

# Talking Points: Public Lands Workforce Cuts & Impacts on Outdoor Recreation

## 1. Immediate, Tangible Impacts on Outdoor Recreation

- **Trail maintenance will suffer** – Fewer workers mean trails will become overgrown, damaged, and harder to navigate.
- **Campgrounds may close or go unmaintained** – Trash pickup, restroom maintenance, and reservation systems all rely on staff.
- **Search-and-rescue response will be slower** – Fewer rangers mean longer wait times for people in distress.
- **Educational programs will be cut** – Ranger-led hikes, wildlife talks, and visitor centers will be scaled back or eliminated.
- **Longer lines, reduced access** – With fewer staff to manage permits, entry gates, and visitor centers, access to public lands could be delayed or restricted.

## 2. These Cuts Threaten Public Safety

- **Increased wildfire risk** – Seasonal workers play a critical role in clearing hazardous fuels and assisting in early wildfire response. Reducing their ranks increases the chance of uncontrolled wildfires.
- **More accidents, fewer emergency responders** – Less staff means slower medical response and a higher likelihood of preventable injuries or deaths.

## 3. The Cuts Are Hitting the People Who Make Public Lands Work

- The layoffs overwhelmingly target **seasonal and early-career employees**, the very people who:
  - Keep trails, campgrounds, and roads open.
  - Manage visitor services and permits.
  - Help prevent and respond to wildfires.
- These aren't bureaucrats in Washington—these are dedicated professionals who live in and serve outdoor communities.

## 4. This Is Bad for Gateway Communities

- Businesses in outdoor recreation hubs depend on well-managed public lands. If parks and forests cut back services, **fewer visitors will come, and local businesses will suffer**.
- Gateway towns will lose seasonal jobs tied to recreation tourism.

## 5. Congress Just Passed a Major Outdoor Recreation Bill—But Now There's No Staff to Implement It

- The **EXPLORE Act** was a bipartisan effort to improve outdoor access, but with these staffing cuts, agencies won't have the people needed to implement it.
- This means fewer streamlined permits, delayed recreation infrastructure projects, and an overall failure to improve outdoor access.

## 6. Public Lands Were Already Understaffed—This Makes It Worse

- Since 2010, the National Park Service has lost **20% of its full-time staff**, despite a **16% increase in visitation**.
- The U.S. Forest Service had already announced a hiring freeze for seasonal workers—these new cuts will further **erode the agency's ability to manage recreation areas and protect public lands**.

## 7. Past Shutdowns Show Us Exactly What Will Happen

- When national parks lost staff during government shutdowns, we saw:
  - Overflowing trash and closed restrooms.
  - Increased vandalism and illegal off-road vehicle use.
  - Damage to fragile ecosystems.
- This isn't speculation—we've seen what happens when land management agencies are underfunded and understaffed.

## 8. Outdoor Enthusiasts Need to Take Action

- **Contact your lawmakers** – Demand they oppose these staffing cuts and reinvest in the workforce that keeps public lands accessible. Action alert: <https://action.outdooralliance.org/a/agency-staffing>
- **Reach out directly to lawmaker offices** – Ask them to restore positions, speak to the administration and other decision makers.

**Bottom line:** Cutting the workforce that cares for public lands is reckless. It will make outdoor experiences worse, put public safety at risk, and hurt local economies. Lawmakers must act now to reverse these cuts and protect access to the outdoors.