



## Trails Community Appropriations Recommendations

### USDA Forest Service

- Fund Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails budget at \$29.35M, including \$11.5M for National Scenic and Historic Trails, and continued support for the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance Trail Stewardship Funding
- \$56.8M to fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness
- \$100M to fund Legacy Roads & Trails as a separate line item

### Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

- Trails Line Item, including at least \$10.5M for National Scenic and Historic Trails, with robust funding for BLM trails
- Fund National Conservation Lands at \$65.131M
- \$10.5M to fund National Conservation Lands- National Scenic Historic Trails, sub-activity Recreation Resources Management, including \$3.15M to operate Historic Trail Interpretive Centers
- Restore BLM FTE staffing levels, including for trail management and maintenance

### Fish and Wildlife Service

- Funding for Refuge Visitor Services at least \$79.973M

### National Park Service

- Funding for the Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at \$15M
- Funding for Park Service Operations for the National Trails System maintained at a minimum of \$21M
- Restore funding for Volunteers in Parks programs at a minimum of \$8M, including an acknowledgment of the benefits for trails
- Restore funding for Visitor Services sub-activity, Youth Partnership Programs at a minimum of \$10.95M, including an acknowledgment of the benefits for trails
- Robust funding for Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program, at a minimum of \$125M

### Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA)- Commerce, Justice Science

- \$1.5M to fund the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account

### US Geological Survey

- \$1.5M to fully fund the National Digital Trail Project (NDTP) of USGS

*For more information on trails appropriations contact Tyler Ray, Director of Policy and Advocacy, [tray@americanhiking.org](mailto:tray@americanhiking.org); Valerie Rupp, Executive Director, Partnership for the National Trails System, [valerie@pnats.org](mailto:valerie@pnats.org); and Mike Passo, Executive Director, American Trails*

# Trails Community Appropriations Recommendations

## Detailed Justifications

### **Overview:**

Trails are the gateway to fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping, climbing, and more. A thriving trails system can provide access for all communities, support economic growth, and expand opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation.

Access to open spaces for recreation has been shown by many studies to improve physical and mental health and to increase quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Trails bring those health benefits to all by providing individuals of diverse backgrounds access to our public lands for all types of outdoor recreation.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, trail-centered activities directly generate over \$594 billion<sup>2</sup> and nearly 3.5 million jobs<sup>3</sup> annually. On federally-managed land, outdoor recreation contributes more than \$64.6 billion to the national economy and supports more than 623,000 jobs annually.<sup>4</sup>

### **Forest Service Recommendation:**

National Forest trails benefit everyone and receive increasing public use each year. Collectively, the National Forests provide 157,000 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.” Even with enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act, this trail system is increasingly stressed and annual maintenance cannot keep pace with the growing demand due to inadequate funding. Roughly 120,000 of the 159,000 miles of trails are in need of some form of maintenance or repair.<sup>5</sup>

### **Fund Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails budget at \$29.35M, including \$11.5M for National Scenic and Historic Trails**

As trails use continues to increase along with annual maintenance needs, funding at \$29.35M will restore funding above 2011 levels, which reflects the highest funding levels going back to at least 2005.

### **Within CMTL, Trails Increase Support for the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance Trail Stewardship Funding**

Much of the agency'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. We encourage expanded support of this program within the CMTL,

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<sup>1</sup> American Hiking Society, Health Benefits of Hiking, <https://americanhiking.org/resources/health-benefits-of-hiking/> (last visited 1/27/2020). See also Harvard Medical School, *Exercising to Relax*, Updated July 13, 2018, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/exercising-to-relax>.

<sup>2</sup> OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION, OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY 18 (2017), available at [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA\\_RecEconomy\\_FINAL\\_Single.pdf](https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf). Trail centered activities generated \$594,311,835,880 from retail spending, salaries, and federal and state taxes.

<sup>3</sup> Id. Trail centered activities create 3,476,845 jobs.

<sup>4</sup> OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION, OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY 15 (2017), available at [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA\\_RecEconomy\\_FINAL\\_Single.pdf](https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf); “Forest Service Makes it Easier for Visitors to Enjoy National Forests and Grasslands.” U.S. Forest Service, <https://www.fs.fed.us/news/releases/forest-service-makes-it-easier-visitors-enjoy-national-forests-and-grasslands>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fs.usda.gov/news/releases/usda-forest-service-announces-challenge-increase-focus-problems-facing-nations>

Trails line item for dedicated funding to challenge cost share efforts focused on non-profit partnerships. This funding can also significantly increase conservation corps work on trail systems with additional funding.

### **\$56.8M to fund Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness**

The National Forests and Grasslands provide a great diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities, connecting the American public with nature in an unmatched variety of settings and activities. Funding at \$56.8M will restore funding to 2013 levels (minus estimated cost-share amounts), which reflect the highest funding level going back to at least 2005.

### **\$100M to fund Legacy Roads & Trails as a separate line item**

For FY2022, Legacy Roads & Trails should be reinstated as a separate line item in the USFS budget with \$100,000,00 distinctly designated for urgently needed road and trail repair, maintenance and storm-proofing, fish passage barrier removal, and road decommissioning, especially in areas where Forest Service roads may be contributing to water quality problems in streams and water bodies which support threatened, endangered or sensitive species or community water sources.

