

November 11, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

For the past two years, key recreation industry leaders and other talented and experienced individuals have welcomed the chance to examine key opportunities to improve the recreational experiences of visitors to the remarkable public lands and waters managed by your department through public/private partnerships. The creation of the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee (ORAC) resulted from a belief in the importance of these partnerships both in the past and in the future, as the department grappled with decades of underfunded maintenance, an inability to expand visitor infrastructure with appropriated funds alone, and the challenges of responding to changes in lifestyles and technology.

Members of ORAC took their mission seriously and contributed many hundreds of hours, personally and with organizational resources, in outreach efforts, in subcommittee deliberations and at our meetings without compensation. We believe we brought valuable new data and information to Interior on topics of importance to you and the \$763 billion outdoor recreation industry which provides 5.3 million jobs – according to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis. In a very real way, we provided a missing voice in your department’s planning and deliberation, speaking on behalf of our customers who generate the approximately half billion recreation visits to Interior’s public lands and waters and the nearly \$2 billion in fees and taxes that are administered by your department. Interior correctly asserts the economic significance of recreation on the lands and waters it oversees. What ORAC initiated was supplying vital information on the jobs and investments involved in outdoor recreation on public lands to help Interior in its decision-making – to actually support and grow that contribution.

Our efforts identified key barriers to access to public lands and waters. We highlighted the needless confusion over lack of consistency in Interior bureau operations and inadequate leadership by the department of federal/state/local recreation efforts on trails, access and more. We heard concerns from Interior about maintaining and expanding its legislated recreation missions and brought business sector strategies to acting on those challenges. We highlighted opportunities involving modernized and better managed campgrounds and an improved www.recreation.gov. We provided forums for ideas of Pew Charitable Trusts and KOA, including use of dynamic pricing and other strategies useful in managing patterns of visitation. We discussed key tools like FLREA and related fee programs which could greatly contribute to meeting Interior’s operational needs.

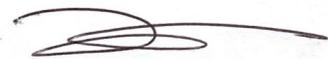
We are proud of the work done by our members over the past two years and the two rounds of recommendations we have submitted to the Department on key issues including:

- 1) ***Respond to Outdoor Recreation Product and Activity Innovation***
- 2) ***Improve Regional Collaboration and Consumer Research to Better Provide Outdoor Recreation Opportunities***
- 3) ***Develop a Coordinated Approach to Interior’s Outdoor Recreation Assistance***
- 4) ***Develop Regional Solutions to Improve Access to Public Lands and Connect Our Trail Systems Across Boundaries***
- 5) ***Expand the Adoption of New Technology to Encourage and Manage Outdoor Recreation***
- 6) ***Improve Hospitality Data/Recreation Opportunities Access***
- 7) ***Improve NPS and Partners Employee Housing***
- 8) ***Expand Use of Conservation and Service Corps***
- 9) ***Modernize, Market and Better Manage Campgrounds***

ORAC brought together some of our top industry leaders committed to our nation's great outdoors. Their personal involvement and generous commitment of corporate resources was noteworthy and important for you to recognize. Although ORAC's work now appears to have concluded, we urge you to expedite review of these recommendations and to find new channels for dialogue with the nation's outdoor recreation industry leadership, and particularly the corporate leaders in recreation and related tourism who are making investments of billions of dollars on public lands and waters and in gateway communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Department of Interior's Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,



William E. Yeargin
Former Chair
Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee



Derrick Crandall
Former Vice Chair
Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee

Cc:

- 1) Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee Members
- 2) Rick May, Senior National Advisor to the Secretary for Recreation
- 3) Daniel Smith, Ex-Officio
- 4) Rob Wallace, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
- 5) David Vela, Deputy Director, Exercising the Authority of the Director for the National Park Service