

July 11, 2025

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Oppose Elimination of National Park Service Community Assistance Programs

Dear Chair Simpson, Chair Cole, Ranking Member Pingree, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of millions of our members and supporters, we write to express deep concern regarding the proposed elimination of critical National Park Service (NPS) Community Assistance Programs in the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations process. Programs such as the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, National Heritage Areas, the National Register of Historic Places, Hydropower Assistance Program, and several Congressionally-authorized grants are essential to communities nationwide. They reflect the NPS's mission to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation beyond park boundaries.

These locally focused programs provide vital planning, technical assistance, and funding support to initiatives that improve parks, trails, conservation areas, and historic sites. They help revitalize underutilized spaces, transforming them into dynamic community assets that foster recreation, public health, economic development, and environmental resilience. Many of these projects leverage significant non-federal investment, making them some of the most cost-effective tools the federal government has for strengthening communities.

Recent examples highlight the ongoing impact of these programs: In December 2024, the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program announced support for 10 new community projects across Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.¹ These include a 1.5-mile Riverwalk extension in Montgomery, Alabama; expanded access to Ashley River Park West in Charleston, South Carolina; and key blueway and greenway initiatives along the Hatchie and Nolichucky Rivers in Tennessee. These efforts not only enhance outdoor access but also advance cultural preservation, environmental restoration, and regional connectivity through strategic partnerships.

¹ National Park Service (2025). Current RTCA projects. U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/current-projects.htm>

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) and the National Register of Historic Places support local efforts to protect historic landmarks, restore cultural sites, and preserve the stories that define our shared heritage—ensuring that future generations can experience the depth and diversity of America’s past.

The Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program exemplifies NPS’s collaborative approach to conservation, supporting locally driven plans for rivers such as the Westfield (MA), White Clay Creek (DE/PA), and the York River (ME). However, continued budget shortfalls and staffing reductions increasingly limit the program’s ability to initiate new studies, provide technical assistance, and ensure ongoing stewardship. Despite its proven success in leveraging local partnerships and avoiding direct federal management, the program’s reach remains constrained by inadequate capacity and unpredictable funding, putting at risk the long-term protection of nationally significant waterways.

We are also particularly concerned about the proposed elimination of the Hydropower Assistance Program, which plays a key role in advancing renewable energy and resilience within our national parks. Notable successes include the Glacier Bay “intertie” project in Alaska—completed in 2021—which delivers 800 kW of renewable power and saves approximately 600 tons of CO₂ annually, and the Yellowstone micro-hydro project in Wyoming saves around \$73,000 per year and reduce carbon emissions by 800 tons annually. These innovative projects demonstrate how modest federal investments can yield substantial environmental and economic benefits.

In addition, we are alarmed by the growing staffing crisis at the NPS, including the threat of a Reduction in Force (RIF), which could further dismantle the agency’s capacity to serve the public. With the workforce already down by 24% this year alone, additional cuts would endanger visitor safety, delay basic services, and compromise the protection of our nation’s natural and cultural treasures.² The uncertainty surrounding RIFs has demoralized staff and jeopardized essential park functions at a time of record-high visitation.

While the proposed cuts would reduce overall federal spending by less than one-half of one percent, they would slash the National Park Service’s budget by nearly 40%—severely curtailing the agency’s reach and effectiveness in communities across the country, particularly in areas distant from national parks. The elimination of these programs would undo decades of collaboration between NPS and local organizations, tribes, municipalities, businesses, and regional partners.

For most Americans, everyday experiences with nature happen close to home—walking a dog, visiting a neighborhood park, kayaking on a river, or hiking a nearby trail. These places, often supported by NPS assistance programs, form the foundation of our national outdoor infrastructure. Cutting these programs undermines our collective ability to support outdoor recreation, preserve cultural heritage, and promote public and economic well-being.

We urge you to reject these short-sighted cuts and reaffirm the NPS’s role in serving all communities.

Thank you for considering this request.

