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**Chris Wood**  
President & CEO

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

The Honorable Joe Manchin, Ranking Member  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

November 6, 2019

**RE: Trout Unlimited Supports the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act, S. 2666.**

Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Manchin, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you, Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Manchin, for holding a hearing to examine the importance of programs that share or reinvest revenues derived from those projects with impacted communities and public land resources and to receive testimony on S.2666, the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act.

Trout Unlimited strongly supports S.2666 and we urge members of the Committee to advance this bill to the floor for consideration by the full Senate. We deeply appreciate the leadership of bill sponsors, Senators McSally and Heinrich. We also extend a special thanks to Senators Risch and Tester for supporting the bill since its inception three Congresses ago. And, we thank Senators Udall, Gardner, Daines, and Bennet for their valuable support for the bill.

Many of Trout Unlimited's 300,000 members and supporters are trout and salmon anglers who invest time and resources on public lands, in pursuit of hunting and fishing opportunities. Trout Unlimited and its dedicated base of volunteers work in partnership with the federal agencies, states and counties to complete habitat conservation and restoration projects on public lands.

Public lands contain some of the most valuable trout and salmon habitat in the country. Millions of individuals visit public lands each year to hunt, fish, or recreate. In most Western states, public lands comprise more than 70 percent of the remaining available habitat for native trout, and virtually all the Nation's strongholds for native trout.

According to *Outdoor Recreation Roundtable*, the outdoor recreation economy accounted for 2.2% of U.S. GDP in 2016, making it one of the nation's largest economic engines. The Outdoor Industry Association calculates annual gross output of outdoor recreation at \$887 billion. Additionally, outdoor recreation accounted for 7.6 million jobs in 2016—levels on par with many critical industries in our nation.

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**A mission to conserve, protect, & restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.**

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These impressive statistics are fundamentally linked to public lands. According to a 2018 Pew Trust report on economic contributions of wildlife-related recreation on BLM lands, an estimated 8.1 million trips were made on BLM lands in 2016 for outdoor recreation. Collectively, fishing, hunting and wildlife-viewing on these Western public lands supported an estimated 26,500 jobs, provided \$1 billion in salaries, contributed \$3.3 billion in total economic output, and generated about \$243 million in federal taxes.

In some cases, federal lands also represent a reasonable setting for well-planned and properly mitigated renewable energy development projects. These projects could stimulate job growth, reduce carbon pollution, and contribute to the protection and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat on public lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

Balancing new development with protection of fish and wildlife values is essential.

The importance of balancing these multiple uses on public lands is a lesson we have learned the hard way. A key historical example is the 1872 mining law, through which we promoted one social good – expansion into the West through giving people access to mining – but failed to include the necessary provisions to ensure protection and restoration of impacted resources, particularly the funds to clean up abandoned mines. Now, we are looking to promote renewable energy development on public lands, but unlike the approach of the past, we are seeking to do so in a way that provides funding for mitigation and restoration.

PLREDA strikes the important balance between development of new, clean energy infrastructure and the conservation of our natural resources. By identifying priority areas for wind, solar and geothermal development, PLREDA encourages smart siting and efficient permitting of projects in places with high potential for energy and low impact on wildlife and habitat. Planning ahead for development in priority areas offers developers certainty for their project timelines and saves both time and money.

Further, the bill establishes a revenue sharing model that will support agency engagement, provide revenues to local counties and states, and uphold sportsmen's access to and conservation of fish and wildlife values on these lands. This revenue sharing model will build new partnerships for renewable energy by linking community and conservation goals to project deployment. With this approach, PLREDA will expand renewable development in a manner that minimizes impacts to and supports the outstanding cultural and economic benefits of hunting, fishing and recreation on our public lands.

**Revenue Sharing: PLREDA benefits states, counties and fish and wildlife through revenue sharing.**

PLREDA offers a way to offset unavoidable impacts on fish, wildlife, and water resources by creating a conservation fund derived from royalties and other revenues from public land wind and solar energy development. This fund is essential to our ability to maintain opportunities to hunt and fish on public lands, which are some of the best in the country. More importantly, it is a must-have tool for conserving critical habitat for fish and wildlife across the public landscape.

A survey by the Fish & Wildlife Service found that 103.7 million U.S. residents fished, hunted, or wildlife watched in 2016, and they spent \$156.9 billion on their activities. This is a large, and growing, contributor to our economy: between 2011 and 2016, there was a 16 percent increase in the total number of people participating in wildlife-related recreation in our country. We need high quality, accessible habitat to sustain this economic activity. The conservation fund created by the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act would support the work needed to maintain our public land natural resource values.

The conservation fund would be used to support access and restoration for land and water resources in regions where renewable energy development takes place. For example, planting of riparian vegetation to minimize sedimentation and runoff into nearby streams and to provide nesting habitat for birds and game, or projects to enhance instream flow and habitat to support sensitive populations of native trout and salmon in the area.

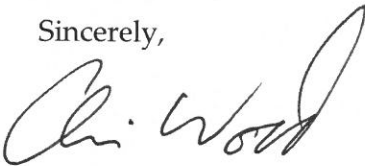
The Revenue Sharing approach will help to increase sportsmen's access to public lands. The model will also support states and counties and helps to ensure agency capacity to efficiently process the permitting program.

### **Conclusion**

S.2666, PLREDA will allow us to develop energy resources, bolster local economies, diversify county revenue streams, improve hunting and fishing access and make public land fishing and hunting better than we found it. In addition to these merits, I again urge you to consider the bill's broad and bipartisan support and to find a path forward for it this year.

We applaud and support the bipartisan leadership Senators McSally and Heinrich as well as the long-standing leadership of the bipartisan co-sponsors of this bill, many of whom serve on this committee, and encourage you to advance this bill into law. We look forward to working with all of you to advance the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Chris Wood

Attachment (1):

October 24, 2019 Letter of support for the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act from 25 hunting, angling, landowner, and conservation organizations.