



June 5, 2018

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

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
 United States Senate  
 311 Hart Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510

***RE: Fiscal Year 2019 Senate Interior Budget – Restore USFS Legacy Roads and Trails Program***

Dear Senators Cantwell and Murray,

We are writing to ask for your help prior to the markup of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2019. The recent markup on the House side failed to include funding for the U.S. Forest Service’s Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation program – a program that was conceived in Washington State but has benefited drinking water, wildlife and fish habitat and recreational access across the country. The program has benefitted from your support over this past decade, which is why we write to ask that funding be restored to \$40M in FY19 – same as the FY17 level – and as a dedicated line item in the agency budget.

Legacy Roads and Trails began in 2008 because private and state forest landowners were meeting their road obligations set forth in the Washington State 1999 Forest and Fish Law but the U.S. Forest Service was not. As forest landowners were investing hundreds of millions of dollars in upgrading needed roads, removing roads no longer needed, and fixing fish passage barriers, the U.S. Forest Service roads continued to unravel

because of lack of prioritizing and lack of investment. The Legacy Roads and Trails program began to change that.

Having the dedicated funding source for the past 10 years – through the Legacy Roads and Trails budget line item – the agency has been able to plan for and fund critical infrastructure projects that are beyond routine road maintenance (i.e. grading, ditch cleaning, etc.). Some example accomplishments include:

- Moved a popular recreational access road out of the floodplain in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to protect the road from being flooded out and to enhance salmon habitat.
- Fixed and upgraded two culverts on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest that plugged during a storm and closed the access road. The new culverts are much larger to ensure water and large wood passes through during storms to prevent further blow-outs and also to reconnect the stream for fish.
- Converted a spur road to a trail on the Olympic National Forest to create a loop trail opportunity for mountain bikers, equestrians and hikers in the Skokomish river watershed.
- Reclaimed a closed and unneeded road on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest by removing broken culverts and debris to reduce sediment from dumping into the Skykomish river.

Legacy Roads and Trails also makes economic sense – it has created or maintained 330-528 jobs annually across the nation, bringing dollars and jobs into rural communities, and saved America’s taxpayers \$3 million per year in road maintenance costs. The “stormproofing” of roads has made access more reliable, which enables Washingtonians to camp, hike, kayak, picnic, mountain bike, and more on public lands, supporting a \$21.6 billion recreation industry in Washington State.

We urge you to work to prevent the elimination of this program and to restore its funding in FY19. The Forest Service has been making slow but steady progress since 2008 but that progress only came because the agency was held accountable by Congress and this program.

We are grateful for your strong support of Legacy Roads and Trails over the last 10 years. Continued funding for Legacy Roads and Trails will go a long way toward allowing people to access and experience the opportunities of our public lands.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Tom Uniack  
Executive Director  
Washington Wild

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Vice Chair  
Snohomish County Council

Marlies Wierenga  
Pacific Northwest Conservation Manager  
WildEarth Guardians

Carolyn Eslick  
Representative (39<sup>th</sup> District)  
Washington State House of Representatives

John McGlenn  
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