

Senate Reconciliation Talking Points

June 25, 2025

Summary

Senator Mike has introduced [new legislation](#) to sell off public lands through the Senate budget reconciliation bill—for the third time. It's expected to get a vote as soon as this week. His previous attempt to dispose of up to 3.3 million acres was rejected by the Senate parliamentarian earlier this week, with the backdrop of unprecedented outreach from Americans of all stripes—including 600,000 letters from Outdoor Alliance advocates—insisting that lawmakers reject public land sales. Despite this, his office has pivoted to introduce a narrower set of sales focused more closely on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands—dropping Forest Service land from the bill.

Outdoor Alliance and our GIS Lab are currently analyzing and mapping the new legislation, which still calls for mandatory sale of 0.25-0.5% of BLM land—we estimate this to be up to 1 million acres... or maybe even double that depending on how some drafting ambiguity is resolved.

The new bill language focuses on lands within five miles of a “population center,” a vague term that, if based on U.S. Census definitions, could include towns as small as 2,500 people. That narrower geographic focus means the pool of eligible land is much smaller—making it more likely that cherished recreation areas near communities will be targeted for sale.

Talking points

- **BLM land up on the potential chopping block has a higher chance of being sold.** Now that the field is narrower, the land potentially for sale is more likely to actually be sold. What was once a lottery is now a potential coin flip.
- **These lands support recreation, especially close to home.** Outdoor Alliance's GIS Lab analysis shows that the proposed land sales will impact climbing, paddling, mountain biking, and hiking across the Western US. Outdoor recreationists move to towns for their proximity to trails. The trails within 5 miles of town are typically the most used and loved.
- **These actions ignore long-term economic benefits.** Recreation, not just extraction, is a sustainable economic driver for rural communities across the country, whether that is fueled by close to home recreation or as a sought-after destination.
- **This isn't about housing. It's about selling off our public lands.** The public lands sell-off provision masquerades as a way to provide more housing, but it lacks safeguards to ensure land is used for that purpose with no mechanism of enforcement. Research suggests that [very little of the land managed by the BLM](#) is actually suitable for housing.
- **Land sales bypass existing protections.** We already have legal pathways for limited, community-supported land transfers—but reconciliation sidesteps those processes. Sell offs of huge swaths of land without proper process and public input is categorically

different and a red line for our community. Any unprotected land could be sold, even high value recreation areas.

- **Public lands belong to all Americans.** Selling them off sets a dangerous precedent, especially when it's done without local input or public debate. This new bill text is slated to sell off up to double what the house tried to pass.

Ask for your members of Congress: Vote no on a reconciliation bill that includes public land sell offs, and reach out to [Senate or House] leadership to tell them that public lands sell offs must not be included in reconciliation. Keep public lands in public hands.

Resources

- **Outdoor Alliance [blog](#) and [action alert](#) is live.** Please share both widely.
- **Outdoor Alliance [policy letter](#)** that was sent around to members of Congress. It provides a comprehensive breakdown about our concerns with the new bill language.
- **[Rapid legal assessment of the bill text](#)** from University of Colorado Law School.
- **Maps.** We are currently in the process of quickly updating our maps to reflect the new bill text. We will share specific impacted locations and correlating recreation when it's available.
 - In the meantime, share our [instagram post](#) with highlights of specific places that could be sold off as part of this bill.

Action Items

- **Reach out to your congressional contacts** to let them know that this update still won't fly.
- **Ask your networks to reach out to their members of Congress.** Even if they already have, they need to keep hearing from us that this new language is still a red line. Share our action alert:
<https://action.outdooralliance.org/a/reconciliation-senate-2/?ms=grasstops>
- **Let us know what you're hearing!** It helps inform our national strategy if we can better understand how offices are talking about this issue.

Email Template

Please personalize this, especially thanking your members of Congress if they've already come out against public land sell offs, and include a place in your area that could be sold off. For grassroots outreach within your networks, please use our [action alert](#). This is just here to help you get started with your outreach.

As an avid outdoor enthusiast, I remain livid about the proposed sell offs of BLM land in the recently updated reconciliation language.

I have reviewed the updated bill text, and the sell offs of these public lands are still hugely problematic for a multitude of reasons:

- Outdoor recreationists move to towns for their proximity to trails. The trails within 5 miles of town are typically the most used and loved.

- We already have legal pathways for limited, community-supported land transfers—but reconciliation sidesteps those processes. Sell offs of huge swaths of land without proper process and public input is categorically different and a red line for our community. Any unprotected land could be sold, even high value recreation areas.
- Recreation, not just extraction, is a sustainable economic driver for rural communities across the country, whether that is fueled by close to home recreation or as a sought-after destination.
- This sets a dangerous precedent of selling off pieces of our national heritage for short term payoffs. It's our job to steward these lands for generations to come.

[insert a personal message: highlight a place that could be sold off in your district, how it could affect your area if you're not in one of the 11 states in the future, implications for your livelihood or quality of life.]

I am fundamentally opposed to selling off our public lands and waters. Public lands belong to all Americans, not just those from any given state or town. We must protect this key part of our heritage.

As your constituent, I want your vocal opposition to public land sell offs and the spending package's approach that undermines public lands and waters.

June 18, 2025 - PREVIOUS TEXT (see updated information above)

Background:

The Senate is actively considering including public land sell offs in the reconciliation spending package. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [proposed text](#) for its portion of the bill that would sell off more than 3 million acres of public land—roughly four times the size of Rhode Island. This proposal may be the most extreme land sale plan we've ever seen, and it stands a real chance of happening. We urge the Senate to take a different approach—one that strengthens the outdoor recreation economy and the public lands that support it.

