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CONTACT: Anna Roth - Media Liaison, Washington Trails Association,  
anna@wta.org

## **Forest Service staffing cuts will affect hikers this summer**

SEATTLE — 9,000 miles of Forest Service trails in Washington are missing the staff that usually maintain them.

The vast majority of US Forest Service staff who perform the essential work of keeping hiking trails clear, safe and sanitary are seasonal workers, and more than 2,400 seasonal jobs across the U.S. were eliminated in reaction to a \$700 million deficit combined with last month's hiring freeze for all federal employees.

The Forest Service manages more miles of trails in Washington than any other agency, and this move eliminated dozens of positions for trail crews and wilderness rangers. That means there will be no Forest Service employees maintaining trails in The Enchantments, or favorites like Snow Lake, Dog Mountain and Lena Lake this year.

Reduced staffing also means hikers can expect less-frequently cleaned toilets at trailheads and in the backcountry, overflowing trash cans, illegal dumping unaddressed and trails blocked by logs and overgrown by brush. Forest Service staff say to expect limited hours at visitor centers and ranger stations and more deferred maintenance projects, meaning issues like broken bridges or washed out trails may be neglected for another year.

And the situation becomes more complicated when one considers that visitors made 14 million more trips to Forest Service lands during the years of 2018-2022 compared to a decade earlier.\*

Washington Trails Association (WTA) partners regularly with the Forest Service to complete the maintenance that's needed to keep trails open and functioning. They also step in to reopen trails when natural disasters like floods and fires impact beloved landscapes.

Historically, the USFS provided WTA crews with materials, pack support and other resources necessary to completing trail work. With the budget cuts, WTA crews will have little to no support on-the-ground.

While WTA is clearing and maintaining trails in the short-term, they are also working on long-term solutions to help get the Forest Service the resources it needs to steward our public lands. Hikers and people who love Washington's outdoor spaces can help by joining WTA's Hiker Rally Day. The event is an opportunity to speak to your state representatives about protecting funding for trails and outdoor spaces.

<https://www.wta.org/get-involved/action/hiker-rally-day-2025>

For more information about how to get involved, visit **wta.org**

*\*National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Results U.S. Forest Service National Summary Report/Data collected FY 2010 through FY 2014*

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**To request interviews, please contact Anna Roth:** [anna@wta.org](mailto:anna@wta.org)

WTA staff available for Interviews:

- Andrea Imler, Advocacy Director
- Kindra Ramos, Chief Programs Officer

**More information about WTA's trail maintenance program:**

<https://www.wta.org/news/magazine/features/wta-trail-maintenance-30-anniversary> (2023)

### **About Washington Trails Association**

Washington Trails Association (WTA) is the nation's leading state-based hiking and trail maintenance organization powered by the passion and dedication of hikers. Every year over 5 million outdoor enthusiasts come to us for education, inspiration and opportunities to protect and advocate for public lands. Together we work to ensure that Washington's trails remain sustainable and accessible to everyone for generations to come. By fostering a welcoming environment and engaging with the hiking community, WTA is committed to nurturing an inclusive organization where everyone feels valued, represented and able to contribute to the future of trails. **wta.org**