

# Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance

## Issue

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) is a program of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies to develop trails and greenways, conserve rivers, and preserve open spaces. For the past decade, RTCA funding has remained flat—even falling behind the rate of inflation.

**Congress should restore and increase the funding of the RTCA program, and support a budget of \$10.1 million for 2007.**

## Status

In President Bush's 2007 Budget Proposal, the budget for the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program was cut by \$500,000, for a total budget request of \$7.7 million. This budget cut puts RTCA projects not completed by the end of this fiscal year at risk, and will reduce the number of new projects RTCA will be able to accept in 2007. Congress's Interior Appropriations Bill need not adhere to the priorities proposed in the President's budget

## Background

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program works on projects in all 50 states, and coordinates roughly 300 projects each year through its 30 regional offices. In the past eight years, the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program has helped create a total of 10,763

miles of trails for hiking and biking—in addition to protecting 5,481 miles of rivers and conserving 517,372 acres of parks and open spaces. On average, RTCA helps create more than 1,300 miles of trails and conserves more than 61,000 acres of open spaces each year.

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program has been instrumental in providing technical assistance for local projects for bicyclists. For example, in Arlington, Mass., RTCA was a partner in establishing one of the first Safe Routes to School pilot programs. In 2005, RTCA hosted and facilitated a Bicycle Friendly Communities Workshop in Omaha, Neb. and is playing a key role in the ongoing effort to make Omaha more bicycle-friendly.

Even now, the demand for RTCA projects exceeds the program's capacity. The proposed RTCA budget cut will result in staff cuts and possibly the closing of regional offices. Since 2002, RTCA staff has already decreased from 90 to 75. This presents a major threat to projects underway that are not slated to be completed during this fiscal year, and will reduce the number of new projects that RTCA can accept by as many as 35 in 2007.

An increase of funding for the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program will lead to more miles of trails and more acres of protected open spaces in your community.