

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program - Information Report

08801-0001-31 – September 2023

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law on November 15, 2021, provided Forest Service with approximately \$5.5 billion for investing in natural resources-related infrastructure, wildfire risk management, and ecosystem restoration. IIJA made \$250 million available to establish the IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program, providing Forest Service with \$50 million annually for fiscal years (FY) 2022 through 2026 for road, trail, and aquatic organism passage improvements on National Forest System lands.¹

The National Forest System is made up of more than 150 National Forests and Grasslands. Within these forests and grasslands, Forest Service manages hundreds of thousands of miles of roads and trails, as well as thousands of bridges, some of which are used for recreational access and resource management. Forest Service can use IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program funding for the following types of project activities:

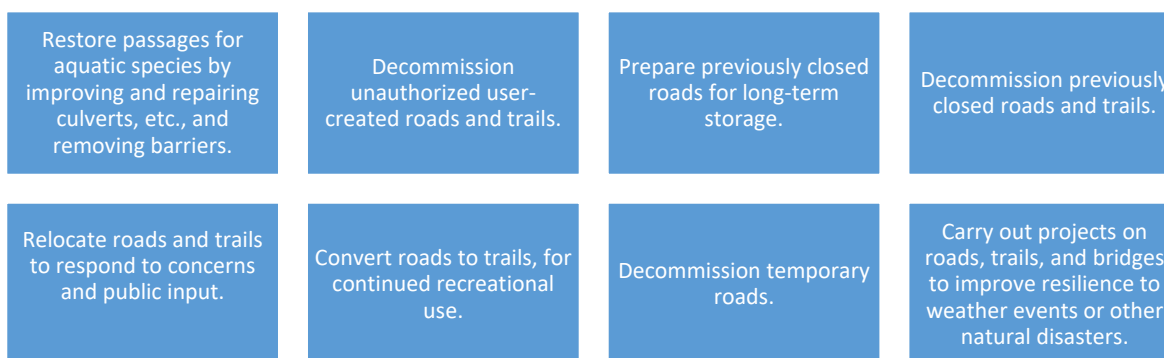


Figure 1: Eight Activities That Qualify for IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program Funding

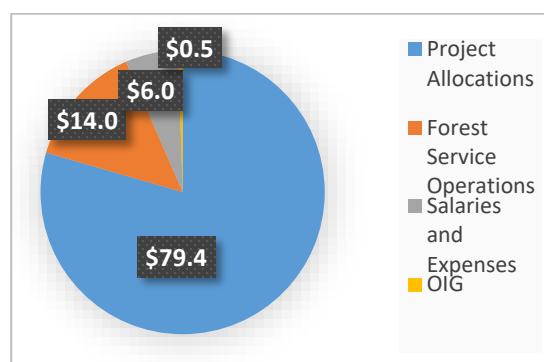


Figure 2: FYs 2022 & 2023 IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program Funding Allocations (in Millions)

Of the \$100 million FY 2022 and FY 2023 IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program funding, Forest Service allocated more than \$79.4 million for program-specific activities and the remaining more than \$20.5 million to various costs such as salaries and expenses, operations, and OIG oversight (see Figure 2). According to Forest Service, they then used a formula to allocate program funding to each region based on the acres of priority watershed and number of road, trail, and stream miles within each region.

¹ Congress previously funded a similar Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program from FYs 2008 to 2017.

Each Forest Service region selects and prioritizes IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program projects to distribute the allocated funding. Before submitting the projects to the national office for final review and approval, regions are to use an interdisciplinary team process including Engineering, Fisheries and Wildlife, Hydrology, and Recreation staffs to evaluate and prioritize projects. The Forest Service National Office provided guidance to the regions on legislative and national office considerations and priorities, while also allowing regions the flexibility to incorporate variations in criteria to recognize regional priorities.

