

First, let me thank the committee for inviting Backcountry Hunters & Anglers to address you on this important issue, an issue that we believe is the most important case of public water access likely ever to be heard in the North America.

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers is the sportsman's voice for our wild public lands, water and wildlife. We are a 501c3 based in Missoula MT, Born around a campfire in 2004 we are the fastest growing sportsmens organization on the planet with roughly 25,000 members and over a quarter million supporters. The Southeast Chapter, which includes Louisiana was established in 2016 and has almost 1,000 paying members..

We were invited to bring an outside perspective on this issue, which I think is a great fit for us in this conversation. I can tell you that a shocking number of the calls I have taken on the issue have been from folks who live outside of the state. Families that have made annual trips to pursue redfish and trout over generations from grandfather to great grandson... They are concerned that those days are coming to an end. I have spoken to our corporate partners who are trying to better understand what the future looks like for sportsmen in an important market. I'll touch on these themes and the tourism concept in a minute.

With that being said, for over a year we have been engaged in a discovery process on the public access issue here in Louisiana, and have had the opportunity to meet and get to know many of the folks in this room from all sides, sportsmen, the state, and the landowners. The one thing that our organization has come to understand through this discovery process, is that there is no one party sitting on the wrong side of this thing...THAT IS TO SAY THERE ISN'T A BAD GUY. It's confusing, and there is a lot going on. BUT THERE IS OPPORTUNITY FOR COMPROMIZE AND RESOLUTION THROUGH REAL SOLUTION SEEKING, which we believe this task force is well positioned for...and over the coming months we would like to help facilitate part of that when and where we can.

These numbers will be referenced many times over the course of this meeting and throughout the life of the task force. Because I am indeed not from Louisiana, I would like to speak to the Non Resident Licenses... **All Angling meaning fresh and saltwater combined: Non Residents accounts for Retail Sales of \$246,578,288 ECONOMIC IMPACT \$394,057,860...I want to talk about this a little.**

Its kind of easy to glaze over these numbers, like most numbers they feel intangible. It's easy to take the current state and accept it as fact, and currently the fact is people are lining up to fish in Louisiana, and it might be easy to assume that the access issue won't hurt this sector of tourism. We think this is a false assumption, and believe that friction points through trespassing fees, short term lease agreements or whatever route is potentially taken will guarantee the slow down the out of state sportsmen engagement and more than likely deter resident sportsmen engagement as well.

To add some context here I want to quote Tom Rosenbaur, Director of Marketing for Orvis and has this to say:

Louisiana has historically been an important market for Orvis, and as such, Orvis has heavily invested in Louisiana with a retail store in Baton Rouge, an endorsed lodge and two endorsed guide services as well. Louisiana is the epicenter of fishing for big redfish in shallow water, and as a result has become an important destination to our customers from around the world. Louisiana is a growing market for the Orvis brand, however the developing public access issues gives us pause as we begin to think about our market strategies for the future. It is undeniable that more access for sportsmen positively correlates to stronger engagement by the public and thus healthier markets for the outdoors industry.

Just take the example of Montana vs. Wyoming in the Rocky Mountains. Montana has a progressive public access policy for anglers and as a result is the epicenter of trout fishing in North America. Everyone dreams of going to Montana to fish for trout, whether they have never done it or go there a dozen times a year. In contrast, Wyoming, which is equally scenic and has excellent trout resources, has a very restrictive public access policy and as a result hardly gets mentioned when people talk of trout fishing. It's no accident, just a lack of attention to the importance of tourism by Wyoming's public officials. Destination anglers buy meals, rent cars, shop at stores, and put heads in beds. Louisiana needs to decide if it wants to risk losing this big chunk of their tourist economy.

It's my understanding that Louisiana's Tourism Sector is the second largest revenue generator for the State behind Taxes. Recreation sits just behind Food and Beverage as the second largest sector. Non Resident fishing licenses generated over \$23 million in tax revenue alone according to the survey from 2007.

Going back to Montana vs Wyoming. Montana is very accessible to the public and in 2015 sold 387,380 non resident licenses. Wyoming with restrictive access sold 219,344 non-resident Licenses. That's a delta of 168,036 licenses in favor of public access.

YETI, the cooler company everybody loves and now a publicly traded company, has this to say:

"YETI was founded in Austin, TX in 2006 with an emphasis for providing durable coolers for hunters and anglers. Our roots quickly spread throughout the southeast. Louisiana is home to a high density of YETI consumers, most of which are outdoorsman. They rely on our products to keep them comfortable in the harsh elements. Limiting access in Louisiana's public waterways can, and will have a negative impact on YETI's business. We encourage our consumers to enjoy wild places, and stand for increasing public access to those wild places."

These are two of the largest companies in the outdoors industry, Orvis as a company is over 150 years old, It might be wise to consider their words.

I would like to point out that YETI just had their ambassador summit here in Venice last week, which was a collection of the most influential individuals in the hunting and fishing industry.

It is important to come back to our main talking point that we would like to communicate, which is compromise is 100% achievable here, and there are existing pathways that everyone in this room should deeply consider for solution seeking. The first is the hopeful AG interpretation on severance. This is a good starting point, let's begin to address liability issues, and begin to chop away now in the near term such that we can push these issues aside to save an important heritage, culture, and economy.