

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2021

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We write to express our support for enhanced funding of \$3.5 million for the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) allocation for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. This figure represents a \$1.9 million increase above the fiscal year (FY) 2021 appropriation of \$1.6 million.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a 2,193-mile linear park stretching through 14 states and 88 counties—more than any other unit of the National Park System. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail draws visitors from all over the United States and the world, bolstering the economy of the communities around the trail. In 2019, there were over an estimated three million visitors to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

In order to keep the Appalachian National Scenic Trail safe for visitors and to manage the natural resources that are held in the public trust, there must be sufficient federal support to pair with the state, local, and volunteer support that goes into maintaining and operating the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and keeping the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in a state of good repair.

In 2019, for the first time in over a decade, the National Park Service issued a Service-wide call for units seeking to increase their ONPS allocation on the basis of new or changed needs. The increase that was ultimately included in the President's FY21 Budget, and your committee appropriated that increase. In the President's FY22 Budget, a further minor increase was requested, reflecting continued understanding that the needs of the unit are not able to be met given current ONPS support. While that past funding was used to provide for one additional full time equivalent staff position, there are still unmet public safety and operational challenges, and this requested level of funding would address that outstanding need. For that reason, we urge your support for this requested funding.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,




Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



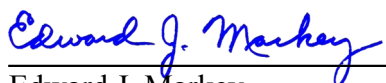
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator




Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



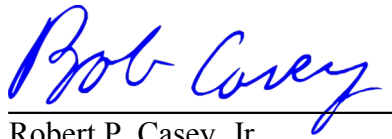
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



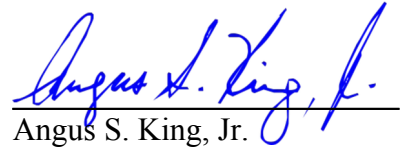
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Robert P. Casey, Jr. in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Angus S. King, Jr. in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator