

**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 ±
the 230 Organizations and Entities Below**

Chair Merkley, Ranking Murkowski, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of American Hiking Society and the millions of trail users our collective 240 organizations and entities represent who spend their time, money, and energy to get out on trails for recreation, health and wellness, and to volunteer, we thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of adequately funding our nation's trails and public lands to ensure access for all. We ask the Committee to adopt the following 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. Appropriations for federal land management agencies requested herein, coupled with the significant resources provided by non-profit partners, serve to accelerate collective stewardship of our nation's public lands and waters, and enhance climate adaptability.

Summary of Requests

Forest Service:

- *Capital Improvement and Maintenance (CMTL), Trails at \$30M, including \$15M for National Scenic and Historic Trails, and funding for the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Trail Partner Funding. In order to support adequate funding for all Forest Service trails and to avoid a reduction in the existing budget for non-National Scenic and Historic Trails managed by the Forest Service, increases for non-National Scenic and Historic Trails should occur in parity with the rate of increases for National Scenic and Historic Trails;*
- *At, minimum \$70M to fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness;*
- *At least \$10M to fund Legacy Roads & Trails, with support for Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative (WWRI) coalition request of \$100M;*

Bureau of Land Management:

- *Funding at \$15M for National Trails System Line Item;*
- *National Conservation Lands at \$78.145M, but a minimum level funding of FY24 Senate proposed at \$65M;*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

- *Refuge Visitor Services at least \$86.114M;*
- *Support Infrastructure-National Partnership funding;*

National Park Service:

- *Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at \$15M;*
- *Park Service Operations for the National Trails System at a minimum of \$20.964M;*
- *Volunteers in Parks programs at a minimum of FY23 levels, including dedicated funding to the National Trails System;*
- *Visitor Services sub-activity, Youth Partnership Programs at a minimum of \$10.95M, including an acknowledgment of the benefits for trails;*
- *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program, at a min \$125M;*

US Geological Survey:

- *\$1.5M to fully fund the National Digital Trail Project (NDTP)*

Forest Service Recommendation:

National Forest trails benefit everyone and receive increasing public use each year. Collectively, the National Forests provide 159,000 miles of trails for activities ranging from hiking, biking, horseback riding, off-highway vehicle usage, groomed winter trails for cross-country skiing and snowmobiling, and access points for "river trails." Roughly 120,000 of the 159,000 miles of trails are in need of some form of maintenance or repair.

Program: Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$30M

FY24 Enacted Level: \$20M (House bill was \$25M)

Department: USDA

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

Report Language requested:

- In order to support adequate funding for all Forest Service trails and to avoid a reduction in the existing budget for non-National Scenic and Historic Trails managed by the Forest Service, increases for non-National Scenic and Historic Trails should occur in parity with the rate of increases for National Scenic and Historic Trails
- The committee supports continued funding for the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Trail Partner Funding Program. Much of the Forest Service’s trail work is accomplished today by volunteer groups and non-profit partners. The Forest Service has a successful Trail Stewardship Partner Funding challenge cost share program that leverages federal funding by 3 to 5:1.

Program: Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness

FY25 Funding Level Requested: At, minimum \$70M **FY24 Proposed Level (House):** \$60M

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

Program: Legacy Roads & Trails

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$10M minimum **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$6M (House bill was \$10M)

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

BLM Recommendation:

The BLM manages 13,468 miles of trails over 245 million acres —more land than any other federal land management agency and contains a diversity of landscapes that often provide the public less structured but nonetheless diverse recreational opportunities. BLM recreation resources and visitor services support strong local economies. More than 120 urban centers and thousands of rural towns (comprising 64 million people) are located within 25 miles of BLM lands.

Program: Bureau of Land Management National Trails System Line-Item Funding

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$15M **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$11M (House bill was \$15M)

Department: Bureau of Land Management **Agency/Account:** Trails

Program: National Conservation Lands

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$78.145M, but a minimum \$63.599M

FY24 Enacted Level: \$59.135M (Senate proposed FY24 level was \$63.599M)

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

FWS Recommendation:

Refuge Visitor Services provides funding for trail maintenance across FWS-managed land. Located in every U.S. state and territory, and within an hour’s drive of nearly every major U.S. city, National Wildlife Refuges provide incredible opportunities for outdoor recreation, including hiking, hunting, fishing, birding, boating, and nature photography across 2,500 miles of trails. More than 37,000 jobs are reliant on refugees. Funding at a level of \$93M will provide for trail maintenance across the land and water trails, refuges, wetlands, and hatcheries, including eleven National Scenic and Historic Trails and forty-four National Recreation Trails.

Program: Visitor Services

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$86.114M **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$76M (Senate bill was \$80.839M)

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

Program: Infrastructure

Department: Department of Interior **Agency/Account:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Infrastructure

Report Language requested: National Partnerships are an important component to maintain trail infrastructure across Fish and Wildlife Service sites. The Department shall continue support for National Partnerships and prioritize funding to leverage these partnerships.

