



# Partnership for the National Trails System

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**KATHY DECOSTER, ADVOCACY & POLICY DIRECTOR**  
**STATEMENT TO THE**  
**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT & RELATED AGENCIES**

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce and members of the subcommittee:

The Partnership for the National Trails System is grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony today. We urge your continued support in the FY 2021 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill for **investments in America's National Trails System** and for attention to **specific needs of the 30 national trails administered by the National Park Service, the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management**. This Subcommittee's continued support for the various needs of the National Trails System in the FY 2020 bill is most appreciated and builds on efforts over the past 25 years to support trails that make up the system. We also appreciate your continuing efforts to increase **appropriations for the Land and Water Conservation Fund** as we work towards full funding and thank you for supporting **LWCF investments in the trails**.

The **National Trails System** is a bold experiment in public/private collaboration for public benefit. While most of the trail making is done by tens of thousands of citizen stewards increased funding is needed to close gaps in these trails. To continue the progress that you have fostered **with an increased investment in the National Trails System**, the Partnership requests that you provide **annual operations funding for each of the 30 national scenic and historic trails** for Fiscal Year 2021 through these appropriations:

- **National Park Service: \$17.014 million** for **administration of 23 trails** and for coordination of the long-distance trails program by the Washington office. **Construction and Maintenance: \$686,041** for the **Ice Age Trail**, **\$2,791,829** for the **Appalachian Trail**, **\$75,000** for the **Arizona Trail**, and **\$200,000 each** for the **Pacific Crest and Pacific Northwest Trails**.
- **USDA Forest Service: \$100 million** for **trails construction and maintenance (CMTL)** with **\$9.886 million** of it to **administer 6 trails** and **\$1.3 million** to manage parts of **16 trails** administered by the NPS or BLM. **\$510,000** for **Iditarod Trail** construction and maintenance.
- **Bureau of Land Management: \$2.812 million** to **administer three trails** and for coordination of the National Trails program and **\$7.14 million** to manage portions of **13 trails** administered by the Park Service or the Forest Service and for operating five National Historic Trail interpretive centers. **Construction: \$1 million** for the **Iditarod Trail**. **Maintenance: \$300,000** for the **Iditarod Trail**, **\$100,000** for the **Arizona Trail**, and **\$300,000** for the **Pacific Crest Trail**.

We ask you to appropriate **\$900 million** from the **Land and Water Conservation Fund** and allocate **\$38.354 million** of it to these agencies to purchase properties that protect **five national scenic** and **five national historic trails**:

- **Bureau of Land Management: \$5.695 million**
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service: \$5.419 million**
- **US Forest Service: \$16.74 million**
- **National Park Service: \$10.5 million**

#### **National Park Service**

The **\$17.014 million** we request for **Park Service operations** includes increases for some of the trails to continue the progress and new initiatives made possible by the additional funding Congress provided last year and several

years ago. An **increase of \$82,500** for the **Old Spanish Trail** will enable the Park Service to continue working with the Old Spanish Trail Association to increase volunteer participation in signing, interpreting, and educating the public about the trail. The Park Service will be better able to collaborate with the Bureau of Land Management in administering the trail and to consult with other agencies to protect the cultural and natural resources along it from destruction by energy projects. An increase of **\$203,000** for **El Camino Real de los Tejas** will enable the Park Service to better support work to increase interpretive signage along the trail and public understanding of the trail, its cultural and historic resources and how to protect them.

We request an **increase of \$315,000** to expand Park Service efforts to protect cultural landscapes at more than 200 sites along the **Santa Fe Trail**, to develop GIS mapping, and to fund public educational and community outreach programs of the Santa Fe Trail Association in preparation for the 200th Anniversary of the Trail. An **increase of \$139,400** for the **Oregon and California Trails** will enable the Park Service to better support the work Oregon-California Trails Association volunteers to develop digital and social media to connect with youth in the cities along these trails providing information about their many layers of history and to better protect the historical and cultural heritage sites and landscapes along them from destruction by energy development in the West. Congress doubled the length of the **Trail of Tears** in 2009, but provided no additional funding to manage the additional trail. An increase of **\$150,000 to \$645,000** will provide for management of this additional trail and more support for the work of Trail of Tears Association volunteers.

We request an increase of **\$172,000 to \$300,000** for the **New England Trail** to strengthen the outreach and community engagement of the Connecticut Forests & Parks Association and the Appalachian Mountain Club along the trail and support trail relocations and reconstruction work of these organizations' volunteers.

