

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

October 2, 2018

Re: American Hiking Society Statement in Support of S. 569, S. 3172, and S. 1522

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Hiking Society, our members, supporters, and the millions-strong hiking community nationwide, we encourage the committee to support three pieces of legislation under consideration today: S. 569, *Land and Water Conservation Authorization and Funding Act*, S. 3172, *Restore Our Parks Act*, and S. 1522, *Every Kid Outdoors Act*.

Support: S. 3172, *Restore Our Parks Act*

S. 3172 is a first step toward addressing the National Parks System's \$11.6 billion maintenance backlog.¹ The bill creates a fund that would provide \$6.5 billion over five years from energy development revenues on federal land and water to meet some of the most pressing deferred maintenance needs within the National Park Service,² including \$462 million in trail maintenance on 18,844 miles of trails.³

We appreciate the need to address the large backlog for the National Park Service. At the same time, we encourage the committee to address the \$9.5 billion in maintenance needs across lands managed by other federal agencies, including US Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management.⁴

Current Deferred Maintenance Trail Backlogs

When annual maintenance needs go unaddressed, long-term problems arise, seriously hampering the public's access to outdoor recreation. Closed trails, out-of-service restrooms, campgrounds in poor conditions, and impassable roads are only a few of the barriers that hikers face. In turn, local economies that rely on trail recreationists suffer.

Currently, 193,500 miles of trails on federal lands need \$1.71 billion of estimated maintenance.

¹ *What Is Deferred Maintenance?*, NPS.GOV, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/deferred-maintenance.htm> (last visited Sept. 29, 2018).

² This funding includes funds from Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenue, which also provides funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

³ Nat'l Park Serv., Nat'l Park Serv. Asset Inventory Summary FY17, available at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/upload/FY17-Asset-Inventory-Summary-AIS-Service-wide_Report_508-3.pdf.

⁴ See *Exploring Innovative Solutions to Reduce the Department of the Interior's Maintenance Backlog Before the H. Comm on Natural Resources*, 115th Cong. (2018) (statement of U.S. Dep't of the Interior), available at <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/doi-maintenance-backlog>; See also U.S. Dep't of Agric., Office of Inspector Gen., Forest Service Deferred Maintenance 2 (May 2017), available at <https://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/08601-0004-31.pdf>.

| Agency | Trails | Deferred Maintenance Amount |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Forest Service ⁵ | 157,000 miles | \$300 million (trails) |
| National Park Service ⁶ | 18,844 miles | \$462 million (trails) |
| Fish & Wildlife Service ⁷ | 2,100 miles | \$336 million (roads, trails, bridges) ⁸ |
| Bureau of Land Management ⁹ | 13, 468 miles | \$615 million (roads, trails, bridges) ¹⁰ |
| All Agencies | (191,412 miles trail specific) | \$1.713 billion |

Deferred Maintenance Impacts Economic Activity and Recreation Access

The economic impact of trails and the potential increased economic activity from addressing deferred maintenance needs would be significant. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, recreation on trails in America accounted for \$201 billion in annual spending in 2017 and were responsible for 1.7 million jobs. Much of this spending takes place in small communities along each of the trails, communities for which this income is substantial, meaningful, and will remain local. Many of the jobs trails create cannot be exported offshore: guides and outfitters, hotel staff and restaurateurs, and numerous others directly benefit the community in which they reside. Open and well-maintained trails are essential for this continued economic benefit.

Trails are more than just an economic engine. Since our nation’s founding, the outdoors has been a distinctive part of our American heritage, and trails are integral to that. Whether it’s a family out for a hike on a nearby trail, a returning veteran walking off the war, or hunters and anglers accessing their sites, Americans continue to seek places for outdoor recreation, a connection to nature, and healthy exercise. By addressing long overdue improvements to trails and the surrounding infrastructure, Congress can ensure that outdoor recreation remains open and accessible.

Support: S. 569, the *Land and Water Conservation Authorization and Funding Act*

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is America’s most important program to conserve irreplaceable lands and improve outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the nation. The program has funded nearly one thousand trail projects and thousands of other projects

⁵ See Carol Hardy Vincent, Congressional Research Serv., Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2007-FY2016 Estimates and Issues 3 (Apr. 25, 2017), available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43997.pdf>. See also U.S. Dep’t of Agric., FY 2019 Budget Justification 75 (Feb. 2018), available at <https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/usfs-fy19-budget-justification.pdf>.

⁶ Nat’l Park Serv., Nat’l Park Serv. Asset Inventory Summary FY17, available at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/upload/FY17-Asset-Inventory-Summary-AIS-Service-wide_Report_508-3.pdf.

⁷ FWS total includes deferred maintenance not limited to trails as trail specific breakdowns are not publicly available. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serv., Bureau Highlights (2018), available at https://edit.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/fy2019_bib_bh059.pdf; U.S. Dep’t of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Serv., Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2019 NWRS-10 (2018),

⁸ Trail specific data not publicly available.

⁹ BLM total includes deferred maintenance not limited to trails as trail specific breakdowns are not publicly available. Carol Hardy Vincent, Congressional Research Serv., Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2007-FY2016 Estimates and Issues 3 (Apr. 25, 2017), available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43997.pdf>.

¹⁰ Trail specific data not publicly available.

ranging from National Parks, Forests and Wildlife Refuges to community parks and ball fields in all 50 states.

Our National Scenic and Historic Trails, which are celebrating their 50th Anniversary this very day, have benefitted from LWCF funding that allowed for the completion of the Appalachian Trail, and building major segments of the Pacific Crest Trail and at least ten other scenic and historic trails over 52 different projects.

The fund should be permanently reauthorized with dedicated funding without weakening amendments.

Land and Water Conservation Fund and Deferred Maintenance Must Be Addressed Together

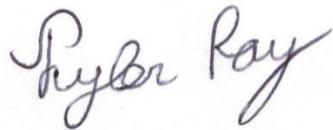
Additionally, we urge concurrent consideration of legislation to permanently reauthorize and fund the LWCF. As both funds would receive funding from Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenue, longstanding commitments to the LWCF should be met before designating new OCS commitments. Fulfilling the promise of LWCF and addressing deferred maintenance are complementary means of ensuring that our natural resources are both conserved and preserved for continued use. One should not be done at the expense of the other.

Support: S. 1522, *Every Kid Outdoors Act*

The Every Kid Outdoors Act congressionally authorizes the Every Kid in a Park program, providing every fourth grader and their family free access to all federal public lands and waters.¹¹ The act will introduce the next generation to outdoor recreation and foster lifelong service to and enjoyment of our most treasured natural resource. Hundreds of thousands of students have taken advantage of the program since it began, and it is crucial that this program continue to provide access to our public lands.

Please contact Tyler Ray, Director of Policy and Advocacy, tray@americanhiking.org, 301-565-6704 x705 with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,



Tyler Ray
Director of Policy and Advocacy

¹¹ *Every Kid In A Park*, everykidinapark.gov (last visited Oct. 1, 2018).