

WASHINGTON OUTDOOR ALLIANCE



The
Mountaineers



July 21, 2017

The Honorable Representative Suzan DelBene
U.S. House of Representatives
2442 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget

Dear Representative DelBene:

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Showshoe Club, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Mountaineers, Washington Climbers Coalition and Washington Trails Association—all human-powered recreation organizations in Washington State—come together as a coalition on issues relating to recreation, access and conservation. On behalf of the 36,000 members that the coalition Washington Outdoor Alliance represents, we thank you for your commitment to protecting Washington's outstanding public lands over the years. The Evergreen State's snowy mountains, raging rivers and diverse landscapes inspire us every day in our work and in our recreation.

We believe that current residents and visitors benefit greatly from these assets that make up our national public lands and we strive to ensure this legacy continues for many more generations.

We are very concerned about possible cuts to our land management agencies and conservation and recreation safeguards. Budget cuts to these areas lead down the road to selling out our public lands and waters to corporate interests at the expense of our own health, economic benefit, and values. We believe these programs must be protected so that future generations can enjoy the beauty, learn about nature, and experience the outdoors as we do now. Our organizations, and the many thousands of members that we represent, do not support any cuts targeted to erode conservation and recreation safeguards, or our land management agencies. As Congress moves forward in developing a budget for Fiscal Year 2018, we support budget options that reflect these American values embodied in our public lands.

We want to highlight a few specific public lands budgets that were proposed for cuts but need to be defended:

U.S. Forest Service Maintenance Budgets

In a poll completed by the Colorado College in 2015, 72% of voters in the West say the lack of resources to properly maintain and care for public lands is a serious problem with 33% saying this is an extremely

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serious problem.¹ However, the Administration's Proposed Fiscal Year 2018 Budget completely disregards voters and ignores this clear problem. Instead, the funds needed to fix aging infrastructure to ensure access and to protect rivers and wildlife is proposed to be completely slashed.

- Capital Improvement and Maintenance budget cut 73% (from \$363M to \$99M)
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- Deferred Maintenance budget cut 100% (from \$3.1M to \$0)

Agency goals cannot be met with these types of cuts. If Congress were to proceed with these cuts, Americans would lose even more access to our public lands as roads, bridges, and trails deteriorate to unsafe conditions.

National Park Service (NPS) Budgets

During the past five years, visitation to our National Parks has steadily increased as more and more people are looking to explore and enjoy America's iconic landscapes. The Administration's budget proposes a \$2.55 billion budget for NPS in Fiscal Year 2018, a cut of \$379 million from the 2017 omnibus package. This budget reduction would cut the equivalent of 1,242 full-time positions if Congress passes the administration's budget.² Since 2011, more than 2,300 NPS jobs have been lost – even though National Park visitation has skyrocketed.

The Administration's budget also proposes to reduce the Park Service's facilities operations and maintenance funds to \$685.9 million, a cut of \$92.7 million from the 2017 package. These funds support the rehabilitation of high-priority park infrastructure projects as well as routine maintenance work, including work done on roads and trails within our national park system. If Congress were to enact the Administration's budget, this would be the steepest cut to National Parks since before World War II.³

Recently, the Secretary of Interior has called for increasing Park fees to make up for proposed budget cuts to the Department of Interior. This would result in decreased access to our national public lands (with fewer Americans being able to afford access), and a worse experience once there, with less staff and resources to maintain these places.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

For over a half a century, the federal government has kept its promise to the American people and directed some of the royalties from offshore energy development for conservation and recreation. The

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Administration's proposed budget would siphon off at least 80% of those dollars other unknown and unintended purposes, which is completely unacceptable.

Conservation and recreation programs within Federal agencies have been severely underfunded for years, despite the overwhelming benefit they bring to the American public. With 12 million visitor days a year to Washington's public lands contributing over \$535 million in annual expenditures⁴, steep cuts in budgets would effectively eliminate access and hurt the recreation economy – much of it in rural areas.

We thank you again for your leadership in protecting our public lands and ask you to continue to stand up for healthy lands and waters, healthy lifestyles, and diverse economies by rejecting proposed cuts to these important programs and agencies and supporting strong public lands budgets.

Sincerely,

Gus Bekker, *President*, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club

Eddie Espinosa, *Northwest Policy Advisor*, American Alpine Club

Katherine Hollis, *Conservation and Advocacy Director*, The Mountaineers

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Yvonne Kraus, *Executive Director*, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

cc: John McCauley, *Regional Director*, Outdoor Alliance

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July 21, 2017

The Honorable Representative Jamie Herrera Beutler
U.S. House of Representatives
1107 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget

Dear Representative Herrera Beutler:

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Showshoe Club, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Mountaineers, Washington Climbers Coalition and Washington Trails Association—all human-powered recreation organizations in Washington State—come together as a coalition on issues relating to conservation, recreation, and access. On behalf of the 36,000 members that the coalition Washington Outdoor Alliance represents, the Evergreen State's snowy mountains, raging rivers and diverse landscapes inspire us every day in our work and in our recreation.

We believe that current residents and visitors benefit greatly from these assets that make up our national public lands and we strive to ensure this legacy continues for many more generations.

We are very concerned about possible cuts to our land management agencies and conservation and recreation safeguards. Budget cuts to these areas lead down the road to selling out our public lands and waters to corporate interests at the expense of our own health, economic benefit, and values. We believe these programs must be protected so that future generations can enjoy the beauty, learn about nature, and experience the outdoors as we do now. Our organizations, and the many thousands of members that we represent, do not support any cuts targeted to erode conservation and recreation safeguards, or our land management agencies.

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The Administration's budget also proposes to reduce the Park Service's facilities operations and maintenance funds to \$685.9 million, a cut of \$92.7 million from the 2017 package. These funds support the rehabilitation of high-priority park infrastructure projects as well as routine maintenance work, including work done on roads and trails within our national park system. If Congress were to enact the Administration's budget, this would be the steepest cut to National Parks since before World War II.³

Recently, the Secretary of Interior has called for increasing Park fees to make up for proposed budget cuts to the Department of Interior. This would result in decreased access to our national public lands (with fewer Americans being able to afford access), and a worse experience once there, with less staff and resources to maintain these places.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

For over a half a century, the federal government has kept its promise to the American people and directed some of the royalties from offshore energy development for conservation and recreation. The Administration's proposed budget would siphon off at least 80% of those dollars other unknown and unintended purposes, which is completely unacceptable.

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On behalf of the 36,000 members our organizations represent, we ask you to stand up for Washington's diverse economies, healthy lands and waters, and healthy lifestyles, that our national public lands provide by rejecting proposed cuts to these important programs and agencies and supporting strong public lands budgets.

Sincerely,

Gus Bekker, *President*, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club

Eddie Espinosa, *Northwest Policy Advisor*, American Alpine Club

Katherine Hollis, *Conservation and Advocacy Director*, The Mountaineers

Andrea Imler, *Advocacy Director*, Washington Trails Association

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Joe Sambataro, *Northwest Regional Director*, Access Fund

Yvonne Kraus, *Executive Director*, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

cc: John McCauley, *Regional Director*, Outdoor Alliance

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July 21, 2017

The Honorable Representative Pramila Jayapal
U.S. House of Representatives
319 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget

Dear Representative Jayapal:

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Showshoe Club, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Mountaineers, Washington Climbers Coalition and Washington Trails Association—all human-powered recreation organizations in Washington State—come together as a coalition on issues relating to conservation, recreation, and access. On behalf of the 36,000 members that the coalition Washington Outdoor Alliance represents, we thank you for your appreciation and dedication to Washington's outstanding natural beauty. The Evergreen State's snowy mountains, raging rivers and diverse landscapes inspire us every day in our work and in our recreation

We believe that current residents and visitors benefit greatly from these assets that make up our national public lands and we strive to ensure this legacy continues for many more generations.

We are very concerned about possible cuts to our land management agencies and conservation and recreation safeguards. Budget cuts to these areas lead down the road to selling out our public lands and waters to corporate interests at the expense of our own health, economic benefit, and values. We believe these programs must be protected so that future generations can enjoy the beauty, learn about nature, and experience the outdoors as we do now. Our organizations, and the many thousands of members that we represent, do not support any cuts targeted to erode conservation and recreation safeguards, or our land management agencies.

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cc: John McCauley, *Regional Director*, Outdoor Alliance

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July 21, 2017

The Honorable Representative Derek Kilmer
U.S. House of Representatives
1520 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget

Dear Representative Kilmer:

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Yvonne Kraus, *Executive Director*, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

cc: John McCauley, *Regional Director*, Outdoor Alliance

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July 21, 2017

The Honorable Senator Patty Murray
U.S. Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget

Dear Senator Murray:

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Showshoe Club, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Mountaineers, Washington Climbers Coalition and Washington Trails Association—all human-powered recreation organizations in Washington State—come together as a coalition on issues relating to conservation, recreation, and access. On behalf of the 36,000 members that the coalition Washington Outdoor Alliance represents, we thank you for your commitment and leadership to protecting Washington's outstanding public lands over the years. The Evergreen State's snowy mountains, raging rivers and diverse landscapes inspire us every day in our work and in our recreation.

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