



June 7, 2017

Dear South Carolina Member of Congress:

As groups representing more than 100,000 outdoor enthusiasts in South Carolina—including hunters, anglers, campers, wildlife viewers, and boaters who enjoy this state’s internationally renowned natural places—we are writing to ask you to stand up for national public lands in our state and throughout the country.

Our letter is timely as this week is the 111th Anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt’s signing of the Antiquities Act. Several weeks ago, President Trump signed an Executive Order that put a number of National Park Service monuments on the chopping block to be examined for possible sale or transfer. This move to reduce public stewardship of national monuments is unprecedented. We hope you will do all in your power to prevent action by the Secretary of Interior to lessen protections of any and all national monuments, as well as national parks and national historic areas.

Our public lands and waters are an American birthright, landscapes where we connect with America’s history, hunt and fish with our friends, camp with our families, and enjoy the solitude and natural beauty of our country. Public lands are the foundation of the growing outdoor economy and are critical for the travel and tourism industry that keeps South Carolina’s economy strong. As a representative in Washington for South Carolina citizens, we respectfully ask you to join us in opposing every effort to sell our nation’s public lands or transfer them to the states. Please work with us to improve stewardship, management, and access to national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and rangelands.

In South Carolina, this matter extends beyond the state’s borders. South Carolinians travel and value public lands across America. Many of our citizens make annual treks out west to enjoy and celebrate the great outdoors embodied in our federal public lands. We are quite concerned with efforts by western states and lawmakers demanding the surrender of federal lands. Western public lands are public trust lands owned by all Americans and should remain accessible as a cherished right of ALL Americans.

We want you to know just how important these lands are to us, to our way of life, to our communities and economies, and, most important, to our children and generations to come. Without public lands, a significant percentage of South Carolinians would have no outdoors to enjoy. Sumter and Francis Marion National Forests in South Carolina not only provide wonderful trout fishing experiences and backcountry camping, but support mainstream tourism

SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
215 Pickens St. • Columbia, SC 29205 • (803) 256-0670 • (803) 256-0690 FAX • www.scwf.org

economies by providing the backdrops of fall color so beloved by tourists. National Wildlife Refuges like Waccamaw, Cape Romain, and Santee draw tens of thousands of outdoor lovers every year. Some come for wilderness experiences; others come for easy access to inspiring landscapes. They all recognize public lands are an American tradition and a tradition that will not be given up without a fight.

These places sustain our wildlife heritage—and serve as powerful economic engines for local communities. Public lands are the foundation of America’s \$887 billion outdoor economy, supporting over six million jobs. About 35% of South Carolinians participate in fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing alone, providing almost 35,000 jobs, according to a newly-released independent study by Clemson University. And these figures do not include many other outdoor activities and do not account for millions of dollars from other outdoor-based tourism.

More than 685,000 Americans submitted comments to the the Secretary of Interior last month in support of Bears Ears and other national monuments. In light of this overwhelming support for public lands across the nation, it is unfortunate and short-sighted for some in Congress to advocate giving away the places where we hunt, fish, hike, and camp to states or to private owners. South Carolina government has financial shortfalls in managing its own state lands, and there is no capacity to take on the costs of transferred public lands. History in the western states shows that states usually end up selling any transferred federal lands. Once lands are taken out of the public trust they are not likely to ever return to public access.

Our nation’s lands belong to all Americans. They are vital to the future of hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation, and to the health, wealth and happiness of Americans, to ensure current and future generations have as rich and diverse a network of lands as we do today.

We ask you to stand with tens of thousands of South Carolina’s sportsmen and women in opposing the wholesale transfer or sale of America’s public lands to state and private interests. We should all work together to improve how these lands are managed, but we cannot deprive current and future generations of Americans the right to access and utilize the lands and resources that we enjoy today.

Sincerely,

Mark Coleman, Sportsman Enthusiast

Ben Gregg, Executive Director, South Carolina Wildlife Federation

Joe Hamilton, Founder and Senior Advisor, Quality Deer Management Association

Bill Harring, Lexington Wildlife Chapter

Hiram Hutchinson, Secretary, York County Sportsman Committee

Gerrit Jöbsis, American Rivers, Appalachian and Carolina Region

Paul McKee, Council President, South Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited

Ray Nelson, Tri-State Bass Club

Frank Oliver, CEO, Wildlife Action Inc.

Mark White, President, South Carolina Chapter, Ruffed Grouse Society