

I 29.2:T 68

Clemson University



1604 018 860 694

THE NATIONAL
TRAILS SYSTEM
AT *40*





THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM AT 40

Prepared by the Federal Interagency
Council on Trails

November 2008



In 1988, cyclists peer into a tunnel along the Elroy Sparta Bike Trail, a National Recreation Trail nominated in 1971.

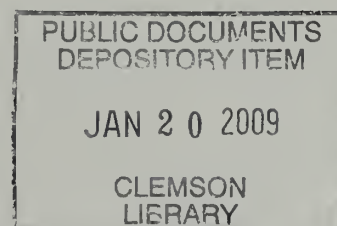
Photo: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

CONTENTS

Introduction / Purpose Statement	1
What is the National Trails System?	3
Celebrating Our Successes	5
The Benefits of the National Trails System	7
The Obstacles to Full Performance	10
Recommendations	11
Conclusion	13
Appendix A – Executive Order 13195	14
Appendix B – NST and NHT Administration	16
Appendix C – NST and NHT Corridor Lengths	17
Appendix D – NST and NHT On-The-Ground Management, by Agency . . .	18
Appendix E – National Recreation Trails on Federal Lands	19
Appendix F – Organizations Supporting the National Trails System.	20

Cover: An Appalachian National Scenic Trail hiker pauses to enjoy beautiful views. Photo: Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Facing page: Covered wagon at Scotts Bluff National Monument, 2006. Photo: National Park Service (NPS).





Ezra Meeker stands by Chimney Rock in western Nebraska during his first reenactment trip along the Oregon Trail in 1906. Photo: David Welch.

Children ride bikes opposite Washington, D.C., along the Mount Vernon Trail, a component of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Photo: NPS.



A dogsled musher greets a snowmachine operator along the Iditarod NHT in Alaska. Photo: Kevin Keeler/BLM.



INTRODUCTION/ PURPOSE STATEMENT

THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM AT 40

The National Trails System connects people to our land, our scenic wonders, our heritage, our cultures, and our communities. This diverse network of sustained and protected trails strives to provide education, foster appreciation and enjoyment, protect resources, and support enriching and inspiring experiences through partnerships, community involvement, and citizen action.

- Partnership for the National Trails System, 2003

40

years in the making, the National Trails System is maturing into a true nationwide network of trails as the result of Federal, State, and local governmental bodies working in close partnership with thousands of enthusiastic volunteers and dozens of nonprofit organizations. Passed in 1968, the National Trails System Act has been amended many times. Volunteers have proven to be the heart and soul of the System.

Because each national trail in the National Trails System is assigned to one or more Federal agencies, this report offers a Federal interagency perspective on the state of the National Trails System in 2008.

National trails are complex. Some are long, some short. Many involve built elements such as bridges and steps, restrooms, visitor centers, markers, blazes, and highway signs. Many include a land corridor of cherished views or rare and sacred cultural sites. Some trails cross large amounts of Federal land, while others mostly involve private landowners, local park authorities, public road rights-of-way, and state and tribal reservations. These trails involve complex organizational issues: partnership agreements, fund raising, volunteers, and special events. Some are a single route, while others form complex braided networks.



*Auto tour route signs along Interstate
435 in Kansas City, Missouri, June, 2008.
Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.*

“The establishment of a nationwide system of trails will be an accomplishment worthy of a place beside other major conservation programs. . . The fundamental objective of a nationwide system of trails is to provide simple, inexpensive recreation opportunities for all people by having an abundance of trails for walking, cycling, and horseback riding near home, as well as providing some major historic and scenic interstate trails of national significance.”

- Stewart Udall in testimony, March 6, 1967, in GPO, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation... on HR 4865 and Related Bills To Establish a Nationwide System of Trails, March 6-7, 1967, Serial No. 09-4, p. 23.



President Johnson signs the National Trails System Act into law on October 2, 1968. Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, Lady Bird Johnson, and other high-level officials look on. Photo: LBJ Library, Austin, TX.

This report describes the current status of America’s national scenic and historic trails, as well as the other trail types created by the National Trails System Act: national recreation trails, rail-trails, and connecting and side trails. In addition, it highlights various Federal programs that assist these trails. Recommended actions are offered to address existing unmet needs and better coordinate consistency among the various agencies.

