



RE: Office of Outdoor Equity  
April 22, 2021

The Alaska Outdoor Alliance enthusiastically supports the creation of an Office of Outdoor Equity. Outdoor recreation is a key part of Alaska's economy and lifestyle. Alaska has the highest rate of participation in outdoor recreation in the country, accounting for 3.9 percent of state GDP and one in 10 jobs. Our state is rich in lush green forests, clean air and salmon streams, mountains, glaciers, rivers and seas that make this one of the best places in the world. But it's also poor: 13 percent of Alaska kids live in poverty. By providing the mandate to create more pathways to get all kids outdoors, we can close this gap and create communities with more leaders who care about climate, air, water and open their world to possibilities of careers in wildlife biology, conservation, ecology and other outdoor recreation professions. The Office of Outdoor Equity would elevate the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation's purpose by providing equitable access to opportunities to Alaskans who most need them right now.

It should be an essential right as an Alaskan to have baseline access to and competence in Alaska's outdoors. The Office of Outdoor Equity would elevate the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation's purpose by providing equitable access to opportunities to Alaskans who most need them right now. While benefits to outdoor recreation are myriad, these are some of the top reasons investing in our people through outdoor recreation makes sense:

**Improve Health.** Outdoor recreation can be a core part of the prescription for chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

**Improve educational outcomes.** Research demonstrates kids who play outside have improved test scores, and socialization at school.

**Lifelong benefits.** Outdoor activities improve baseline competency for life; e.g. hunting and fishing puts food on the table, hiking and camping instills wayfinding abilities and safe travel protocols and other examples.

Investing in our people is always a good idea. An Office of Outdoor Equity and a grant program to support programs and initiatives for residents who are among our most vulnerable and need such support would pay dividends for generations to come.

Sincerely,  
Lee Hart, Executive Director  
Alaska Outdoor Alliance