

Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative

Restoring healthy forests and clean waters across Washington

June 22, 2007

Honorable Norm Dicks
U.S. House of Representatives
2467 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Forest Service Roads in Washington State

Dear Congressman Dicks:

Thank you for your strong leadership and support of increased funding in the House of Representatives' proposed FY 2008 Interior Appropriations Act (H.R. 2643) to address the serious problem of deteriorating Forest Service roads in the National Forests of Washington State.

Abandoned, erosive, and poorly maintained roads pose a serious threat to water quality, fish passage, and salmon recovery, 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 are very pleased that the House of Representatives' FY 2008 Interior appropriations bill includes a bold, new Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative. 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 greatly appreciate your 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
Washington State Director
Wildlands CPR

Mary Scurlock
Senior Policy Analyst
Pacific Rivers Council

Mark Lawler
National Forests Committee Chair
Cascade Chapter, Sierra Club

Gina Ottoboni
Public Policy Associate
The Mountaineers

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: Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Governor Christine Gregoire