



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