² National Parks Conservation Association. (2023). *Protecting America’s heritage means protecting the people who steward it*. Retrieved from <https://npca.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/4593/7ee25845-bd0e-45d8-b38b-e89dd09a2b80.pdf?1752079943>

Sincerely,

3 Bull Contracting LLC
A Rocha USA
Acknowledge Create Teach
African American Museum of Iowa
Aiea Community Association
Alabama Rivers Alliance
Alaska Trails
Ali'i Pauahi Hawaiian Civic Club
AllTrails
Amana Heritage Society
American Chestnut Land Trust
American Discovery Trail Society
American Hiking Society
American Packrafting Association
American Rivers Action Fund
American Trails
American Whitewater
Animal Wonders KC
Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Avalonia Land Conservancy
Avid Trails, LLC
Back Country Horsemen of America
Backcountry Education Adventure
Research
Badlands to Badlands Trails
Batavia Park District
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
Black Canyon Trail Coalition
Blackwell School Alliance
Blowing Rock Tourism Development
Authority
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
Bluebird Mountain Farm
Boone Dutch Creeks Watershed
Alliance
BRNHA
Buchanan County Historical Society
Bucks County Audubon Society at
Honey Hollow
Cahaba Medical Care Foundation
Caldera Action
California Sportfishing Protection
Alliance
Californians for Western Wilderness
CalWild
Capital Off Road Pathfinders
Caribbean Center for Rising Seas
Carolina Mountain Club

Catawba Vale Innovation Market, LLC
Cedar Falls Historical Society
Chattooga Conservancy
Chinook Associates LLC
City of Atlanta
City of Grand Forks
Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe &
Sustainable Community
Clermont Historical Society
Climate Justice Alliance
Coalition to Protect America's National
Parks
Commercial River Permittees &
Concessionaires
Community Geographics
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists
Association
Confluence Research and Consulting
Connecticut River Conservancy
County Line Riders of Catalina
CU Maurice River
Deerfield River Watershed Association
Delaware County Historical Society &
Museum
Delaware River Greenway Partnership
Designing Accessible Communities
Dodge County Parks
Door County Trails
Dragonfly Trails, Inc.
Eagle Rock Shredders
Eagles Landing Winery
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Earthmoving Legacy Center
East Coast Greenway Alliance
Eastern Pennsylvania Alliance of
Climbers
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Defenders of McHenry
County
Evansville-Area Trails Coalition
Fabulous Fox! Water Trail
Fairbanks Cycle Club
Farmington River Watershed
Association
FATRAC – Folsom Auburn Trail Riders
Action Coalition
Finger Lakes Trail Conference
Five Rivers MetroParks
Foodshed Alliance

Foothills Rails to Trails Coalition
ForeverGreen Trails
Fossil and Prairie Conservation
Foundation
Four Mounds Foundation
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of Berrien County Trails
Friends of Deschutes Canyon
Friends of Dodge County Parks
Friends of Freedom Park, WI
Friends of Keegans Bayou Trail
Friends of Michaux State Forest
Friends of the Cheat
Friends of the Lost Coast
Friends of the River
Friends of the Thomas Trail
Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance
for Land Trusts
Gato Verde Adventure Sailing School
LLC
German American Heritage Center
Great Egg Harbor Watershed
Association
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Great SW Adventures
Greenagers Inc
Greenways Foundation
Groundwork USA
Grout Museum District
Groveland Trail Heads
Hansen's Dairy Farm
Heartland Acres Agribition Center
Heritage Conservancy, Inc.
Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail
Housatonic River Commission
Houston Engineering, Inc.
Hydropower Reform Coalition
Illinois Environmental Council
Illinois River Watershed Partnership
Interior Alaska Trails Newsletter
Internships and Adventures LLC
Iowa Museum Association
Johnson County Historical Society
Kayperworks
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Keystone Trails Association
Kids for Saving Earth
La Veta Trails, Inc.
Lamoni Historical Association
Levees.org II L.L.C.
Lewis and Clark Trust, Inc.

Live Well Shawnee County – Active
Environment
Looking for Lincoln / Abraham Lincoln
National Heritage Area
Lookout Valley Greenway Alliance
Lower Farmington River and Salmon
Brook Committee
Maasdam Barns
Main Line Therapeutics
Making Tomorrow
Malama Huleia
Massachusetts Woodlands Institute
Metro Mountain Bikers
Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition
Miss Effie's Country Flowers
Missisquoi River Basin Association
Missourians for Responsible
Transportation
MLTW
Monongahela River Trails Conservancy
Morgan Outdoors
Musconetcong Watershed Association
Museums of Story City
National 19th Amendment Society
National Federation of Federal
Employees
National Mississippi River Museum &
Aquarium
National Park Service
National Washington Rochambeau
Revolutionary Route
Nature Legacies
New Jersey Recreation & Park
Association
New Mexico Wild
Next 100 Coalition
Nippersink Watershed Association
North Country Trail Association
Northeast Trailworks, LLP
Northern Forest Canoe Trail
Northwest Trail Alliance
Ocean Conservation Research
OCP
Ohio River Way
Old Orchard Creek Farms, LLC
Oregon Creative Group
Oregon-California Trails Association
Park County Environmental Council
Park Planning Sustainability, LLC
Parks Forever Consulting & Advocacy
ParkWatch Fond du Lac

Partnership for the National Trails System
Paunacussing Watershed Association
Pedal Factory
Pilchuck Audubon Society
Pixel Trail Inc.
Planet Zero Gravity, LLC
Preservation Alliance of West Virginia
Project Eleven Hundred
Putnam Museum and Science Center
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Rails to Trails of Wayne County
Rapids Riders
Resource Renewal Institute
Rio Grande Indivisible
Rio Grande Valley Broadband – Great
Old Broads for Wilderness
Riparia, LLC
River Alliance of Wisconsin
River Management Society
River Network
Rocky Mountain Field Institute
Salida Mountain Trails
San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship
Santa Risa Southeast Greenway
Save The Bay – Narragansett Bay
Sierra Freepackers Unit – Back Country
Horsemen of California
Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area
Smith River Alliance
Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
South Tourism Society
South Yuba River Citizens League /
Yuba River Waterkeeper
Southeast Fox River Partnership
SPLASH Delaware River Floating Classroom
Staurolite Farm, LLC
Strategic Habitat Enhancements
Taproot Collaborative
Taunton River Stewardship Council
Taunton River Watershed Alliance
Tega Cay Healthy Kids
The Conservation Foundation
The Lannding LLC
The Rachel Carson Council
The River Radius Podcast

The Santa Fe to Taos Thru-Hike
The Shimoda Group, LLC
Thompson Falls Community Trails
Thoreau Farm Trust
Tidewater AT Club / Trail Maintenance
Timber Rock Lodge & Big South Fork
NRRA Concessionaire
Town Branch Trail, Inc.
Trail Access Project
Trail Center
Trailnet.org
Traverse Area Paddle Club
Travis County Parks
Travis County Parks Foundation
Trego Lake District (WI)
Trust for Public Land
Tucker County Convention and Visitor Bureau
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Turtleback Trails Network
Union Pacific Museum
Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild & Scenic Committee
Urban Patchwork
Ushers Ferry Historic Village
Vermont Huts & Trails
Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative
Village of South Elgin
Virginia Trails Alliance
Visit Eau Claire
Voice for Animals
Ward 7 Resilience Hub Community Coalition
Wasatch Adaptive Sports
Washington County Historical Society, Inc.
Washington Trails Association
Wausau and Marathon Country Parks and Recreation Foundation
West Michigan Trails
West Virginia Rails to Trails Council
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Western Illinois University – Quad Cities
Western Nebraska Resources Council
White Clay Watershed Association
Wild Hope
Wild Montana
Wilder Memorial Museum
Wildlife for All
Wilrona LLC dba Fireside Winery

Wisconsin Pony of the Americas Club
WV TRAIL