## **Bureau of Land Management Recommendation:**

The BLM manages 13,468 miles of trails over 245 million acres —more land than any other federal land management agency. Most of the country's BLM-managed public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska, 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.

### **Trails Line Item, including at least \$10.5M for National Scenic and Historic Trails, with robust funding for all BLM trails**

A trails line item in the BLM budget will address the fragmented funding allocations across sub activity accounts and create consistent funding for trails. The BLM has no specific account in its budget for funding national trails or trails in general, including the three National Historic Trails that it is charged by law to administer and the portions of the 13 other national trails that it manages on public lands. A trails line item in the BLM budget (including at least \$10.5M for National Scenic and Historic Trails plus an additional \$3.15 million to operate historic trail interpretive centers, as described in greater detail below, will address the fragmented funding allocations across sub activity accounts and create consistent funding for trails.

### **Fund National Conservation Lands at \$65.131M**

National Conservation Lands funds enhance recreational access, conserve the Nation's heritage and manage these nationally recognized resources. We urge you to consider the additional demands BLM is responsible for – and the increasing popularity of these lands – and provide a sharp increase in base funding for the National Conservation Lands. Remarkably, this increase would restore program funding to its FY2006 funding level. Such an increase is needed to properly administer the system's expansion by 18 million acres since 2000, and will permit increased inventory, monitoring and protection of cultural resources, enhance proper management of all resources and provide a quality visitor experience. This should also include robust funding for National Scenic and Historic Trails, as recommended below.

**\$10.5M to fund National Conservation Lands- National Scenic Historic Trails, sub-activity Recreation Resources Management, including \$3.15M to operate Historic Trail Interpretive Centers**

At a minimum, include language that directs the Bureau to include unit-level allocations within major sub-activities for each of the scenic and historic trails — as the Bureau has done for the national monuments, wilderness, and conservation areas. The Bureau’s lack of a unified budget account for National Trails or trails line item 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.

**Restore BLM FTE staffing levels, including for trail management and maintenance**

Across the board staffing shortages have impacted BLM’s ability to complete its mission, including management and maintenance.

**Fish and Wildlife Service 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 refugees. Funding at a level of \$74.227M 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.

**Funding for Refuge Visitor Services at least \$79.973M**

Funding at \$79.973M will restore funding to 2010 levels, which reflect the highest funding level going back to at least 2006.

**National Park Service 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.

**Funding for the Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at \$15M**

The RTCA program brings the expertise of over a century of land management to the greater recreation community. When a community asks for assistance with a project, National Park Service staff provide free critical tools for success, on-location facilitation, and planning expertise, which draw from project experiences across the country and adapt best practices to a community’s specific needs. Funding at \$15M will ensure these trail planning services are made available to communities in all regions of the nation, including recreation programs for youth.

**Funding for Park Service Operations for the National Trails System maintained at a minimum of \$21M**

The NPS has administrative responsibility for 23 National Scenic and Historic Trails established by Congress. Funding at \$21M within the Park Service Operations account for the National Trails System is essential for keeping these popular trails accessible. The request will help the work of trail organization partners of the Park Service to build, maintain, and interpret these trails.

**Restore funding for Volunteers in Parks programs at a minimum of \$8M, including an acknowledgment of the benefits for trails**

Volunteers in Parks leverages private donations with public funding to maximize trail maintenance resources.

**Restore funding for Visitor Services sub-activity, Youth Partnership Programs at a minimum of \$10.95M, including an acknowledgment of the benefits for trails**

The Youth Partnership Program in part funds the Public Land Corps program, which provides education and work opportunities for men and women aged 16-30. The NPS utilizes non-profit youth serving organizations to perform critical natural and cultural resource conservation projects at NPS sites. Without funding, projects completed by youth crews through these programs would not be accomplished. These projects range from masonry apprenticeships on historic structures to Tribal land improvements; to engaging other youth through coordination of culturally-based workshops and outdoor recreation clubs.

**Robust funding for Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program, at a minimum of \$125M provided in FY 2021**

Robust funding for LWCF programs reflect the nation's outdoor recreation priorities. Maintain robust funding for ORLP, at a minimum maintaining the FY21 \$125M appropriation.

**Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA)- Commerce, Justice Science**

**\$1.5M to fund the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account**

Funding at \$1.5M will allow the Bureau of Economic Analysis to continue to provide data and analysis for the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account and demonstrate the value of outdoor recreation to the economy.

**US Geological Survey**

**\$1.5M to fully fund the National Digital Trail Project (NDTP) of USGS**

The USGS National Digital Trails project supports the Department of Interior's vision to "Increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans..." Full funding at \$1.5M will allow the USGS to provide critical information and research for our nation's trails, including a web-based interactive decision support tool (TRAILS) that identifies potential routes to improve connectivity between existing trails and trail systems, a nationwide digital trails database in the public domain, and a mobile applications to provide trail maintenance information to land management agencies.