GAO

United States
General Accounting Office

Denver Regional Office

Suite 300-D
2420 W. 26th Avenue
Denver, CO 80211

October 14, 1988

OCT 17 1988
Received
Kootenai
FS
AS
B
P&I
C-S
TS
S-T
C-I
RS
W-F
H-S
ES
O-C
S-F
AFS
F-D
LMRS
L-R
R-M
C
PS
O-P
D-C
DRS
ZES
CC:

Mr. James F. Rathbun
Kootenai National Forest
506 Highway 2 W
Libby, MT 59923

Dear Mr. Rathbun:

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has been requested by the Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands to review the management of Forest Service trail construction, use, and maintenance.

The enclosed questionnaire is being mailed to all forest supervisors to obtain detailed information on trail funding, maintenance and reconstruction backlogs, as well as new construction needs. We also plan to visit some regional offices and national forests to follow-up on information provided in the questionnaire. These visits will be coordinated with the Forest Service's Washington office, and we will contact the specific regions and forests to set up a convenient time for an on-site visit.

Please complete this survey using information available to you and your best professional judgement, and return it by **November 4, 1988,** using the enclosed self-addressed business reply envelope.

If you have any questions concerning this survey, please contact William Temmler, Felicia Turner, or me at FTS 564-0006 or (303) 964-0006.

Sincerely,

David A. Hanna

David A. Hanna
Regional Manager

Enclosures - 2

GAO
United States
General Accounting Office

Denver Regional Office

Suite 3000
2420 W. 26th Avenue
Denver, CO 80211

October 14, 1988

Mr. James F. Rabbun
Kootenai National Forest
506 Highway 2 W
Libby, MT 59923

Dear Mr. Rabbun:

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) has been requested by the Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands to review the management of Forest Service trail construction, use, and maintenance.

The enclosed questionnaire is being mailed to all forest supervisors to obtain detailed information on trail funding, maintenance and reconstruction backlogs, as well as new construction needs. We also plan to visit some regional offices and national forests to follow-up on information provided in the questionnaire. These visits will be coordinated with the Forest Service's Washington office, and we will contact the specific regions and forests to set up a convenient time for an on-site visit.

Please complete this survey using information available to you and your best professional judgement, and return it by **November 4, 1988,** using the enclosed self-addressed business reply envelope.

If you have any questions concerning this survey, please contact William Temmler, Felicia Turner, or me at FTS 564-0008 or (303) 964-1906.

Sincerely,

David A. Hanna
Regional Manager

Enclosures - 2

U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

SURVEY ON TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION IN NATIONAL FORESTS

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), an agency that assists Congress in reviewing federal programs, is conducting a review of the trail system in National Forests. The purpose of this review is to examine the Forest Service's management of trail construction, use, and maintenance.

The following questionnaire is being sent to all Forest Supervisors. In addition, GAO is planning to visit some National Forests and the Regional Offices that are responsible for those forests between September and December, 1988. The purpose of these visits is to obtain additional information and to verify/document the information provided in this questionnaire. We will contact these locations to set up a convenient time for an on-site visit.

Please complete this survey using information available to you and your best professional judgement and return it by November 4, if possible, using the enclosed self-addressed business reply envelope. If you have any questions concerning this survey, please contact William Temmler or Valerie Garth at FTS 564-0006 or (303) 964-0006. If the return envelope is missing or misplaced, please return the questionnaire to:

U.S. General Accounting Office
Attn: William Temmler
2420 West 26th Avenue, Suite 300-D
Denver, Colorado 80211

Thank you for your assistance.

Mailing address: Kootenai National Forest
506 Highway 2 W
Libby, MT 59923

Person completing survey:

Name: Charles E. Harris

Title: Recreation Officer

Telephone Number: 406-293-6211
(area code)

Forest Supervisor:

Name: James F. Rathbun

Telephone Number: 406-293-6211
(area code)

Today's Date: 11 /08 /88
MO DAY YR

NOTE: For all questions where figures are not available either at the forest supervisor's office or at the district stations, please estimate an answer based on your best professional judgement

OVERALL TRAIL DATA

1. As of September 30, 1988, how many total miles of system trail, if any, were in the formal (summer) inventory of the National Forest or Forests under your administration? (If none, enter 0)

