

April 13th, 2021

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce,

On behalf of the undersigned hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation organizations, we are writing to request your support for watershed and habitat restoration on U.S. Forest Service lands **by appropriating \$100 million in funding for the Forest Service Legacy Roads and Trails (LRT) Remediation program** in the Fiscal Year 2022 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill.

The Forest Service manages over 191 million acres of public land that are jointly owned by all Americans. These lands provide essential habitat for a wide range of North American fish and game species. Rivers and streams on Forest Service lands provide critical habitat for trout, salmon and other aquatic species.

Across the country, from the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia to the Coleville National Forest in Washington, LRT-funded projects have made major contributions to improve water quality and aquatic habitat while making USFS roads and trails more durable. The program's targeted activities create important recreation and conservation jobs across the nation and save America's taxpayers millions in road maintenance costs. These activities include:

- **Maintaining and/or storm-proofing thousands of miles of roads** to protect habitat, water quality and downstream communities;
- **Reclaiming thousands of miles of unneeded roads** to prevent erosion from damaging streams, many of which supply drinking water to rural and urban towns and cities;
- **Replacing over one thousand culverts to restore fish passage**, aiding the recovery of fish species important to restoration goals, tribal communities and sportfishing enthusiasts;
- **Improving over five thousand miles of trails**, driving the \$842.2 billion outdoor recreation economy.

The Legacy Roads and Trails program works because it is targeted and results oriented. Over half of the money used for fish passage and culvert projects came from external partners amplifying the effect of the Legacy Roads and Trails seed funds. The collaborative stewardship of the LRT program has made fishing and hunting better, while providing high-paying family wage jobs in rural communities. These investments on our public lands have helped to improve drinking water, and to increase flood resiliency in the face of increasingly unpredictable and intense weather events.

Research has consistently shown that big game species need big wild country, uninterrupted by motorized disturbance. The LRT program helps address this wildlife need by removing and restoring unused tertiary motorized routes. These efforts help provide security habitat for sensitive species like elk and mule deer, while also providing hunters opportunities to experience the solitude, challenge and reward that hunting wild public lands provide.

The program is uniquely positioned to help the Forest Service address its historic maintenance backlog. USFS has identified a backlog of over \$3.5 billion in deferred maintenance for roads, close to 400 high priority culvert projects requiring nearly \$110M just for one year, and \$675M for priority watershed restoration projects in just a portion of the watersheds nationwide. With its proven track record and broad bipartisan support, the LRT program is ideally shaped to begin addressing these needs once again.

We ask for your support of the program by reinstating Legacy Roads and Trails as a separate line item in the FY 2022 Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill with a \$100M allocation including salary, expenses and project investments. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society

American Sportfishing Association

American Woodcock Society

Angler Action Foundation

Archery Trade Association

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

The Billfish Foundation

Fly Fishers International

Izaak Walton League of America

National Deer Association

National Wild Turkey Federation

National Wildlife Federation

The Nature Conservancy

North American Grouse Partnership

Orion: The Hunter's Institute

Ruffed Grouse Society

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Trout Unlimited

Wild Salmon Center