NPS Recommendation:

National Parks, and the world-class experiences their 18,844 miles of trails provide, are one of the most unifying forces in America. Well-maintained trails improve the quality of visitor experiences and enhance visitor safety.

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

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$15M **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$13M

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

Report Language requested: Within, National Recreation and Preservation, \$13.845M for the Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance program.

Program: National Trails System

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$20.964M **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$18.856M

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

Report Language requested:

- Within, Park Service Operations, \$20.964M for administration of the National Trails System.
- National Trails System-The Committees understand the importance of providing adequate funding for the development and maintenance of the National Trails System for future generations to enjoy. The Committees urge the Service to continue its efforts to develop National Scenic and Historic Trails, not limited to supporting construction and maintenance projects and volunteer coordination efforts, and to recognize equal "unit" status of National Scenic Trails.

Program: Volunteers in Parks

FY25 Funding Level Requested: Maintain FY23 increase, at minimum **FY24 Enacted Level:** Level

Department: Interior **Agency/Account:** National Park Service, Park Partnership Support Functions

Report Language Requested: The committee recommends funding through Volunteers in Parks be provided for volunteer support of the National Trails System, National Rivers, and National Park Service trails.

Program: Youth Partnership Programs

FY25 Funding Level Requested: Maintain FY23 increase, at minimum **FY24 Enacted Level:** Level

Department: Interior **Agency/Account:** National Park Service, Visitor Services

Report Language Requested: The committee recommends funding through the Youth Partnership Programs be provided for support of the National Trails System, National Rivers, and National Park Service trails.

Program: Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership

FY25 Funding Level Requested: At least \$125M **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$125M

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

Report Language Requested: The committee recommends funding through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program be provided for support of trails, including the National Trails System.

U.S. Geological Survey Recommendation:

Program: National Digital Trail Project

FY25 Funding Level Requested: \$1.5M **FY24 Enacted Level:** \$1.35M

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

(Across Agencies) Restore Staffing for Federal Land Managers Recommendation:

Federal land agency field staff continue to suffer from previous job reductions, and the resulting lack of oversight is now a roadblock to proper collaborative management between federal land agencies and volunteer-based partners. Crucial projects are stalled waiting for plan review or other necessary agency expertise, such as environmental studies, design, and other work that is above the ability and purview of trail groups. Delays have lasted years, contributing to the maintenance backlog and, ultimately, increasing the cost to taxpayers for this necessary work as trails continue to deteriorate at an even greater rate.

We must improve agency staffing levels to meet the need. Agency front-line managers provide crucial and unparalleled expertise and oversight to nonprofit trail partners. This guidance is key to the success of nonprofits

as they take on more of the management responsibility for our trails and recruit, train, and marshal thousands of volunteers in public service. Increasing agency staffing levels is essential to completing the complex work of managing and maintaining trails and public lands.

Beyond increases in land management agency staffing, we ask the committee to include report language to audit the centralized agency hiring practices, which have been identified as a roadblock to filling thousands of crucial vacancies. Centralizing hiring prevents land managers from quickly filling vacancies from local talent pools. The cumbersome process slows hiring so much that vacancies often go unfilled. In many cases, by the time a job is offered, the candidate has already moved on. More hiring flexibility would help local land managers fill vacancies quickly.

A' Tuscan Estate Bed & Breakfast
Access for All, LLC
Ala Kahakai Trail Association
Alaska Trails
American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
American Discovery Trail Society
American River Parkway Foundation
American Rivers
American Society of Landscape Architects
Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort
Anza Trail Foundation
Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arizona Peace Trail, Inc.
Arizona Trail Association
Arkansas Parks and Recreation
Foundation
Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico
Back Country Horsemen of Oregon
Back Country Horsemen of Texas
Back Country Horsemen of Utah -
Southwest Chapter
Front Range Back Country Horsemen
Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen
Northern Colorado Back Country Horsemen
Rocky Mountain Back Country Horsemen
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
Beaver Island Archipelago Trail Association
Bike Walk RVA
Bitter Root Cultural Heritage Trust /
qa' ánin 'ískit [respect the trail]
Black Canyon National Recreation Trail
Blue Ridge Horseman's Association
Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee
Buffalo Bayou Trail Coalition
California Mountain Biking Coalition
CalWild
Capital Trails Coalition
Cascade Volunteers
Central Oregon Trail Alliance (COTA)
Chamber of Commerce of Smyth
County Inc
Chautauqua County Partnership for
Economic Growth
Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance
City of Clarksville Parks and Recreation
City of Fitchburg
City of Glendale, Trails & Open
Space Program
City of Hot Springs- Parks & Trails
Clear Trails
Colfax Greenway Committee
Colorado Mountaineers
Community Land Shepherds
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association
Conservation Lands Foundation
Conservation Minnesota
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
The Corps Network
County Line Riders of Catalina, Inc
Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail
Cycle Yamhill County
Cyclotour Guide Books
D|G Studios
Delaware River Greenway Partnership
Desperados Trail Scouts
Dickinson County Trails Board
Dirt Dojo LLC
Eagle Rock Shredders
Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance

