

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2026

Mr. Michael Boren  
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and  
Environment  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Mr. Tom Schultz  
United States Forest Service Chief  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Under Secretary Boren and Chief Schultz:

As Members of Congress, we write to firmly oppose the Administration's proposed revision of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. For years, this rule has successfully balanced the use of motorized vehicles with other uses on public lands. Substantially changing this rule, as proposed by the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recently published Notice of Intent (NOI), will endanger public safety, reduce quality access to national forests, and degrade the quality of lands and waters that support our nation's wildlife, clean water, and outdoor recreation economy. Durable, well-informed travel management decisions are also critical to sustaining America's \$1.3 trillion outdoor recreation economy, which supported 5.2 million jobs and accounted for 2.4 percent of U.S. gross domestic product in 2024. Further, we urge the USDA to extend the ongoing comment period to 60 days to allow the public to adequately weigh in on policy changes that impact them first and foremost.

Our national forests serve a wide range of users, including hunters, anglers, hikers, horseback riders, motorized recreationists, livestock operators, outfitters, and local communities. Based on more than twenty years of experience with the Travel Management Rule in place, we know that these uses can coexist when travel management decisions are made thoughtfully and with meaningful input from the people who know these landscapes best. We also know that poorly managed travel can create conflicts among users, interfere with permittee operations, damage wildlife habitat and water resources, disturb cultural resources, and create maintenance obligations that the Forest Service does not have the resources to meet.

For these reasons, we believe any revisions to the 2005 Travel Management Rule should preserve the following core principles:

- Maintain the current default of keeping routes and areas closed to motorized use unless expressly designated as open. The NOI's proposal to flip that default – to open-unless-closed – could lead to spider webs of user-created trails and will diminish access for quiet, non-motorized recreation, with significant harm to wildlife, water, and vegetation.
- Carry forward criteria that guide local land management decisions and protect critical public land values, including soil, watersheds, vegetation, and wildlife habitat, as well as reduce conflicts between public land uses such as camping, hiking, hunting, and grazing.
- Travel management decisions should continue to be informed by robust public engagement and local input. Communities, Tribal Nations, recreationists, permittees, and other stakeholders should have a meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions that affect how they access and use their public lands.
- The Forest Service must retain the ability to protect fish and wildlife habitat, riparian areas, water quality, and cultural resources. Coordination with State wildlife agencies and consultation with Tribes should remain important components of travel management planning.

- The agency should continue to clearly identify where motorized travel is permitted. Clear designations, accurate Motor Vehicle Use Maps, user education, adequate signage, and reasonable enforcement are essential to ensuring that visitors understand where they can travel and that land managers can protect sensitive resources.
- The Forest Service should consider the long-term cost of properly maintaining, staffing, and administering its transportation system before adding new routes or expanding access. The agency already faces a significant road and trail maintenance backlog. Expanding the system without the resources necessary to maintain it would ultimately leave taxpayers, land managers, and local communities to deal with the consequences.

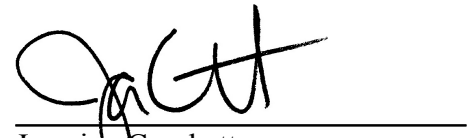
We also recognize that circumstances change and that individual routes may warrant reconsideration where local conditions justify it, but the current rule already allows for modifications to the road and trail system through a public process and requires annual updates to the Motor Vehicle Use Maps. We support using technology to improve public access to information, including continued modernization and digitization of Motor Vehicle Use Maps. We believe there is room to make travel management more effective without sacrificing the principles that have helped balance access, recreation, resource protection, and responsible land management.

We urge the Forest Service to approach these revisions with those principles in mind and to work closely with Congress, Tribal Nations, State and local governments, and the broad range of stakeholders that depend on our national forests. We look forward to engaging constructively in this process and ensuring that any final rule gives land managers the tools they need to keep our forests accessible, safe, and healthy for generations to come.

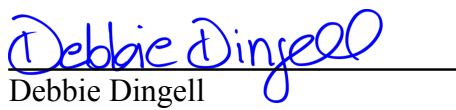
Sincerely,



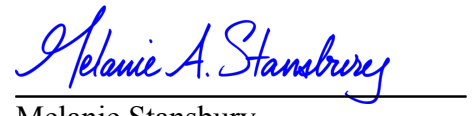
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Gabe Vasquez  
Member of Congress

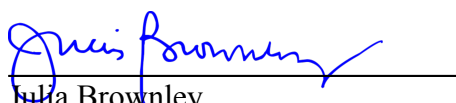
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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress

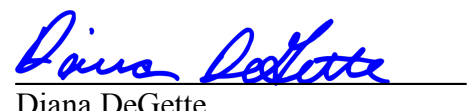
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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

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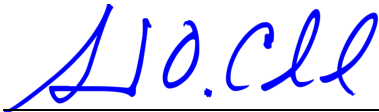
Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress

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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



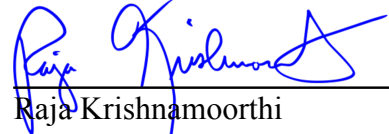
Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Susie Lee  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



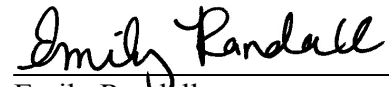
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



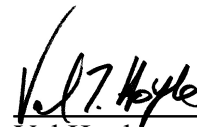
Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



Emily Randall  
Member of Congress



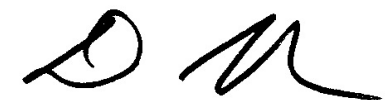
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle  
Member of Congress



Brittany Petersen  
Member of Congress



Dave Min  
Member of Congress



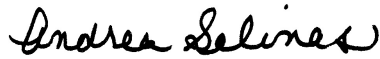
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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Adenita S. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



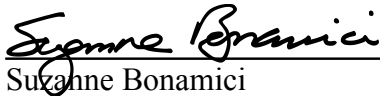
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Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



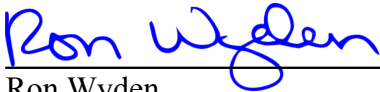
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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



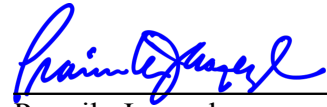
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Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress



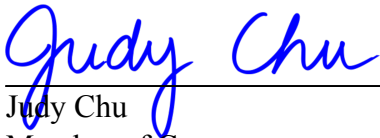
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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress