**National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding at RISK**

Updated 3.15.2019

**What is the Issue**

The National Forest Trail System Stewardship Partnership Funding is at risk of being unavailable this year due to the Forest Service Washington Office moving all “of-the-top” funds to the Regions. While this may sound good in theory it means Regions may prioritize these funds as they see fit, based on local needs. With National direction focused on timber harvest and fuels reduction, trails may be short changed.

**What You Can Do (by April 15)**

Contact your Regional Forester to let them know how you value partnership funding and specifically how the National Trail System Stewardship Partnership Funds have helped your organization. Ask them to participate in continued funding of this partner-oriented effort to engage volunteers in National Forest trail maintenance.

Specifically ask them to:

* Support the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding
* Share that this is a cost-effective and efficient way to fund volunteer trail maintenance efforts to implement the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act. Returns on investment average 7:1.
* Allocate $30,000 - $100,000 per Region to the fund this year through the National cost-share agreement.
* Encourage local units to utilize volunteers in trail maintenance on the National Forests.

**Who to Contact**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Region 1 – Missoula MTLeanne Martin406-329-3511 | Region 2 – Denver COBrian Ferebee303-275-5350 | Region 3 – Albuquerque NMCal Joyner505-842-3292 |
| Region 4 – Ogden UTNora Rasure801-625-5605 | Region 5 – Vallejo CARandy Moore707-562-8737 | Region 6 – Portland ORGlenn Casamassa503-808-2468 |
| Region 8 – Atlanta GAKen Armey404-347-4177 | Region 9 – Milwaukee WSKathleen Atkinson414-297-3600 | Region 10 – Juneau AKDavid Schmid907-586-8806 |

**National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding**

**2017-2018**

The National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding is a joint project between the US Forest Service and the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA). The purpose of the Trail Stewardship funding is to help implement the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act goals of increasing volunteer participation on the National Forest Trail System. The funding program was designed to encourage coordination and collaboration between local trail stewardship groups and their agency partners to identify and complete projects which would improve trail maintenance accomplishments and backlog elimination on the National Forest trail system. This program had projects in both 2017 and 2018 and covers all portions of the National Forest Trail System, both motorized and non-motorized trails.

This program engages the broader trail community by involving key national trail organizations, the American Hiking Society, American Trails, Back Country Horsemen of America, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, the American Motorcycling Association, and the Blue Ribbon Coalition, in outreach for the program, and in reviewing and rating the proposals.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Outcomes and Results | 2017 | 2018 |
| Amount of the Program | $250,000 | $400,000 |
| Number of Applications Received | 90 | 114 |
| Applications Requests $ Value | $1,000,000 | $1,697,000 |
| # of Projects Selected and Funded | **21** | **42** |
| $ Value Cash Match from Selected Projects | $448,000 | $1,104,000 |
| $ Value In-Kind Match from Selected Projects | $775,000 | $2,031,748 |
| # of Volunteers | **2000** | **6,279** |
| # of Staff/Interns | 30 | 125 |
| Total Volunteer and Staff Hours Contributed | 30,000 | 93,123 |
| Total $ Value of Contributed Labor | $700,000 | $2,167,490 |
| Relative Return on Investment from FS Funding | **5:1** | **7:1** |
| Trail Miles Maintained to Standard | 750 | 1604 |
| Number of Events | 300 | 500 |
| FS Regions Represented | All | All |

This program has been successful in engaging volunteer trail groups to meet the goals of the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act.

**Additional Talking Points – National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding**

* The National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding Program has successfully involved partners in trail maintenance on the National Forest Trail System during 2017 and 2018, with over 8,300 volunteers engaged and 2,350 miles of trail maintained.
* This funding program was initiated to directly support the goals of increasing volunteer engagement and participation on the National Forest Trail System as directed by the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act.
* This program engages the broader trail community by involving key national trail organizations, the American Hiking Society, American Trails, Back Country Horsemen of America, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, the American Motorcycling Association, the Blue Ribbon Coalition, and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, in outreach for the program, and in reviewing and rating the proposals.
* This funding enables partner groups to expand volunteer efforts, provide tools and equipment, support field events, and engage communities with the outcome of more trail maintenance accomplished on the National Forest Trail System.
* In 2017 and 2018 this funding was provided by the Washington Office, but with a new change in the budget process, Regions now have received these funds and must choose to participate in the funding program.
* To participate, Regions simply allocate an amount of funding to add to the national pool and then transfer it to the Washington Office for deposit in an existing Challenge Cost Share agreement with the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance.
* All allocated funds will be managed as a national pool, though it is expected that project selections will be roughly equitable with contributed amounts per Region over time. Annual selections will vary depending on projects submitted, the overall value of the accomplishment compared to cash and in-kind contributions, miles accomplished, etc.
* All solicitation of proposals, managing of invoices and reimbursements is handled by the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance through an existing national Challenge Cost Share agreement. All projects currently require coordination with local Ranger Districts and letters of support from District Rangers. Regions will have the option of participating in project selection if that is desired.
* Projects selected for funding return either cash or in-kind matches. Previous year return on investment has averaged 7:1.
* Expenses for managing this program are typically under 5% and for 2019 no overhead or indirect charges will be taken from Regional funds allocated to manage the program. 100% of funding supplied will go to support local volunteer groups.
* Applications are currently being solicited for trail projects for Summer 2019. To be effective this year, funding decisions need to be made by May 1st. To participate Regions should express their commitment of funding by April 15th.