We request an **increase of \$100,000 to \$640,000** for the **Ala Kahakai Trail** to enable the Park Service to work with E Mau Na Ala Hele and the Ala Kahakai Trail Association to care for resources and with the University of Hawaii to conduct archaeological and cultural landscape studies along this trail. We also request increases of **\$400,000** for the **Captain John Smith Chesapeake Trail**, **\$123,000** for the **Overmountain Victory Trail**, and **\$122,000** for the **Washington-Rochambeau Trail**.

The **\$2 million** we request for the **4,600-mile North Country Trail** will enable the Park Service to provide greater support for the regional GIS mapping, trail building, trail management, and training of volunteers led by the North Country Trail Association. The **\$1.05 million** we request for the **Ice Age Trail** includes a **\$207,000 increase** to build partner and citizen capacity for building new and maintaining existing trail, protecting the natural and cultural resources on the lands purchased for the trail, and to provide the Park Service with a planner to accelerate planning of the land protection corridor for the trail.

**Construction and Maintenance:** We request that you provide **\$686,041** for the **Ice Age Trail** to build 17 miles of new trail and several trailhead parking lots and repair damage from catastrophic floods; **\$75,000** for maintenance of the National Park Service segments of the **Arizona Trail**; and **\$200,000** each for trail construction on National Park Service segments of the **Pacific Crest and Pacific Northwest Trails**. For the **Appalachian Trail** we request **\$1.0177 million** for Cyclic Maintenance; **\$1.417 million** for Repair Rehab; and **\$357,129** for Public Land Corps to support youth corps crews.

#### USDA - Forest Service

We ask you to appropriate **\$100 million for trails construction and maintenance (CMTL)** to begin to address the considerable maintenance backlog on the trails in the National Forest System. Within this appropriation we request that you provide **\$9.886 million as a separate budgetary item specifically for the Arizona, Continental Divide, Florida, Pacific Crest, and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trails and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail** within the over-all appropriation for **Capital Improvements and Maintenance for Trails**. Recognizing the on-the-ground management responsibility the **Forest Service** has for **1024 miles** of the

Appalachian Trail, more than **650 miles** of the North Country Trail, and sections of the Ice Age, Anza, Caminos Real de Tierra Adentro and de Tejas, Lewis & Clark, California, Iditarod, Mormon Pioneer, Old Spanish, Oregon, Overmountain Victory, Pony Express, Trail of Tears and Santa Fe Trails, we ask you to appropriate **\$1.3 million** specifically for these trails.

We ask that you provide direction to the Forest Service to specifically allocate the funding appropriated for the administered and managed national scenic and historic trails directly to those trails.

The Partnership's request of \$9.886 million includes **\$1.5 million** to enable the Forest Service and Florida Trail Association to continue trail maintenance, to control invasive species, do ecosystem restoration, and otherwise manage **4,625 acres** of new **Florida Trail** land. This request also includes **\$2.5 million** for the **Pacific Crest Trail**, **\$2 million** for the **Continental Divide Trail**, **\$1 million** for the **Pacific Northwest Trail**, **\$926,000** for the **Nez Perce Trail**, and **\$1.45 million** for the **Arizona Trail**. The additional funds requested will enable the Forest Service to develop Comprehensive Management Plans for the latter three trails and will support rehabilitation of existing trail and construction of new trail along all these trails and support the youth engagement work being done by the partner trail associations. We also request **\$510,000** of **additional funding** for construction and for maintenance of sections of the **Iditarod Trail** in the Chugach National Forest.

### **Bureau of Land Management**

Although considerably more money is needed to fully administer the **National Conservation Lands System** and protect its resources, we request that you appropriate **\$84 million** in **base funding** for the System. We ask that you appropriate as **new permanent base funding** **\$250,000** for **National Trails System Program Coordination**, **\$1 million** for the **Iditarod Trail**, **\$230,000** for **El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail**, **\$1.332 million** for the **Old Spanish Trail**, and **\$4 million** for the Bureau to manage **4,645 miles** of thirteen other national scenic and historic trails. We request **\$1 million** to construct new sections of the **Iditarod Trail** and to maintain these trails: **Iditarod Trail - \$300,000**, **Arizona Trail - \$100,000**, and **Pacific Crest Trail - \$300,000**. We also request **\$3.14 million** to operate **five historic trails interpretive centers**.

