



March 25, 2019

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

Subject: Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations: U.S. Forest Service - Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative

Dear Senator Murray:

We are deeply concerned by the elimination of a dedicated line item for the U.S. Forest Service’s (USFS) Legacy Roads and Trails program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act and ask that this distinct line item be reinstated in the FY 2020 Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill at \$50M as a distinctly separate program within the agency’s Capital Improvement and Maintenance budget.

The program was first conceived in Washington State, where 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. The deadline for completion was 2015. From 2000 to 2007, while state and private landowners made significant progress, the USFS fell far behind – mostly because the general road maintenance budget was insufficient. Several of the groups on this letter worked with state agencies and former Representative Norm Dicks (WA06) to find a solution and Legacy Roads and Trails was established. Not only have Washington’s watersheds that support clean and safe drinking water, wildlife and fish habitat and recreation opportunities benefited, but so have lands and waters across the nation.

From 2008-2018, this unique bi-partisan program has invested over \$32M in Washington State leading to the following results:

- **Maintained and/or storm-proofed 2,298 miles of needed roads**, helping Washingtonians get where they wish to go on Forest Service lands;
- **Reclaimed 313 miles of unneeded roads**, preventing sediment from entering streams, many of which supply drinking water to rural and urban towns and cities;
- **Restored fish passage at 55 stream crossings**, boosting opportunity for Washington's \$1.1B sportfishing industry and advancing salmon restoration goals; and
- **Improved 105 miles of trails**, 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 **saved America's taxpayers \$3 million per year** in road maintenance costs.

That said, we are very concerned by what occurred in the 115th Congress. Without dedicated funding, 50% of the work planned for FY2019 will not occur this year. 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 setback comes at an especially challenging time for Washington. While the state invests millions in salmon "injunction barriers" downstream, upstream federal barriers are forgotten. 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 our state's \$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 for salmon, 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) 2020 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 public lands.

FY2020 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. As Washingtonians increasingly recognize the importance of restoring our watersheds, protecting sources of clean water and supporting economic benefits from outdoor recreation, this is not the time to pull back on our collective commitments to support clean water and salmon recovery.

Sincerely,

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Washington Wild

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Andrea Matzke
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