

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
House of Representatives  
H-232, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
House of Representatives  
H-107, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives  
H-218, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment  
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker, Democratic Leader Hoyer, Chairman Obey, Chairman Rahall, and Chairman Dicks:

When considering the upcoming economic stimulus plan, we believe it is important to include a major investment in restoration and maintenance of our public lands, our public lands infrastructure, wildlife conservation, and our water resources.

Our public lands have provided the natural capital and ecosystem services that have ensured American economic growth, as well as resources and recreation for millions of Americans, and vital habitat for endangered, threatened, sensitive, and game species. Today our public lands face many structural challenges, including a crumbling infrastructure in our National Parks, a large backlog of unused and obsolete Forest Service roads in need of decommissioning, abandoned mines in need of remediation, deferred maintenance work on Bureau of Land Management lands, accumulating maintenance needs for roads and bridges on Tribal lands, and an extensive list of unfunded projects at the Bureau of Reclamation. Additionally, there are existing Army Corps of Engineers habitat restoration projects in need of implementation. Further, our National Wildlife Refuge System has become home to invasive species, and wildfire-prone forests have grown near communities in the wildland-urban interface.

In rural towns facing severe economic challenges, contractors and agencies stand ready to put people to work to immediately address these issues. Therefore, we request your consideration of the following items for inclusion in the stimulus bill. Although not an

exhaustive list, these are some important programs that are largely ready to go and will put people to work in short order.

- **National Park Service** Fund the maintenance backlog of our roads, bridges, trails, and structures. The maintenance backlog from FY2007 was between \$6.12 billion and \$13.11 billion. Fifty-six percent of the total deferred maintenance was for roads, bridges, and trails, 19 percent was for buildings, and 25 percent was for other structures. Work can begin now to reduce this backlog and to provide services for important habitat and watershed restoration.
- **Bureau of Land Management** Fund construction for deferred maintenance, fire preparedness, abandoned mine remediation, restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, watersheds and riparian areas, weed treatments, clean-up and remediation of hazardous materials on BLM lands, and preservation of native plant materials for future land rehabilitation. The BLM Abandoned Mine Lands program can put to work more than 4,000 people and quickly allocate at least \$400 million to remediate some of the 12,000 abandoned mines it has identified. The deferred maintenance on BLM lands currently runs between \$380 and \$460 million. The BLM can utilize up to \$300 million per year for the hazardous fuel reduction program to use prevention methods to reduce the occurrence of wildfires and protect rangeland ecosystems, homes, and property.
- **Forest Service** Fund the maintenance backlog and decommission unused and obsolete roads and bridges, as well as provide funding to assist homes and communities in implementing fuels reduction, "firewise" prevention methods, and planning, restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, and fund construction projects for fish passage and culverts. The Forest Service has more than 380,000 miles of roads, 186,000 of which the agency identified for removal by 2041. \$5.7 billion is needed to address road backlog maintenance and decommissioning, and another \$4 billion for fish passage on culvert construction. \$700 million a year can be put to work by the Forest Service to implement hazardous fuel reduction near homes and communities to reduce the threat of wildfire, and protect lives and property.
- **State Fire Assistance** \$1 billion can be put to work immediately by states and local governments for hazardous fuel reduction programs to reduce the occurrence of wildfires and protect rangeland ecosystems, homes, and property. This will complement the \$1 billion request mentioned above (\$300 million for BLM and \$700 million for FS). With 42 million homes in the wildland-urban interface/intermix, and unequivocal scientific evidence that their safety hinges on construction materials and the immediately adjacent vegetation, enormous need and opportunity exists for a win-win investment to ratchet down suppression costs and property losses over time.
- **Fish and Wildlife Service** Fund the \$2.24-\$3.03 billion backlog of restoration projects such as consensus dam removals and fish passage construction, fish habitat restoration, and wildlife habitat restoration. Additionally, the National Wildlife Refuge System is ready to go with a \$1 billion program that would create nearly 20,000 jobs where \$443 million can be put to use within three months to combat invasive species, restore native habitat and ecosystems, and upgrade water management practices. The remaining \$504 million can be utilized for energy efficiency, renewable energy usage and green building construction.
- **Bureau of Reclamation** Fund water recycling infrastructure projects in the Title XVI Program, which funds construction of water recycling facilities and creates

construction jobs that help communities avoid the need for new dams or diversions. Construction could begin almost immediately on 19 projects that are already authorized—equivalent to a cost of about \$300 million.

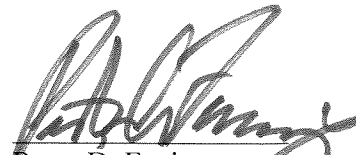
- **Army Corps of Engineers** Fund aquatic ecosystem restoration efforts, such as floodplain restoration, wetland and coastal hydrology and vegetation, shellfish restoration, consensus dam removal, fish passage, and levee modification. Many of these large-and-small scale efforts require significant engineering and construction resources that would create a variety of jobs. Numerous projects could quickly utilize federal funding up to \$2.5 billion.
- **Bureau of Indian Affairs** Fund unmet Tribal community needs, estimated by BIA of well over \$258 million in maintenance funding for roads and bridges and \$310 million in unmet new roads and bridges projects. These projects will immediately create over 11,000 jobs and will inject a much-needed stimulus into Native American economies.

Finally, we are recommending the creation of a **National Forest Watershed Restoration Corps** in which \$500 million could be provided over two years to create highly skilled jobs in resource-dependent communities adjacent to public lands through contracts and temporary, professional appointments in the Forest Service. This temporary program could expand the work currently done under the Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation account by creating up to 3,500 direct jobs annually for two years. This small-scale, temporary variation on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) would complement the programs described above. This program is consistent with the Western Governor's Policy Resolution 08-3 and is endorsed by more than sixty grassroots conservation, labor, and state organizations across the nation.

As Congress and the incoming Obama administration work to develop a stimulus to reinvigorate our economy, we urge you to include the above programs that protect our public lands and conserve wildlife and habitat. We can create jobs that also address our public lands and water needs through work to restore our public lands infrastructure, decommissioning thousands of miles of obsolete, ecologically-devastating, dirt and gravel roads and repairing fish-passage culverts to improve thousands of miles of habitat for endangered and sport fish. Other projects can protect and restore clean drinking water for local communities, implement water-saving plans that help both fish and farmers, and remediate abandoned mines. Coupling this work with a program reminiscent of the CCC will help reinvigorate American's interest, appreciation and involvement in their public lands and conserve wildlife habitat. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Jay Inslee  
Member of Congress

  
Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

  
Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress

Don

Betty Sutton

Mam H Mahul

Grace J. Napolitano

Rail Nene

Raul M. Arjawa

Ron Kind

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Mr. Mr

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