The Federal Interagency Council on Trails was chartered in 1969 to foster interagency collaboration and make recommendations to the secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture about various aspects of the National Trails System. Federal agency members of the Council have joined together to submit this report to inform our own agencies and departments about the full spectrum of current Federal involvement in the National Trails System.

Current interagency authorities and agreements that underlie this report include:

1968	The National Trails System Act, as amended (16 USC 1241-1251)
2001	Executive Order 13195, <i>Trails for America in the 21st Century</i>
2006	<i>The National Trails System Memorandum of Understanding</i> , signed by six agencies, all participants in the Council.

Submitted by: Steven Elkinton, National Park Service
 (Chair, Federal Interagency Council on Trails)
 Nathan Caldwell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Christopher Douwes, Federal Highway Administration
 Deb Salt, Bureau of Land Management
 Jonathan Stephens, USDA Forest Service
 Peppino Persio, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM?

The National Trails System, authorized by the National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended (*16 United States Code* 1241-1251), includes four types of trails:

- National Scenic Trails (NSTs)
- National Historic Trails (NHTs)
- National Recreation Trails (NRTs), and
- Connecting and Side Trails.

NSTs and NHTs can only be established by Congress, while NRTs and connecting and side trail designations are formally recognized by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture.

National Scenic Trails offer superlative corridors of recreation in continuous and protected corridors that cross America's diverse landforms. The first two were the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails. Today eight NSTs cross 29 states and total 14,600 miles in combined lengths. Of this mileage, 11,080 miles (76%) are complete and open to the public (see Appendices C and D).

National Historic Trails teach history. Each follows a chain of sites and physical embodiments (ruts, grave sites, structures, and ruins) that tell the story of America's growth. They are often not continuous, and the level of historic integrity may vary from pristine to radically altered. Added to the System in 1978, there are now 18 NHTs in 32 states totaling 32,400 miles in designated routes. Related statistics include almost 20,500 miles of auto tour route, 2,935 miles of re-tracement trail, 1,933 high potential sites and segments, and over 120 visitor centers (see Appendices C and D).

NPS trails staffer Kay Threlkeld takes notes along the routes of four overlapping historic trails at the headwaters of the Sweetwater River in central Wyoming. Photo: NPS.





Volunteers work on the Herman Gulch Trail in Colorado, a 2005 National Trails Day project. Photo: Continental Divide Trail Alliance.

Below left: A youth crew from Ossining, NY, works to relocate the Appalachian NST on Bear Mountain in Harriman State Park. Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.

Below right: Ross Marshall, President of the Partnership for the National Trails System, stands by a wayside exhibit along the Oregon Trail in Independence, Missouri, 2008. Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.



National Recreation Trails are usually local in nature — although a few stretch longer than 100 miles. They are found in every state and Puerto Rico. Each year the secretary of the Interior, upon application, recognizes several dozen NRTs. The Secretary of Agriculture oversees recognition of NRTs within the National Forest System. Currently there are 1,055 NRTs totaling over 19,000 miles. They can be single-use or multi-use, paved or natural surfaced, on water or land, urban or rural, motorized or non-motorized. (A summary of Federally-managed NRTs is found in Appendix E.)

As for **connecting and side trails**, secretarial action has officially registered two, both finalized in 1990. The 86-mile Anvik Connector is in Alaska, while the 14-mile Timm's Hill Trail is found in northern Wisconsin.

Rail-trails are also authorized by the National Trails System Act which enables the Surface Transportation Board to preserve abandoned railroad rights-of-way for use as recreation trails on an interim basis. The resulting “rail-to-trails” movement, launched first in the United States and now found worldwide, has preserved over 15,000 miles of former railroad corridors as recreational trails.

Trail administration is a trailwide function that includes interagency consultation, coordination, planning, compliance, and graphics and logos. Appendices B and F show each of the 26 NSTs’ and NHTs’ administering agencies, as well as significant partner organizations.

Trail management refers to on-the-ground responsibilities involved with maintenance, signage, visitor services and safety, permits, resource management and monitoring, area planning, volunteer coordination, and local promotion. Many Federal agencies are involved in the management of specific trail sites and segments. (Appendix D outlines the Federal management jurisdictions for each of the 26 NSTs and NHTs.)