The package also guts protections for public lands and waters, prioritizes drilling and logging, and allows industry to bypass environmental reviews and public input.

Outdoor Alliance outlined the most concerning parts of the House bill [in a letter to lawmakers](#). The Senate version is similar, and we will have an updated letter that reflects the Senate's proposal soon. You can find more resources in our [social media toolkit](#).

Say No to Public Land Sell-Offs

Even though the House removed proposals to sell off over 500,000 acres of public land in Utah and Nevada, the Senate has added back land sell offs back in totaling 3.3million acres! The bill

requires the sale of between .5 and .75 percent of BLM & USFS land. Parcels can be nominated for sale in specified states (the west, minus Montana), excluding land covered by specified protective designations (e.g., Wilderness). At the high end, this amounts to roughly 3.3 million acres of public land, 4x the size of Rhode Island. These land sales and similar proposals undermine how we steward public lands and put outdoor access at risk.

[Here's an action alert and map](#) showing that nearly 300 million acres of public lands could be open for these proposed sales, an area that includes nearly 100,000 miles of trails, 8,232 climbing areas, and 3,405 river miles across the West.

Relevant section of [proposed bill text](#): 0301

Here's why this matters:

- **Public lands belong to all Americans.** Selling them off sets a dangerous precedent, especially when it's done without local input or public debate.
- **These lands support recreation.** Outdoor Alliance's GIS Lab analysis showed that the proposed land sales will impact climbing, paddling, mountain biking, and hiking across the Western US.
- **Land sales bypass existing protections.** We already have legal pathways for limited, community-supported land transfers—but reconciliation sidesteps those processes. Sell offs of huge swaths of land without proper process and public input is categorically different and a red line for our community. Any unprotected land could be sold, even high-value recreation areas.
- **These actions ignore long-term economic benefits.** Recreation, not just extraction, is a sustainable economic driver for rural communities across the country.

Ask for your Senators: Vote no on a reconciliation bill that includes public land sell offs, and reach out to Senate leadership to tell them that public lands sell offs must not be included in reconciliation. Keep public lands in public hands.

Protect Public Participation in Land Decisions (NEPA)

The bill lets project developers pay to speed up environmental reviews and avoid legal oversight. That's a major blow to transparency and local voices.

- **NEPA is the public's voice.** It's often the only way local recreationists and communities learn about and weigh in on projects affecting their trails, rivers, and landscapes.
- **There's room for improvement—done right.** Targeted reforms to make the process more efficient are welcome—but gutting NEPA isn't the answer. For those of you who have worked on NEPA processes from a project proponent standpoint, you can share that you understand the frustrations, but that allowing industry to pay its way around the law is not the solution.
- **Speed isn't always smart.** Rushing the process can lead to conflicts, bad outcomes, and costly do-overs.

Ask: Keep public input strong. Don't allow developers to buy their way out of public accountability.

Don't Cut Funding that Supports Public Lands and Recreation

This bill strips Forest Service and BLM funding from Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) programs that keep our outdoor spaces accessible, healthy, and resilient, including:

- BLM + NPS conservation, protection, and resiliency
- BLM + NPS conservation, ecosystem, and habitat restoration programs; and
- **NPS staffing:** These cuts would strip \$237m of dedicated funding for NPS staff, which would allow parks to hire skilled professionals and seasonal staff to stabilize operations during a very challenging time.

Ask: Maintain—and grow—investments that support the future of outdoor recreation and public land stewardship.

Oppose Logging Quotas that Ignore Forest Health

The bill mandates increased timber harvesting on National Forests and BLM lands. It also requires agencies to authorize 20-year contracts with timber companies, meaning that the timing of projects will be based on timber markets and industry priorities rather than land management needs. This is a de facto privatization of public lands, and will stymie efforts to invest in recreation infrastructure like trails or develop conservation designations.

- It prioritizes volume over strategy—forcing logging into areas of commercial value rather than focusing on wildfire risk reduction.
- Long-term timber contracts (up to 20 years) tie managers' hands and reduce flexibility to meet changing local needs.

Ask: Let land managers use science—not quotas—to guide forestry decisions.

Reject Rollbacks on Responsible Oil, Gas, and Mining Practices

This bill reverses reforms that protect recreation, wildlife, and communities from the impacts of extractive development. Recent reforms help give land managers discretion to direct leasing towards low-conflict areas, including through preference criteria that help avoid conflict with outdoor recreation. The bill eliminates land manager discretion to avoid sensitive areas and simultaneously lowers the rate that oil & gas companies pay to the treasury for the use of public resources.

- It lowers royalty rates and forces lease sales—even in the Arctic Refuge and Gulf of Mexico.
- Outdoor recreation and fossil fuel development are not compatible in all places—especially in landscapes with high conservation and recreation value.

Ask: Keep leasing reforms in place that protect taxpayers and allow land managers to balance multiple-use activities.

Points of praise

There were a few things we were glad to see are not in the current version:

- **Forest Legacy Program**, which protects working forests and opens new recreation access. It was slated to be cut, but we're glad to see that it is going to stay in place now.
- Provisions allowing mining in **Boundary Waters** were removed from the House version of the text.

Overarching ask: I'm part of a growing outdoor recreation community that values public lands and the long-term economic and personal benefits they provide. H.R. 1 and the Senate ENR's proposed revisions would put those values and places at risk. I urge you to reach out to leadership to voice your opposition, and support a more balanced, forward-looking approach that sustains our outdoor way of life and the economy it supports.