



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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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**<sup>3</sup> 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,

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

<sup>2</sup> Economic Report for Fiscal Year 2015. U.S. Department of the Interior

<sup>3</sup> 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