

Submission on behalf of: Tyler Ray, Senior Director for Programs and Advocacy, American Hiking Society prepared for the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies addressing trail funding at the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Geological Survey

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 192 Organizations Below

Chair Merkley, Ranking Member Murkowski, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of American Hiking Society and the millions of trail users our 201 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 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 \$24M, including \$11.957M 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 all other Forest Service managed trails, increases for all other Forest Service Trails should occur in parity with the rate of increases for National Scenic and Historic Trails;*
- *\$58.575M to fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness;*
- *At least \$15M to fund Legacy Roads & Trails, with support for Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative (WWRI) coalition request of \$100M.*

Bureau of Land Management:

- *Funding at \$13.75M for National Trails System Line Item;*
- *National Conservation Lands at \$78.145M, but a minimum level funding of FY23 at \$61.499M*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

- *Refuge Visitor Services at least \$86.114M*

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 \$135M*

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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$24M

FY23 Level: \$20M

Department: Agriculture **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 all other Forest Service managed trails, increases for all other Forest Service 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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$58.575M at a minimum

FY23 Level: \$55M

Department: Agriculture

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

Program: Legacy Roads & Trails

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$6.39M at a minimum

FY23 Level: \$6M

Department: US Department of Agriculture

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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$ 13.75

FY23 Level: \$11M

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

Program: National Conservation Lands

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$78.145M, but a minimum \$61.499M

FY23 Level: \$61.499M

Department: Bureau of Land Management **Agency/Account:** BLM, 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 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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$86.114M

FY23 Level: \$80.859M

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

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)

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$15M

FY23 Level: \$13M

Department: Department of Interior **Agency/Account:** NPS, 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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$20.964M

FY23 Level: \$18.856M

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

Report Language requested:

- Within, Park Service Operations, \$22.18M 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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: Maintain FY23 increase, at minimum

FY23 Level: Unknown

Department: Department of Interior **Agency/Account:** NPS, 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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$10.95M

FY23 Level: Unknown

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

Bill Language requested:

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

FY24 Funding Level Requested: At least \$135M

FY23 Level: \$125M

Department: Department of 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.

US Geological Survey Recommendation:

Program: National Digital Trail Project

FY24 Funding Level Requested: \$1.5M

FY23 Level: \$1.35M

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

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

Federal land managers, including those overseeing recreation and trails programs across NPS, USFS, BLM, and FWS sites, continue to face staffing shortages impacting the ability to adequately manage, maintain, and conserve the nation's trails. Across the board land management agency staffing needs to be increased in order to support all aspects of trail management and maintenance, including volunteer engagement and partnerships, land acquisition, on the ground maintenance of trails systems that are desperately in need of attention to reduce maintenance backlogs, ensure that trails are safe and accessible, and address current and anticipated high levels of public use.

