



The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Chair  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies

The Honorable Chellie Pingree  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies

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

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies

**Re: Trail Funding Recommendations for FY23 Appropriation Omnibus**

Dear Committee Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the millions of trail users our collective organizations represent who spend their time, money and energy to get out on trails for recreation, health and wellness, and to volunteer, we thank the Senate and House Appropriation Committees for meeting with and responding to our request for prioritizing trail inclusive funding in the FY23 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations legislation.<sup>1</sup> As discussions between the House and Senate are underway to reconcile the legislation for final passage, and enactment, we request that final legislation include robust funding for trails, including the preferred funding levels (at a minimum) and report language outlined below.

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of: Kathryn Van Waes, PhD., Executive Director, American Hiking Society and  
With the full support of American Trails, American Motorcyclist Association, Back Country Horsemen of America, Equine Land Conservation Resource, International Mountain Bicycling Association, National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
<https://americanhiking.org/advocacy/fy23-trail-funding-public-witness-testimony-of-american-hiking-society-on-be-half-of-trails-community-senate/> (Senate);  
<https://americanhiking.org/advocacy/fy23-trail-funding-public-witness-testimony-of-american-hiking-society-on-be-half-of-trails-community-house/> (House).

Trails are the gateway to nearly every facet of outdoor recreation, including fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping, and more. We ask the Committee to adopt these funding requests so the federal government can continue to leverage private contributions and benefit from volunteer labor as well as provide inexpensive, healthy outdoor recreation options for your constituents and all Americans.

## **Forest Service**

**Program:** Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails

**Department:** US Department of Agriculture

**Agency/Account:** Forest Service, Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails

**Funding Requested: \$30.51M (at minimum \$24.25M House proposed funding level)** We appreciate both the House and Senate providing increased funding to Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails, including an increase for National Scenic and Historic Trails. In order to support adequate funding for all Forest Service trails and to avoid a reduction in the existing budget for all other Forest Service managed trails, we urge the committees to consider an additional increase to \$30.51M, including \$12M for national scenic and historic trails funding provided in the House bill. (House Report, 117)

### **Report Language Requested:**

- (House Report, 117) Trail Maintenance and Construction.—The Committee recommends \$24,250,000 for Trail Maintenance and Construction, \$5,750,000 above the enacted level and \$6,811,000 above the budget request.

National Scenic and Historic Trails.—The Committee directs the Forest Service to continue to provide specific trail operation, maintenance, and construction funding and accomplishment data for the national scenic and historic trails in future budget justifications. The Committee recommends no less than \$12,000,000 for national scenic and historic trails funding

- (Senate Report, 115) The Service will continue to provide specific trail operation, maintenance, and construction funding and accomplishment data for the National scenic and historic trails in future budget justifications. Trail Partnerships.—Volunteer groups, Tribal organizations, and non-profit partners are integral to the trail building and maintenance required for the 159,000 miles of trails on National Forest System lands, including more than 10,000 miles of nationally designated scenic, historic, and recreation trails. The Committee supports the Service's 10-Year Trail Shared Stewardship Challenge and continuing the Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Program to facilitate these efforts. The Committee is aware of the growing need to sustain and increase the capacity for resilient trail building within the outdoor recreation community. The Service is encouraged to collaborate with regional training centers that provide resources for training trails stewards responsible for the maintenance of trails for public use and is further encouraged to focus on maintaining geographical diversity in its partnerships.
- (Senate Report, 114) The Committee recognizes the importance of the Legacy Restoration Fund authorized by the Great American Outdoors Act (Public Law 116–152), which will provide \$1,425,000,000 over 5 years to addressing deferred maintenance. These mandatory funds augment the appropriations from this account, which continues to be necessary for new construction and to maintain Service infrastructure so that additional projects are not added to the deferred maintenance backlog. While the Committee appreciates the expanse and geographic diversity of the proposed legacy restoration project list, the Service must also ensure that the most critical projects are prioritized for this unprecedented and limited opportunity, such as major

projects with a substantial financial investment that otherwise require significant shifts in annual funding. The Committee and the Service have struggled to budget for and report how funding is split between new construction and the maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure. The Service is directed to brief the Committee within 90 days of enactment of this act on a plan to delineate between these elements in future budget submissions.

**Program:** Agency Staffing

**Department:** US Department of Agriculture

**Agency/Account:** Forest Service

**Report Language Requested:**

- (House Report, 113): The Committee has provided significant increases above enacted for Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness, Vegetation and Watershed Management, Trails, and National Forest System Salaries and Expenses. The Committee expects these increases, among others, will yield improvements in the administration of recreation areas and to perform new work and maintenance in recreation areas, such as Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.

**Program:** Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness

**Department:** US Department of Agriculture

**Agency/Account:** Forest Service, Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness

**Funding Requested:** \$55.915M (House Report, 113)

**Program:** Legacy Roads & Trails

**Department:** US Department of Agriculture

**Agency/Account:** Forest Service, Legacy Roads & Trails

**Funding Requested:** \$15M (House Report, 117)

**Report Language Requested:**

- (House Report, 117) Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation.—The Committee recommends \$15,000,000 for Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation, \$10,000,000 above the enacted level and \$15,000,000 above the budget request.
- (Senate Report, 116) The Service should include accomplishment data to accompany the annual budget submission, including miles of roads and trails improved, miles of streams restored, number of bridges and culverts constructed, miles of road decommissioned, and number of jobs created.

