

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS URGE INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR NATIONAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM AS VITAL COMPONENT OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS, CLIMATE- AND EQUITY- FOCUSED GOALS

Washington, D.C. (September 9, 2021) – Members of Congress from across the nation joined to urge increased funding for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) as a key step for economic recovery and meeting national climate and equity goals. The Members noted that the Senate bipartisan infrastructure bill failed to include an increase in RTP funding. The letter to U.S. House of Representatives leaders said:

“The benefits delivered by the RTP since 1991 are remarkable. It has funded more than 30,000 projects across the country, offering safe and healthy opportunities for hiking, biking, skiing, motorcycling, snowmobiling, OHVing, horseback riding and more. It supports urban, suburban, and rural trails that benefit people of all incomes and physical abilities across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It is vital to the nation’s outdoor recreation industry, which yields \$788 billion in economic output annually and supports 5.2 million jobs.”

“There is clear benefit to ensuring states and localities can access the funds needed to expand their active trail networks, ensure outdoor recreation is a part of the clean energy transition, provide safe and healthy outdoor spaces for all communities, and encourage greater carbon-free modes of transportation. We ask that the reconciliation package include funding for the RTP that brings it up to the \$147 million per year included in the [House-passed] INVEST Act.”

Signers of the letter are:

U.S. Representative Peter Welch (VT)
U.S. Representative Angie Craig (MN)
U.S. Representative Ed Case (HI)
U.S. Representative Julia Brownley (CA)
U.S. Representative Ann Kuster (NH)
U.S. Representative Marilyn Strickland (WA)
U.S. Representative Mike Doyle (PA)
U.S. Representative Darren Soto (FL)
U.S. Representative Rick Larsen (WA)
U.S. Representative Jared Huffman (CA)
U.S. Representative Brendan Boyle (PA)
U.S. Representative Mary Gay Scanlon (PA)
U.S. Representative Conor Lamb (PA)

The letter was initiated by Mr. Welch of Vermont, who is also the lead sponsor of H.R.1864, the RTP Full Funding Act. He explained:



COALITION FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS

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“RTP funds vital trail building and maintenance throughout the nation and are critical to ensuring our trails remain safe and accessible for all – while helping to support 5.2 million jobs in the outdoor recreation industry. Unfortunately, this program has faced stagnant funding for a decade as tax dollars from outdoor recreation have not been returned to trail projects. I’ve urged full funding for the program throughout my time in Congress and am hopeful that the reconciliation package is an opportunity to allow trail projects to continue supporting climate-friendly outdoor recreation, connected communities and the prosperity of local economies.”

Derrick Crandall, Co-Chair of Coalition for Recreational Trails, thanked the letter’s authors and noted that the Senate’s failure to increase program funding, while unfortunate, was largely caused by a delay in the release of an estimate of nonhighway recreational fuel taxes. Congress requested the study by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 2019, but the study was not released until July 29, 2021, as the Senate neared final action on the infrastructure bill. FHWA estimated that motorized recreational activities generated nearly \$300 million annually in federal tax receipts. He urged Congressional action on behalf of CRT’s more than 35 national organizations representing the full spectrum of trail enthusiasts.

“The Congress has several pathways to funding more and better trails. The reconciliation measure is a logical option,” said Marianne Fowler who is also Co-Chair of CRT, “since it supports both important national infrastructure as well as national goals for equity, climate change and healthier communities and individuals.”

The Congressional letter, the FHWA report and details on the 30,000+ projects completed to date can be found at www.rectrails.org, along with information on CRT. CRT’s members include:

Adventure Cycling Association
American Council of Snowmobile Associations
American Hiking Society
American Horse Council
American Motorcyclist Association
American Trails
Americans for Responsible Recreational Access
Back Country Horsemen of America
BlueRibbon Coalition
Conservation Legacy
The Corps Network
Equine Land Conservation Resource
International Association of Snowmobile Admin.
International Mountain Bicycling Association
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Assoc.
Motorcycle Industry Council
National Bicycle Greenway
National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council
National Park Hospitality Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
Off-Road Business Association
Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
People for Bikes
Professional Trail Builders Association
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
Society for Outdoor Recreation Professionals
SnowSports Industries America
Specialty Equipment Market Association
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
Student Conservation Association
Tread Lightly!
United Four Wheel Drive Associations

