



April 22, 2026

**Via Email:** [William.K.Kelleher@who.eop.gov](mailto:William.K.Kelleher@who.eop.gov)

William K. Kelleher  
Advisor  
White House Domestic Policy Council

**Re: Safari Club International Letter In Support Of Revising  
Executive Order 11644, As Amended By Executive Order 11989**

Dear Mr. Kelleher:

Safari Club International (“SCI”) requests the revision of restrictions on federal public lands that negatively impact access for sportsmen and women. Off-road vehicle access on public lands is currently controlled by Executive Orders signed by Presidents Richard Nixon (Executive Order 11644) and Jimmy Carter (Executive Order 11989) in the 1970s. The Orders reduce public access and conflict with later Congressional directives such as the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (“Dingell Act”) and the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act (“EXPLORE Act”). On behalf of more than 100,000 members and advocates, SCI requests that President Trump revise these Executive Orders, in line with these laws and the Administration’s focus on making America beautiful and increasing public access.

Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 establish “minimization criteria” that have been treated essentially as closure criteria. Rather than promoting compatible off-road vehicle use alongside other recreational uses and protection of natural resources, federal agencies have been constrained by activist litigation, leading to widespread closure of trails and roads to motorized access and the creation of de facto wilderness outside Congressional designations.<sup>1</sup> These Orders, as interpreted by agency regulations, have been expanded well beyond their scope.

The results have negatively impacted sportsmen and women. Anti-use advocates have sought to prohibit motorized big game retrieval on public lands by applying these minimization criteria.<sup>2</sup> They have successfully shut down hunting access in other areas during prime seasons. For

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<sup>1</sup> For example, *Ctr. for Bio. Diversity v. Culver*, No. 21-cv-07171-SI (N.D. Cal. Oct. 22, 2024); *WildEarth Guardians v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 790 F.3d 920 (9th Cir. 2015); *Friends of the Clearwater v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, No. 3:13-CV-00515-EJL (D. Idaho Mar. 11, 2015); *The Wilderness Soc’y v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, No. CV08-363-E-EJL (D. Idaho Oct. 22, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> For example, *WildEarth Guardians v. Provencio*, 272 F. Supp. 3d 1136 (D. Ariz. 2017).

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example, the threat of a lawsuit by anti-use advocates caused the Forest Service to move up the winter closure of the northern Gros Ventre drainage in Wyoming. Changing the winter closure date resulted in hunters losing access to almost a month of wolf and private-lands elk hunting seasons in that area. Unsurprisingly, the wolf population in the Gros Ventre drainage has grown out-of-control, forcing elk out of this natural winter range.<sup>3</sup> This closure has had a real impact on hunting access and obstructed state wildlife management objectives.

In short, the current system favors closure to off-road vehicle use by default. SCI requests a shift consistent with the Dingell Act and EXPLORE Act. This shift would fully implement these laws and achieve a better balance of uses on public lands. Specifically, the Dingell Act “declares that it is the policy of the United States that federal departments and agencies ... shall ... facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting opportunities on Federal land.” 16 U.S.C. § 7901(a)(1) & (3). Likewise, the EXPLORE Act directs federal agencies to “seek to create additional opportunities ... for motorized and nonmotorized access and opportunities on Federal recreational lands and waters administered by the Chief of the Forest Service or the Director of the Bureau of Land Management.” Pub. L. 118-234, § 127(d). As demonstrated by the Gros Ventre example, a closure by default conflicts with Congress’ directive that public lands be open for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting and that federal agencies seek to create additional user opportunities on public lands.

Accordingly, SCI requests that Executive Order 11644, as amended by Executive Order 11989, be revised in its entirety. Rather than creating a system of closure by default and requiring “minimization,” the revised Executive Order should explicitly acknowledge the multiple-use mandate of public lands and the need to provide public access. The minimization criteria should not be strict requirements that lead courts to substitute their judgment and litigation to set access policy. Rather, these criteria should be considerations within the broader directive of ensuring that public lands are truly accessible.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Regina Lennox at [rleennox@safariclub.org](mailto:rleennox@safariclub.org).

Respectfully,



W. Laird Hamberlin  
CEO, Safari Club International

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<sup>3</sup> For example, C. MacIntosh, The mysterious, intermittent disappearance of Gros Ventre elk, Jackson Hole News & Guide (Mar. 18, 2026).