Access4Bikes Foundation
 Alaska Trails
 American Discovery Trail Society
 American Rivers
 American Society of Landscape Architects
 Anza Area Trail Town
 Appalachian Mountain Club
 Appalachian Trail Conservancy
 Arizona Trail Association
 Back Country Horsemen of America
 Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota
 Back Country Horsemen of Colorado
 Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico
 Back Country Horsemen of Oregon
 Back Country Horsemen of Texas
 Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead
 Back Country Horsemen of UT -
 Southwest Chapter
 Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen
 Northern Colorado Back Country
 Horsemen
 Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
 Bay State Trail Riders Association, Inc.
 Bike To The Sea .Org
 Black Hills Sustainable Living
 Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee
 California Mountain Biking Coalition
 California Trails Foundation
 CalWild
 Capital Trails Coalition
 Carolina Mountain Club
 The Chemeketans
 Chinook Associates
 Chinook Trail Association
 Choose Outdoors
 Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance
 City of Asheville, NC Greenway Committee
 City of Clarksville, TN Parks and Recreation
 Colorado Mountain Bike Association
 Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association
 Connecticut Forest & Park Association
 Conservation Minnesota
 Continental Divide Trail Coalition
 The Conservation Fund
 County Line Riders of Catalina, Inc
 Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail
 Dickinson County Trails Board
 Idaho Horse Council
 Dirt Dojo LLC
 Disabled Equestrians Organization
 Dishman Hills Conservancy
 East Coast Greenway Alliance
 EcoServants
 Elizabeth River Trail Foundation
 Enchanted Circle Trails Association
 Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail
 Evansville-Area Trails Coalition
 Farms and Barns Real Estate LLC
 Fitchburg Greenway Committee
 Floyd County Parks and Recreation
 Department
 Folsom Auburn Trail Riders Action Coalition
 (FATRAC)
 Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition
 ForeverGreen Trails
 Fort Wayne Trails, Inc.
 Friends of Balcones Canyonlands National
 Wildlife Refuge
 Friends Of Blackwater, Inc.
 Friends of Constitution Park Ossipee
 Friends Of Cross Bar SRMA
 Friends of North Idaho Trails
 Friends of Pocahontas State Park
 Friends of the Cheat
 Friends of the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage
 Trail
 Friends of the Kanawha Trace
 Friends of Weiser River Trail Inc
 G5 Trail Collective
 Granite Mountain Riders
 Grant Creek Trails Association
 Great Springs Project
 Hayward Area Recreation and Park District
 Health by Design
 Higher Ground
 Hispanic Access Foundation
 Hoosier Environmental Council
 Housing Rehab
 Hubbardston Open Space Committee - chair
 Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs
 Indiana Trails Community
 Infrastructure Resources, LLC
 Iron TrailCraft Inc.
 Jordan Lake Trails Conservation Association
 Lake Champlain Committee
 League of Michigan Bicyclists
 Legacy Land Conservancy
 Legacy Trails LLC
 Leominster Trail Stewards
 Loudoun County Department of Parks
 Recreation and Community Services
 Love in Motion
 Lowelifes Respectable Citizens' Club
 Maine Trails Coalition
 Marin County Bicycle Coalition
 Marquette Area Chapter of the North Country
 Trail Association
 ME4E
 Milestepper, LLC
 Milwaukee Riverkeeper
 Mineral County MT Rails-to-Trails
 Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition
 Montana Nightriders Snowmobile Club
 MORE The (Mid-Atlantic Off-Road
 Enthusiast) Inc
 Mormon Trails Association
 Mount Rogers Trail Coalition
 Muskegon County Trail Riders
 National Association for Interpretation
 National Coast Trail Association
 National Washington Rochambeau
 Revolutionary Route Association
 Natural Sporthorse
 Nature Legacies
 Nevada Off-Highway Vehicles Program
 Nevada Outdoor School
 New England Mountain Bike Association
 New Hampshire Rail Trails Coalition
 New Mexico Sportsmen
 New York Bicycling Coalition
 New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
 Newtown Parks and Recreation
 North County Land Trust
 Northwest Pennsylvania Trail Association
 Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Assn., Inc.
 NorthWoods Stewardship Center
 Oregon Equestrian Trails
 Oregon Horse Council
 Oregon Timber Trail Alliance
 Oregon Trails Coalition
 Ozark Trail Association
 Pacific Crest Trail Association
 Palmetto Trail
 Patten Area Outdoors
 The PC Help Desk, Inc
 Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
 PeopleForBikes
 Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council
 Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance
 Pima Trails Association
 Potomac Heritage Trail Association
 Rappahannock County Recreation Facilities
 The REC Co-op
 Red Line Parkway Initiative
 Rio Grande Indivisible, NM
 River Region Trails, Inc.
 Rocky Mountain Backcountry Horsemen
 Rocky Mountain Field Institute
 San Diego Mountain Biking Association
 San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
 Sandy Creek Nature Center Inc.
 Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship
 Shawnee Trail Conservancy
 Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
 Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship
 The Sierra Club
 Singletrack Trails, LLC
 Siskiyou Upland Trails Association
 Sitka Trail Works, Inc
 Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists
 South Mountain Trolley Greenway
 South Penn Enduro Riders
 Southborough Trails Committee
 Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance
 Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association
 Sports Backers
 St. Skutia Icelandic Horse Club
 super genius inc.
 Tahoe Rim Trail Association
 Terra Active, LLC
 Trails and Open Space Coalition
 Trails Inspire
 Trails Unlimited
 Trails Utah
 Truckee Meadows Trails Regional Trail
 Program, Truckee Meadows Parks
 Foundation
 Trust for Public Land
 The Trustees of Reservations
 Twin State Rails-to-Trails Working Group
 Upper Valley Trails Alliance
 Urbana Park District
 Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance
 The Vermont Mountain Bike Association
 Vinton County Park District
 Virginia Bicycling Federation
 Virginia Trails Alliance
 Washington County, Ohio, Board of
 Commissioners
 Washington Trails Association
 Western New York Mountain Bicycling
 Association
 Western Riding Club
 Western States Trail Foundation
 The Wilderness Society
 Willamette Valley Visitors Association