

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

November 21, 2025,

Re: Trail Related Funding Levels and Report Language in FY26 Interior and Related Appropriations Bill

Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chair(s) Murkowski and Simpson and Ranking Member(s) Merkley and Pingree:

On behalf of the millions of trail users our 259 collective organizations represent, who invest their time and resources to get out on trails for recreation, health and wellness, and to volunteer, we thank the Committees for advancing legislation to fund our nation's trails and public lands.

As follow-up to our Public Witness/Outside Witness Testimony submission from earlier this year, as Congress works together on a final bill, we ask you to adopt the following trail specific funding levels and report language that are included in the respective House and Senate versions of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies funding bills.

We write in support of the topline agency funding levels proposed in the Senate bill and the trail specific programs and report language below included in the House and Senate report language and bill text.

Programs with identical proposed funding levels or report language have been omitted for brevity.

Forest Service

Program: Capital Improvement and Maintenance (CMTL), Trails

House Report: pg. 252

Funding Level: \$22M

Program: Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness

House Report: pg(s). 76, 251

Funding Level: \$48M

Bureau of Land Management

Program: National Conservation Lands, National Trails System

Senate Report: pg. 19, 179

Funding Level: \$11M

Report Language: "National Conservation Lands.—The Committee recommends \$59,135,000 for National Conservation Lands, including \$11,000,000 for National Scenic and Historic Trails. National Conservation Lands conserve the Nation's heritage and this funding will allow increased inventory, monitoring, and protection of cultural resources; enhance proper management of all resources; and provide a quality visitor

experience through recreational access. Furthermore, this funding ensures that units in the National Conservation Lands system are adequately staffed with land managers, law enforcement officers, and cultural resources experts.”

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Program: Refuge Visitor Services

Senate Report: pg. 27, 181

Funding Level: \$76M

House Report: pg. 21-22

Report Language: The Committee directs continued management of the more than 2,500 miles of trails, including significant portions of 15 National Scenic and Historic trails, across 860 miles of public lands in 21 States that the Service oversees.

Program: Infrastructure Management- National Partnerships

House Report: pg. 21-22

Report Language: “The Committee encourages the Service to consider cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations that support trails through Infrastructure-National Partnerships.”

National Park Service

Program: Park Service Operations, National Trails System

Funding Level: \$18.856M

House Report: pg. 27-28

Report Language: “Appalachian Scenic Trail.—The Committee is aware that many parks, including the Appalachian Scenic Trail, are experiencing increased visitation and support needs and encourages the Service to include sufficient resources in future budget requests to address these needs.”

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail.—The Committee notes the importance of the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail and encourages the Service to include sufficient resources in future budget requests to ensure a continued positive visitor experience.

Senate Report: pg. 42

Report Language: “Newly-Designated National Scenic Trails.—The Committee notes the designation of three new national scenic trails as units of the park system, including the Ice Age, the New England, and the North Country National Scenic Trails. The Committee notes that the Service has incorporated ongoing funding for these newly designated trails into the Service’s base operations budget and directs the Service to ensure that commensurate access to resources is provided to them.”

Program: Volunteers in Parks

Funding Level: \$7.71M

Senate Report: pg. 43

Program: Youth Partnership Program, Visitor Services

Funding Level: \$14.665M

Senate Report: pg. 43

U.S. Geological Services

Program: National Digital Trail Project

Funding Level: \$1.35M

House Report: pg. 37

Report Language: "Within the amount provided, \$1,350,000 is for the National Digital Trails project."

Agency Staffing

Department of Interior Staffing

Senate Report pg. 9:

"Staffing.—The Committee is greatly concerned with the actions taken regarding staffing across the Department of the Interior and the other agencies funded in this bill. The staff are the lifeblood of the Department and these agencies and the uninformed manner in which staffing reductions have been imposed in the name of efficiency is anything but efficient. The Committee expects the Department of the Interior and the other agencies funded in this bill to maintain the requisite staffing levels to ensure that operations are not deleteriously affected or have a negative impact on the economic output and support to States, localities, and tribes."

Senate Bill pg. 9:

"Agency Budget Staff.—The Committee notes the value of having a full set of budget staff maintained at specific agencies in addition to having department-level budget office staff and therefore directs each agency funded by this act to maintain its own separate budget office at the agency level. The Committee notes that section 447 of the bill restricts transfers of funds among accounts with the effect of moving personnel and affirm that agency budget staff is covered within that provision."

Forest Service Staffing

Senate Report pg. 138:

"The Forest Service shall maintain staffing levels by hiring, retaining, and rehiring after separations in order to fulfill the mission required under title 7, title 16, title 30, title 43, and title 54, United States Code, including to protect natural and cultural resources, provide and maintain appropriate access and recreation for visitors, provide safety precautions for visitors and staff, maintain physical and natural infrastructure, provide information and respond to stakeholders and the general public, conduct tribal consultation, provide for administrative support, administer forestry assistance programs, provide technical assistance to states,

tribes and private landowners, manage energy and minerals resources, and carry out other activities in support of effectively operating the National Forest System and carrying out programs administered by the Forest Service in a timely manner.”

