

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2006

## *SUPPORT THE NPS RIVERS, TRAILS AND CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM*

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in signing the attached letter to the Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations requesting an increase in funding for the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program in the FY 2007 Interior Appropriations bill.

This small, yet extremely effective, technical assistance program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service. Through extensive partnerships between state, federal, and local interests, the program helps restore rivers, preserve open space, and develop trail and greenway networks—all contributing to enhanced quality of life and close-to-home recreation opportunities. A list of ongoing RTCA partnerships in all states is attached.

Current funding for the RTCA program is approximately \$8 million. Despite the program's demonstrable successes each year, RTCA funding has remained relatively stagnant during the last decade and lagged well behind the rate of inflation. The program's funding decreased by \$200,000 in FY 2006, resulting in significant cuts to staff and reduced staff participation in on-the-ground projects, diminishing important services of this field-based program. RTCA requires at least a \$2 million increase to remedy the program's continued erosion, compensate for losses due to inflation, and enable the program to respond to growing needs and opportunities in communities throughout the country.

We hope you will join us in supporting a much-needed increase in RTCA funding for FY 2007. If you would like to sign the attached letter or if you have questions, please contact David Hunter (ext. 4-3364) with Senator Collins or Alice Yates (ext. 4-2683) with Senator Levin. The deadline for signatures is May 24, 2006.

Sincerely,

  
Susan Collins

  
Carl Levin

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 24, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510


Dear Senators Burns and Dorgan:

We are writing in strong support of an appropriation of \$10.1 million for the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program in FY 2007. Currently funded at approximately \$8 million, RTCA is a cost-effective and highly efficient technical assistance program that creates public-private partnerships with citizen groups and local, state, and federal governments to restore rivers and wildlife habitat, develop trail and greenway networks, preserve open space, and revitalize communities—all contributing to enhanced quality of life, improved local economies, and close-to-home recreation opportunities.

The RTCA program produces tangible results around the nation and plays a critical role in creating parks and open spaces across the country, which supports youth conservation partnerships, brownfield redevelopment, floodplain planning, volunteerism, transportation alternatives, and increased physical activity. On average, the program partners protect nearly 700 miles of rivers, create more than 1,300 miles of trails, and conserve more than 61,000 acres of open space each year. RTCA receives only 0.03% of the total funding for the National Park Service, yet succeeds in leveraging this funding many times over in local, state, and partnership direct funding and in-kind matches.

The innovative RTCA program has produced excellent results through technical assistance and recreation and conservation partnerships. In order to respond to growing needs and opportunities throughout the country, we respectfully request a \$2 million increase in this important program. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Susan Collins

  
Carl Levin