



February 24, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray
 United States Senate
 154 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Subject: Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations: U.S. Forest Service - Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative

Dear Senator Murray:

The undersigned 58 conservation, recreation and wildlife groups as well as local businesses and elected officials are deeply concerned by the elimination of the U.S. Forest Service’s (USFS) Legacy Roads and Trails program and the resulting negative impacts in Washington State. We ask that the program be reinstated in the FY 2021 Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill at \$50M as a distinctly separate program within the Capital Improvement and Maintenance budget.

The Legacy Roads and Trails program is a national program and has benefitted visitors to National Forests and improved waterways across the U.S. The seed came from Washington State’s Forest and Fish Law, when state agencies, private forest landowners and the USFS committed to address their forest road problems – as required by the Endangered Species Act (related to listed salmon runs) and the Clean Water Act. While state and private landowners made significant progress towards this goal, the USFS fell further behind because the general road maintenance budget was insufficient and the agency was not prioritizing this work. In 2007, several of the groups on this letter worked with state agencies and Representative Dicks to find a solution and Legacy Roads and Trails was established. Not only have our watersheds that support clean and safe drinking water, wildlife and fish habitat and recreation opportunities benefited but also lands and waters across the nation.

From 2008-2018, this unique job-producing bi-partisan program has invested over \$32M in Washington State leading to the following results:

- **Ensured access to Forest Service lands** by maintaining and/or storm-proofing 2,298 miles of needed roads;
- **Protected rivers and streams** by reclaiming 313 miles of unneeded roads, preventing sediment from entering waterways, many of which supply drinking water to rural and urban communities;
- **Restored fish passage** by removing or upgrading culverts at 55 stream crossings, boosting Washington’s \$1.1B sportfishing industry and advancing salmon restoration goals; and
- **Improving trails** by fixing 105 miles, keeping the \$535M National Forest recreation industry going strong.

Moreover, Legacy Roads and Trails created or maintained **330-528 jobs annually** across the nation, bringing dollars and jobs into rural communities, and **saving America’s taxpayers \$3 million per year** in road maintenance costs.

That said, we are very concerned by what we’ve seen. Without dedicated funding in FY2019, 50% of the work planned for last summer was not completed. Without dedicated funding in FY2020, only 3 forests out of 19 in the Pacific Northwest will be able to implement one project (Deschutes, Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot). Without a distinct budgetary line item, we are

now unable to track accomplishments. And without direction from Congress, the proposed LRT *trails* projects cannot be funded from the general *road* maintenance budget.

This comes at an especially challenging time for Washington. While the state invests millions in salmon “injunction barriers” downstream, upstream federal barriers are forgotten although there are 1,151 full barriers to fish and an additional 145 partial barriers on USFS managed streams. While the state looks to save critically endangered orcas, key Chinook salmon (prey species) spawning grounds in national forest headwaters are ignored. As private forest landowners complete their road-related obligations spending over \$315M, the federal forest negligence puts these investments at risk. And as Washingtonians #GoOutside supporting the \$21B recreation industry, they are losing access where storms take out roads and trails.

In Washington D.C. we’ve seen an interest in rebuilding America’s infrastructure. During these conversations we ask that you encourage your colleagues to consider the proven track record of success from the Legacy Roads and Trails program as a model. The program helps adapt the road system to a more manageable size over time, reducing fiscal and environmental burdens and enabling the Forest Service to ensure better and more reliable access. It focuses on the key areas where projects improve up and downstream connections including other public lands and national parks for salmon and trout, improve water quality and ensure road/trail resilience in a changing climate. It’s a simple solution to a formidable problem. But it needs funding to succeed. We ask for your support of the program by **reinstating Legacy Roads and Trails as a separate line item in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill with a \$50M allocation.** This is but a small down payment on the growing problem impacting how people access and experience opportunities on our public lands.

FY2021 Funding Request

- AGENCY: U.S. Forest Service
- SUBCOMMITTEE JURISDICTION: Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
- FUNDING PROGRAM: U.S. Forest Service Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Program (internal Forest Service funding code: "CMLG")
- FY20 REQUEST: \$50 million
- PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Since its authorization in FY 2008, the Legacy Roads and Trails program has significantly enhanced the Forest Service’s ability to address key problems associated with its aging and poorly maintained road system. This includes repairing roads and trails needed for public access, replacing failed or undersized culverts to improve aquatic passage and retire unneeded roads to prevent sediment pollution from entering waterways important for salmon, trout, and other aquatic species. The program delivers funds to address road problems in real time, which enables the Forest Service to efficiently plan, design, and implement restoration treatments. It is a critical tool for leveraging non-federal funds resulting in stronger projects and enhanced community engagement. And because funds primarily go to actual work on the ground, Legacy Roads and Trails creates high wage jobs for contractors, including those who specialize in stream restoration, environmental design, and heavy equipment operation.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Eslick
Representative (R-39)
Washington House of Representatives

