



*Promoting and protecting foot trails and the hiking experience*

December 19, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U. S. House of Representatives  
H232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner  
Republican Leader  
U. S. House of Representatives  
H204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
U. S. Senate  
S221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
U. S. Senate  
S230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam and Sirs,

American’s vast system of public lands provide the natural capital and ecosystem services that have ensured American economic growth, providing resources and recreation for millions of Americans, and essential habitat for species. Today our public lands face many challenges, among which include deteriorating infrastructure within our National Parks, a large backlog of unused and obsolete Forest Service roads in need of decommissioning, and dwindling agency funding levels.

On behalf of the 75 million Americans who hike, American Hiking Society and the Partnership for The National Trails System respectfully request that you include essential funding levels for trails-related federal land management agency programs in the economic stimulus bill that Congress is planning to consider at the start of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. Your action will improve the effectiveness and impact of the following federal agency programs as well as contribute to the economic growth of our Nation:

- *National Scenic and Historic Trails and Recreation Trails, Inter-Agency*
- *National Landscape Conservation System, Bureau of Land Management*
- *Legacy Roads and Trails, U.S.D.A., Forest Service*
- *Transportation Management Planning, U.S.D.A., Forest Service*
- *Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, National Park Service*
- *Land & Water Conservation Fund, Inter-Agency*

With adequate funding, each of these programs constitutes immediate and “shovel-ready” opportunities to create and restore critical public lands infrastructure. Planning and designing trails requires thousands of highly-skilled positions, and creating and maintaining them provides sustainable, local “green” job opportunities. Trails offer alternative modes for transportation that get Americans moving and healthy. Trails drive tourism and volunteerism, stimulating and diversifying the economies of the thousands of communities that are the



gateways to public lands recreation in America. These programs support the Active Recreation Economy, which contributed more than \$730 Billion to the U.S. economy last year (Outdoor Industry Association, 2007).

### **National Scenic and Historic Trails and Recreation Trails, Intra-Agency**

National Scenic and Historic Trails and Recreation Trails conserve stunning landscapes and vistas, and preserve significant national historic and ecological treasures, such as those enjoyed along the *Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail* or the *Pacific Crest Trail*. While many of these trails traverse multiple federal jurisdictions, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has no budget activity accounts for National Scenic and Historic Trails despite the fact that it manages nearly 5,000 miles of these trails with adjacencies to thirteen of the twenty fastest growing cities in America. Instead, funds are painstakingly cobbled together from 42 separate subactivity accounts. This lack of a line item program for recreation prevents the BLM from capitalizing on its expenditures, partnerships, ability to leverage volunteer labor or donations, and accomplishments.

The proposed funding levels will enable the BLM, U.S.D.A., Forest Service, and National Park Service (NPS) to offer significant jobs creation opportunities at the local level and in rural communities, and to accomplish their Congressionally-mandated missions to maintain the recreational, interpretative and safety infrastructure of National Scenic and Historic Trails and Recreational Trails System across our Nation.

- *BLM - \$8 Million (National Scenic & Historic Trails)*
- *NPS - \$24 Million (National Scenic & Historic Trails)*
- *U.S.D.A., Forest Service - \$10.5 Million (National Scenic & Historic Trails)*  
*\$100 Million (Recreation Trails Maintenance)*  
*\$110 (Recreation Operations, Maintenance, Planning)*

### **National Landscape Conservation System, Bureau of Land Management**

The National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) is a 26 million acre collection of national monuments, wilderness areas, scenic rivers, trails, and historic sites. Managed by the BLM, the NLCS contains more than 850 federally-recognized units. The mission of the NLCS is to conserve, protect and restore nationally significant landscapes recognized for their cultural, ecological and scientific values for the American public. These crown jewels represent some of the best and last places to experience the history and wild beauty of the American West.

The NLCS has been underfunded since it's designation in FY2000. The proposed funding levels will enable the BLM to leverage volunteer support, maintain safe and equitable access to recreation, and provide for the creation of meaningful employment within the growing communities proximate to its units.

