

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 • Rails-to-Trails Conservancy + 251 Organizations and Entities

Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Merkley, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of American Hiking Society and 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 Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of adequately funding our nation's trails and public lands. 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 to provide economic generating outdoor recreation for your constituents. Appropriations and adequate staffing 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, resulting in economic growth and development from rural gateway communities to urban centers.

Summary of Request

Forest Service:

- *Capital Improvement and Maintenance (CMTL), Trails at \$22M, including funding for the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Trail Partner Funding Program*
 - Report Language: 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, an increase for non-National Scenic and Historic Trails, if any, should occur in parity with the rate of increase, if any, for National Scenic and Historic Trails;
 - Report Language: The committee supports continued funding for the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Trail Partner Funding Program. Nearly half of the Forest Service's trail work is accomplished today by volunteer groups and non-profit partners. The Forest Service's successful Trail Stewardship challenge cost share agreement leverages federal funding via a 5:1 return on investment.
- *At minimum \$58M to fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness;*
- *At least \$6M to fund Legacy Roads & Trails,*
 - Report Language: The committee supports continued funding for the Legacy Trails Grant Program provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (BIL). Much of the Forest Service's trail work is accomplished today by volunteer groups and non-profit partners. The Legacy Trails Grant Program leverages federal funding via its 8:1 return on investment.

Bureau of Land Management:

- *Funding at \$11M for National Trails System Line Item;*
- *National Conservation Lands at minimum \$78M*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

- *Refuge Visitor Services at least \$78.969M;*
- *Support Infrastructure-National Partnership funding;*

National Park Service:

- *Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at \$13.47M;*
- *Park Service Operations for the National Trails System at a minimum of \$22.9M;*
- *Volunteers in Parks programs at a minimum of FY25 levels,*
- *Visitor Services sub-activity, Youth Partnership Programs at a minimum of FY25 levels, including an acknowledgment of the benefits for trails;*
- *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership at a minimum of \$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 164,000 miles of trails are in need of some form of maintenance or repair.

Program: Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$22M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$20M

Department: US Department of Agriculture

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

Report Language requested: See Summary on pg. 1;

Program: Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness

FY26 Funding Level Requested: At, minimum \$58M to fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness;

FY25 Enacted Level: \$45M

Department: US Department of Agriculture

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

Program: Legacy Roads & Trails

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$6M at a minimum

FY25 Enacted Level: \$6M

Department: US Department of Agriculture

Agency/Account: Forest Service, Legacy Roads & Trails

Report Language Requested: See Summary on pg. 1

Bureau of Land Management 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

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$11M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$11M

Department: Bureau of Land Management

Agency/Account: Trails

Program: National Conservation Lands

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$78M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$59.135M

Department: Bureau of Land Management

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

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 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 refuges. 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

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$78.9694M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$76M

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.

National Park Service 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)

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$13.47M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$13M

Department: Department of 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, Park Service Operations

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$22.9M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$18.856M

Department: Department of Interior

Agency/Account: National Park Service, Park Service Operations

Report Language requested:

- Within, Park Service Operations, \$22.9M 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

FY26 Funding Level Requested: Maintain FY25 level funding

FY25 Enacted Level: Level funding with FY24

Department: Department of 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

FY26 Funding Level Requested: Maintain FY25 level funding.

FY25 Enacted Level: Level funding with FY24

Department: Department of 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.

US Geological Survey Recommendation:

Program: National Digital Trail Project

FY26 Funding Level Requested: \$1.35M

FY25 Enacted Level: \$1.35M

Department: U.S. Geological Survey

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

(Across Agencies) Protect and Improve Staffing for Federal Land Managers Recommendation:

Federal land agency field staffs 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 protect and 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. Improving agency staffing levels is essential to completing the complex work of managing and maintaining trails and public lands.

Beyond improving 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.