Bureau of Land Management Staffing

Senate Bill pg. 8:

“That the Bureau of Land Management shall maintain staffing levels by hiring, retaining, and rehiring after separations in order to fulfill the mission required under title 16, title 30, title 43, and title 54, United States Code, including to protect natural and cultural resources, provide and maintain appropriate access and recreation for visitors, provide safety precautions for visitors and staff, maintain physical and natural infrastructure, provide information and respond to stakeholders and the general public, conduct tribal consultation, provide for administrative support, manage energy and minerals resources, and carry out other activities in support of effectively managing the National Conservation Lands and other public lands in a timely manner.”

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Staffing

Senate Bill pg. 15:

“That the United States Fish and Wildlife Service shall maintain staffing levels by hiring, retaining, and rehiring after separations in order to fulfill the mission required under title 16, title 43, and title 54, United States Code, including to protect natural and cultural resources, provide and maintain appropriate access and recreation for visitors, provide safety precautions for visitors and staff, maintain physical and natural infrastructure, provide information and respond to stakeholders and the general public, conduct tribal consultation, provide for administrative support, enforce Federal wildlife laws, protect species, uphold Acts, treaties, conventions and agreements to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats, providing professional expertise to other agencies and international and private partners, and carry out other activities in support of effectively operating the National Fish Hatchery System and National Wildlife Refuge System and carrying out programs administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in a timely manner.”

Senate Report pg. 28:

“Staffing of the National Wildlife Refuge System.—Over the past decade, the Refuge System’s full-time equivalent [FTE] staffing has decreased while the Refuge System has continued to grow. The Committee is concerned with the current level of FTEs within the Refuge System. Further, within 60 days of enactment of this act, and monthly thereafter, the Department and the Service are directed to brief the Committee on Refuge System operations, to include staffing levels by refuge, visitor data by refuge, and other data necessary to convince the Committee that operations have not been and will not be deleteriously affected in an effort to make the Refuge System operate more efficiently.

Further, the Committee directs the Service to submit, no later than 90 days after the enactment of this act, a report detailing by month: (1) how many permanent, probationary, and temporary positions were terminated during Fiscal Year 2025 and in which refuge units or complexes they served, their titles, and whether they were permanent, probationary, or temporary staff; (2) how many permanent, probationary, and temporary positions remain filled and in which refuge units or complexes they serve, their titles, and whether they are

permanent, probationary, or temporary staff; and (3) which Refuge System units or complexes have two or fewer staffers, what the filled positions at those refuges are, and if those staff are permanent, probationary or temporary. Within the funding recommended for National Wildlife Refuge System, the Committee encourages the Service to prioritize hiring and retention of FTEs particularly to fill longstanding vacancies in the refuge system such as at the Northern Maine Wildlife Refuge Complex and Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex.”

National Park Service Staffing

Senate Bill pg. 23:

“The National Park Service shall maintain staffing levels by hiring, retaining, and rehiring after separations in order to fulfill the mission required under title 16, title 43, and title 54, United States Code, including to protect natural and cultural resources, provide and maintain appropriate access and recreation for visitors, provide safety precautions for visitors and staff, maintain physical and natural infrastructure, provide information and respond to stakeholders and the general public, conduct tribal consultation, provide for administrative support, administer historic and other preservation programs, and carry out other activities in support of effectively operating the National Park System and carrying out programs administered by the National Park Service in a timely manner.”

Senate Report pg. 40:

“NPS Staffing.—While national parks generate billions of dollars of economic output annually for the U.S. economy that helps boost States, localities, and tribes, visiting a national park is often a “bucket list” adventure or a once in a lifetime opportunity for some. The Committee is concerned about actions that could potentially lessen Americans’ ability to visit parks or have a safe experience while visiting parks, and that otherwise could depreciate the value of time spent exploring some of America’s great natural wonders. Within 60 days of enactment of this act, and monthly thereafter, the Department and the Service are directed to brief the Committee on park operations, to include staffing levels by park, visitor data by park, and other data necessary to convince the Committee that operations and natural and cultural resource protection have not been and will not be deleteriously affected in an effort to make parks operate more efficiently.”

Please contact Tyler Ray, Senior Director for Programs and Advocacy, American Hiking Society, tray@americanhiking.org to discuss further.

Sincerely,

American Hiking Society
American Trails
American Motorcyclist Association
Back Country Horsemen of America

Ala Kahakai Trail Association
Alaska Trails
Alburritos Mexican Restaurant
Alliance for Morris County Parks
American Chestnut Land Trust
American Council of Snowmobile Associations

Equine Land Conservation Resource
International Mountain Bicycling Association
National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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
Lowelife's 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 (MWCDC)
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 Old 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 Parkes 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 Trust