

Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative

Restoring healthy forests and clean waters across Washington

July 12, 2007

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
173 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4701

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4704

Dear Senators Murray and Cantwell:

We are writing to request your support for increased funding in the FY 2008 Interior Appropriations Act to address the serious problem of deteriorating Forest Service roads in the national forests of Washington State. We also want to thank you for your June 29 letter to the Secretary of Agriculture expressing concerns and requesting more information about this problem.

As you know, abandoned, erosive, and poorly maintained roads pose a serious threat to water quality, fish passage, and salmon recovery in Washington State, but the Forest Service lacks the resources necessary to take corrective action. Inadequate funding to fix Forest Service road problems also threatens access to trailheads and other recreational sites. The Forest Service has a \$300 million backlog of road decommissioning, repair, and maintenance work in Washington State, and the backlog is growing by at least \$8 million annually. Unfortunately, the President's latest budget proposal calls for a significant decrease in funding to fix and maintain Forest Service roads.

This year, Governor Gregoire, tribal leaders, and conservationists joined together in a state-wide Watershed Restoration Initiative to highlight the need for additional federal funding to correct road problems in Washington's national forests. The Initiative is requesting that Congress provide \$30 million each year for the next decade to fix Forest Service road problems in Washington State, beginning with the Puget Sound/Hood Canal region.

We enthusiastically support Congressman Dicks's Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative in the House of Representatives' FY 2008 Interior appropriations bill. The Roads Initiative will provide \$65 million to the Forest Service nationwide to accomplish urgently needed road decommissioning, maintenance, and other treatments to reduce the impact of old Forest Service roads and improve fish passage. The Initiative appropriately

gives special attention to protecting streams that support endangered fish species and supply water to communities.

We strongly encourage you to join with Congressman Dicks in his efforts to reduce road impacts, restore watersheds, and improve salmon habitat in Washington State. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Legacy Roads Initiative is enacted by Congress and properly implemented by the Forest Service.

Sincerely,

Thomas O’Keefe, PhD.
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

Bonnie Phillips
Executive Director
Olympic Forest Coalition

Mike Anderson
Senior Resource Analyst
The Wilderness Society

Sue Gunn
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National Forests Committee Chair
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William Deters
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Marc Bardsley
President
North Cascades Conservation Council

Don Parks
President
Alpine Lakes Protection Society

Kathy Johnson
Forest Practices Chair
Pilchuck Audubon Society

Nalani Askov
Executive Director
Washington Wilderness Coalition

cc:
Congressman Norm Dicks
Governor Christine Gregoire