts for the largest share of the $19 billion maintenance backlog on the nation’s federally managed lands and waters, the USFS holds the next largest share and continues to face mounting deferred maintenance needs that negatively impact outdoor recreational pursuits and the associated economic benefits such activities bring to rural communities. In the wake of the worst fire season in U.S. history, it’s imperative that Congress addresses the agency’s $5.2 billion maintenance backlog to ensure that recreation remains viable to meet ever growing demands for outdoor recreation opportunities on USFS lands.

Eighty-four million people annually enjoy the 158,600 miles of trails managed by the USFS, which generate $9 billion in annual visitor spending and support 143,000 jobs. Maintenance of these routes is imperative to the outdoor recreation industry because this agency’s sustainable multiple-use management concept supports a variety of activities and programs. Without including the USFS in the solution, the agency will continue to be limited in its ability to carry out the multiple-use approach that enables prioritization of shared conservation stewardship, American jobs in rural communities, and supporting outdoor recreation, the USFS’ top revenue generator.

The longer this systemic problem continues, the more challenging it will become for the USFS to manage our nation’s forests and grasslands in a way that maximizes opportunities for recreational and conservation activities.

Thank you for your consideration and swift passage of this bill through committee. We look forward to working with you to achieving a historic and important step forward for places all Americans cherish.

Sincerely,