To promote greater management transparency and accountability for the National Trails and the whole **National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS)**, we urge you to request expenditure and accomplishment reports for each of the NLCS Units for FY19, FY20, and FY21 and to direct the Bureau to include unit-level allocations within **major sub-activities** for each of the scenic and historic trails, and wild and scenic rivers -- as the Bureau has done for the national monuments, wilderness, and conservation areas -- within a **new activity account** for the National Landscape Conservation System in FY21. The Bureau's lack of a unified budget account for National Trails prevents the agency from efficiently planning, implementing, reporting, and taking advantage of cost-saving and leveraging partnerships and volunteer contributions for every activity related to these national resources.

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

The Partnership strongly supports full funding of the **Land and Water Conservation Fund** at the authorized **\$900 million** for the component federal and state programs funded under **LWCF**. Within this amount we request that you appropriate **\$38.354 million** to acquire 43 parcels along 10 national scenic and historic trails:

**Bureau of Land Management: \$5.695 million | 1,845 acres**

**Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CO) - \$2.8 M** to acquire land around the Muddy Pass area to facilitate relocation of the trail off a busy highway.

**Nez Perce National Historic Trail (ID) - \$2.295 million** to protect riparian ecosystems and migratory corridors with habitat for sage grouse, pronghorn antelope, and elk, and historic and cultural resources.

**Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (OR) - \$600,000** for trail and resource protection within the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument in Southern Oregon.

**US Fish and Wildlife Service: \$5.419 million | 1,790 acres**

**California National Historic Trail (ID): \$1.57 million** to protect the largest breeding concentration of Sandhill Cranes and a haven for other waterfowl near Grays Lake NWR from agricultural development;

**Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (VA) \$3 million** to preserve and provide access to sites of historic encounters between John Smith and indigenous peoples and protect major eagle and migratory bird stopover habitat in the Rappahannock River and James River NWRs.

**Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (WA) \$849,000** to preserve a wealth of unique ecosystems and enhance ecosystem connectivity between State-protected lands and the Steigerwald NWR.

**US Forest Service: \$16.74 million | 16,000 acres**

**Appalachian National Scenic Trail (NC, TN, VA, VT) \$5.45 million** for four national forests in four states to protect miles of several trout streams, relocate trail segments, preserve trail viewsheds, and provide habitat for rare birds and ecological connectivity and watershed protection near or adjacent to the **Appalachian Trail**. One parcel in NC is also within the viewshed of the **Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail**.

**Arizona National Scenic Trail (AZ) \$200,000** for an easement in Little Casa Blanca Canyon closing a gap in the trail and removing it from a dangerous road.

**Florida National Scenic Trail (FL) \$90,000** to fill trail gaps and provide connectivity between protected areas along the Withlacoochee River and adjacent to Suwannee River State Park;

**Lolo National Forest (MT) - \$6 million** for 7,500 acres (Phase II) of the Lolo Trails Landmark project that protects existing portions of both the **Lewis and Clark** and **Nez Perce National Historic Trails**. Phase I of this project was the #3 national priority for the USFS in FY 2020;

**Shasta-Trinity National Forest (CA) - \$5 million** for Phase III of the Trinity Divide project (5,600 acres) which includes or is adjacent to portions of the **Pacific Crest Trail** in northern California. Previous LWCF appropriations over three years ensured the completion of the first two phases of Trinity Divide in 2019.

**National Park Service: \$10.5 million | 1,420 acres**

**Ice Age National Scenic Trail (WI) \$3.5 million** to help acquire three parcels totaling 400 acres within the Cross Plains Unit of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve in Dane County.

**Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (VA) \$4 million** to purchase 1000 acres.

**Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (NY) \$3 million** for preservation of a Revolutionary War-era supply depot site and cemetery.

We also request that you continue allocating LWCF funds for “recreation access” in the four land management agencies, with report language encouraging them to use those funds to close gaps in the National Trails System.

**Private Sector Support for the National Trails System**

**Public-spirited partnerships between private citizens and public agencies have been a hallmark of the National Trails System since its inception.** These partnerships create the enduring strength of the Trails System and the trail communities that sustain it by combining the local, grass-roots energy and responsiveness of volunteers with the responsible continuity of public agencies. **They also provide private financial support for public projects, often resulting in a greater than equal match of funds.**

The private trail organizations’ commitment to the success of these trail-sustaining partnerships grows even as Congress’ support for the trails has grown. In **2019 the trail organizations coordinated and guided 23,964 volunteers who contributed 1,010,962 hours** of documented labor valued at **\$25,708,751** to help sustain the national scenic and historic trails. The organizations also raised **private sector contributions of \$13,259,246** for the trails.