



The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies

May 18, 2018

Dear Chairpersons and Ranking Members:

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the National Trails System, created by Congress as a dynamic experiment in citizen-based public/private trail-building for public benefit. The experiment worked -- in every state, from local bicycle/pedestrian trails connecting neighborhoods to long-distance paths leading through some of America's most remote and scenic landscapes and historic places. Americans have walked, hiked, snowshoed, and cross-country skied these trails. They have ridden their horses and bikes down these trails and have accessed their hunting, fishing, and camping sites. Since 1995, tens of thousands of citizen volunteers have contributed more than 18 million hours to build and maintain these trails, and nonprofit trail organizations over \$186 million toward building and maintaining trails, a total value of \$538 million.¹ Outdoor recreation on National Forest lands alone contributes more than \$13 billion dollars to the national economy and supports over 205,000 jobs

¹ Partnership for the National Trails System, Contributions Sustaining the National Scenic and Historic Trails (2018), <http://pnts.org/new/partnership-for-the-national-trails-system-gold-sheet-of-volunteer-contributions-in-2017/>.

annually.² National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Monuments and other public lands and waters account for \$50 billion in economic output and 426,000 jobs nationwide.³

While we applaud Congress for preserving trail funding in FY18, it is exceedingly unfortunate that the Administration's 2019 budget fails to provide for even the most basic necessities to maintain and manage these critical recreation resources, putting the past 50 years of partnership and hard work in jeopardy. **Trails are the gateway to nearly every facet of outdoor recreation, including fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping, and more.** A failure to maintain and manage our nation's trails stymies economic growth and access to healthy outdoor recreation.

Broadly, the Administration's budget would:

- Undo decades of work by agencies, volunteers, and nonprofit organizations;
- Fail to leverage the millions of dollars donated by state and local governments and nonprofit trail organizations as well as volunteer labor each year; and
- Threaten the livelihoods of the 7.6 million Americans whose jobs depend directly on the outdoor recreational activities that take place on trails.⁴

We, the undersigned, urge you to adopt the following funding requests so the federal government can continue to benefit from private contributions and volunteer labor as well as provide inexpensive, healthy outdoor recreation options for your constituents:

Forest Service

In 2016, Congress passed what was termed "the most bipartisan bill in Congress" -- the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act -- to reduce the maintenance backlog on 156,000 miles of trails in the National Forests. Unfortunately, the Administration's 2019 budget cuts fly in the face of Congressional intent.

Action:

- Fund Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails budget at \$100M to address trail maintenance backlog and implementation of National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act (increase of \$20M from FY18 and of \$87.93M from the FY19 proposed budget);
- Fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness at \$261M (increase of \$3.2M above FY18 and of \$20.76M from the FY19 proposed budget); and
- Maintain funding for the Legacy Roads & Trails program to at least \$40M (FY18 enacted; an increase of \$40M from the FY19 proposed budget).

² Outdoor Recreation Economy, Outdoor Industry Association 15 (2017), https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf; "Forest Service Makes it Easier for Visitors to Enjoy National Forests and Grasslands." U.S. Forest Service, <https://www.fs.fed.us/news/releases/forest-service-makes-it-easier-visitors-enjoy-national-forests-and-grasslands>.

³ Economic Report for Fiscal Year 2016. U.S. Department of the Interior 2 (2017), <https://doi.sciencebase.gov/doidv/files/FY%202016%20DOI%20Economic%20Report%202017-09-25.pdf>.

⁴ Outdoor Recreation Economy, Outdoor Industry Association 5 (2017), https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf.

National Park Service

The National Park Service not only maintains trails within park units such as Yellowstone and Acadia National Parks, but also has administrative responsibility for 23 National Scenic and Historic Trails. Last year 331 million people visited a national park unit, and trails were integral to these visits.⁵

Action:

- Park Service Operations for the National Trails System must be maintained at a minimum of \$16.5M (an increase of \$4.735M from the FY19 proposed budget);
- Maintain funding for the Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at \$10.033M (FY18 enacted; an increase of \$0.9M from the FY19 proposed budget);
- Restore the Challenge Cost Share program, funding at \$1.5M, to leverage private donations for public benefit (Administration proposed elimination in FY19 budget);
- Restore funding for Volunteers in Parks programs to leverage private donations for public benefit, funding at \$8M (proposed \$4M cut in FY19 budget);
- Fund Visitor Services subactivity, Youth Partnership Programs, at \$10.95M (proposed \$5.15M cut in FY19 budget)