   1260 miles

2. As of September 30, 1988, how many total miles of trail that are not used as trail in summer (e.g., closed roads, etc.), if any, were available for winter use (including x-country skiing and snowmobiling, etc.) in the National Forest or Forests under your administration? (If none, enter 0)

   150 miles

3. As of September 30, 1988, how many miles of system trail on your forest(s)'s inventory, if any, are open or available for use by each of the following users? (If none in a category enter 0)

Miles	User
1260	Hikers/Walkers
1200	Horseback riders
1100	Bicycles
0	ATVs
0	4-Wheel drive vehicles
100	motorcycles

4. As of September 30, 1988, how many miles of system trail on your forest(s)'s inventory, if any, were in each of the following categories? (Include miles under their **primary use only**, do not double count miles. If none in a category enter 0)

Miles	Type of Trail
71.0	Snowmobile
30.7	X-country ski
1.4	Handicapped
1.3	Interpretative

5. As of September 30, 1988, how many miles of system trail on your forest(s)'s inventory, if any, were a part of each of the following components of the national trail system? (If none, enter 0)

Miles	Type of National Trail
0	National Historic Trail
0	National Scenic Trail
91.5	National Recreation Trail

6. As of September 30, 1988, how many system trail miles on your forest(s)'s inventory, if any, were in designated wilderness areas? (If none, enter 0)

   158 miles

7. How many recreation visitor days (RVDs) of trail use, if any, has your forest(s) had for the following fiscal years? (If none, enter 0)

RVDs	Fiscal Year
106,400	1984
80,000	1985
90,900	1986
88,000	1987
-	1988

8. About what percent of the total RVDs of trail use in your forest(s), if any, were attributable to the following types of users in FY 1988? (if none in a category enter 0)

Percent of RVDs	User
60 %	Hikers/Walkers
10 %	Horseback riders
6 %	Hunters
2 %	ATV/4-Wheel drive vehicle/Motorcycle riders
2 %	Bicyclists
10 %	Snowmobilers
10 %	X-country skiers/Snowshoers
0 %	Other (Please specify)
100%	Total

9. About how many miles of trail, if any, have been removed for any reason from the trail system inventory in your forest(s) during in fiscal years 1979 through 1988? (If none, enter 0)

254 miles ----> IF NONE SKIP TO Q. 11

10. For the trail miles removed from your forest(s)'s inventory during fiscal years 1979 through 1988, please estimate how many miles, if any, were removed for the following reasons: (List miles under the primary reason they were removed only. If none for a particular reason enter 0)

Miles	Reason
	Unused game/stock trail
	Unused administrative trail
	Environmental damage by trail users
	Unable to maintain for safety reasons (e.g. avalanches, floods, etc.)
200	Replaced by road
54	Insufficient maintenance funds
	Correction of inaccuracies in inventory
	Lack of use
	Rerouting of existing trails (Net loss only)
	Other (Please specify)
	Unknown
	Total(should agree with question 9)

11. About how many miles of trail, if any, have been added to your forest(s)'s trail system inventory during fiscal years 1979 through 1988? (If none, enter 0)

178 miles ---> IF NONE SKIP TO Q. 13

12. For the trail miles added to your forest(s)'s inventory during the last ten fiscal years, please estimate how many miles, if any, were added for each of the following reasons: (List miles under the primary reason only. If none in a category enter 0)

Miles	Reason	
0	Rerouting of existing trails (Net gain only)	
17	New construction	
25	Correction of inaccuracies in inventory	
25	Evolution from old road to trail	
111	Other (Please specify)	Retention of trails previously dropped from inventory.
	Unknown	
178	Total (should agree with question 11)	

13. How much money, if any, did your forest(s) receive for trail maintenance, reconstruction (e.g., rerouting trails or portions of trails), and new construction in FY 1987 and FY 1988? (If none, enter 0)

FY 1987	FY 1988	
$ 186,300	$ 143,000	Maintenance
$ 34,200	$ 45,000	New construction and reconstruction

14. Some forests receive money from sources other than the Forest Service for trail related maintenance and construction activities. For the following possible sources, indicate if the forest(s) under your administration received any funding in FY 1988, and if so, the amount received.

