

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer,

As Congress works to confront the escalating public health and economic crises due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge that future recovery legislation include a robust “Restoration and Resilience Jobs” title. Such a title could create as many as three million near-term jobs—in many places where unemployment is surging—by investing in the restoration and resilience of our natural resources and recreational infrastructure. Restoration investments generate more jobs compared to other alternatives, because most of the investment goes towards labor, rather than materials (an analysis of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act showed conservation investments generated 15 to 33 jobs per million dollars and an economic return of \$2.40 for every \$1 invested). This is exactly why President Franklin Delano Roosevelt invested heavily in the Civilian Conservation Corps, which employed more than three million young Americans to reforest and restore natural resources and to build recreational infrastructure across our country. A robust “Restoration and Resilience Jobs” title could serve as the work-plan for a 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps that builds upon the vision of H.R. 2358.

Time is of the essence as unemployment surges, especially among youth. The outdoor industry, which employs 7.6 million American workers (4.8% of total U.S. employment) and generates \$887 billion in economic activity (4.1% of GDP), has gone from one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy (3.9% annual growth) to experiencing record unemployment. While it’s heartening that many Americans are turning to nearby nature with appropriate social distance for exercise and mental health benefits, few are spending money and many are cancelling trips. We support ongoing efforts to support businesses and workers in the outdoor industry by ensuring they are fully eligible for all recovery programs and encourage additional steps to address tariffs and fees that hit this sector particularly hard; but none of these stopgap measures are sufficient for recovery.

In addition to create millions of desperately needed jobs, a “Restoration and Resilience Jobs” title will improve public health by removing pollution from our air and water, expand access to nature and recreational amenities, bolster community resilience to hurricanes, inland floods, and megafires, sequester carbon dioxide, and recover imperiled wildlife species. These investments also support workers and industries disproportionately affected by the downturn, such as agriculture, forestry, ranching, energy, and outdoor recreation.

The priorities identified in this letter were specifically identified, because they create large numbers of jobs quickly and reduce long-term liabilities and risks. Many recommendations

execute existing “NEPA-ready” plans and authorized projects that are already vetted and approved, but currently unfunded, to allow work to start quickly. To expedite project delivery without undermining environmental laws, we increased funding for compliance and permitting offices of federal agencies. We also propose directing significant resources to states, local governments and tribes, suspending and reducing nonfederal match requirements, and preventing rescissions. In addition to supporting the natural resource investments in the Moving Forward Framework, such as the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, we encourage a “Restoration and Resilience Jobs” title that would:

Rebuild Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure (\$27.5 billion)

- Fund \$18.5 billion to enact the Great American Outdoors Act (S.3422), which will create jobs fixing crumbling recreational infrastructure of our National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and BLM lands, and bolster local economic development and the health of Americans by expanding access to outdoor recreational opportunities through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Fund \$4 billion for building and repairing state, local, and tribal outdoor recreational infrastructure and improving accessibility through block grants for states, cities, and tribes to implement State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans, the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program, municipal recreation plans, and repair other recreational infrastructure (NPS).
- Fund \$2.5 billion for Forest Service Capital Improvement and Maintenance, including Legacy Roads and Trails, to expand recreation, reduce flooding, and improve water quality (USFS).
- Fund \$1.5 billion for implementing management and recreation plans for National Park units (NPS).
- Fund \$1 billion for expanding recreational infrastructure for the Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BLM, ACE, BOR, BIA).

Bolster Resilience to Hurricanes, Flooding, and other Hazards (\$24 billion)

- Fund \$10 billion for implementation of ecological restoration plans and authorized projects, such as the Everglades, Mississippi River and Delta, Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, San Francisco Bay, Delaware River, Missouri River, Ohio River, Colorado River, Rio Grande, and the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans of National Estuary Programs (ACE, EPA, FWS).
- Fund \$5 billion for Army Corps Ecosystem Restoration to accelerate coastal and inland ecosystem restoration and resilience projects across the country and catalyze increased investment in natural infrastructure (ACE).
- Fund \$5 billion for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities and Flood Hazard Mitigation programs to create jobs and bolster community resilience by investing in pre-disaster mitigation, especially natural infrastructure solutions like floodplain restoration, and accelerating flood mapping to inform strategic infrastructure investments and development decisions (FEMA).

- Fund \$4 billion for the National Coastal Resilience Fund and Resiliency and Habitat Grant Program to create jobs restoring wetlands, dunes, reefs, marshes, kelp forests, and mangroves and other living shorelines to reduce flood risks, create habitat, and restart tourism (NOAA).