Bureau of Land Management

According to the Bureau of Land Management, as previously stated, the proposed 29% cut to its National Conservation Lands would “affect visitor services, including maintenance and care of trails and trailheads, grounds maintenance, campground access, river and trail access and interpretive resources.”⁶

Action:

- Fund National Conservation Lands, to enhance recreational access, conserve the Nation’s heritage and manage these nationally recognized resources at \$75M (an increase of \$48.7M from the FY19 proposed budget);
- Fund National Conservation Lands- National Scenic Historic Trails, subactivity Recreation Resources Management, which preserves, provides public access to, and allows for the enjoyment of these trails, at \$9.8M (an increase of \$5.7M from the FY19 proposed budget); and
- Increase Challenge Cost Share program funding, which leverages private donations for public benefit to \$3M (increase of \$2M from FY19 budget)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Proposed cuts in Refuge Visitor Services would negatively affect environmental education and birding programs and hours of operation for some visitor centers.

⁵ “National Park System Sees More Than 330 Million Visits”, National Park Service (Feb. 28, 2018), <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/02-28-2018-visitation-certified.htm>.

⁶ Fiscal Year 2018 The Interior Budget In Brief, Department of the Interior BH-9 (May 2017) https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/2018_highlights_book.pdf.

Action:

- Fund Refuge Visitor Services at \$73.2M (increase of \$0.1M from FY18 enacted levels; an increase of \$1.94M from FY19 proposed budget)

Land & Water Conservation Fund

With the proposed elimination of funding in the FY19 budget, the LWCF would be unable to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard our natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. In this 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System, the cuts would prevent congressionally designated trails from advancing towards completion. We ask that, as Congress did in FY18 funding, it reject these proposed cuts and restore funding for the LWCF.

The proposed funding cuts demonstrate a breach of faith with the public, which was promised that in exchange for the depletion of one public resource (offshore energy), they would be provided access to outdoor recreation:

NPS – 102% cut from FY18; no funding for federal land acquisition or recreational access

BLM – 126% cut from FY18; no funding for land acquisitions or recreation access

FWS – 87% cut from FY18; no funding for land recreation access

USFS – 126% cut from FY18; no funding for land acquisitions, Forest Legacy easements to protect working forests, or recreation access

Action:

- At a minimum, fund LWCF at the \$450M level so that the projects of highest importance can be completed for public benefit; and
- Include within this appropriation \$54.8M for National Scenic and Historic Trails projects
 - Many of the projects offer a unique opportunity to acquire lands that will help protect trails or close existing gaps between sections of these Congressionally-designated trails; and
 - Once land is acquired, volunteers and private funding stand ready to build/maintain the trails.
- As you are aware, the LWCF program expires on September 30, 2018. We ask that you permanently reauthorize the program.

We look forward to working with Congress to fulfill these requests to protect, preserve, and maintain trails. For additional information please contact Tyler Ray, American Hiking Society, tray@americanhiking.org. Gary Werner, Partnership for the National Trails System, gary@pnts.org, Randy Rasmussen, Back Country Horsemen of America, WildernessAdvisor@bcha.org, or Mike Passo, American Trails, mikepasso@americantrails.org.

Sincerely,

40 Mile Loop Land Trust, Portland, Oregon
Accessible Trails Foundation
AccessWorks, Inc.

The Acorn Group
Ala Kahakai Trail Association
Alaska State Parks
Alaska Trails
Almanor Recreation and Park District
American Discovery Trail Society
American Endurance Ride Conference
American Hiking Society
American Trails
Appalachian Trail Conservancy.
Arizona Trail Association
Back Country Horsemen of America
 Back Country Horsemen of California
 Back Country Horsemen of California, High Sierra Unit
 Back Country Horsemen of California, Mother Lode Unit
 Back Country Horsemen of Colorado, Front Range Chapter
 Back Country Horsemen of Iowa
 Back Country Horsemen of Oregon
 Back Country Horsemen of Southwest Virginia
 Back Country Horsemen of the Virginia Highlands
 Back Country Horsemen of Virginia, Golden Horseshoe Chapter
 Back Country Horsemen of Washington
 Back Country Horsemen of Washington, Ponderosa Chapter
 Back Country Horsemen of Washington, Traildusters Chapter
 Back Country Horsemen of Washington, Whatcom Chapter
 Back Country Horsemen Washington, Tahoma Chapter
 Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen
Wyoming Back Country Horsemen
Bay Area Barns and Trails
Bay State Trail Riders Association, Inc.
Bike Tiverton
Blue Mountains Conservancy
Boulder Area Trails Coalition (BATCO)
Buckeye Trail Association
Cache County Trails Planning
Cape Horn Conservancy
Central Oregon Trail Alliance
Central Washington Endurance Riders
Champlain Area Trails
Chattahoochee Parks Conservancy
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chinook Trail Association
Choose Outdoors
City of Carpinteria