Received funding in FY 1988? 1. Yes	2. No	If yes enter amount	
[ ]	[X]	$_____	State grants (direct or through cooperators)
[ ]	[X]	$_____	Onsite donation boxes
[ ]	[X]	$_____	Challenge grants
[ ]	[X]	$_____	Clubs, user groups
[ ]	[X]	$_____	Businesses
[ ]	[X]	$_____	Line item appropriation
[ ]	[X]	$_____	Other (Please specify) Backcountry Horsemen volunteer work

TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION

15. How many miles of system trails in your forest(s), if any, were physically inspected by Forest Service personnel in FY 1988? (If none, enter 0)

624 miles ---> IF NONE SKIP TO Q. 17

16. For the system trails inspected in FY 1988 in your forest(s), how many miles, if any, were in the following condition? (Priority criteria per FSH 2309.18, 4.26--2) (If none in a category enter 0)

Miles	
27	Needing maintenance activities that would correct an unsafe condition (Priority 1)
157	Needing maintenance activities that minimize unacceptable resource and trail damage (Priority 2)
425	Needing maintenance activities that fully restore the trail to the planned design standard (Priority 3)
15	Needing no maintenance activities

NOTE: For questions 17, 18, and 19 only include sections of trail where work was actually performed. Do not include miles walked to or between work sites where no work was actually performed.

17. How many miles of system trail in your forest(s), if any, received Priority 1 maintenance (as defined in Q. 16) during fiscal years 1987 and 1988? (If less than one mile, enter to nearest 10th; If none, enter 0)

Miles	
85	Received maintenance in FY 1987
95	Received maintenance in FY 1988

18. How many miles of system trail in your forest(s), if any, received Priority 2 maintenance (as defined in Q. 16) during fiscal years 1987 and 1988? (If none, enter 0)

Miles	
323	Received maintenance in FY 1987
270	Received maintenance in FY 1988

19. How many miles of system trail in your forest(s), if any, received Priority 3 maintenance (as defined in Q. 16) during fiscal years 1987 and 1988? (If none, enter 0)

Miles	
243	Received maintenance in FY 1987
186	Received maintenance in FY 1988

20. As of September 30, 1988, how many miles of system trail in your forest(s), if any, would you estimate require further maintenance or reconstruction work to bring them up to the planned design standard (i.e., Priority 3)? For those miles that require further work, how much would you estimate the work to cost? (Please include the cost of maintaining or reconstructing foot bridges on these sections of trail.)

Estimated Miles	Estimated Costs	
665	$ 130 M	Trail maintenance
200	$ 200 MM	Trail reconstruction

21. As of September 30, 1988, how many miles of system trail in your forest(s), if any, were not usable because of deferred maintenance or reconstruction backlog? (If none, enter 0)

212 miles

22. In fiscal years 1984 through 1988, have deferred maintenance and reconstruction backlog on the whole increased or decreased or remained the same in your forest(s)?

	Greatly increased	Slightly increased	Remained the same	Slightly decreased	Greatly decreased
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Deferred maintenance			X		
2. Reconstruction backlog		X			

23. How many full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) of Forest Service personnel and contracted personnel, if any, were devoted to trail maintenance, reconstruction, or new construction in your forest(s) during fiscal years 1987 and 1988? (If none, enter 0)

FTEs Forest Service Personnel	FTEs Contracted Personnel	Fiscal Year
11.3	0	FY 1987
11.3	0	FY 1988

24. To what extent, if any, have the following factors contributed to deferred maintenance or reconstruction backlog for system trails in your forest(s)? (Check one for each)

	Little or no extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Great extent	Very great extent
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Lack of program funding				X	
2. Lack of outside funding	X				
3. Lack of Forest Service personnel			X		
4. Lack of volunteer personnel		X			
5. Lack of contract personnel	X				
6. Low priority of trail program at this forest		X			
7. Low priority of trail program at region		X			
8. Low priority of trail program at NFS head-quarters				X	
9. Other (Please specify)					

25. To what extent, if any, are the maintenance or reconstruction needs for the trails in your forest(s) caused by each of the following? (Check one for each)

