

**STATEMENT BY DERRICK CRANDALL, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION, ON POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF GLOBAL CLIMATE WARMING ON RECREATION AND THE RECREATION INDUSTRY, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HEARING CONDUCTED BY THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS, MAY 24, 2007.**

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Madame Chair and Distinguished Members, the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) appreciates the opportunity to appear before this body today to discuss an extraordinarily important issue: the potential consequences of global climate change on recreation and the recreation industry.

I am Derrick Crandall and I am appearing on behalf of the members of the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) – more than 100 national organizations, representing virtually every segment of the nation's \$400 billion outdoor recreation industry, and tens of millions of outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

Our organization has played an active role in federal recreation policy since its creation in 1979. We were centrally involved in the creation and operations of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors in the mid-1980's and the National Recreation Lakes Study Commission, which submitted its report in 1999 to the Congress and the President. Both spoke directly to the topic before this body today. We also were actively involved in the creation of the National Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and have enjoyed opportunities to work closely with this committee on such diverse programs as the National Scenic Byways Program, the Recreational Trails Program, the Wallop-Breaux program aiding fishing and boating, and programs to provide access to and safe transit across our public lands. We thank the Chairman and members of this body for the continuing interest shown in these important issues.

Outdoor recreation is a vital and positive force in our nation today. Nine in ten Americans participate in outdoor recreation today, and a major catalyst for this involvement is the marvelous shared legacy of our Great Outdoors – one in three acres of the surface of the nation managed by federal agencies and hosting well in excess of a billion recreation visits annually. ARC monitors participation in outdoor recreation closely through annual national surveys. A summary sheet on participation is attached.

The benefits accruing from recreation participation are significant, and the appreciation for these benefits is growing. The economic significance of outdoor recreation is obvious in communities across the nation, and especially those communities proximate to federally-managed lands and waters. From boat dealers to campground operators, from RV manufacturers to ski rental shops, from retailers selling outdoors goods to guides and outfitters, tens of thousands of businesses and millions of Americans are supported by \$400 billion in annual expenditures on recreation by American families. And increasingly, America's recreational opportunities are a key factor in luring international visitors to enjoy the world's best systems of parks and forests, refuges and other public sites. It is especially noteworthy that two major segments of the recreation industry – RV and recreational boats – are solid US manufacturing businesses employing tens of thousands of skilled workers.

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But the public recognizes that recreation contributes far more significantly to our nation in ways beyond jobs. Recreation is understood as a valuable means to encourage the physical activity we need to maintain our health. With two in three Americans failing to get the minimum level of physical activity recommended by the Surgeon General – just 30 minutes daily of moderate movement like walking – and obesity now responsible for medical costs greater than those linked to tobacco, opportunities to combine exercise with fun are an obvious priority. Studies now document that increasing recreation participation can be among the most cost effective strategies for reducing public health costs.

And the benefits arising from recreation don't stop there. Recreation can be a very effective means for increasing parent-child communications as well as a tool to deter violent crime and substance abuse. Outdoor settings and recreational activities have proven valuable as alternative educational programs, especially for disruptive youth and those with learning styles poorly suited to traditional classrooms. Earlier this week, a California author and journalist, Richard Louv, was in town to speak to two very important audiences: the National Scenic Byways Conference and a large gathering at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Louv's book, **Last Child in the Woods**, has added to our lexicon with a new term: Nature Deficit Disorder. And he presents credible evidence that nature-robbled kids are much more prone to Attention Deficit Disorder and prescribed medicines like Ritalin with uncertain long-term consequences. Concerns expressed by Louv and others have motivated the recreation community to pursue strategies like the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights – which expressed a commitment to helping all children splash in clean water and hike through healthy forests (details appended).

### **Recreation and the Environmental Protection**

The recreation community has been a solid and active proponent of environmental protection for decades. Recreationists understandably care about waters that are too polluted to use for swimming and boating, and about national park vistas impaired by pollutants. This is why recreationists were leaders in arguing for action on acid rain in the 1960's. It is why recreationists and the recreation industry today support education and communications programs championing responsible use of the outdoors – programs like Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! It is why national park concessioners have an incredible track record of initiatives to serve park visitors well while operating in an environmentally- friendly way.

One of the leading park concessioners is Xanterra. Xanterra uses renewable wind power and on-site large-scale renewable solar photovoltaic systems to reduce in-park air emissions and greenhouse gas emissions. Each year, Xanterra recycles, composts, and diverts from the local park landfill more than five million pounds of solid waste. Xanterra also recycles grease on-site into biodiesel for use in fleet vehicles and boilers, and uses hybrid vehicles, countless electric vehicles, and numerous alternative fuel vehicles throughout all of its operations.

