

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Outdoors Alliance for Kids Calls for End to Shutdown *Youth Advocacy Groups Highlight Impacts of Parks Closures*

Washington, D.C.— Today, the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), a non-partisan alliance of more than 100 groups including the YMCA of the USA, the American Heart Association and Boys and Girls Clubs of America, called for the government shutdown to end. Member groups of OAK are raising concerns that the Department of Interior's 'soft closure' of national parks has created significant health and public safety issues that impact kids and families in particular. The soft closure of our national parks is decreasing access to safe and affordable places for children and families to get outside and active. The shutdown is also resulting in significant damage to natural, cultural and historic resources on our public lands.

"All over the country youth groups that lead trips into our national parks are having to cancel and disappoint the kids they serve. It's not safe for kids and families to be out there exploring our parks without the support and protection provided by the National Park Service, and it's not safe for our parks to have people driving off-road, damaging sacred natural features and leaving behind their trash. It's time to end this shutdown and get our parks back in operation." -- **Jackie Ostfeld, founder and chair of OAK and director of Sierra Club Outdoors**

"Our national parks and public lands promote a healthy lifestyle by enabling people of all ages to enjoy the outdoors and increase their physical activity. The current government shutdown limits access to this invaluable resource for wellness and health in our nation. For this reason, we join the nation's governors and other organizations in calling for an end to this shutdown." -- **Mark Schoeberl, executive vice president of advocacy at the American Heart Association.**

"Alliance for Childhood is eager for all of our public spaces to be open and staffed by the hardworking park and forest rangers, outdoor educators, and wilderness experience leaders who serve our youth, children and families so enthusiastically. Across the nation, our public lands offer unique and life-changing experiences for those who visit these treasured places. We encourage our federal government leadership to restore the many opportunities for getting kids outdoors by reopening the agencies that serve our future leaders and protect our public lands." - **Linda Rhoads, executive director of Alliance for Childhood**

"The government shutdown has been a disaster for America's parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The shutdown is making the already massive maintenance backlog worse, damaging valuable historic and cultural resources, and ruining travel plans for many Americans. The Wilderness Society calls on government leaders to provide the necessary funding to reopen the government and allow our federal land management agencies to restore these treasured landscapes. Let's make sure that all Americans have an opportunity to visit

these places and have a safe and positive experience.” -- **Paul Sanford, National Director of Recreation Policy at the Wilderness Society**

“This ill-conceived shutdown is causing critical damage to our parks and harm to surrounding communities. NRPA urges Congress and the administration to fully fund and reopen our national parks and federal public lands. The neglect and mismanagement of our national parks resulting from this shutdown is unacceptable.” -- **Barbara Tulipane, CAE, president and CEO of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)**

“With the prolonged government shutdown almost in its third week, our National Parks and other public lands are suffering. While we are heartened by concerned citizens volunteering to remove trash and help prevent vandalism, the burden cannot be left with them to prevent irreversible damage. Plus, the continuation of the shutdown puts at risk the very partnerships between nonprofits and the government that help maintain our trails, like American Hiking’s Volunteer Vacations. It’s time for Congress and the White House to reopen the government and resume their responsibility to oversee and fund the protection and maintenance of our National Parks and public lands.” -- **Kathryn Van Waes, Executive Director, American Hiking Society.**

“Every year Winter Wildlands Alliance's 65-site National SnowSchool program introduces thousands of students to winter ecology and the joy of exploring public lands on snowshoes. If the National Park and US Forest Service shutdown continues, many SnowSchool field trips will unfortunately be cancelled. With a finite number of winter days and a limited ability to reschedule, this likely means many kids will completely miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime SnowSchool experience.” -- **Kerry McClay, National SnowSchool Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance.**

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About the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK): OAK is a national strategic partnership of organizations from diverse sectors with a common interest in connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. The members of OAK are brought together by the belief that the wellness of current and future generations, the health of our planet and communities and the economy of the future depend on humans having a personal, direct and life-long relationship with nature and the outdoors. OAK brings together nearly 100 businesses and organizations, representing more than 60 million individuals to address the growing divide between children, youth and the natural world. For more information: www.outdoorsallianceforkids.org