

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2022

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We write to thank the Subcommittee for its ongoing support for maintenance of infrastructure on our national public lands. We encourage you to continue this critical support by ensuring that the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill includes robust annual funding for infrastructure maintenance needs at the Department of the Interior.

The bureaus within the Department of the Interior maintain tens of thousands of diverse infrastructure assets, including roads, bridges, buildings, trails, campgrounds, and water management structures. Failure to adequately maintain this infrastructure is irresponsible and negatively impacts visitor access, enjoyment, and safety for the rapidly growing community of public lands visitors. The National Park Service alone has an estimated \$21.8 billion in deferred maintenance and repairs— maintenance or repairs that were not done when they should have been and that were delayed to a future period.

We were thrilled to join you both and a bipartisan majority of Congress to pass the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, authorizing a historic investment in infrastructure maintenance at the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Education, and Forest Service. As you know, the Great American Outdoors Act established the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF), which utilizes revenues from energy development to provide up to \$9.5 billion over five years to address agency deferred maintenance needs.

Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act was a major achievement, but the LRF is a finite investment to address the existing deferred maintenance backlog. If annual infrastructure maintenance budgets continue to fall short of ongoing maintenance needs, agencies will defer maintenance and repairs, thereby growing the deferred maintenance backlog and counteracting the intended deferred maintenance buy-down of the LRF. The National Park Service notes in its FY 2023 budget request that its estimated deferred maintenance has *grown* since FY 2018, despite support from the LRF, in part because “preventive, recurring and related maintenance programs were insufficient to keep pace with maintenance needs, adding to the backlog.”

The industry standard is to annually allocate 2-4% of organizational assets' current replacement value toward facility maintenance and repair activities. Based on the industry standard, annual agency budgets have consistently underfunded maintenance and repair needs. The Department of the Interior estimates the replacement value of its assets is more than \$400 billion, meaning the industry standard annual cost to maintain DOI assets is between \$8 billion and \$16 billion. The Department's FY 2023 budget request includes approximately \$2.8 billion of non-LRF funds to address facility operations, maintenance, repair, and modernization needs.

In the absence of consistently robust annual maintenance budgets, deferred maintenance backlogs will continue to grow. Compounding the issue, deferment of maintenance and renewal activities also accelerates the rate of facility deterioration and increases repair costs, driving the total deferred maintenance backlog higher as time passes. Deferring maintenance is not a responsible way to manage our nation's public lands infrastructure.

Our nation's public lands provide inestimable cultural value, offer abundant conservation and recreation opportunities, and support local economies and the multibillion-dollar national outdoor recreation economy. We thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure our public lands infrastructure is responsibly maintained so that future generations can continue to experience America's treasured places.

Sincerely,



ANGUS S. KING, JR.
Chairman, National Parks
Subcommittee
United States Senate
Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources



JOE NEGUSE
Chairman, National Parks,
Forests, and Public Lands
Subcommittee
United States House
Committee on Natural
Resources