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Other concessioners are making similar strides. Buses now help visitors enjoy Yosemite Valley without reliance on personal vehicles – and the buses are powered by alternative fuels to reduce emissions. Boat fleets rented at Lake Mead by Forever Resorts use new-technology engines, again dramatically reducing emissions.

Other recreation companies are taking initiatives, as well. The Walt Disney Company has adopted a far-ranging strategy labeled ***Eco-Action Through Action Sports***. Key to the effort is the X Games Environmentality™ (XGE) Mission. Disney has committed its ESPN X Games to environmental stewardship in all facets of event planning, from waste reduction to recycling, from use of environmentally friendly products to use of renewable resources and reducing emissions through “green power” use at the X Games events. It further uses the ESPN X Games to encourage employees and spectators alike to proactively support its Environmentality creed.

### **Recreation and Global Climate Change**

The recreation community is concerned about the potential of global climate change on recreation opportunities. Fears of an inability to provide skiers with snow, or the danger of coastal erosion and more violent weather in areas which draw large numbers of Americans for recreation – 75% of all recreation occurs at or near the shores of our oceans, large lakes and major rivers – clearly concern us. And for that reason, the recreation industry seeks to be a vital part of public policy discussions and action on global climate change.

Can, should and is the recreation community taking actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions linked to recreation: the answer to all three questions is YES. And we feel that together, government, industry and individuals can achieve important goals that are good for the environment – and make economic sense, too.

Our efforts are in two fields. The first is at recreation sites. We know that there are practical steps that can and should be taken to reduce our environmental impact. We also know that the small business nature of the recreation industry makes an active technical assistance initiative by the Environmental Protection Agency, by the U.S. Department of energy and others vital to assist recreation businesses identify and adopt best practices.

The second issue is transportation-related actions. Mobility is one of the core underpinnings of recreation choices in America. Few of us live where we choose to play. And all of us benefit from the ability to travel from the regions in which we live to see and experience the priceless legacy of the outdoors – the one-third of the nation belonging to every American and managed by agencies including the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – special places that draw more than a billion visits annually. We strongly encourage public policies that continue and enhance the connection of the public to these places. That is why we support enthusiastically the National Park Service

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Centennial Initiative. Visits to these places yields mental and physical health benefits, memories which bond families and friends and unify us as Americans.

It is for that reason that we call upon the Congress to insure that actions to respond to global climate concerns do not serve to imprison Americans indoors.

It is important to understand that actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote mobility can be undertaken. In fact, we applaud this committee for its role in creating and nurturing the National Scenic Byways Program. Byways deliver great benefits to the public by slowing travelers down and making trails and fishing spots more accessible and more findable. Just the very fact that travel on byways is typically at 40 to 50 miles per hour is a contribution to emissions reduction, since it increases the efficiency of cars, SUVs and trucks markedly over that attained when traveling at Interstate speeds – or worse yet, in congested traffic on Interstates.

Concerns about greenhouse gas emissions has also spurred the recreation community to open a dialogue with federal recreation site managers, gateway communities and others about ways to reduce consumption of motor fuels in another important way. Millions of Americans tow or carry large recreational items from home to recreation site – often every week. This movement reduces vehicle efficiency significantly. We are seeking to protect the ability of Americans to camp, to boat, to use off-highway vehicles – but to leave these units nearby actual places of use. This could have a dramatic benefit on fuel efficiency and safety – and actually save American families money.

We also favor alternative transportation to personal vehicles for access to recreation sites. There are a handful of national parks and national forests that facilitate movement from urban residential areas to public recreation sites, including the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area near Los Angeles and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest near Salt Lake City. We need efforts to make such access much more common.

We also ask help in overcoming an increasingly common complaint from recreationists: that easy access to free tire inflation stations has declined precipitously, despite that fact that properly inflated tires have been demonstrated repeatedly to be the easiest and most economic way to increase vehicle fleet efficiency.

In closing, we ask the Congress to be wary of the danger of actions that would discourage healthy active lives and travel to see special places like national parks. The reality is that a reasonably fuel-efficient SUV – or even a large motorhome – gets more passenger miles per gallon when occupied by a family than does even the most fuel efficient car available today when occupied solely by a driver. And the benefits to the nation are large. We know that towing and carrying capacity are key ingredients for purchases of vehicles by many American families, and we ask your help in protecting the ability of Americans to purchase vehicles that meet these needs.

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Thank you for attention to this important issue.

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