

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 19, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Project
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. President-Elect:

As you develop an economic stimulus proposal, we urge you to include funding to create green jobs working to restore our nation's natural infrastructure—our parks, forests, wildlife refuges, grasslands, wetlands, and rivers and streams. The Department of the Interior and the USDA Forest Service manage nearly 1 of every 3 acres of land in the United States (over 700 million surface acres), play a critical role in water management in all 50 States, and support abandoned mine land reclamation across the country. These agencies also face tens of billions of dollars in deferred maintenance liabilities for roads, trails, dams, and buildings, much of which are in such a state of disrepair that they pose a serious threat to public health and safety.

Through the Civilian Conservation Corps, these agencies played a central role in creating jobs to lift this country out of the Great Depression, and they have the capacity, the desire, and the urgent needs to justify playing a significant role in our economic stimulus strategy today. They have billions of dollars of “shovel-ready” projects restoring forest and rangeland ecosystems, preserving historic structures, repairing roads and dams, controlling invasive species, reclaiming mine lands, constructing water reuse projects, and improving the energy efficiency of buildings, to name just a few. These types of projects have a proven track-record of quickly creating jobs for people who are likely to rapidly return a large portion of their wages to the economy. They also provide a long-term return on the investment through, for example, improved ecosystem services, increased community capacity, and reduced emergency costs for wildfire suppression and other natural hazards.

We urge you to provide at least \$10 billion over two years to the land and water resource management agencies in the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to restore the physical and natural infrastructure that they manage and support for the American people. Specifically, we urge you to include:

- \$2 billion to the National Park Service for infrastructure deferred maintenance, habitat restoration, historic preservation, and other appropriate projects;
- \$3.5 billion to the Forest Service for forest and rangeland restoration, community wildfire protection, tree planting, infrastructure deferred maintenance, and other appropriate projects;
- \$1.25 billion to the Fish and Wildlife Service for wildlife refuge restoration, habitat conservation, infrastructure deferred maintenance, and other appropriate projects;

- \$1.5 billion to the Bureau of Land Management for public land restoration, invasive species control, infrastructure deferred maintenance, and other appropriate projects;
- \$1.0 billion to the Bureau of Reclamation to fund water reuse, infrastructure, environmental restoration, renewable energy projects, and other appropriate projects;
- \$450 million to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for deferred maintenance of irrigation and other infrastructure, ecosystem restoration, cultural and historic preservation, and other appropriate projects (in addition to funding for tribal school, transportation, and health facility projects);
- \$250 million to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement for grants to states and tribes for abandoned mine land reclamation; and
- \$50 million to the United States Geological Survey for the National Streamflow Information Program.

Given the magnitude of the economic and natural resource management challenges facing our country, we believe such an investment is necessary and appropriate. In fact, it is essential, particularly for the many rural communities that are among the hardest hit by this recession and that are some of the least likely to directly benefit from the other programs that have been proposed for the stimulus package. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Jeff Bingaman



Maria Cantwell



Barbara Boxer



Ron Wyden



Patrick Leahy



Jon Tester



Daniel Akaka