I recently visited Capitol Hill for an annual summit with the Outdoor Alliance, the only organization in the United States that unites the voices of outdoor enthusiasts to conserve public lands and ensure those lands are managed in way that embraces the human-powered experience. The ACA is a founding member of the Outdoor Alliance.

43% of paddling resources are found on public lands. The summit focused on key issues facing public lands, including two huge threats: a growing sense of a lack of permanency, and a lack of urgency to enact legislation to ensure these lands remain protected. The ACA and OA are concerned that, increasingly, policy makers do not look at public lands legislation as something they need to do right now, and that public lands may increasingly be subject to the whims of election cycles.

Following a full day of meetings with Outdoor Alliance member organizations, including American Whitewater, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, the Mountaineers, the Access Fund, the Colorado Mountain Club, the Winter Wildlands Alliance, and the International Mountain Biking Association, I worked with others to visit key congressional offices to voice ACA concerns about H.R. 3990, the National Monument Creation and Protection Act, H.R. 4532, the Shash Jaa National Monument and Indian Creek National Monument Act, H.R. 4558, the Grand Staircase-Escalante Enhancement Act, and finally H.R. 3905, Minnesota’s Rights in Superior National Forest Act. Each of these pieces of proposed legislation either codify existing changes to National Monuments and their proclamations, or further limit the availability of the Antiquities Act as a meaningful conservation tool.

The idea of public lands is an American ideal. The ACA feels there is a finite amount of public land that we can protect, and that if we wait, it will only be more expensive and the taxpayer will eventually be on the hook. It is our job to not only help designate, but continue to support the authorization of programs and funds that keep our public lands healthy and maintained for the long term, ensuring opportunity for future generations of paddlers.

It is honor to represent the paddling community in effort to protect the lands which harbor our most treasured paddling resources.

Sincerely,

Brett Mayer