

**Testimony from Fred Ferguson, VP Government and Industry Relations, Vista Outdoor  
Subcommittee on Parks, Public Lands, and National Forests  
*Examining the Impacts of Climate Change on Public Lands Recreation*  
May 15, 2019  
2:00 p.m. in room 1334 of the Longworth House Office Building**

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing examining the impacts of climate change on public land recreation. Before I begin, I would also like to extend a special thanks to the Committee staff, stenographers, digital technicians, personal office aides, and many others whose behind-the-scenes work allows this Subcommittee and the entire institution to perform at the highest of levels. As a former House staffer, I appreciate the work each of you do on behalf of the American people.

My name is Fred Ferguson, and I am Vice President of Government and Industry Relations for Vista Outdoor, Inc. Vista Outdoor is a consumer products company with over 40 brands that operate in various hunting, outdoor recreation, and lifestyle markets. Among the most notable brands are Federal and CCI Ammunition, which collectively are the world's largest commercial ammunition manufacturers, CamelBak – the inventor of the hands-free hydration category, and Bell Helmets, a staple among wheeled-sport enthusiasts of all ages and types. Vista Outdoor also services 80% of local, state, and federal law enforcement markets and partners with the military on a variety of ammunition and hard goods contracts.

The slogan for Vista Outdoor is to “Bring the World Outside.” This mantra drives us to develop the very best products, but is also the bedrock of the Vista Outdoor culture. Each of our nearly 5,000 employees cares deeply about the outdoors and conserving and enhancing the places we visit for our kids and their grandkids. As a company, we believe the climate is changing and we believe that humans are having an impact. To fulfill our mission and to ensure the next generation has access to the outdoors, we believe that individuals, industry, and government must come together to debate, develop, and deliver solutions in the face of outdoor challenges.

For starters, we believe that each of us should do more at the individual level to reduce waste, pollution, and harmful impacts to the environment. I am proud to join Rep. John Curtis (UT-03) in the Clean Air Challenge. At Vista we also have the flexibility to work from home, utilize video conferencing technology, and water refilling stations in order to reduce our impact on the environment. We would also like to thank the Subcommittee for ditching disposable. The average American drinks 18 disposable plastic bottles of water per month. Our brand CamelBak has long been a leader in eliminating single-use plastic bottles. In fact, their #DitchDisposable campaign has resulted in 10 million reusable plastic bottles being spared from our landfills and oceans.

Second, we believe that industry needs to lead by example. At Vista Outdoor, we are proud of our environmental record. Reducing our environmental footprint is a corporate goal and we have a team putting words into action. Currently, our teams are advancing more than 20 different environmental initiatives. For example, many locations have reduced power usage

through the retrofitting of lighting systems. At our largest manufacturing facility, 97% of the materials used in production are recycled or reused. In another site, the majority of power used to run a 1,100 person manufacturing facility is generated from clean, renewable hydropower. We also stress environmental responsibility in our supply chain and with our international partners, because we believe any serious conversation about emissions must be global. We believe all companies – but especially those in the outdoor recreation space – have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to behave in environmentally conscious ways.

Finally, government must display leadership and develop realistic, bipartisan solutions that address sustainability and resiliency in the face of a changing climate.

The good news is that this Subcommittee has a tremendous opportunity to lead by example. This Subcommittee is one of the hardest working on Capitol Hill. Each year, the Subcommittee easily passes more bills and holds more hearings than any other in Congress. The Subcommittee's jurisdiction, which includes management of over 1/3 of America's landmass, make it a leading venue for climate change compromise and consensus. Moving forward, I urge the Subcommittee to consider six policy principles through the lens of bipartisanship as consensus legislation is drafted on the issue of climate change.

1. Consensus must begin with the principle that multiple-use requires multiple management. We believe that federal lands should stay in federal hands, but we also believe that rigid, one-size-fits all management directives for 660 million acres of land is

a losing strategy. What's good for a forest in Washington State is not necessarily right for the grasslands of the Dakotas. Congress should enact laws that empower local field offices who can make better land management decisions that in turn supports healthy ecosystems, a changing climate, and outdoor recreation.

2. Hunting, wildlife habitat, and a healthy climate are linked. The hunting industry answered the nation's call in the 1930's to save our nation's wildlife and their habitat. Today, the hunting industry has paid more than \$12 billion in federal excise taxes through the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Fund. Pittman-Robertson is an 11 percent excise tax paid on all firearm, ammunition and archery product purchases, supported by the industry and its consumers. Since Vista Outdoor's inception in 2015, our company has been the largest payer into the fund, with an average of \$80 million per year. Through this program, 76 million acres of habitat have been improved. Healthy forests, wetlands, grasslands, deserts, and sage flats – all of the habitat that Pittman-Robertson supports – function as a net carbon sink, which in turn supports carbon reductions. Congressional support for the hunting community and recognition of our contributions to healthy ecosystems must be part of climate change consensus.
3. Forests provide recreation opportunities for virtually every user of Vista Outdoor products. It is critical that our forests are properly managed and that all management tools are on the table. Enactment of the so-called "Wildfire Fix" solves the forest budget crisis, but Congress must now pass a forest management bill that restores

healthy forests and turns the tide on catastrophic wildfires that are becoming all too common in our country.

4. The deferred maintenance backlog is a threat and opportunity for climate change resiliency. Congress should pass the bipartisan H.R. 1225, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act. The bill would tackle the \$19 billion backlog and would jumpstart projects that prioritize climate-change-resilient infrastructure on federal lands.
5. Federal lands are home to world class wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal resources. Steps should be taken to expedite the permitting and production of these resources. Federal lands can play a key role in bringing more renewable energy, battery storage, and carbon-free innovation to market.
6. As a former staffer from Utah, I am very familiar with the vast investments made by the full Committee in water infrastructure. The conservation, use, and flow of water will elevate in importance as the population grows and the climate changes. Federal initiatives focused on water management and water infrastructure resiliency is a topic the full Committee should address.

In closing, I would like to again thank the Chairwoman, Ranking Member, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on this important topic. The Subcommittee has a tremendous opportunity to lead by example through the development of bipartisan, forward-

thinking solutions that can break the gridlock and make a meaningful contribution to climate change compromise and consensus.