

## Rural Outdoor Investment Act (ROI)

Demand for outdoor access has grown steadily for the last several decades, and the pandemic has intensified this economic trend in cities and towns across the country. Communities with recreation assets including trails, rivers, lakes, and developed infrastructure like marinas and campgrounds are attracting businesses, visitors, and new residents who provide reliable revenue flows and create jobs in outdoor businesses and beyond. Well-planned investments in outdoor infrastructure and related businesses are turning around declining communities and bringing sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century prosperity to the places that need it the most.

The Rural Outdoor Investment (ROI) Act focuses on promoting economic growth in rural communities through coordination and strategic investment in recreation assets, planning and business development and manufacturing opportunities. This bill would provide vital capital to rural communities across the country working to revitalize and grow their jobs and economies through the outdoor recreation industry by providing \$50 million a year in recreation and economic development funding. Similar investments have shown a strong return on investment and provide significant multipliers such as recruitment and retention of businesses and workers who want to work near where they can play- more so now than ever before. The bill focuses on three critical areas:

- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure including boat ramps, parking at trailheads, marinas, campgrounds and other outdoor facilities.
- Planning to support communities that want to create an outdoor experience that meets consumer expectations and grows Main Street.
- Business Assistance to support recreation-related businesses such as: outdoor manufacturers and retailers, equipment rentals; shuttles; guides and outfitters in addition to hotels, restaurants and retail.

These goals are achieved by promoting collaboration between the Economic Development Administration (EDA), USDA Rural Development, and the Small Business Administration to educate communities and business about existing federal resources like grants and business loans, and by authorizing funding for the [Recreation Economy for Rural Communities](#), which provides planning assistance grants to revitalize Main Streets through outdoor recreation.

The federal government has an opportunity to leverage recreation as an important economic driver to support a widerange of communities who have begun the transition to a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy as they work to make their communities more attractive to live, work and play. This significant natural leverage has a proven track record in successful communities across the country from Moab, Utah to Lake Placid, New York, to Fruita, Colorado, and Bentonville, Arkansas.

Funding in the bill is broken down as follows:

- **\$30 million** for public works through EDA. This would fund necessary infrastructure improvements from signage, to boat ramps, to new trails.
- **\$5 million** for planning grants through EDA for communities to create recreation economy plans that optimize their natural places including marketing, branding, business development, fundraising, and tourism management.
- **\$2.5 million** in university partnerships to promote place-based research, education, and technical assistance to local stakeholders and businesses for this high growth sector.
- **\$12.5 million** for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities grants for Main Street revitalization through outdoor recreation.