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**Written Statement Submitted by The Pew Charitable Trusts to the  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks**

**For the record of the legislative hearing held on June 23, 2021  
Regarding S. 192, S. 491, and S. 1769**

The Pew Charitable Trusts seeks to preserve ecologically and culturally significant U.S. public lands and rivers through legislative designations, as well as federal and state administrative protections. To accomplish these goals, we work closely with diverse stakeholders—such as local businesses, local governments, Indigenous Tribes, the outdoor recreation industry, travel and tourism organizations, veterans, sportsmen and women— to develop collaborative proposals that protect landscapes and local communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored how much Americans value the outdoors, with individuals actively seeking connections to public lands and rivers. It has also shown how important visitor spending is to states and local communities. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation activities generate \$788 billion each year in national economic output and support 5.2 million American jobs (2019 data). Our public lands and rivers are important economic drivers in rural and urban areas, and bills pending before the Subcommittee have the potential to assist in our nation’s economic recovery.

Pew supports S. 192, S. 491, and S. 1769. We appreciate the Subcommittee holding a hearing on these initiatives. Our detailed position on each proposal is outlined below.

**Pew Supports the River Democracy Act of 2021 (S. 192)**. This bill would protect over 4,700 miles of rivers—just 4% of Oregon’s river miles—helping to safeguard clean drinking water sources, reduce catastrophic wildfire risks, support critical habitat for fish and wildlife, expand recreational opportunities, and boost rural jobs and economies. Outdoor recreation in Oregon generates more than \$7.2 billion annually to the state’s economy and support more than 88,000 jobs. S. 192 has the potential to increase those numbers by enhancing the protections of important recreational rivers and streams across the state.

The proposal is a product of an extensive statewide process led by Sen. Wyden. Oregonians from all corners of the state were asked to submit nominations—15,000 nominations from more than 2,500 Oregonians were received. Public meetings in towns throughout the state were then held to vet these protections and make changes to address issues and concerns that were raised in those meetings.

**Pew Supports the York River Wild and Scenic River Act of 2021 (S. 491).** This bipartisan legislation would designate approximately 30 miles of the York River and tributaries in the York River Watershed as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. The York River watershed sustains a rich tapestry of natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat, drinking water supplies, and numerous archaeological sites. The rivers in this region provide quality habitat for one of the largest smelt spawning migrations in southern Maine and support an active commercial fishing industry that's important to the area's economy and history. S. 491 was developed by the York River Study Committee, a diverse group of local stakeholders that explored river designation for over three years.

**Pew Supports the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act (S. 1769).** This initiative would expand the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) by more than 191,000 acres in the Rim of the Valley Corridor. The densely developed area in Los Angeles has fewer parks per square mile than most other U.S. metro regions; S. 1769 would address this issue by connecting communities to open space and by enhancing access to outdoor recreation opportunities. The bill would also preserve a vital wildlife corridor for mountain lions, bobcats, deer, and many other species, and protect habitat for endangered species such as the California red-legged frog.

S. 1769 was crafted following a special resource study required by Congress in the Rim of Valley Corridor Study Act of 2008 and conducted over six years by the National Park Service. The study examined the suitability and feasibility of designating all or a portion of the corridor as a unit of the SMMNRA, and included public participation from a broad range of stakeholders and community members. The resulting legislation is supported by local elected officials, community leaders, park equity and environmental justice organizations, business owners, residents, veterans, conservation organizations, and recreation groups.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the Subcommittee's consideration of Pew's views on these bills. We welcome the opportunity to work together to improve and move them forward.

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