City of Redding
Coastal Georgia Greenway, Inc.
Colorado Mountain Club
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association
Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Continental Divide Trail Society
The Corps Network
Corvallis-to-the-Sea Trail (C2C Trail)
County Line Riders of Catalina, INC
Cullman County Economic Development
Cumberland Trails Conference
Donald Hoch, Director, Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission
E mau na Ala Hele
El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association
Enchanted Circle Trails Association
Equine Alliance Youth Foundation
Florida Trail Association
Foothills Rails to Trails Coalition
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of Cloudland Canyon State Park
Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness
Friends of the Cheat
Friends of the Desert Mountains
Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail
Friends of the Tonto National Forest
Friends of Van Cortlandt Park
Friends of Weiser River Trail
Harrison Rail Trails, Inc.
Helac Corporation
Hestafolk
Hestafolk 4-H Club
Hestafölk Icelandic Horse Club
Huron Waterloo Pathway Initiative
Hut2Hut
Ice Age Trail Alliance
Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance
The Intertwine Alliance
Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority
Jamestown Parks and Recreation (North Dakota)
Keystone Trails Association
Lake Champlain Committee
Lake Ray Roberts Equestrian Trail Association
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
Lewis and Clark Trust, Inc.

Linn County Iowa Conservation
Madison Byways
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Marin Municipal Water District
Maui Mountain Bike Coalition
Mazamas
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Department of Parks
Mode Shift Omaha
Mormon Trails Association
National Coast Trail Association
Nevada All-State Trail Riders
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
Nez Perce Trail Foundation
Nickel Plate Trail
North Country Trail Association (NCTA)
North Country Trail Hikers Chapter of the NCTA
Oregon Equestrian Trails
Oregon Horse Country (Oregon Horse Council)
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon-California Trails Association
Outside Las Vegas Foundation, dba Get Outdoors Nevada
Overmountain Victory Trail Association
Ozark Highlands Trail Association
Ozark Trail Association
Pacific Crest Trail Association
Parks & Trails New York
Partnership for the National Trails System
Pathfinders For Greenways
Pearl City Sno-Pearls
Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance
Pima Trails Association
Portage Park District Foundation, Ravenna, OH
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Rail-Trail Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Inc.
Recreation Outdoors Coalition
Rock County Multi Use Trail Group
Rockfish Valley Foundation
Rocky Mountain Field Institute
Ruby Valley Cycling Club
Sam Houston Trails Coalition
San Joaquin River Trail Council

San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
Santa Fe National Historic Trail
Santa Fe Trail Association
Scenic Trails Research
Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
Simpson University Outdoor Leadership
Sitka Bicycle Friendly Community Coalition
Southern Appalachian Bicycle Association
Southern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association
Southern Oregon Trail Alliance
Southwest Trail & Distance Riders
Spring Trust for Trust
Student Conservation Association
Superior Hiking Trail Association
Tahoe Rim Trail Association
Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway
Tillamook Estuaries Partnership
Town of Castle Rock Parks & Recreation
Trail Insight
Trail of Tears Association
Trailkeepers of Oregon
Trails & Bikeways Council of Greater Redding
Trails and Open Space Coalition
Trails Inspire, LLC
Trails Utah
Triangle Greenways Council
Tuleyome
Upper Valley Trails Alliance
Vernon Township Recreation
Victor Hiking Trails, Inc.
Volcanic Legacy Community Partnership
Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona
Waldo County Trails Coalition
Walk Sitka
Warrior Expeditions
Washington Trails Association
The Wilderness Society
Wildlands Restoration Volunteers
Wisconsin Horse Council Trails Committee
Wyoming Pathways
York County Rail Trail Authority