



May 9, 2022

Chair Bill Ingebrigtsen
Minnesota Senate Bldg, Room 3207
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Rick Hansen
407 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Support for Language Establishing Outdoor Recreation Office

Dear Chair Ingebrigtsen, Chair Hansen, and members of the Conference Committee:

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) – the nation’s leading coalition of outdoor recreation trade associations comprised of 35 members representing more than 110,000 American businesses – strongly supports the creation of an Office of Outdoor Recreation (OREC) in Minnesota. The creation of an OREC will help expand access to the outdoors and to grow a vibrant industry that already generates \$689 billion dollars in output, comprises 1.8% of U.S. GDP, and creates 4.3 million jobs. Prior to the pandemic, this industry was growing faster than the economy as a whole, and we see signs that the pace of growth will continue to gain momentum in the near- and medium-term.

Outdoor recreation is a way of life for many as well as a prominent economic driver in Minnesota, where it generates \$8.4 billion, creates more than 89,000 jobs, and supports healthy, sustainable communities in every corner of the state.

To support these businesses it is imperative to include the language to establish an Office of Outdoor Recreation. Many facets of state government already support and promote Minnesota’s outdoor recreation opportunities and the economic benefits they provide, but an OREC would coordinate these efforts and ensure unity as well as efficiency among outdoor recreation stakeholders and government. The office would also play a prominent role in expanding access to the outdoors and nature-based experiences for Minnesotans and enjoys strong support among outdoor recreation trade associations and businesses in Minnesota and across the country. In March, more than 20 Minnesota-based businesses and trade associations sent a letter of support for the office to the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee, urging its creation to support the outdoor recreation economy.

Outdoor recreation is also an effective economic multiplier. A strong, place-based outdoor culture and access to outdoor assets enables communities and states to attract new business, and to recruit and retain employees; improves urban and rural quality of life; attracts year-round tourism; creates sustainable local economies; and expands access to the outdoors for all residents, creating positive benefits across economic, health, and social indicators. Creating a Minnesota OREC would help focus efforts already underway across multiple agencies and drive Minnesota’s economy forward.

To date, eighteen other states have created ORECs or appointed a Director of Outdoor Recreation to implement strategic plans that grow outdoor recreation through policies, programs, and initiatives. Minnesota’s creation of such an office would build on the state’s storied outdoor legacy and represent a sincere commitment to leverage existing resources to diversify and grow the state’s outdoor economy, expand access to the outdoors, increase rural prosperity, build healthy communities, develop a next-generation workforce, and promote environmental stewardship and responsible resource development.

We kindly ask that you support this effort and help move Minnesota towards establishing the Minnesota Office of Outdoor Recreation through including the House language in the final Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus bill. Throughout this process, ORR stands ready to help grow this essential part of the economy and contribute to the well-being of Minnesotans and visitors alike. Please contact Jill Sims (jsims@nmma.org or 612-961-2220) or Rebecca Gillis (rgillis@outdoorindustry.org or 303-667-4598) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable