



Protecting the places you love to hike

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2018

Re: American Hiking Society Statement in Support of H.R. 6510

Dear Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Hiking Society, our members, supporters, and the hiking community nationwide, we encourage the committee to support H.R. 6510, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act.

All Public Lands Must Be Included in Deferred Maintenance Legislation (incl. U.S. Forest Service)

H.R. 6510 is a first step to address the \$21.5 billion maintenance backlog that exists across all federal lands.¹ The bill creates a fund that would provide \$6.5 billion over five years from energy development revenues on federal land and water to address the most pressing deferred maintenance needs within the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Education.²

However, somewhat perplexingly, H.R. 6510 does not include the U.S. Forest Service and its 193 million acres of public lands, encompassing 157,000 miles of trails. We urge the committee to rectify this oversight prior to final passage.

Current Deferred Maintenance Trail Backlogs

When annual maintenance needs go unaddressed, long-term problems arise, impacting the public's ability to access outdoor recreation. Closed trails, out-of-service restrooms, campgrounds in poor conditions, and impassable roads are only a few of the barriers that hikers face.

Currently 193,500 miles of trails on federal lands need \$1.93 billion of estimated maintenance.

¹ See *Exploring Innovative Solutions to Reduce the Department of the Interior's Maintenance Backlog Before the H. Comm on Natural Resources*, 115th Cong. (2018) (statement of U.S. Dep't of the Interior), available at <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/doi-maintenance-backlog>; See also U.S. Dep't of Agric., Office of Inspector Gen., *Forest Service Deferred Maintenance 2* (May 2017), available at <https://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/08601-0004-31.pdf>.

² This funding includes funds from Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenue, which also provides funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

Agency	Trails	Deferred Maintenance Amount
Forest Service ³	157,000 miles	\$300 million (trails)
National Park Service ⁴	18,844 miles	\$684 million (trails)
Fish & Wildlife Service ⁵	2,100 miles	\$336 million (roads, trails, bridges) ⁶
Bureau of Land Management ⁷	13, 468 miles	\$615 million (roads, trails, bridges) ⁸
All Agencies	(191,412 miles trail specific)	\$1.935 billion

Deferred Maintenance Impacts Economic Activity and Recreation Access

The economic impact of trails and the potential increased economic activity from addressing deferred maintenance needs would be significant. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, recreation on trails in America accounted for \$201 billion in annual spending in 2017 and were responsible for 1.7 million jobs. Much of this spending takes place in small communities along each of the trails, communities for which this income is substantial, meaningful, and will remain local. Many of the jobs trails create cannot be exported offshore: guides and outfitters, hotel staff and restaurateurs, and numerous others directly benefit the community in which they reside. Open and well-maintained trails are essential for this continued economic benefit.

Trails are more than just an economic engine. Since our nation’s founding, the outdoors has been a distinctive part of our American heritage, and trails are integral to that. Whether it’s a family out for a hike on a nearby trail, a returning veteran walking off the war, or hunters and anglers accessing their sites, Americans continue to seek places for outdoor recreation, a connection to nature, and healthy exercise. By addressing long

³ See Carol Hardy Vincent, Congressional Research Serv., Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2007-FY2016 Estimates and Issues 3 (Apr. 25, 2017), available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43997.pdf>. See also U.S. Dep’t of Agric., FY 2019 Budget Justification 75 (Feb. 2018), available at <https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/usfs-fy19-budget-justification.pdf>.

⁴ Nat’l Park Serv., Nat’l Park Serv. Asset Inventory Summary FY17, available at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/upload/FY17-Asset-Inventory-Summary-AIS-Servicewide_Report_508-3.pdf.

⁵ FWS total includes deferred maintenance not limited to trails as trail specific breakdowns are not publicly available.. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serv., Bureau Highlights (2018), available at https://edit.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/fy2019_bib_bh059.pdf; U.S. Dep’t of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Serv., Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2019 NWRs-10 (2018),

⁶ Trail specific data not publicly available.

⁷ BLM total includes deferred maintenance not limited to trails as trail specific breakdowns are not publicly available. Carol Hardy Vincent, Congressional Research Serv., Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2007-FY2016 Estimates and Issues 3 (Apr. 25, 2017), available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43997.pdf>.

⁸ Trail specific data not publicly available.

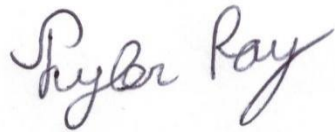
overdue improvements to trails and the surrounding infrastructure, Congress can ensure that outdoor recreation remains open and accessible.

Land and Water Conservation Fund and Deferred Maintenance Must Be Addressed Together

Additionally, we urge concurrent consideration of legislation to permanently reauthorize and fund the LWCF. As both funds would receive funding from Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenue, longstanding commitments to the LWCF should be met before designating new OCS commitments. Fulfilling the promise of LWCF and addressing deferred maintenance are complementary funds to ensure that our natural resources are both conserved and preserved for continued use. One should not be done at the expense of the other.

Please contact Tyler Ray, Director of Policy and Advocacy, tray@americanhiking.org, 301-565-6704 x705 with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tyler Ray". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Tyler Ray
Director of Policy and Advocacy