



PROTECTING OUR TRAILS

FEDERAL BUDGET AND STORM DAMAGE
ACTION ALERT - 2007



Background:

In November 2006, powerful storms swept through Washington state, damaging property and causing more than \$70 million of damage to public lands trails and roads. Much of the damage was concentrated in Mount Rainier National Park, totaling \$36 million. For most of spring 2007, the Park was closed to visitors, since every access road saw major damage. Now, hikers can enter the Park again, but some roads remain washed-out or otherwise damaged. The Wonderland Trail has been reopened after having been closed for most of the hiking season.

The damage was not confined to the Park, though. The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest saw \$11 million in trail and road damage, closing such beloved routes as Big Four Ice Caves, Foss Lakes, and Green Mountain. These losses are combined with \$3 million in damage from the October 2003 storms that have still not been funded. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest saw more than \$18 million in road and trail damage. And the Olympic National Forest and Park saw nearly \$4 million in damage to roads such as the North Fork Quinault and Queets River Roads and trails such as the Hoh River Trail.

Response So Far

WTA responded by coordinating both trail maintenance and advocacy. We've been working extensively on storm damaged trails statewide, both on Forest Service and National Park Service lands. We coordinated with the offices of Congressmen Baird and Inslee to pull together a sign on letter to the Interior Appropriations Committee urging them to allocate funds to repair storm-damaged trails and roads. Every member of Washington's delegation signed on with the exception of Congressman Dicks, who, as chair of Interior Appropriations, could not. Congressman Dicks on his own has been a champion for storm damaged trails, advocating for \$65 million to pay for road and trail repairs on public lands, and was successful in allocating the \$36 million needed to repair damage at Mount Rainier National Park. He is joined by the strong advocacy of Senator Patty Murray, who proposed nearly \$36 million in the Senate budget to repair damaged roads.

The House approved the \$65 million pushed by Congressman Dicks, but the Senate Committee report does not include those dollars. As of the beginning of the August Congressional recess, the Senate had not acted on the House budget proposal, and will not until after the recess ends in September.

Message to elected officials: Thank you for your response to this point but, there is more to be done. Please restore and increase funding for the National Forest Service. Please provide adequate funds to repair damage caused by storms in November 2006.

WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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