- *NLCS - \$75 Million*

### **Legacy Roads and Trails**

#### **Travel Management Planning, U.S.D.A., Forest Service**

The Forest Service manages more than 380,000 miles of roads, many of which are in dire need of repair. The Forest Service road maintenance backlog is approaching \$10 billion. Shrinking budgets have ensured that each year the Forest Service slips further behind in its responsibility to maintain its road system. Yet one of the most significant threats to forest watersheds and their biotic communities is failing forest roads. Poorly maintained roads



restrict and render unsafe recreational access, contaminate rivers and community water supplies, and represent missed opportunities to put Americans back to work.

The proposed funding level would create a Forest Watershed Restoration Corps within the Forest Service to decommission forest roads, repair fish culverts and maintain forest roads used for recreation and administration. Such a comprehensive watershed restoration program could provide 3500 jobs for people in rural, resource dependent communities with the same high-wage, high-skill jobs derived in the past from building roads or extracting timber.

Since 2005, the Travel Management Rule (TMR) has required the Forest Service to make damaging motorized cross-country travel illegal and to identify a system of motorized routes that protect natural resources and provide for safe, reliable visitor access. As this process nears completion, the finished maps must be made available to the public, and compliance with designated motorized route systems must be monitored and enforced.

To date, funds have not been adequately appropriated for the agency's compliance with the TMR. This proposed funding level will enable the Forest Service to prepare and distribute maps of its transportation and recreation infrastructure while conducting necessary education and outreach, and monitoring and enforcement to ensure visitor compliance and safety with the designated route system.

- *Legacy Roads and Trails - \$500 Million (over 2 year period)*
- *Travel Management Rule - \$8.4 Million (Planning)  
\$75.7 Million (Implementation)*

### **Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance, National Park Service**

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program is a technical assistance arm of the NPS that implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the NPS to states and local communities. RTCA yields enormous conservation, recreation, economic and community capacity-building benefits by fostering partnerships between federal, state, and local entities. The resulting cooperative efforts restore rivers and wildlife habitat, develop trail and greenway networks, preserve open space, and revitalize communities - all contributing to improved quality of life and close-to-home recreation opportunities.

RTCA is a highly effective and cost efficient program that plays a critical role in creating a nationwide network of parks and open spaces, fostering conservation partnerships, promoting volunteerism, and encouraging physical activity. The proposed funding level will enable RTCA to act immediately to support local organizations and agencies in the creation and maintenance of local recreational planning and infrastructure implementation.

- *Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance - \$10.1 Million*

### **Land & Water Conservation Fund**

Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants have contributed greatly to the outdoor recreation estate over the past 33 years. In addition to the large number of projects, these grants have had considerable long-term effects on our Nation's overall attitudes and policies regarding outdoor recreation. Today, there is clear evidence that the grant program has been successful in encouraging States to take greater responsibility for protection and development of recreation resources at every level - enabling States to establish their own scenic river and recreational trail systems as well as to recognize the value of recreation to their local



economies. Sustained funding for these grants will ensure state and local community capacity, promote employment and support recreation and physical health initiatives, thereby continuing the success of the LWCF in building a permanent legacy for future generations.

- U.S.D.A., Forest Service - \$42 Million (*Pacific Crest Trail, Florida Trail, Appalachian Trail, North Country Trail*)
- BLM - \$9 Million (*Nez Perce Trail, Oregon Trail*)
- NPS - \$18 Million (*Ice Age Trail, North Country Trail, Appalachian Trail, Overmountain Victory Trail*)

In conclusion, we believe that a commitment to these investments in public lands infrastructure will not only provide immediate economic stimulus, but permanent and critical improvements in both the economic and physical health of our Nation and citizenry. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this request for essential funding levels for these critical federal land management agency programs.

American Hiking Society and the Partnership for The National Trails System welcome the opportunity to work with the incoming Administration and Congressional Leadership and staff on these programs and appropriations in 2009 and beyond. Please contact us for further discussion and/or proposed funding details.

Sincerely,

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