## **BLM Recommendation:**

**Program:** Bureau of Land Management Trails Funding

**FY23 Funding Level Requested:** \$12M for National Scenic and Historic Trails and Trails Line Item

**Department:** Bureau of Land Management

**Agency/Account:** Trails

**Report Language requested:**

- (House Report, 13) National and Scenic Historic Trails.—To increase transparency, the recommendation has consolidated all funding for National and Scenic Historic Trails into a new subactivity under Recreation Management and recommends \$12,000,000. Within available funds the Bureau is encouraged to provide additional resources for the Iditarod, Pacific Crest, Arizona,

and Continental Divide National Scenic Trails, the Arizona Trail Indigenous Place Name project, and the construction of a hiking trail from Elko, Nevada to the California Trail Center. The Bureau is directed to brief the Committee on unit level allocations within 60 days of enactment of this Act

- (Senate Report, 17) National Trails.—The Committee appreciates the Bureau’s dedication to improving access and a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion on the National Trails System. In coordination with its trail partners, the Bureau is directed to update exhibits at its trail interpretive centers to reflect these themes and provide a project list within 120 days of enactment of this act.

**Program:** National Conservation Lands

**Department:** Bureau of Land Management

**Agency/Account:** Bureau of Land Management, National Conservation Lands

**Funding Requested:** \$70M (House Report, 14)

## **FWS Recommendation:**

**Program:** Visitor Services

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Visitor Services

**Funding Requested:** \$87.527M (House Report, 22)

**Report Language Requested:**

- (House Report, 22) Visitor Services.—The recommendation includes \$87,527,000. The recommendation provides \$11,000,000 for Urban Wildlife Conservation, an increase of \$5,000,000 above the enacted level, and \$74,527,000 for general program activities that will enhance recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and watching wildlife which includes \$3,000,000 to help the Service mobilize the next generation of conservation and climate resilience workers and maximize training opportunities with the goal of improving America’s land, waters, and infrastructure. With a national wildlife refuge located within a one-hour drive of nearly every major metropolitan area, this increase for urban refuges enables the Service to improve access and engage new audiences in outdoor recreation and conservation. The Service is encouraged to work with partners to support year-round environmental education for youth and adults of all ages living in urban settings.
- (House Report, 23) Refuge Maintenance— For trails projects, the Committee understands funding from this account is supplemented with funding from the Federal Lands Transportation Program, which comes from the Highway Trust Fund, and from the Great American Outdoors Act. The Service is directed to include a current and projected deferred maintenance backlog in its annual budget request.

**Program:** Fish and Wildlife Service Staffing

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** Fish and Wildlife Service

**Report Language Requested:**

- (Senate Report, 24) Staffing of the National Wildlife Refuge System.—The Committee notes that over the past 10 years, the Refuge System’s full-time equivalent [FTE] staffing has decreased

nearly 25 percent while the Refuge System has continued to grow. The committee directs the National Refuge System to use the increased funding provided to hire the additional 254 FTE staff requested and to consider prioritizing filling vacant positions at the Northern Maine Wildlife Refuge Complex, and Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, and encourages the Service to fill long vacant staffing positions at other Refuge's across the country.

## **NPS Recommendation:**

**Program:** Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA)

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** National Park Service, National Recreation and Preservation

**Funding Requested:** \$13M (House Report, 36)

**Program:** National Trails System

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** National Park Service, Park Service Operations

**Funding Requested:** \$22.18M (at minimum, \$18.856M from House passed bill)(House Report, 36)

**Report Language Requested:**

- (Senate Report, 39) National Trails System.—The Committee understands the importance of providing adequate funding to develop and maintain the National Trails System for future generations to enjoy. The Committee urges the Service to continue its efforts to support construction and maintenance projects and volunteer coordination efforts, including activities in support of non-unit National Scenic Trails.
- (House Report, 35) El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail.—The Committee encourages the Service to emphasize and increase collaborations with local non-profit organizations to support research and renewal efforts of the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail

**Program:** National Park Service Staffing

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** National Park Service

**Report Language Requested:**

- (Senate Report, 34) The recommendation fully funds the budget request to hire more than 1,559 new employees across the Service to restore losses in staff capacity suffered over the past several years that have limited the ability of the Service to address challenges including increased visitation and impacts of climate change... NPS Operations: The recommendation meets the requested funding level to restore staffing capacity across the system, and in those efforts the Service is directed to focus on building a workforce that reflects the diversity of America.

**Program:** Volunteers in Parks/Youth Partnership Programs

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** National Park Service, Visitor Services/Park Partnership Support Functions

**Funding Requested:** \$7.711M (At a minimum, maintain FY22 funding levels) (Senate Report, 36)

**Report Language Requested:**

- (Senate Report, 36) The recommendation provides \$7,711,000 for funding volunteers in parks programs, interpretation and education programs, and youth partnership programs. The recommendation also provides not less than enacted level for the Indian Youth Service Corps.

**Program:** Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership

**Department:** Department of Interior

**Agency/Account:** National Park Service, State Conservation Grants

**Funding Requested:** \$125M (House Report, 153; Senate Report, 166)

## **US Geological Survey**

**Program:** National Digital Trail Project

**Department:** U.S. Geological Survey

**Agency/Account:** U.S. Geological Survey, Core Science Systems

**Funding Requested:** \$1.5M (House Report, 47)

**Report Language Requested:**

- (House Report, 47) The recommendation also includes \$10,000,000 for the Federal climate data portal, \$7,722,000 for Alaska mapping and map modernization, \$730,000 for geospatial and geologic research and collection on tribal lands, \$1,900,000 for the United States Board on Geographic Names, and *\$1,500,000 for the National Digital Trails project.*

Thank you for considering the above requests. For additional information please contact Tyler Ray, American Hiking Society, [tray@americanhiking.org](mailto:tray@americanhiking.org).

Sincerely,

American Hiking Society

American Trails

American Motorcyclist Association

Back Country Horsemen of America

Equine Land Conservation Resource

International Mountain Bicycling Association

National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance

Partnership for the National Trails System

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy