

Congressmen to hear resident's testimony

By Thomas Dewell, Jackson Hole, Wyo.

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A valley resident will testify today before Congress on the role federal lands can play in combating climate change.

Forrest McCarthy will speak before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands.

McCarthy was recently named the public lands director for Winter Wildlands Alliance, a Boise, Idaho-based national nonprofit organization working to protect winter ecosystems and opportunities for backcountry skiing and snowshoeing.

McCarthy will deliver testimony on behalf of the Outdoor Alliance, a coalition of six national, member-based organizations devoted to conservation and stewardship of public lands and waters through responsible human-powered outdoor recreation.

"The outdoor community's interest in climate protection is multifaceted," McCarthy said in a prepared statement. "The places where we pursue our outdoor activities and that support the \$730 billion outdoor recreation economy are impacted by a warming climate."

McCarthy's testimony will focus on the Outdoor Alliance's perspective that public lands are vital in combating climate change because of their role in ecosystem adaptation, their natural ability to sequester carbon, their potential for renewable energy projects such as wind farms and solar arrays, and that they provide the opportunity for Americans to stay connected to the natural world.

"Only by maintaining our connection to our environment will we have the awareness and commitment to achieve the goal of stabilizing our climate," McCarthy said.

McCarthy said those who enjoy the outdoors must be responsible when it comes to creating their own carbon footprints. He suggests people carpool when they head out to ski in the backcountry or find ways to decrease energy use in their daily lives.

"To combat climate change it is going to take change and sacrifice," McCarthy said in a phone interview Friday.

At the same time, people cannot abandon wild spaces.

"We need to continue to have the connection with the natural world," McCarthy said.

In the prepared testimony McCarthy will give to the committee, he pointed out how climate change has impacted his experience in the Tetons.

"A personal loss for me is the legendary Black Ice Couloir, a challenging ice climb high on the northwest face of the Grand Teton," the testimony reads. "Today, due to

warming temperatures, all the ice is gone and future generations of mountaineers will never have the opportunity to attempt one of the most renowned alpine climbs in North America.”

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