East Coast Greenway Alliance
Elkins Creek Horse Camp & Tack
Shop LLC
Elkins Creek Horse Club
Enchanted Circle Trails Association
Endangered Species Coalition
Evansville-Area Trails Coalition, Inc.
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition
Forest Preserve District of DuPage
County, IL
ForeverGreen Trails
Fort Wayne Trails Inc.
Friends of Chessie Trail
Friends of Constitution Park Ossipee
Friends of Douglas-fir National Monument
Jason Grodman
Jodie Adams
Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Friends of the North Pikes Creek Wetlands
Gilmer County Economic
Development Association
Greater Hells Canyon Council - Blue
Mountains Trail
Groundwork NRG
Headwaters Trails Alliance
Health by Design
Higher Ground USA, Inc.
Ice Age Trail Alliance
Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs
IMBA Team Dirt Chapter
Intentional Hiking
Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority
Klickitat Trail Conservancy
Kline Consulting LLC
The Landing LLC
Legacy Trails LLC
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
Lewis and Clark Trust, Inc.
Lincoln City Chamber of Commerce
Love in Motion
Lowlifes Respectable Citizens' Club
Mac Market
Maine Trail Riders Association, Inc. (Equine)
Maine Trails Coalition
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Mayes County HOPE
Mayes County Trails Alliance
Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Monterey Off Road Cycling Association
The Mountaineers
Mountain Surf Creative
Multidisciplinary Education for the
Environment
Nantahala Area SORBA
National Coast Trail Association
National Washington Rochambeau
Revolutionary Route Association
Nature Trails
The Naples Trail Collective
Nevada Outdoor School
New Hampshire Rail Trails Coalition
New Mexico Sportsmen
New York Bicycling Coalition
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
Newell Improvement Coalition, Inc. 501 C3
Newport Chamber of Commerce
Newtown Parks and Recreation

Northwest Trail Alliance
Northwest Trail Riders Association
Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association, Inc.
NorthWoods Stewardship Center
Oakridge Trails Alliance
Ohio Mountain Bike Alliance
Ohio Trails Partnership
Oregon Equestrian Trails
Oregon Horse Council
Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council
Oregon State Snowmobile
Association
Oregon Trails Coalition
Oregon-California Trails Association
Orogenesis Collective
OuterSpatial
Over The Bars Mountain Bike Club
Overmountain Victory Trail Association
Ozark Trail Association
Pacific Crest Trail Association
Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive Association
Pelican Path Committee
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
PeopleForBikes
Pike County Fiscal Court
Pima Trails Association
Potomac Bridle and Hiking Trails Association
Prime Desert Woodland Preserve
Princeton Open Space Committee
Quad Cities Bicycle Club
Red Line Parkway Initiative
REI Co-op
Reserve Concepts
Resilient Headwaters
Rio Grande Indivisible, New Mexico
Rocky Mountain Field Institute
Sage Trail Alliance
San Diego Mountain Biking Association
San Francisco Public works
San Jose Conservation Corps
San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
Schaumburg & Polk, Inc.
Seeds of Stewardship
Seeley Trails Organization
Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
The Sierra Club
Siskiyou Upland Trails Association
Sitka Trail Works
Smith River Alliance
Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists
South Coast Tours LLC
Southern Kettles Off Road Riders (SKORR)
Southern Nevada Mountain Bike Association
Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association
Southwest Montana Bike Association
Southwest Montana Mountain Bike Association
Stark County Bicycle Club
The Street Trust
SWMMA
Tahoe Rim Trail Association
Teaneck Creek Conservancy
Terra-Strata, LLC
Thrive Allen County
Thrive Kansas
TORC
Town of Awendaw, SC
Town of Breckenridge Open Space & Trails
Trail Access Project
Trail Keepers of Oregon
Trail Riders of Today
Trailkeepers of Oregon

Trails Inspire, LLC
Travel Lane County
Traverse Area Recreation &
Transportation (TART) Trails
Tri Town Trail
Trinity Coalition
Truckee Meadows Trails supported by the
Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation
Trust for Public Land
Tuleyome
Unified Government of Athens-Clarke
County Leisure Services Department
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
Urbana Park District
Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
The Vermont Mountain Bike Association
Virginia 4 Wheel Drive Association
Virginia Bicycling Federation
Visit McMinnville
Walk, Bike & Hike Committee, Canton, MA
Wallowa Mountains Hells Canyon
Trails Association
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Washington Trails Association
West Virginia Land Trust
Western Riding Club
WI Horse Council District 1
Wild Alakea - Alicia Fields
The Wilderness Need Association
The Wilderness Society
Willamette Valley Visitors Association
Wilson Creek Trail Coalition
Wisconsin Non-motorized Recreation
& Transportation Trails Council