

A Vision for an Arizona Office of Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is an iconic part of Arizona - from the rim of the Grand Canyon to the canyons and bajadas of the Sonoran Desert. Arizona has a history of stewardship for our lands, waters, and wildlife. Yet, we are falling behind our neighboring states in capitalizing on our unique outdoor assets.¹ Arizona needs an Office of Outdoor Recreation to help us leverage the potential of our natural and cultural resources. The time is long overdue. The time to act is now.

An Office of Outdoor Recreation would help to enhance the quality of life for Arizona's residents, promote sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors, and expand and invigorate the outdoor recreation economy. This office would leverage jobs, prosperity, and wellness for all state residents in both rural as well as in large metropolitan areas. Bridging the missions of existing state agencies such as wildlife conservation, tourism, and management of state parks and trails would allow each to build upon the work of the other and scaffold the effect of their efforts.

Goals

- Enhance economic opportunities and job diversity, particularly in rural communities;
- Increase access to and opportunities for transformative outdoor experiences for all segments of Arizona's diverse population;
- Facilitate the growth of new outdoor recreation businesses and industries;
- Cultivate a stronger, more resilient outdoor recreation workforce;
- Increase awareness of the value of outdoor recreation for improved public health, community well-being and economic vitality;
- Provide a unified voice to promote the economic, social, health and other values of outdoor recreation, trails, wildlife protection, and access to public lands;

Outcomes

- Enhanced outdoor recreation economic activity, particularly in rural areas;
- Measurable growth in local and state tax revenues from outdoor recreation activities;
- Coordinated planning, use, access, and promotion of outdoor spaces within Arizona;
- Provides a central clearinghouse for outdoor business support, recruitment, expansion, retention and recruitment, especially for rural areas;
- Improved vitality for rural communities through increased population growth, fueling jobs for teachers, doctors, construction workers and more;
- Higher success rate for local community grant writing and fund development.

"The Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC) provides a central point of contact, advocacy, and resources at the state level for the diverse constituents, businesses, and communities that rely on the continued health of the outdoor recreation economy. OREC's mission is to champion industry, communities, and people to come to life through Colorado's great outdoors."

-- Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, 2021. Online at: <https://oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-outdoor-recreation-industry-office>

Arizona would benefit from a unified voice to promote the economic value of outdoor recreation, trails, and public lands. Our neighboring states' offices for Outdoor Recreation have already demonstrated the value of having such an office. The time for Arizona to tap into the \$459 billion dollar per year² outdoor recreation industry is now.

As Brett Prettyman, Intermountain Communications Director for Trout Unlimited commented: "It's time for every state to have one. It's important to recognize the value of recreation."

¹ Maryland becomes latest state to open an office of outdoor recreation. *Outside Business Journal*, September 28, 2021.

² *New U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Numbers Underscore Immense Value of Outdoor Industry*. Outdoor Industry Association November 2020.