	Little or no extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Great extent	Very great extent
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Avalanches		X			
2. Blowdowns				X	
3. Flooding/Runoff		X			
4. Fires	X				
5. Timber sales		X			
6. Mining	X				
7. Vandalism		X			
8. Heavy use			X		
9. Initial bad trail alignment or location		X			
10. Other (Please specify) Lack of funds to keep up to design standards.				X	

26. To what extent, if any, are the following types of resource damages a problem on your forest(s)'s trails? (Check one for each)

	Little or no extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Great extent	Very great extent
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Sheet erosion		X			
2. Gullying			X		
3. Litter		X			
4. Visual deterioration	X				
5. Threats to endangered species' habitats	X				
6. Other (Please specify)					

NEED FOR NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

27. According to your forest(s)'s plan, how many miles of new system trail (of all kinds) if any, are to be constructed in your forest(s) between October 1, 1988 through September 30, 1993)? (If none, enter 0)

37.5 miles ----> If none, skip to Q. 34

28. How much do you estimate the planned trail construction through fiscal year 1993 will cost in total?

$ 562 M

29. Of the trail construction planned through fiscal year 1993, how many miles, if any, will be open or available for use by each of the following users? (If none for any category enter 0)

Miles	User
37.5	Hikers/Walkers
30.0	Horseback riders
37.5	Bicycles
0	ATVs
0	4-Wheel drive vehicles
5.0	Motorcycles
5.0	Snowmobiles
37.5	X-country skiers

30. According to your forest(s)'s, plan how many miles of handicapped accessible and interpretive trail are planned through fiscal year 1993? How much do you estimate the construction of the new trails in each category will cost? (If none in a category enter 0)

Miles	Cost	Type of Trail to be Constructed
3.0	$ 60 M	Handicapped
5.0	$ 50 M	Interpretative

31. How many miles of the planned new system trail construction in your forest(s) (listed in question 27), if any, will be for trails in each of the following categories of the national trail system? What would you estimate the cost of this construction? (If none for any category enter 0)

Miles	Cost	Type of National Trail
2.0	$ 2 M	National Historic Trail
0	$ -	National Scenic Trail
0	$ -	National Recreation Trail

32. How many miles of the planned new system trail construction in your forest(s) (listed in question 27), if any, will be for trails in designated wilderness areas? What would you estimate the cost of this construction? (If none, enter 0)

0	Miles
$ -	Cost

33. Based on your best judgement, what percent, if any, of the miles planned for new trail construction listed in question 27 results from each of the following causes? (If none, enter 0, all categories should add to 100%)

Percent of miles		Reason
30	%	Overuse of current system trails in forest
	%	Trail designation by Congress
	%	Request by mountain bikers
	%	Request by snowmobilers
	%	Request by hikers
	%	Request by horsemen
	%	Request by other user groups (Please specify)
30	%	Attract users to other areas of forest(s)
10	%	Resolve user conflicts
30	%	Management perception of need for specific kinds of trails
	%	Administrative, firefighting needs, etc.
	%	Other (Please specify)
100%		Total

Kootenai Falls
Swinging Bridge
Historic Highway

VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

34. Trail maintenance, construction, and reconstruction has been performed in some National forests by groups or programs that are not made up of Forest Service personnel.

For each of the groups or programs listed below please check whether your forest(s) has made use of them for system trail maintenance, construction, or reconstruction between October 1, 1987 and September 30, 1988. If you have, please indicate how many miles these groups or programs have worked on in your forest(s) and the number of person-hours they worked.

	Used group or program? 1. Yes	2. No	Miles	Person-hours
General programs (e.g., Boy Scouts, Sierra Club, etc.)	[X]	[ ]	14	164
Human resource programs (e.g., Youth Conservation Corps, honor crews, juvenile delinquent program, etc.)	[X]	[ ]	53	4300
Cooperative agreements (i.e., Torts and Workers' Comp covered)	[X]	[ ]	2	40
Partnerships (Torts and Workers' Comp not covered)	[ ]	[X]	58	600
Individuals	[X]	[ ]		

35. How many Forest Service full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) were used between October 1, 1987 and September 30, 1988, if any, to plan, train, or supervise trail maintenance/construction efforts by volunteers or human resource programs on your forest(s)? (If none, enter 0)

1.8 FTEs

36. Has your forest(s) had to limit the number of volunteer or human resource program workers it has accepted for trail maintenance/construction work due to the number of Forest Service personnel available to plan, train, or supervise these workers? (Check one)

1. [X] Yes

2. [ ] No ----> Skip to Q. 38

37. How many additional Forest Service FTEs would be necessary to sufficiently plan, train, or supervise all volunteer/human resource program trail maintenance/construction workers available to your forest(s)?

