

INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT CONTACTING THE WASHINGTON SENATORS AND THE WESTERN WASHINGTON REPRESENTATIVES

You are strongly urged to contact both Senators and your one Representative now, using their special e-mail routines if you can. Contact information is provided in an accompanying attachment. Phone numbers are also included, for follow-up or further questions.

SOME BACKGROUND, BEFORE YOU START

It was Sen. Cantwell who introduced the Trail authorization bill in the Senate in every Congress from the 108th through the 111th. (And Rep. Hastings [R], from Eastern WA, has done the same in the House.) Over the years, Congressional support for the Trail bills has been bi-partisan and regionwide.

Both Washington Senators and all of the Western Washington Representatives voted for the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (now Public Law 111-11), in which Section 5203 authorizes the development of the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail. They can be thanked for that, and now it is the funding issue that must be addressed.

Of course, their understanding of the Floods and the Trail will vary from individual to individual, but they all have some familiarity with the topic. By demonstrating our strong interest and large numbers (and the reasons for our interest) we can make them more comfortable about moving this project forward now, in these difficult times. There are a lot of voters out there who do not agree with us.

In composing your messages to Congress, be thinking about the benefits you see in developing the Trail, not just strengthening the economies (and increasing the tax revenues) at the local, state, and regional levels, but also promoting awareness and understanding of natural history and the natural sciences. Altogether, there is an amazing story to be told by developing the Trail, and it can be done with a relatively modest investment of federal funds, through a remarkable partnership of public and private agencies and organizations, coordinated by the National Park Service. Your own slant and illustrative details on these themes can be very effective in strengthening the case for the Trail and showing how it would be a good use of federal funds.

Although our lawmakers have solidly supported the Trail, the project does not fit the conventional pattern that is familiar to them. There are special features of the project that some of the lawmakers (or their staff members) may not have noticed.

The responsibility of NPS is primarily to coordinate and facilitate a large interpretive project that includes many willing partners that historically have been separately engaged in providing interpretive, educational and recreational services, based on their respective land holdings and programs. The Trail will be a significant example of what can be accomplished in a structure of partnership and collaboration.

For the development of the Trail, no new federal land acquisition is authorized, and the National Park Service is not made responsible for managing any more land than it already manages.

THE BIG ISSUE AT THE MOMENT

The \$250,000 that we are requesting for FY 2011 would cover the estimated cost of setting up a centrally located office with a start-up staff of two---the Trail Superintendent and an Interpretive/Education Specialist. Their work would necessarily involve extensive travel across the four-state area. (Budget items: \$200,000 for salary and benefits; \$20,000 for two lease vehicles; \$15,000 for travel; \$10,000 for office equipment [computing, copying, phones, etc.]; \$5,000 for office supplies)

To be fully operational, the Trail office would probably require an annual budget of about \$500,000, but it is only the first-year allocation that is under consideration now. For better or for worse, the prospects for funding for FY 2012 are totally unknown.

It may be a bit startling to consider the mismatch between the overwhelming scale of the Floods and the small pot of money that would be required to tell the story effectively.

WHAT MAY BE CONFUSING TO US AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: The law authorizes \$12 million for the Trail, with no time period specified. That figure has no meaning with respect to funding here and now. The effect of the stated figure is to require that a new Congressional authorization must be obtained at the point that the cumulative total of appropriations for the Trail approaches the original \$12 million authorization. The \$12 million authorization is not an item for discussion now---it only represents a procedural situation that would come up at some time in the future. However, this may need to be explained to reporters and to people who are upset about what they take to be a large binding commitment of funds, which it is not. The actual funding for the Trail will come in normal year-by-year appropriations, set by Congress.

The act does require unspecified participative (matching) funding of major projects. The act also requires that a definitive management plan, covering interpretation as well, be presented to Congress within three years of the first appropriation of funds.

MISSOULA FLOODS? PUGET SOUND??

Our delegation in Congress may understand this already, but there are good reasons for folks in our part of the state to have an interest in the development of the Trail. You, of course, already have some of your own to cite.

Much of what is spelled out here is not suggested for inclusion in a message, but more for your information, and perhaps to help you see more ways to connect your experience and views to the public issues that are raised in this appropriations situation.

You qualify as a constituent of three federal lawmakers. You can compose one good message and send it to all three. You may even enjoy this opportunity to express your interest and support, and to influence the creation of the Trail.

THEY SHOULD HEAR FROM YOU

WHEN YOU ARE WORKING ON A MESSAGE FORM:

Typically, the “**Subject**” to *select* will be “**Budget**”, and the “**Bill**” will be “**Interior Appropriations**”. The “**Agency**” to *enter* will be “**National Park Service**” and the “**Account**” will be “**Operations**”. There is some variation in how the forms are set up and worded.

Before you click the “**Send**” or “**Submit**” button, proofread what you have entered, and you may want to copy and save the text of your message before you send it, if you did not compose and save the text off-line beforehand. It is probably a good idea to save a copy of what you had to say. The message will not show up in your “**Sent messages**” folder.

LINKS TO INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING “OUTSIDE WRITTEN TESTIMONY” TO THE INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES

HOUSE, deadline Mar 19

http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/INT_instructions_for_providing_written_testimony2.pdf

SENATE, deadline May 14

<http://appropriations.senate.gov/upload/OWT-FY11-Interior.pdf>