



The Honorable Thad Cochran
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

July 7, 2017

Dear Chairpersons and Ranking Members:

Next year, 2018, will be 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. Congress's action has inspired and helped to fund trail building and maintenance projects in every state, from local bicycle/pedestrian trails connecting neighborhoods to long-distance paths leading thru some of America's most remote and scenic landscapes and historic places. Over the past 20 years tens of thousands of citizen volunteers have contributed more than 17 million hours to build and maintain these trails and nonprofit trail organizations have provided nearly \$172 million to help sustain them.

It is exceedingly unfortunate, that as the nation celebrates 50 years of success, the Administration's 2018 budget for trails and the agencies that manage and maintain trails on federal lands would undo much of what has been accomplished. The Administration's budget fails to provide for even the most basic necessities to maintain and manage these critical recreation resources. **Trails are the gateway to nearly every other facet of outdoor recreation, including fishing, hunting, camping, and more.** A failure to maintain and manage our nation's trails directly impacts park visitation, visitor safety, the ability for people to enjoy healthy outdoor recreation, and our nation's economy.

Importantly, trails represent a key attribute that sustains the national recreation economy, as recently reported by the Outdoor Industry Association. For example, outdoor recreation on National Forest lands alone contributes more than \$13 billion dollars to the national economy and supports over 205,000 jobs annually.¹ Whereas national parks, national wildlife refuges, national monuments and other public lands and waters account for \$45 billion in economic output and about 396,000 jobs nationwide.² These public areas provide significant economic benefits, particularly for nearby rural communities.

Broadly, the Administration's budget:

- Undoes decades of work by agencies, volunteers, and nonprofit organizations rather than building on such work and leveraging all that has been accomplished;
- Fails to leverage the millions of dollars donated by state and local governments and nonprofit trail organizations as well as volunteer labor each year; and
- Affects the livelihood of the **1.8 million Americans whose jobs depend directly on trails**³ and the outdoor recreational activities that take place on trails.

We, the undersigned, urge you to consider the following funding requests so that 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

Just last year Congress passed what was termed "the most bipartisan bill in Congress" when it passed the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act to help reduce the maintenance backlog on 156,000 miles of trails in the National Forests. The Administration's 2018 budget, which cuts trail maintenance from \$77.4M to \$12.7M – an 84% cut and recreation by \$8M, flies in the face of Congressional intent when it passed PL114-245 (the Trails Stewardship Act).

Action:

- Fund CMTL budget at \$85M to address trail maintenance backlog and implementation of National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act;
- Fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness at \$261M; and
- Restore funding for the Legacy Roads & Trails program to at least \$40M (FY17 enacted).

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 331,000,000 people visited a national park unit and trails were integral to these visits. People hiked, went sightseeing, traveled on horseback, watched wildlife,

¹ "Forest Service Makes it Easier for Visitors to Enjoy National Forests and Grasslands." U.S. Forest Service

² Economic Report for Fiscal Year 2015. U.S. Department of the Interior

³ The Outdoor Recreation Economy, 18-18. (2017).

camped, and learned about America's history and culture on trails that the Park Service manages.

Action:

- Park Service Operations for the National Trails System must be maintained at a minimum of \$16.5M;
- Fund the Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at the 2016 enacted level of \$10M;
- Restore the Challenge Cost Share and Volunteers in Parks programs that leverage private donations for public benefit, funding them at \$1.5M and \$8M respectively; and
- Restore funding for the Youth Partnership Programs to the FY2017 level of \$10.95M.

Bureau of Land Management

The proposed 26% cut to the Bureau of Land Management's National Conservation Lands, in the agency's own words, would, "affect visitor services, including maintenance and care of trails and trailheads, grounds maintenance, campground access, river and trail access and interpretive resources." Additionally, the budget seeks to save \$4.5M by focusing on the 384 fee-generating sites while curtailing efforts and operating hours at its 3,200 non-fee generating recreation sites. This shifts the management focus and public access from recreational opportunities and public engagement to a model where tax-payers are only allowed entry if they pay to access land that belongs to them.

Action:

- Fund National Conservation Lands at \$75M;
- Restore \$4.5M to the subactivity Recreation Resources Management; and
- Restore the Challenge Cost Share program that leverages private donations for public benefit, funding it at \$3M.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Proposed cuts in Refuge Visitor Services would result in a cut of approximately 5% of public programming such as environmental education and birding programs and may impact the hours of operation for some visitor centers. With 37,000 jobs reliant on Refuges this savings could end up costing the economy instead.

Action:

- Fund Refuge Visitor Services at \$73.2M.

Land & Water Conservation Fund

With an overall 84% cut from 2017 appropriations, LWCF would be unable to fulfill any part of its charter to protect lands that would allow the American public to enjoy them for a variety of recreational pursuits such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and numerous other activities. The cuts would not allow even the trails designated by Congress itself, to be nearer to completion by closing gaps.

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

NPS – 72% cut; no funding for federal land acquisition or recreational access

BLM – 91% cut; no funding for land acquisitions or recreation access

FWS – 75% cut; no funding for land acquisitions or recreation access

USFS – 89% cut; 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
- Appropriate \$54.8M for National Scenic and Historic Trails projects in the Collaborative Landscape Proposal
 - 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.

