

United States Senate

April 6, 2016

The Honorable Thomas L. Tidwell
Chief
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1111

Dear Chief Tidwell:

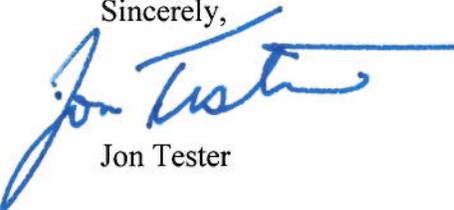
I write regarding your testimony today at the Senate Appropriations Interior Subcommittee hearing on the Administration's budget request for the Forest Service budget request for Fiscal Year 2017. Our national forests play a critical role in Montana's economy and way of life. With that in mind, I would like to continue our discussion regarding proposed cuts to the trails program in Region 1.

I am deeply troubled by the Administration's proposed cuts to Region 1's trails program. The impact of a 30 percent reduction in our trails budget over the next three years would have an adverse impact on public access to our national forests and to Montana's economy. I understand that the amount of this proposed cut was based on a newly developed model to address agency-wide funding cuts. However, this model places a disproportionate burden on funding for trails in Montana. These proposed cuts seem particularly imbalanced when funding to some regions is proposed to increase by as much as 2.5 percent. I believe that this proposed reduction unduly burdens Montanans and does not consider the broader economic ramifications to my state.

You stated in the hearing today that your staff is taking a second look at this proposal. I welcome and appreciate that news. However, I ask that you provide me with additional information on this review. For instance, is there a target date for completing the review? Can we expect it to be completed before resources are appropriated for Fiscal Year 2017? What other variables is the Agency weighing that would impact the proposal? I appreciate any additional information you can offer me regarding this review.

Montanans treasure their access to our public lands and this proposed cut undermines our economy and outdoor heritage. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester