December X, 2018

Vicki Christiansen, Chief

United States Forest Service

1400 Independence Ave., SW

Washington, DC 20250

**RE:** **Support for** **10-Year Sustainable Trail Stewardship Challenge**

Dear Chief Christiansen:

We write to voice our strong support for the agency’s draft 10-Year Sustainable Trail Stewardship Challenge (10YTC), a major public-private partnership action item from the agency’s *National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System*, released earlier this year. Critically, the 10YTC directly responds to recommendations made by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in its report on the Forest Service’s trail maintenance backlog and aligns well with the goals of the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.[[1]](#footnote-1)

As Chief, we encourage your continued support for the 10YTC, including securing resources necessary for its implementation at each level within the agency and strengthening oversight and critical leadership by headquarters.

Well-managed trail systems serve as powerful economic generators, supporting our nation’s growing outdoor recreation economy, whichaccounted for $412 billion in GDP (2.2% of total GDP) in 2016.[[2]](#footnote-2) Community leaders and planners throughout the country use trails as important drivers of economic revitalization, including building and strengthening local businesses.[[3]](#footnote-3) Additionally, trails are the second most important community amenity that potential homeowners cite when choosing a new community.[[4]](#footnote-4)National Forest System trails comprise a vital component of our nation’s economy and infrastructure, making the vision represented by the 10YTC all the more critical at this time.

We offer our collective capacity to work with Forest Service personnel and other partners to thoughtfully and strategically begin implementing solutions that improve and sustain our trails. Thank you.

Sincerely,

1. GAO, Forest Service Trails (June 2013), <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-618>; National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act, Pub. L. No.114-245, 129 Stat. 3129 (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account: Updated Statistics for 2012-2016 (Sept. 2018), <https://www.bea.gov/news/2018/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-updated-statistics-2012-2016>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station, Economic Benefits of Recreational Trails (2010), https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/rectrails.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Id. *citing* Nat’l Ass’n of Realtors and Nat’*l Ass*’n of Home Builders, *Consumer’s Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers* (2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)