

March 25, 2019

Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

To the Colorado General Assembly:

As outdoor recreation businesses leaders and enthusiasts, we urge you to vote yes in support Senate Bill 19-181.

Diversity is the bedrock of Colorado's economy, and the recreation industry alone contributes \$28 billion in economic activity here in the state, employing more than 229,000 people and drawing millions of visitors. The industry itself is also quite diverse, contributing to the economy through retail sales, manufacturing, outfitters and guides, outdoor activities such as skiing, mountain biking, rafting, hunting, hiking, fishing, climbing and more.

It is critical that state legislators support all segments of our economy, and ensure that the activities in one industry do not undermine the viability of another. The recreation industry deserves equal footing with the energy industry when state agencies are making decisions that have long term impacts on the environment and thus the success of our operations.

SB 181 addresses this important concern by requiring the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) to regulate oil and gas operations and affirmatively protect "public health, safety and the environment and wildlife" when considering applications for oil and gas drilling, pipelines and other infrastructure. This is an important change in the law that many of us working in the recreation industry strongly support. For too long we have seen oil and gas drilling approved in sensitive areas that adversely affect Colorado's landscapes, rivers, and wildlife. By giving due consideration to the impacts of energy development, you are supporting the recreation industry's need for quality recreation experiences.

We also strongly support the climate and air quality provisions written into SB 181. Methane is a powerful contributor to climate change, which affects our businesses in myriad ways. A University of Arizona study released in December 2018 evaluating snowpack levels over a 35-year period from 1982 to 2016 shows that some locations in the western US—including many in Colorado—have experienced declines in snowpack of up to 41 percent. This has a direct impact on jobs in Colorado, where the alpine ski industry employs 43,000 people. Drought and unpredictable snowfall affect our ski areas in winter and river/fishing outfitting in spring and summer. Extended wildfire seasons close off large portions of public lands where we hunt, climb, hike and mountain bike. When the recreation business in Colorado is adversely affected so too are a host of other businesses that rely on and support the recreation and tourism industry—hotels, restaurants, gas stations, outfitters, guides, and local shops. SB 181 allows Colorado to continue its leadership role in reducing methane emissions from oil and gas operations.

We applaud other elements of the law that protect overall air quality as well. Ozone alerts on the Front Range exceeded 70 days last year. La Plata County, a major oil and gas producing county in Southwest Colorado, received an "F" for its ozone levels last year from the American Lung

Association. And just this month, it was unhealthy for the millions of people living on the Front Range to exercise and recreate outside. This is a public health problem that affects young and old alike and cannot be ignored. When people are told by health officials to curtail outdoor activities because ozone levels exceed safe standards, our businesses are of course affected as well.

SB 181 is a long overdue update to the law governing energy development in Colorado. It recognizes that our economy has grown and changed dramatically over the last several decades.

We urge you to vote in favor of this commonsense legislation and send this bill to the governor's desk to become law.

Very sincerely,

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