

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 27, 2022

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
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 allocation for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. This figure represents a \$1.8 million increase above the fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriation of \$1.7 million.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a 2,194-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.

Recognizing the deficiency in base Operation of the National Park System support for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail based on its acreage, assets, and visitation, the Department of the Interior requested a modest increase in its base allocation in both Fiscal Year 2021 and Fiscal Year 2022. We are grateful that the Committee increased funding in response to those Department requests; however, significant unmet public safety and operational challenges remain unmet for lack of sufficient funding. The funding that we are requesting would address outstanding needs.

Furthermore, we appreciate the encouraging language the Committee has included for the National Park Service in the previous two omnibus appropriations reports. We respectfully suggest that the Committee continue to include its encouragement for sufficient resources for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, by including this updated language:

“The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a 2,194-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, co-managed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and A.T. Clubs, draws visitors from all over the United States and the world, bolstering the economy of the communities around the trail. The Committees are aware that the Trail is experiencing increased visitor use and asset management challenges and encourages the Service to include sufficient resources in future budget requests to meet its expanded visitor services, law enforcement, compliance, and land acquisition requirements.”

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



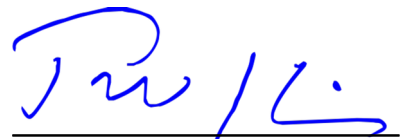
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



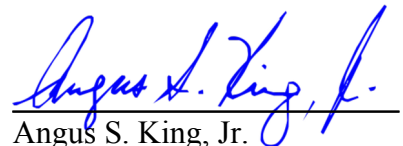
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



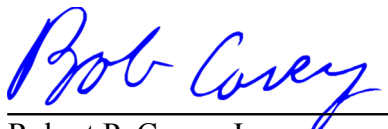
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



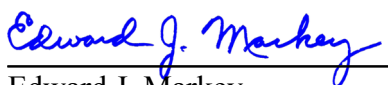
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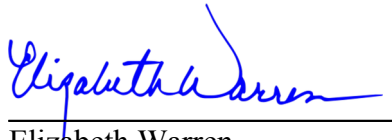
Richard Blumenthal
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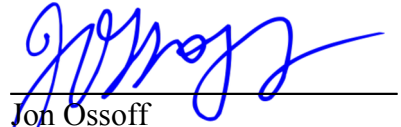
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