GARY WERNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATEMENT TO THE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT & RELATED AGENCIES

May 24, 2017

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee:

The Partnership for the National Trails System appreciates your support over the past 20 years, through operations funding and dedicated Challenge Cost Share funds, for the national scenic and historic trails administered by the National Park Service. We also appreciate your increased allocation of funds to support the trails administered and managed by the Forest Service and for the trails in the Bureau of Land Management’s National Landscape Conservation System.

2018 will be the 50th year since Congress established the National Trails System as a bold experiment in public/private collaboration for public benefit. While most of the trail making is done by tens of thousands of citizen stewards increased funding is needed to close gaps in these trails. To continue the progress that you have fostered and to begin the next 50 years with an increased investment in the National Trails System, the Partnership requests that you provide annual operations funding for each of the 30 national scenic and historic trails for Fiscal Year 2018 through these appropriations:

- **National Park Service:** $16.233 million for administration of 23 trails and for coordination of the long-distance trails program by the Washington office. **Construction:** $357,200 for the Ice Age Trail and $250,000 for the Pacific Crest Trail.

- **USDA Forest Service:** $85 million for trails construction and maintenance (CMTL) with $7.796 million of it to administer 6 trails and $1.3 million to manage parts of 16 trails administered by the NPS or BLM. $600,000 for Iditarod Trail construction and maintenance.

- **Bureau of Land Management:** $2.812 million to administer three trails and for coordination of the National Trails program and $7.14 million to manage portions of 13 trails administered by the Park Service or the Forest Service and for operating five National Historic Trail interpretive centers. **Construction:** $300,000 for the Iditarod Trail. **Maintenance:** $300,000 for the Iditarod Trail and $250,000 for the Pacific Crest Trail.

- We ask you to create a $1.5 million National Trails System Challenge Cost Share Program for the National Park Service.

- We ask you to restore the Bureau of Land Management’s Challenge Cost Share Program with $3 million and allocate $500,000 of it for the national scenic and historic trails.

We ask you to appropriate $900,000,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and allocate $54,832,000 of it to these agencies to purchase 72 tracts along five national scenic and seven national historic trails described in the National Trails System Collaborative Landscape Planning proposal:

- **Bureau of Land Management:** $2,895,000
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service:** $12,719,000
- **US Forest Service:** $18,331,000
- **National Park Service:** $20,887,000.
National Park Service

The $16.233 million we request for Park Service operations includes increases for some of the trails to continue the progress and new initiatives made possible by the additional funding Congress provided several years ago. An increase of $570,000 for the Old Spanish Trail will enable the Park Service to begin implementing the Trail's new Comprehensive Administrative Strategy working with the Old Spanish Trail Association to increase volunteer participation in signing, interpreting, and educating the public about the trail. The Park Service will be better able to collaborate with the Bureau of Land Management in administering the trail and to consult with other agencies to protect the cultural and natural resources along it from destruction by energy projects.

We request an increase of $660,000 to expand Park Service efforts to protect cultural landscapes at more than 200 sites along the Santa Fe Trail, to develop GIS mapping, and to fund public educational and community outreach programs of the Santa Fe Trail Association. Increases of $313,224 for the Oregon Trail and $255,192 for the California Trail will enable the Park Service to work with the Oregon-California Trails Association to develop digital and social media to connect with youth in the cities along these trails providing information about their many layers of history and to better protect the historical and cultural heritage sites and landscapes along them from destruction by energy development in the West. We request an increase of $300,000 to $833,000 for the Ala Kahakai Trail to enable the Park Service to work with E Mau Na Ala Hele, the Ala Kahakai Trail Association, and other community organizations to care for resources on the land and with the University of Hawaii to conduct archaeological and cultural landscape studies along this trail.

The $1,020,000 we request for the 4,200 mile North Country Trail will enable the Park Service to provide greater support for the regional GIS mapping, trail building, trail management, and training of volunteers led by the North Country Trail Association. The $1,278,000 we request for the Ice Age Trail includes a $443,000 increase to build partner and citizen capacity for building new and maintaining existing trail, protecting the natural and cultural resources on the lands purchased for the trail, and to provide the Park Service with a planner to accelerate planning of the land protection corridor for the trail.

Construction: We request that you provide $357,200 for the Ice Age Trail to build 30 miles of new trail and several trailhead parking lots and $250,000 for the Pacific Crest Trail for trail construction projects.

Challenge Cost Share programs are one of the most effective and efficient ways for Federal agencies to accomplish a wide array of projects for public benefit while also sustaining partnerships involving countless private citizens in doing public service work. We request that you restore the Bureau of Land Management Challenge Cost Share program, appropriate $3 million to fund it, and allocate $500,000 of that to fund projects along the national scenic and historic trails. We ask you to create a National Park Service National Trails System Challenge Cost Share program with $1.5 million funding to continue the steady progress toward making these trails fully available for public enjoyment as a wise investment of public money that will generate public benefits many times greater than its sum.

USDA - Forest Service

We ask you to appropriate $85 million for trails construction and maintenance (CMTL) to begin to address the considerable maintenance backlog on the trails in the National Forest System. Within this appropriation we request that you provide $7.796 million as a separate budgetary item specifically for the Arizona, Continental Divide, Florida, Pacific Crest, and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trails and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail within the over-all appropriation for Capital Improvements and Maintenance for Trails. Recognizing the on-the-ground management responsibility the Forest Service has for 1024 miles of the Appalachian Trail, more than 650 miles of the North Country Trail, and sections of the Ice Age, Anza, Caminos Real de Tierra Adentro and de Tejas, Lewis & Clark, California, Iditarod, Mormon Pioneer, Old Spanish, Oregon, Overmountain Victory, Pony Express,
Trail of Tears and Santa Fe Trails, we ask you to appropriate $1.3 million specifically for these trails.

The Partnership’s request of $7,796 million includes $1.5 million to enable the Forest Service and Florida Trail Association to continue trail maintenance, to control invasive species, do ecosystem restoration, and otherwise manage 4,625 acres of new Florida Trail land. The $7,996 million request also includes $2.1 million for the Pacific Crest Trail, $2 million for the Continental Divide Trail, $1 million for the Pacific Northwest Trail, $826,000 for the Nez Perce Trail, and $570,000 for the Arizona Trail. Some of the additional funds requested will enable the Forest Service to develop Comprehensive Management Plans for the latter three trails. We also request $600,000 of additional funding for construction and for maintenance of sections of the Iditarod Trail.

Bureau of Land Management

Although considerably more money is needed to fully administer the National Conservation Lands System and protect its resources, we request that you appropriate $84 million in base funding for the System. We ask that you appropriate as new permanent base funding $250,000 for National Trails System Program Coordination, $1,000,000 for the Iditarod Trail, $230,000 for El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail, $1,332,000 for the Old Spanish Trail, and $4,000,000 for the Bureau to manage 4,645 miles of thirteen other national scenic and historic trails. We request $300,000 to construct new sections of the Iditarod Trail and to maintain these trails: Iditarod Trail - $300,000 and Pacific Crest Trail - $250,000. We also request $3,140,000 to operate five historic trails interpretive centers.

To promote greater management transparency and accountability for the National Trails and the whole National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), we urge you to request expenditure and accomplishment reports for each of the NLCS Units for FY17 and FY 18 and to direct the Bureau to include unit-level allocations within major sub-activities for each of the scenic and historic trails, and wild and scenic rivers -- as the Bureau has done for the national monuments, wilderness, and conservation areas -- within a new activity account for the National Landscape Conservation System in FY19. The Bureau’s lack of a unified budget account for National Trails prevents the agency from efficiently planning, implementing, reporting, and taking advantage of cost-saving and leveraging partnerships and volunteer contributions for every activity related to these national resources.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Partnership strongly supports full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund at the authorized $900 million for the component federal and state programs funded under LWCF. Within this amount we request that you appropriate $54,832,000 for the National Trails System Collaborative Landscape Planning proposal to acquire 72 parcels along these 12 national scenic and historic trails:

Bureau of Land Management: $2,895,000 | 12 parcels | 1,845 acres
Nez Perce National Historic Trail (ID) $2,295,000 to protect riparian ecosystems and migratory corridors with habitat for sage grouse, pronghorn antelope, and elk, and historic and cultural resources.
Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (OR) $600,000 for trail and resource protection within the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument in Southern Oregon.