CELEBRATING OUR
SUCCESSES

*“That view, or that viewshed
or that cultural landscape or
historic landscape — it is part
of the important experience
... for a user or a visitor, to
those places. And in the case of
historic trails, it evokes some
sense of place that can be very
powerful. . . It is a thrill, and
it sometimes makes you shiver
a bit because of the experience
that you’ve been able to have a
hundred years later.”*

- Dr. Jere Krakow
retired NPS, oral history
interview, 2008, p. 17



Dr. Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, gives the Stand Up Taller Award to Eleanor Craig and Heather Rasmussen from Accessible Arts in Kansas City, Kansas, for the Discovery Trails program introducing visually impaired students to America’s historic trails. First Lady Laura Bush oversees the White House ceremony, January 28, 2008. Photo: President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

Since its inception 40 years ago, the National Trails System has blossomed from two trails of 4,700 miles in combined lengths to 26 trails that total over 46,000 miles. Over the years, a variety of Federal agencies have joined with the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management to administer and manage these trails.

The *National Trails System Annual Report for 2007*, issued by the Federal Interagency Council on Trails, offered a snapshot of the current status of the 26 national scenic and historic trails and how far they have progressed since 1968.

Administrative budget for 26 trails	\$11.5 million
Total length of NSTs open to the public	11,080 miles
Total length of NSTs still to be built	~ 5,000 miles
Total length of NHTs open to the public	2,935 miles
Total length of NHT auto tour routes	~ 20,500 miles

Many of the trail offices have extensive data systems, GIS mapping services, and websites. Each trail also is a complex web of citizen partnerships held together by a common motivation to preserve, protect, and make available to the public these outstanding trail resources. As trails have been established, people have organized to support them (see Appendix F).

Florida Trail Association staff and volunteers join NPS Director Fran Mainella in 2006 along the Florida NST. Photo: Florida Trail Association.



“The [trail manager] is actually someone, a private landowner, a state government employee, a federal agency employee, or office that has trail on lands that they own or manage. Administration done by the National Park Service [or BLM, or FS] for a historic trail is really coordinating with all these many ownerships and managements the protection and preservation of the trail resources and the telling of the story, what we call interpretation of the trail, to the public through a variety of means.”

- Dr. Jere Krakow, retired NPS, oral history interview, 2008, p. 8

Many innovations occur along these trails — they are veritable laboratories of creative partnerships. In fiscal years 2007 and 2008, a sampling of such projects and programs included:

- The \$837,000 Connect Trails to Parks program funding 14 projects where national trails intersect with national park areas.
- A petroglyph recording project along the Ala Kahakai NHT.
- The Appalachian Trail Mega-Transect as a north-south diagnostic tool to understand North American natural resource dynamics.
- The web-based John Smith Landscape Visualization project with Pennsylvania State University and the Smithsonian Institution to explore the 17th Century environment of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Florida Trail Association’s Gateway Communities Program to promote close-to-home ecotourism throughout Florida.
- A partnership with Mexico’s Instituto de Antropología y Historia (INAH)-Sonora and the Sonora Office of Tourism to establish the Juan Bautista de Anza NHT across Sonora province.
- A new Urban Identity Strip to showcase the North Country NST in towns and villages.
- A new marketing alliance for the Potomac Heritage NST formed at a conference entitled “Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities Adjacent to Public Lands.”

Such projects strengthen and extend a network of projects that will increasingly show Americans how valuable these trails are to the Nation as a whole and to individual communities in response to each area’s unique conditions.

Projects like these are compelling examples that illuminate the rich educational, conservation, recreational, and heritage values of the National Trails System to communities and individuals.

THE BENEFITS OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

The boss is on the Blackberry, the kids text you 24/7, and your cell phone has begun to sound like a chain saw. Want to get away from it all? The National Trails System provides the perfect escape. Trails provide linear routes for regular physical activity and encourage more passive interests in nature study and personal renewal. Rediscovering history can also give focus and connect people to their genealogical and cultural roots.

Retreat. Renew. Refresh.

On a hike sponsored by the Florida Trail Association, kids explore the Big Cypress National Preserve in southern Florida. Photo: Florida Trail Association.

A trail is more than just a path in the wilderness. It is a gateway to knowledge, friendships, and civic engagement. Trails can also be integral parts of transportation systems that get people moving and allow them to discover more than they might otherwise about the lands and waters around them.

