



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.<sup>1</sup> Outdoor recreation on National Forest lands alone contributes more than \$13 billion dollars to the national economy and supports over 205,000 jobs

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

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.<sup>4</sup>

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).

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<sup>2</sup> Outdoor Recreation Economy, Outdoor Industry Association 15 (2017), [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA\\_RecEconomy\\_FINAL\\_Single.pdf](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>.

<sup>3</sup> 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>.

<sup>4</sup> Outdoor Recreation Economy, Outdoor Industry Association 5 (2017), [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA\\_RecEconomy\\_FINAL\\_Single.pdf](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.<sup>5</sup>

### **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.”<sup>6</sup>

### **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.

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<sup>5</sup> “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>.

<sup>6</sup> 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](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](mailto:tray@americanhiking.org). Gary Werner, Partnership for the National Trails System, [gary@pnts.org](mailto:gary@pnts.org), Randy Rasmussen, Back Country Horsemen of America, [WildernessAdvisor@bcha.org](mailto:WildernessAdvisor@bcha.org), or Mike Passo, American Trails, [mikepasso@americantrails.org](mailto: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