US Fish and Wildlife Service: $12,719,000 | 7 parcels | 6,462 acres
Appalachian National Scenic Trail (PA) $1,800,000 for protection of a keystone habitat for bog turtles, black bear, Indiana bats, northern flying squirrels, and bald eagles along the Kittatinny Ridge.
California National Historic Trail (ID): $1,570,000 to protect the largest breeding concentration of Sandhill Cranes and a haven for other wading birds near Grays Lake NWR from agricultural development;
Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (VA) $8,500,000 to preserve and provide access to the site of a historic encounter between John Smith and indigenous peoples and protect a major eagle and migratory bird stopover habitat at Fones Cliff in the Rappahannock NWR;
Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (WA) $849,000 to preserve a wealth of unique ecosystems and enhance ecosystem connectivity between State-protected lands and the Steigerwald NWR.

**US Forest Service:** $18,331,000 | 41 parcels | 8,704 acres
Appalachian National Scenic Trail (NC, TN, VA, VT) $7,626,000 to protect the largest remaining inholding of the Green Mountain NF, relocate trail segments, preserve trail viewsheds, and provide ecological connectivity and watershed protection near or adjacent to the Pisgah NF State-protected lands;
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (MT, CO) $1,065,000 to protect alpine headwaters of the Rio Grande River and high-altitude habitat for Elk, deer, and Canada Lynx within the Helena National Forest;
Florida National Scenic Trail (FL) $90,000 to fill trail gaps and provide connectivity between protected areas along the Withlacoochee River and adjacent to Suwannee River State Park;
Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (CA, WA) $9,550,000 to protect inholdings of the Shasta-Trinity NF, maintain public access to at-risk trail segments along riparian corridors, and preserve iconic viewscapes at Pine Mountain.

**National Park Service:** $20,887,000 | 12 parcels | 7,466 acres
Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail (HI): $6,000,000 to protect 444 archaeological sites at an ancient coastal indigenous gathering area that hosts a wealth of native plants and wildlife both above and below ground in lava tubes;
Appalachian National Scenic Trail (MA, NY, ME) $5,657,000 to protect the remaining 8 miles of shoreline and enable public access for Bald Mountain Pond, to enable multiple trail re-routings, to preserve delicate habitats for threatened and endangered species, to support connectivity of riparian and forest habitats, and to preserve iconic scenic viewsheds;
North Country National Scenic Trail (MI, WI) $5,900,000 to fill over nine miles of trail gaps, protect over 2,500 acres along the Sturgeon River downstream from the Ottawa National Forest, and to preserve public access to a 3,000-ft pristine shoreline of Lake Superior that provides critical habitat for endangered and migratory species;
Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (TN) $330,000 to protect the historically significant Shelving Rock Encampment Site, preserve original trail roadbed, and facilitate interpretation;
Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (NY) $3,000,000 for preservation of a Revolutionary War-era supply depot site and cemetery.

**Private Sector Support for the National Trails System**

Public-spirited partnerships between private citizens and public agencies have been a hallmark of the National Trails System since its inception. These partnerships create the enduring strength of the Trails System and the trail communities that sustain it by combining the local, grass-roots energy and responsiveness of volunteers with the responsible continuity of public agencies. They also provide private financial support for public projects, often resulting in a greater than equal match of funds.

The private trail organizations’ commitment to the success of these trail-sustaining partnerships grows even as Congress’ support for the trails has grown. In **2016** the trail organizations fostered **1,029,569 hours** of documented volunteer labor valued at **$24,256,645** to help sustain the national scenic and historic trails. The organizations also raised **private sector contributions of $13,184,886** for the trails.