



April 5, 2019

Representative Dominique Jackson, Chair and Representative Edie Hooton, Vice Chair  
Colorado Assembly Committee on Energy & Environment  
200 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, Colorado 80203

RE: Testimony on House Bill 1261 from National Non-Profit Protect Our Winters

Good morning Representative Jackson, Representative Hooton, and members of the House Committee on Energy & Environment. My name is Lindsay Bourgoine, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy for the national non-profit Protect Our Winters. We lead a community of outdoor enthusiasts, professional athletes, and forward-thinking business leaders to affect systemic political solutions to climate change. I am here today to represent our nearly 25,000 supporters here in Colorado.

Every ecosystem has its apex predator. Every political system has its apex issue. Climate change is clearly the apex issues of our time. At Protect Our Winters, we believe in ushering in a new era of renewable energy for carbon emissions reductions. We understand it can be a daunting challenge, but it is one our community embraces, as we have experience realizing the improbable.

I will briefly highlight comments we are submitting today in conjunction with our corporate partners Aspen Skiing Company, Black Tie Ski Rentals, and Cascade Sports Injury Prevention & Physical Therapy, as well as Colorado professional athletes Josh Jespersen, Angela Hawse, and filmmaker Jenny Nichols, all whose careers depend on a strong outdoor recreation economy.

Here in Colorado, outdoor recreation generates \$28 billion in consumer spending annually and supplies 229,000 direct jobs to the state's economy each year. But, unfortunately, climate change is threatening the very future of this economic engine, and we are living in a world where climate change is no longer an expectation for our future, but a part of our daily lives.

Today, a diminished snowpack is confined to the highest elevations, what should be falling as snow is in fact falling as rain, and our winters are noticeably shorter. Our state's iconic outdoor

PROTECT OUR WINTERS

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recreation opportunities– and the outdoor recreation, snowsports, and tourism economies that support them– are at stake.

It is true that this year Colorado has seen a considerable amount of snow. Last year, Protect Our Winters released an economic report showing that unfortunately, low snowfall years have larger decreases in visitation than the increases experienced in high snowfall years. For example, we see 200,000 more skier visits in a good year, but in a bad year, we see nearly 500,000 fewer visits. Put simply, we're not recovering the income lost during low snowfall winters.

In July 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency and the University of Colorado published a study showing that across the country, virtually all locations are projected to see reductions in winter recreation season lengths, exceeding 50% by 2050 and 80% by 2090. They conclude that the loss of tens of millions of recreational visits by 2050 will result in the loss of hundreds of millions in revenue and that limiting greenhouse gas emissions could both delay and reduce adverse impacts to the winter recreation industry.

It is important to note that changes to our winters result in changes to our summers, too. Without a strong snowpack, our rivers run hot and dry, which impacts both fishing and boating. Without a strong snowpack to increase soil moisture, our forests are drier and more prone to wildfire, closing forests and trails to hikers, bikers, and campers. Is this the future we want? One in which our iconic mountains lack snow, and our forests and our rivers are closed?

The outdoor recreation economy is thriving. Nationwide, it is an \$887 billion-dollar industry that depends on a healthy environment and a stable climate, and in Colorado, it sustains nearly four times as many direct jobs as our state's oil and gas industry (39,000) and mining industry combined (at 19,000). We are an industry demanding climate action and we are excited the solution boots the economy, too. Fortunately, this body has the opportunity to set strong climate goals to address the very carbon pollution that is driving this change. Further, we are excited that HB 1261 is a win for both the environment and the economy.

For these reasons, we invite you to belong to the solution and pass HB 1261, considering Colorado's \$28 billion-dollar recreation economy– and a potential future with snowless peaks, dry rivers, and burned forests– too. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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