Selection Considerations

- Foreseeable changes in weather and hydrology
- Public input
- Consistency with applicable forest plan or travel management plan
- In FY 2022, preference to projects that are (a) prepared for implementation and (b) have a National Environmental Policy Act analysis and design/survey completed

Ranking Priorities

- Protect or improve water quality in public drinking water source areas
- Restore the habitat of a threatened, endangered, or sensitive fish or wildlife species
- Maintain future access to the adjacent area for the public, contractors, permittees, or firefighters
- Improve National Forest System road, trail, or bridge resiliency to weather events, flooding, or other natural disasters and/or is a flood resiliency project
- Counties with Social Vulnerability Index of 4 or 5
- Priority watersheds

As of April 10, 2023, Forest Service has funded IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program projects in each region,² as follows:



Figure 3: IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program Funding by Forest Service Region³

Scroll over each region for additional details on the number of projects funded.

Disclaimer: For full interactivity, we recommend viewing this product with desktop software.

² "DC" represents a national office funded agreement/project and is not a region.

³ In the 1960s, Forest Service underwent a reorganization that eliminated Region 7; its forests were divided among Regions 8 and 9.

The IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program funds projects such as improvements to roads and aquatic organism passages.



Figure 4: Culvert and Road Restoration- Forest Service YouTube. Last accessed June 29, 2023.

As of April 10, 2023, Forest Service has funded the following types of IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program projects for FY 2022 and FY 2023.

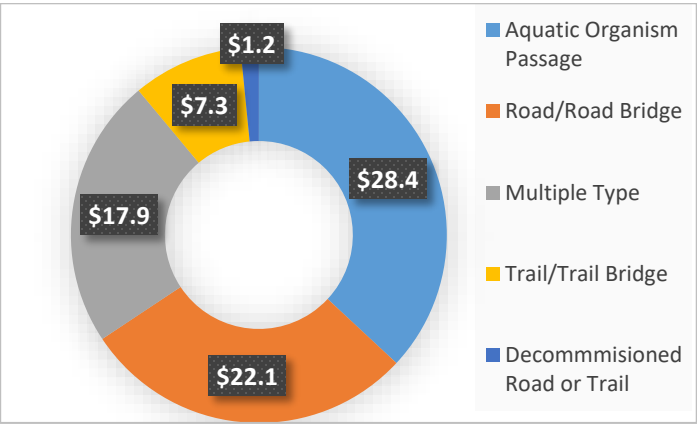


Figure 5: IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program Funding Breakdown (in Millions)

Accomplishments

According to Forest Service, the IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program does not have established targets (number of miles, bridges, aquatic organism passages, etc.). Instead, Forest Service allowed regions the flexibility to prioritize projects using national office–supplied ranking criteria. Forest Service measures project accomplishments depending on the type of project funded, measuring such things as the miles of roads and trails improved; the number of bridges improved, constructed, or reconstructed; the number of culverts replaced; and the miles of unauthorized roads and trails decommissioned.

Forest Service provided the following “before” and “after” pictures of recently completed IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program projects.

Aquatic Organism Passage:
Replacement of existing culvert intended to restore fish and other aquatic species passage and improve species habitat. The project is also intended to improve National Forest System road resilience to weather events.



Trail Improvement:

Application of new surfacing to provide a permeable tread surface intended to improve resilience to weather events by resisting erosion and rutting and reducing sediment runoff into streams.



Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

We conducted this work as part of an ongoing inspection with the objective of conducting integrated oversight of the funding provided to Forest Service’s IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program. Specifically, we plan to review program information for transparency and disclosure, perform data analytics on relative data sets for integrity and quality, inspect key aspects of the internal control environment, and review the implementation of the program. This report provides information related to reviewing program information for transparency and disclosure as well as program implementation.

To accomplish this part of our objectives, we identified the IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program requirements and gained an understanding of the IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program through publicly available information, discussions with Forest Service officials, and a review of documentation provided by Forest Service. This report includes information about the IIJA Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program as of September 2023. We are conducting our inspection in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency’s *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. A draft of this product was provided to Forest Service for technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

Photographs and video are from Forest Service and do not depict any particular audit, inspection, or investigation. Banner photo of a road culvert replacement courtesy of USDA Forest Service; YouTube video by Forest Service; photos of an aquatic organism passage renovation by Paul Hooper; and photos of a renovated trail by Zachary Schmucker

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