Alex Ramel
Representative (D-40)
Washington House of Representatives

Tom Uniack
Executive Director
Washington Wild

Jeanne Kohl-Welles
Councilmember (District 4)
King County Council

Marlies Wierenga
Pacific Northwest Conservation Manager
WildEarth Guardians

Mike Anderson
Senior Policy Analyst
The Wilderness Society

Brad Throssell
Chair
Washington Council of Trout Unlimited

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

J. Michelle Swope
Washington Regional Coordinator
Native Fish Society

Wendy McDermott
Director, Rivers of Puget Sound & Columbia Basin
American Rivers

Michael Foster
Director
NOLS Pacific Northwest

Donna Osseward
President
Olympic Park Associates

Susan Jane M. Brown
Staff Attorney
Western Environmental Law Center

Art Campbell
President
North Central Washington Audubon Society (Wenatchee)

Larry Lober
President
Greater Bellingham Running Club (Bellingham)

Ann Darlington
President
Friends of Heybrook Ridge (Index)

Tim Coleman
President
Kettle Range Conservation Group (Republic)

Mark Boyar
President
MidFORC Coalition

Jasmine Minbashian
Executive Director
Methow Valley Citizens Council (Twisp)

Dave Wernitz
Science and Conservation Director
Conservation Northwest

Harry Romberg
Co-Chair, National Forest Committee
Washington Chapter of the Sierra Club

Robert Kaye
Conservation Committee Chair
North Cascades Audubon Society (Bellingham)

Annie Cubberly
President, Polly Dyer Cascadia Chapter
Great Old Broads for Wilderness (Olympia)

Debbie Copple
President
Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce (Sultan)

Tierra Curry
Senior Scientist
Center for Biological Diversity

Arden Hagen
President
Vancouver Audubon Society (Vancouver)

Larry Brandt,
Vice President & Conservation Chair
Willapa Hills Audubon Society (Longview)

Mike Petersen
Executive Director
The Lands Council (Spokane)

Peter Bahls
Executive Director
Northwest Watershed Institute (Port Townsend)

Patricia A. Jones, PhD
Executive Director
Olympic Forest Coalition (Quilcene)

Rick McGuire
President
Alpine Lakes Protection Society

Hilary Eisen
Policy Director
Winter Wildlands Alliance

Joe Sambataro
Northwest Regional Director
Access Fund

John McGlenn
President
Washington Wildlife Federation (Bellevue)

Yvonne Kraus
Executive Director
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

Tom Vogl
Chief Executive Officer
The Mountaineers

Jon Hoekstra
Executive Director
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Walter A. Dortch
Chair
Darrington Area Resources Advocates (Darrington)

Rob Smith
Northwest Regional Director
National Parks Conservation Association

Judy Hallisey
President
Kittitas Audubon Society (Ellensburg)

Jen Weddle
Co-Executive Director
Okanogan Highlands Alliance (Tonasket)

Terry Frost
President
Lower Columbia Flyfishers (Longview)

Bob Schmitt
President
Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club (Spokane)

Martha Rasmussen
Chair
Friends For Public Use (Darrington)

Molly Whitney
Executive Director
Cascade Forest Conservancy

Cindy Easterson
President
Pilchuck Audubon Society (Snohomish)

Bob Bartlett
President
Wenatchee Valley Fly Fishers (Wenatchee)

Michael Davis
President
Mount Baker Club (Bellingham)

Gabriel Scott
In-House Counsel
Cascadia Wildlands

Phil Fenner
President
North Cascades Conservation Council

Jeff Osmundson
President
Skagit Audubon Society (Mount Vernon)

Chuck Chesire
President
Vancouver Wildlife League (Vancouver)

Jill Silver
Executive Director
10,000 Years Institute (Port Townsend)

Mike Koslosky
President
Puget Sound Fly Fishers

Sarah Shaffer
Executive Director
Wenatchee Outdoors (Wenatchee)

Robert Brenlin
Owner
Latona Pub, Fiddler's Inn, and Hopvine Pubs

Richard A. Jahnke
President
Admiralty Audubon Society (Port Townsend)

Andrea Imler
Director of Advocacy
Washington Trails Association

