

Testimony of Gus Schumacher
Nordic Skier and Outdoor Enthusiast
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Chairman Whitehouse, Ranking Member Grassley, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the crucial issue of climate change and its impacts on outdoor recreation, particularly from the perspective of a Nordic skier. My name is Gus Schumacher, and I'm a world champion nordic skier. I just flew in from a world cup race in Sweden after having just won the World Cup 50K freestyle event at the American Birkebeiner in Cable, Wisconsin. Born and raised in Wisconsin, I currently reside in Anchorage, Alaska. I have spent much of my life immersed in the beauty and challenges of outdoor activities, particularly cross-country skiing.

I come before you today not only as a professional, but also as a concerned citizen troubled by the effects of climate change on our environment and the activities we cherish. As a Nordic skier, I have witnessed firsthand the profound alterations to our natural landscapes and the diminishing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Climate change has dramatically altered the conditions for winter sports, including Nordic skiing. Rising temperatures have led to shorter and more erratic winter seasons, with snow cover becoming increasingly unreliable. The delicate balance required for optimal skiing conditions—sufficient snowfall, cold temperatures, and stable weather patterns—is being disrupted at an alarming rate. This unpredictability not only affects recreational opportunities but also jeopardizes the economic viability of communities reliant on winter tourism.

Additionally, the loss of snowpack and glaciers due to warming temperatures threatens the long-term viability of Nordic skiing regions. Glacial retreat not only diminishes the aesthetic appeal of our landscapes but also impacts water resources vital for snowmaking, further exacerbating the challenges faced by ski resorts and outdoor enthusiasts.

The environmental changes wrought by climate change have cascading effects on ecosystems and wildlife habitats. Species that rely on cold, snowy environments for survival, such as the iconic polar bear or the elusive Arctic fox, are facing unprecedented challenges as their habitats shrink and fragment. Not only the wildlife

are affected though. Throughout my career as an Olympian, I've witnessed canceled races, races that struggled to run, and the Berkie course (that I just competed on) was a severely reduced course all because of a warming climate and lack of snow that perpetually impacts not only outdoor recreation, but the ecosystems that feed off of winters into spring.

However, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity for action. As a nation, we have the capacity and responsibility to mitigate the impacts of climate change and safeguard our outdoor heritage for future generations. Investing in renewable energy, promoting sustainable land management practices, and supporting initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are critical steps in addressing the root causes of climate change.

We must also prioritize adaptation measures to ensure the resilience of our communities and outdoor recreation infrastructure in the face of a changing climate. This includes investing in snowmaking technologies, diversifying recreational offerings, and fostering partnerships between government agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations to enhance climate resilience.

The impacts of climate change on outdoor recreation, particularly Nordic skiing, are undeniable and demand urgent action. I am one of millions who represent the outdoor state and its \$1 trillion value that contributes to a large portion of our economy. As stewards of our planet and custodians of our outdoor heritage, we have a moral imperative to confront the challenges of climate change head-on and preserve the natural wonders that enrich our lives. By working together, we can build a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

Thank you for your attention, and I welcome any questions you may have.