1 Additional FTEs

38. In your opinion, is the amount of Forest Service effort used to plan, train, or supervise current maintenance/construction activities of non-Forest Service staff sufficient or insufficient in ensuring their trail work meets the level of performance you desire? (Check one)

1. [ ] Always sufficient
2. [ ] Usually sufficient
3. [X] Usually insufficient
4. [ ] Always insufficient

IF YOU CHECKED 1 OR 2 ABOVE SKIP TO Q. 40; IF YOU CHECKED 3 OR 4 CONTINUE ON TO Q. 39.

39. Based on the current amount and quality of trail work performed by non-service employees, how many additional Forest Service FTEs would be necessary to sufficiently plan, train, and supervise volunteer/human resource program trail maintenance, reconstruction and construction in your forest(s)?

1 Additional FTEs

RIGHT-OF-WAY ISSUES

40. Has your forest(s) experienced any rights-of-way problems related to trails in fiscal years 1984 through 1988? (Check one)

1. [X] Yes
2. [ ] No ---> SKIP TO Q. 45

41. Of the trail related right-of-way problems your forest(s) has experienced in fiscal years 1984 through 1988, how many have occurred at trail heads and how many have occurred along trails? (If none for a category enter 0)

Number of Problems	Problem location
4	At trail heads
	Along trails

42. In fiscal years 1984 through 1988, has the need to obtain rights-of-way caused any partial or full trail closures in your forest(s)? (Check all that apply)

1. [ ] Caused partial closures
2. [ ] Caused full closures
3. [X] Caused no closures

43. As of September 30, 1988, how many right-of-way cases are needed, if any, to keep existing trails completely open and construct planned new trails? (If none for either category enter 0)

64 Right-of-way cases needed (either through easement or purchase) to keep existing trails open

4 Right-of-way cases needed (either through easement or purchase) to construct planned trails

44. How many rights-of-way have been obtained through condemnation proceedings in your forest(s) in fiscal years 1984 through 1988? (If none, enter 0)

0 Rights-of-way obtained through condemnation

OTHER

45. Between October 1, 1986 and September 30, 1988, has anyone in your forest received positive user comments in person, by telephone, or in writing about specific newly constructed or reconstructed trails or trail projects? (Check one)

1. [X] Yes

2. [ ] No ---> SKIP TO Q. 47

46. Please estimate the number of times each of the following types of trail users have made positive comments about specific newly constructed or reconstructed trails or trail projects in your forest(s) between October 1, 1986 and September 30, 1988? (If none for any category enter 0)

Number of positive comments	User
145	Hikers/Walkers
30	Horseback riders
20	Bicyclists
0	ATV/4-Wheel drive/Motorcycle riders
20	Snowmobilers
60	X-country skiers/Snowshoers
0	Handicapped
12	Interpretative
0	Other (Please specify)

47. In each fiscal year from 1984 through 1988, how many Forest Service and non-Forest Service personnel in your forest(s), if any, have public contact as a substantial part of their job? For Forest Service personnel please also include number of FTEs. (If none for any year enter 0)

Number of Forest Service personnel	FTEs Forest Service personnel	Number of non-Forest Service personnel	FY	
20	12	20 →	1984	
21	12	20 →	1985	
21	12	22 →	1986	→ Campground Hosts
21	12	22 →	1987	
22	12	23 →	1988	

48. Please describe what you would consider to be the most serious trail problem and its cause in the forest(s) you administer.

Lack of legally documented ROW

Lack of maintenance (tread and brush) due to insufficient funding

49. If you have any comments on topics covered in this questionnaire or on trail activities in general, please use the space below or attach additional pages if necessary.

Lack of dollars

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION