

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we request that you include robust funding for capital improvement and maintenance of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) roads and bridges.

The USFS road network includes more than 370,000 miles of roads and 6,200 bridges. Road and bridge needs comprise more than \$3 billion of USFS' \$5.5 billion deferred maintenance backlog.

In USFS' budget justification for FY 2020 they gave this explanation for their request:

“Funding will be used for the operations and maintenance of existing roads and reconstruction of existing roads, including timber haul roads. This funding will enable the Forest Service to provide an increased level of critical support to improve forest conditions and reach the FY 2020 timber goal of 3.7 billion board feet. The agency will also be able to address maintenance issues to protect life and property. The agency plans to invest in road and bridge capital improvement projects that support timber production and fuel reduction, enhance/improve safe access to high-use recreation sites, rehabilitate bridges in poor condition, and protect water quality and natural resources.”

Many isolated communities around the country depend on USFS roads to connect them to high-use recreation sites and larger cities. Any disruption in access due to weather or something preventable, like maintenance delays, can have drastic economic and even deadly consequences. For example, in Gila County, Arizona, USFS closed Forest Road 708 due to deferred maintenance. Forest Road 708 connects the towns of Pine and Strawberry, Arizona to Fossil Creek. Due to the road closure by USFS, rescue times at Fossil Creek for emergency services increased from 2 hours to nearly 8 hours. Local residents have voiced their concerns on many occasions with USFS, but to date the road is still closed to the general public and access is limited. In a different, example, the main road leading to Arizona Snowbowl ski resort is another USFS road in desperate need of repair. The owner of the resort is not allowed to pave or improve the USFS road, yet the depilated road threatens business and increases travel time to the resort.

Given troubling USFS road and bridge maintenance backlog woes throughout the country, we ask that you prioritize the proper management and repair of roads and bridges already in the USFS inventory as opposed to acquiring more land and assets the USFS budget cannot sustain.

We ask that you prioritize resources and provide robust funding for capital improvement and maintenance of USFS roads and bridges in the FY 2020 bill.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

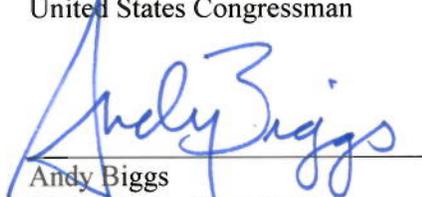
Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
United States Congressman



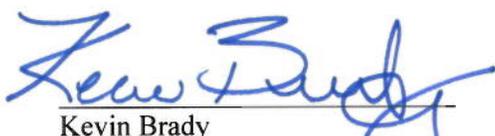
Paul Gosar
United States Congressman



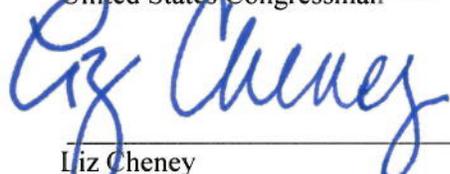
Andy Biggs
United States Congressman



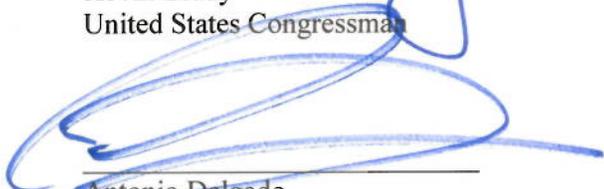
Rob Bishop
United States Congressman



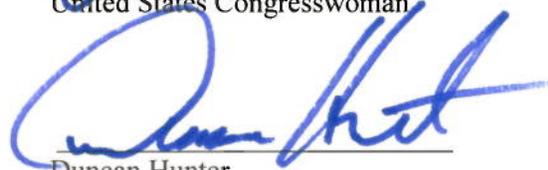
Kevin Brady
United States Congressman



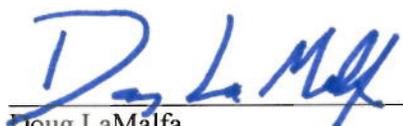
Liz Cheney
United States Congresswoman



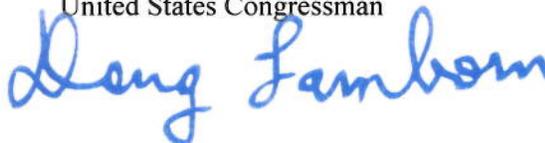
Antonio Delgado
United States Congressman



Duncan Hunter
United States Congressman



Doug LaMalfa
United States Congressman



Doug Lamborn
United States Congressman



Mark Meadows
United States Congressman



Pete Stauber
United States Congressman



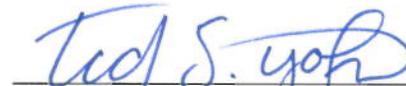
Scott Tipton
United States Congressman



Glenn "G.T." Thompson
United States Congressman



Tom McClintock
United States Congressman



Ted S. Yoho, DVM
United States Congressman