A memorable trail experience is like a book, unfolding chapter by chapter. Trails can be educational tools as well as gateways to and between communities. Trails are physical objects that must be planned and maintained. They are often magnets for creative partnerships and volunteer labor. At their best they promote cross-cultural understanding and even healing of the human spirit.

In July 2004, the American Recreation Coalition stated in a letter to Congress that

... trails are an essential element in addressing this major threat [obesity] to our Nation's health. [Easily] accessible recreational trails can help prevent the estimated 400,000 premature deaths each year and annual medical costs now in excess of \$100 billion attributed to obesity.

Trails attract volunteers. For example in 2007, volunteers serving each of the NSTs and NHTs offered more than 720,000 hours valued at \$13.5 million (plus an additional \$8 million in financial contributions). These sums more than match Federal agency costs for trail administration.

The National Trails System is now embedded in the American landscape, touching or crossing all but a few states. Its benefits are broad and include:

- heritage education
- rigorous physical challenges
- new money for trail-related communities
- access to Federal funding programs
- community enhancement
- regional coordination for conservation and recreation
- and, perhaps most profoundly of all, the nurturing of conservation and heritage values for young and old alike.



AGENCY PERSPECTIVES



Land-Managing Agencies

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM manages 262 million acres (almost 12% of the continental U.S.). These lands are preserved for public purposes under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and administered within 237 resource districts — mostly in the 12 western states. In 2007, BLM recorded almost 70 million recreation visits. BLM lands directly account for some \$50 billion in economic benefits to nearby towns, counties, and states. Under BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, almost 6,000 miles of national scenic and historic trails are officially recognized as management components. BLM administers one NHT and co-administers two others with NPS.



Forest Service

The USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres nationwide. Its primary mission is to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." Authorized in 1905, the Forest Service today operates 155 forests, 20 grasslands, and six national monuments, recording 205 million recreation visits in 2007. The Forest Service has the largest network of trails of any land-managing agency in the United States (perhaps the world) totaling over 143,000 miles. The vast majority of these are natural surfaced backcountry trails in the West and open to both hikers and pack stock. Not only does the Forest Service manage almost 6,600 miles of national scenic and historic trails, it provides administration for four of the national scenic and historic trails.



National Park Service

NPS preserves and protects over 390 national park areas that total almost 85 million acres. The agency was established in 1916 and today hosts over 276 million recreation visits each year. More than 18,000 miles of trails of all types occur in national park areas — about 10% of that mileage is also part of the National Trails System. In addition, NPS administers or co-administers 21 of the national scenic and historic trails.



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is a Department of Defense agency and plays a leadership role in the development, management, protection, and restoration of the Nation's water resources and is the steward of the lands and waters at its water resources projects. Under its Natural Resources Management mission, the USACE manages and conserves those natural resources, consistent with ecosystem management principles, while providing quality public outdoor recreation experiences to serve the needs of present and future generations. USACE is involved in trail activities in two areas: water trails (such as the routes of the Lewis and Clark NHT along the Missouri and Columbia Rivers) and NRTs associated with many of the dams and reservoirs under its jurisdiction.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Service is responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. This occurs in 570 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, 69 fish hatcheries, and 46 administrative sites totaling over 96 million acres. More than 40 million visits were recorded in 2007. The Service manages and maintains over 2,500 miles of trail and 65 foot bridges. Of these trails, 1,400 miles are foot trails used by some 7.5 million visitors a year; while 6 million more explore over 1,000 miles of water trails. Sixty of these trails (totaling 340 miles) are recognized as National Recreation Trails. Visitation to the refuges where these trails are located is expected to reach 50 million people in 2009 (with over 25% of these visitors using the trails).

Trail Assistance Programs



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Federal Highway Administration

The FHWA funds trail projects under a number of programs, such as the Transportation Enhancement Activities (TE) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Generally, these funds are distributed to States by formula and projects are selected and funded by State officials. Together since 1991, TE and RTP have provided the largest investment in trail projects by any national government on record.

TE funds are available for several kinds of projects related to transportation that have benefited communities nationwide through the rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities, renovated streetscapes, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, rail-trails and other transportation trails, transportation museums, and scenic and historic highway visitor centers.

The RTP derives its revenue from the Federal excise tax on fuel used by off-highway vehicles. These funds are made available to states, by formula, to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Half of the funds are distributed equally among all States, and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel use in each State.