Restore Imperiled Fish and Wildlife Habitat (\$19.5 billion)

- Fund \$9 billion for enacting State, Territorial, and Tribal Wildlife Action Plans (Recovering America's Wildlife Act, H.R.3742) to restore habitat needed for recovering Species of Greatest Conservation Need and repairing State Wildlife Management Areas and other state natural resource infrastructure (FWS).
- Fund \$2 billion for implementing Federal Recovery Plans for Endangered and Threatened Species to create short-term habitat restoration jobs and reduce regulatory uncertainty (FWS).
- Fund \$2 billion for implementing the restoration plans of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative and the Migratory Bird Joint Venture implementation plans to restore wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, forests, shorelines, and other habitat in priority conservation areas (FWS).
- Fund \$3 billion for implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, reconnecting aquatic habitat through the National Fish Passage Program, addressing invasive species, and eliminating the maintenance backlog of the National Fish Hatchery System and state and tribal hatcheries (FWS).
- Fund \$1.5 billion for implementing National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans.
- Fund \$1 billion for the Wildlife Crossing Program (language in S.2302) to construct crossings that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and reconnect habitat for terrestrial/aquatic species (DOT) and State and Tribal Wildlife Movement Grants (language in H.R. 2795; H.R. 5179) to restore and reconnect habitat through voluntary projects on public, private, and tribal lands (FWS).
- Fund \$750 million for managing and eradicating wildlife diseases by rebuilding the National Wildlife Health Center (USGS), the National Wildlife Research Center (APHIS), regional and state Wildlife Disease Cooperatives, incentivizing diagnostic laboratories to work on wildlife diseases, and funding research to manage and prevent the spread of potential zoonotic diseases, such as white-nose syndrome and chronic wasting disease (USGS, FWS, APHIS, BIA).
- Fund \$250 million for expanding domestic and international efforts to stop illegal wildlife trade/trafficking, identifying and closing high-risk wildlife markets, and reducing the likelihood of zoonotic diseases transmission by increasing the number of U.S. wildlife inspectors, special agents, and attachés in U.S. embassies (FWS, NOAA, APHIS, CBP).

Bolster Resilience to Fire and Restore Public Lands (\$26.5 billion)

- Fund \$10 billion for restoring, reforesting, and improving resilience of the National Forest System by implementing National Forest Plans and National Grassland Plans and accelerating Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, Vegetation & Watershed

Management, Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management, Hazardous Fuels, Forest Products, and the Reforestation Trust Fund (USFS).

- Fund \$5 billion for implementing the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy on federal, state, tribal, and private lands (USFS, BLM, BIA, NPS, FWS, DOD, DHS).
- Fund \$5 billion for improving wildfire preparedness in vulnerable communities through Community Wildfire Defense Grants (H.R.5091), Assistance to Firefighters Grants, and Fire Protection and Safety Grants (FEMA).
- Fund \$3 billion for restoring native habitat and conservation areas, removing invasive vegetation, reducing fire risks, and improving resilience of water resources on Bureau of Land Management and tribal lands (BLM, BIA).
- Fund \$3 billion for State and Private Forestry to implement State Forest Action Plans (USFS).
- Fund \$500 million for the Urban & Community Forestry Program, which creates jobs in establishing, restoring, and sustaining of community forests (USFS).

Reclaim Degraded Lands (\$20 billion)

- Fund \$10 billion for revitalizing coal country through the cleanup and restoration of abandoned coal mines on federal, state, tribal, and private lands through the Abandoned Mine Lands program, including at least \$3 billion utilizing the funding distribution mechanism envisioned in the RECLAIM Act (H.R.2156).
- Fund \$1 billion for Appalachian Regional Commission priority restoration/revitalization projects.
- Fund \$5 billion for reclaiming abandoned hard rock mines and uranium mines on federal, state, tribal, and private lands, many of which are leaking toxic substances into waters and soils.
- Fund \$4 billion for plugging and reclaiming thousands of orphaned onshore oil and gas wells on federal, state, tribal, and private lands to create jobs in regions facing declining fossil fuel prices.
- Support coal workers by enacting the Black Lung Benefits Disability Trust Fund Solvency Act (H.R.3876) and Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act (H.R. 2991).

Increase Resilience of Working Lands (\$7.5 billion)

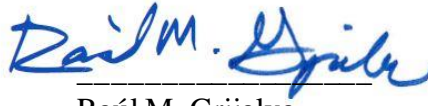
- Fund \$6 billion for creating jobs bolstering resilience and accelerating restoration of private lands through Farm Bill conservation programs and programs in the Climate Stewardship Act (H.R.4269), such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Healthy Forest Reserve Program (NRCS), and Partners for Fish and Wildlife (FWS).
- Fund \$1.5 billion for helping bolster resilience for farmers and ranchers still recovering from last year's flooding and facing another wet spring through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, Watershed Rehabilitation Program, and Emergency Watershed Protection Program (NRCS).

Much of this restoration and resilience work could be implemented by employing millions of young Americans through a 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps, which would simultaneously accelerate our economic recovery, strengthen our workforce, bolster our resilience, sequester carbon, and enhance our nation's remarkable natural resilience. Thank you for your consideration.

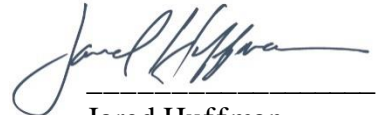
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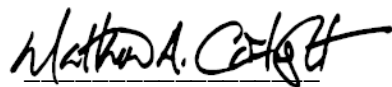
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Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



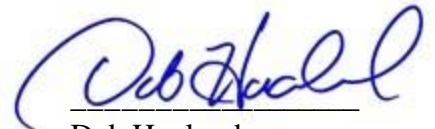
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