Thank you for considering our requests,

Accessible Trails Foundation
Ala Kahakai Trail Association
Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Allentown Hiking Club
American Discovery Trail Society
American Endurance Ride Conference
American Hiking Society
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Trails
Anza Trail Foundation
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arizona Parks and Recreation Association
Arizona Trail Association
ATC Mid-Atlantic Regional Partnership Committee
Athens Bicycle, OH
Back Country Horsemen of America
Back Country Horsemen of Washington
Back Country Horsemen, Mt. St. Helen's Chapter

Back Country Horsemen, Peninsula Chapter
Bailey Bridges, Inc.
Banks of the Wabash, Inc.
Bay State Trail Riders Association
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Big River Strategic Initiative
Biggest Little Trail Stewardship
Birch Outdoors
Blue Mountains Conservancy
Blue Mountain Singletrack Trails Club
B&O Trail Association
Boulder Area Trails Coalition
Buckeye Trail Association
Camp Tuscazoar Foundation
Cape Horn Conservancy
Champlain Area Trails
Chariton Area Chamber/Main Street, Iowa
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Chesapeake Conservancy
City of Reading, PA
City of Stevenson, WA

Colorado Mountain Club
Columbia Land Trust
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association
Connecticut Forest & Park Coalition
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Continental Divide Trail Society
Corvallis-to-the-Sea (C2C) Trail Partnership
Cullman County Commission, Alabama
E Mau Na Ala Hele, Hawaii
East Arlington (MA) Livable Streets Alliance
Eastern Trail Alliance
Florida Trail Association
Friends of Blackwater (WV)
Friends of Cloudland Canyon State Park, GA
Friends of Manchac Greenway
Friends of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks
Friends of the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage
Trail
Friends of the Freetown/Fall River State
Forest
Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail
Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail,
Inc.
Friends of Van Cortlandt Park
Friends of Weiser River Trail
Front Range Back Country Horsemen
Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen of
America
Golden Hills Resource Conservation &
Development, Iowa
Greenways Commission of Bowling Green &
Warren County, KY
Harrison Rail Trail, Inc.
Hoosier Rails to Trails Council
Huachuca Hiking Club
Hut to Hut
Ice Age Trail Alliance
Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance
Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs
Independence Pass Foundation
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Jefferson County Open Space
Keystone Trail Association
Klickitat Trail Conservancy, WA

Lake Champlain Committee
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
Lewis and Clark Trust, Inc.
Los Alamos Tuff Riders IMBA chapter
M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks
Maple Summit Snowmobilers
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Marin Municipal Water District
Middlebury Area Land Trust
Mode Shift Omaha
Mohave County Parks
Mormon Trails Association
Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club
Mountain Club of Maryland
National Coast Trail Association
Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club
Nature Legacies
New England Mountain Biking Association
Nez Perce Trail Association
Nooksack Nordic Ski Club
North Country Trail Association
Northern Idaho Centennial Trail Foundation
Ocoee Adventure Center
Oklahoma Earthbike Fellowship
Old Dominion Appalachian Trail Club
Old Spanish Trail Association
Omaha Bikes
Openlands (IL)
Orange County Parks
Oregon-California Trails Association
Oregon Equestrian Trails
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Outside Las Vegas Foundation
Overmountain Victory Trail Association
Ozark Greenways
Ozark Highlands Trail Association
Ozark Trail Association
Pachner & Associates, LLC
Pacific Crest Trail Association
Pacific Northwest Trail Association
Palm Valley Greenway Trails
Parks & Trails New York
Partnership for the National Trails System
Pathfinders for Greenways

Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society
Pima Trails Association
Ponte Vedra Greenway
Portage Park District Foundation, Ohio
Potomac Heritage Trail Association
Rail Trail Council of NE Pennsylvania
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Reading Recreation Commission, PA
Readington Trail Association
Redding Recreation and Parks
Redding Trails Foundation
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission
Rock Bridge Canyon & Equestrian Trail &
Campground
San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
Santa Fe Trail Association
Saratoga Back Country Horsemen
Schlegel Cycling Club
Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
Sierra Trail Works
Simpson University Outdoor Leadership,
Iowa
South Eastern Distance Riders Association
Southern Appalachian Bicycle Association
Southern Trail Riders Association
Southwest Iowa Nature Trails Project
Spearhead Trails – ATV, OHV & Motorcycle
Trails
Spokane Mountaineers
Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association
Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway
Tahoe Rim Trail Association
Terry Hanson Consulting

The Intertwine Alliance
The Trails Cache, Cache County, Utah
The Vet Foundation
The Wilderness Society
Town of Holly Pond, AL
Trail of Tears Association, Missouri Chapter
Trail Wisdom, LLC
Trails and Bikeways Council of Greater
Redding
Trails and Open Space Coalition
Travel Oregon
Tri-Lakes Metropolitan Planning
Organization
Triangle Greenways Council
Triathlon Club of Oklahoma City
Tuleyome (CA)
Tulsa Mountain Biking Group
Tulsa Urban Wilderness Coalition
United Engines, LLC, Oklahoma City
Urbana Parks District
Upper Valley Trails Alliance
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Walk Sitka
Walking Connection
Warrior Expeditions
Washington State Parks & Recreation
Commission
Washington Trails Association
Westborough Community Land Trust, MA
Wilderness Matters
Wisconsin Horse Council – Trails Committee
Wyoming Pathways
York County Rail Trail Authority