Ala Kahakai Trail Association
Alaska Trails
Alburritos Mexican Restaurant
Alliance for Morris County Parks
American Chestnut Land Trust
American Council of
Snowmobile Associations
American Discovery Trail
Society
American Society of Landscape
Architects
Anza Trail Foundation
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arizona Trail Association
Back Country Horsemen of Blue
Ridge
Back Country Horsemen of
Minnesota
Back Country Horsemen of New
Mexico, Pecos Chapter
Back Country Horsemen of
Oregon

Back Country Horsemen of
Pisgah
Back Country Horsemen of Utah
- Southwest Chapter
Backcountry Horsemen of
America and Oregon Sourdough
Chapter
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
BIKES Club of Snohomish
County
Blackstone Valley NEMBA
Borderlands Adventure Club
BVNEMBA
Camelot Tools LLC
Cape Cod NEMBA
Capital Off Road Pathfinders
Carolina Trailbuilders
Cascade Loop Association-
National Scenic Byway
Cascade Volcanoes Chapter
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Catskill Center for Conservation
and Development

Champion Local Schools
Chautauqua County Equestrian
Trail Sys, Inc
Cheney Rail Trail Steward
Chequamegon Area Mountain
Bike Association
Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance
City of Clarksville Parks and
Recreation
City of Fitchburg
Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe
& Sustainable Community, Inc.
CLEAR TRAILS
COFEM
Color Country National Scenic
Trail Concept
Colorado Mountain Bike
Association
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists
Association
Connecticut Forest & Park
Association (CFPA)
Conservation Minnesota

Continental Divide Trail Coalition
CORA
Cornucopia Trails Club; Bayfield
Area Trails
County Line Riders of Catalina,
Inc
Cross New Hampshire
Adventure Trail
CT Cycling Advancement
Program
Cycle Yamhill County
D.Whitmore Excavating LLC
Dan River Basin Association
Delaware River Greenway
Partnership
Deschutes Trails Coalition
Design Scapes
Dickinson County Trails Board
Eco-Counter
El Camino Real de los Tejas
National Historic Trail
Association
Elizabeth River Trail Foundation
Enchanted Circle Trails
Association
Endangered Species Coalition
Evergreen Mountain Bike
Alliance
Every Body Outside Consulting
Excavation Safety Alliance, LLC
Fairfield County Northeast
Mountain Bike Association
Federoulers
ForeverGreen Trails
Fort Wayne Trails
Franconia Inn & Outdoor Center
Friends of Constitution Park
Ossipee
Friends of Governor Dodge
State Park
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks
Friends of Harlow Lake
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of Stevens Creek Trail

Friends of the Breitenbush
Cascades
Friends of the Chessie Trail
Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Friends of the Mount Vernon
Trail
Friends of the North Pikes Creek
Wetlands
Front Range Trails Conservancy
Glacier Peak Institute
Go Beyond Racing
Greater Arkansas River Nature
Association
Greater Portland New England
Mountain Bike Association
Green Infrastructure Center Inc.
GRH Trails
Guadalupe River Park
Conservancy
Hamblen Farm
Headwaters Trails Alliance
Higher Ground
Hiking Trails for America
Horsemen's Council of IL
IMPD Youth Mountain Bike
Project
Inland Woods + Trails
Intentional Hiking
Interior Trails LLC
Iron Ore Heritage Recreation
Authority
Island Trails Network
Kennebunkport Conservation
Trust
Kenton County Parks &
Recreation
Kline Consulting LLC
La Porte City Park Foundation
La Veta Trails
Lake Ray Roberts Equestrian
Trails Association
Lakeshore Mountain Biking
Sisters
League of American Bicyclists

Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance
Linn County, Iowa, Conservation
Los Padres ForestWatch
Lowelifes Respectable Citizens'
Club
Luck Saddlery & Outfitters
Ludlow Area Sports Trails
Mad River Path
Maine Bureau of Parks and
Lands
Maine Recreation and Parks
Association
Maine Snowmobile Association
Maine Trail Riders Association,
Inc. (Equine)
Maine Trails Coalition
Marcus Garvey Park Alliance
Maricopa Trail+ Park Foundation
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Mar-Mac Human Powered
Trails, Inc.
Midpeninsula Regional Open
Space District
Millbury Nature Trails
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Missourians for Responsible
Transportation
MORE
Mountain Bike the Tetons
Mountain Surf Creative LLC
Mountain Trails Foundation
Mt. Washington Community
Development Corp (MWDCD)
MTB Atlanta SORBA
National Coast Trail Association
National Washington
Rochambeau Revolutionary
Route Association
Nature for All (Los Angeles)
NEMBA North Shore Chapter
NEMBA Pemi Valley Chapter
Nevada All-State Trail Riders
Nevada Outdoor School

New England Mountain Bike Association
New Hampshire Snowmobile Association
New Mexico Sportsmen
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
NEWBA
Next 100 Coalition
NH Rail Trails Coalition
Nonmotorized Recreation and Transportation Trails Council
North Country Trail Association
Northeast Mountain Biking Association
Northeast Passage
Northern Colorado Back Country Horsemen
Northwest Trail Alliance
Northwestern Ohio Rails-To-Trails Association, Inc.
Ohio Mountain Bike Alliance
Orange County Mountain Bike Association
Oregon Equestrian Trails
Oregon Motorcycle Rider's Association
Oregon Trails Coalition
Oregon-California Trails Association
Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech
Over the Bars Mountain Bike Club
Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA)
Ozark Trail Association
Pacific Crest Trail Association
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
Piscataquis County NEMBA
Plymouth NH Conservation Commission
Potomac Bridle and Hiking Trail Association

Rails to Trails of Wayne County Ohio
Red Line Parkway Initiative
Rhody Rovers
Rim Country Mountain Bike Association
Rio Grande Indivisible, New Mexico
Rio Grande Valley Broadband. of the Great Ols Broads for Wilderness
Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association
Rochester Accessible Adventures
Rocktree Trails
Rocky Mountain Back Country Horsemen
Routt County Riders
Ruff Riders
Sage Trail Alliance
Salmonberry Trail Foundation
Salt Hotel and pub Ilwako Washington
San Diego Mountain Biking Association
San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
Santa Monica Mountains Fund
Seacoast NEMBA
SEEDS Ecology and Education Centers
September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance
Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
Sidewalks
Sierra Club
Sinuosity: Flowing Trails
Siskiyou Upland Trails Association
Sitka Trail Works
SmallBox
Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists

Southern NH NEMBA
Southern Trailriders Association
Sports Backers
Sunrise Trail Coalition
Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association (TAMBA)
Tahoe Rim Trail Association
TAP
The Corps Network
The Greenway Collaborative, Inc
The Mountaineers
The Nature Conservancy Maine
The Santa Fe to Taos Thru-Hike
The Vermont Mountain Bike Association
The Wilderness Society
Tillamook Coast Visitors Association
Top City Trails Alliance
Town of Breckenridge Open Space & Trails
Trail Access Project
Trail Association of Southern Utah
Trails Inspire, LLC
Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) Trails
Trinidad Trails Alliance
Trinity Coalition / Trinity River National Water Trail
Tri-State Trails
Trust for Public Land
Tucson Off-Road Cyclists & Activists
UNCG Outdoor Adventures
Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance
VDEQ
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Vermont Academy
Vermont Huts Association
Vermont Mountain Bike Association

Vermont Outdoor Business
Alliance
Virginia Bicycling Federation
Vision Iron County Parks
Recreation and Open Space
Team
Visit Eau Claire
Volunteers for Outdoor California
Wasatch Trails Foundation
Washington Trails Association
West Michigan Mountain Bike
Association
West Virginia Land Trust
Western States Trail Foundation
White Men for Racial Justice
Wildlife for All
Wilton Partners LLC
WinMan Trails Inc.
Women on Wheels
Wyoming Pathways
York County Economic Alliance
York Land