In addition to RTP and TE, the FHWA's National Scenic Byways Program promotes the recognition and enjoyment of America's memorable roads and also provides funding for scenic byway projects. Many of these roads lie along or near NSTs, NHTs, and NRTs.

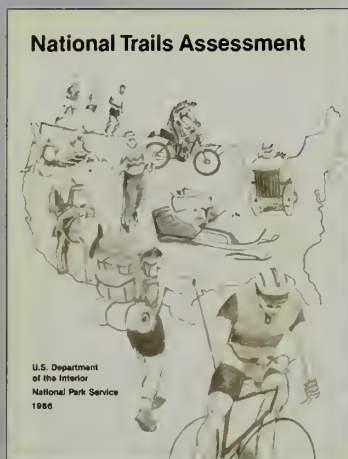
National Park Service's RTCA Program

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) provides staff consultations at no charge to local organizations, local units of government, nonprofit groups, state agencies, and others to develop river, trail, and open space preservation projects. In 2008, RTCA helped with 200 trail projects nationwide. Of these, 15 related directly to NST and NHT corridors. In recent years, this program has helped produce over 1,300 miles of new trail per year (as measured five years later). The RTCA program also reviews all applications coming to the Secretary of the Interior for consideration each year as National Recreation Trails.

"Together is how we got things accomplished. It wasn't me as a superintendent or staff member. It wasn't the staff that I was responsible for. But it was all of us together doing it."

*- Dr. Jere Krakow, retired NPS,
oral history interview, 2008, p. 51*

THE OBSTACLES TO FULL PERFORMANCE



Cover of the 1986 National Trails Assessment. Photo: NPS.

The National Trails Assessment of 1986 examined the creation process for Federal and State trails, identified key issues, and detailed then-current user needs. Although the System's statistics have changed in the intervening 22 years, the basic issues and obstacles that trail users and partners face are generally the same today as they were in 1986. These include:

- inadequate funding
- interagency coordination complexities
- the need for strong volunteer involvement
- often weak support by states and local communities
- fragmented data systems
- inadequate information for users
- opposition by affected private landowners
- poor planning practices, and
- inconsistent regulations.

From a Federal agency perspective, this list can be updated to include, in rough priority by degree of importance, the following impediments to full performance in carrying out the intentions of the National Trails System Act:

- cumbersome interagency coordination, especially at the policy level
- lack of standards and commonly agreed-upon best practices
- dispersal of staff over wide areas
- inconsistencies in volunteer management and project funding programs from one agency to another
- lack of skill development (through training and mentoring)
- shrinking memberships of partner organizations
- inability to provide substantive public relations services, especially in reaching out to local communities
- lack of connections to other agency programs that should be more fully involved in the National Trails System.

Some of the recommendations that follow address these concerns.

BLM and NPS staff gather at Parting of the Ways in Wyoming where the California and Oregon NHTs split going West. Photo: NPS.



RECOMMENDATIONS

“Above and beyond the history and landscapes that these trails celebrate, what fascinates me is how these trails came to be protected today. Almost none of them would have ever been built or would still exist without passionate people of vision, often private citizens. Volunteers are the life-blood of national trails.”

- Glenn Scherer, 2002, America's National Trails: Journeys Across Land and Time, p. v.

Hikers explore Eaton Creek bridge and boardwalk in the Ocala National Forest. Photo: Sandra Friend/Florida Trail Association.



The 40th anniversary of the National Trails System Act, commemorated on October 2, 2008, creates an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the National Trails System and to consider the next steps in making this System even better.

The Partnership for the National Trails System, a nonprofit coalition of 29 organizations that support the various NSTs and NHTs, has spearheaded a plan for “A Decade for the National Trails System” 2008-2018. During this decade, the citizen groups and government agencies who serve as partners in implementing this nationwide trails system can sign onto three major goals:

- Increase public awareness so that every citizen and community in the U.S. is aware of the National Trails System and its components.
- Complete and enhance all NSTs and NHTs for public appreciation and enjoyment. For NSTs, this means creating a protected corridor from end to end. For NHTs it means protecting all listed high potential sites and segments associated with the trail.
- Build the capacity of both nonprofit trail organizations and State and Federal trail offices.

Opportunities and Challenges

The components of the National Trails System (NSTs, NHTs, and NRTs) are now increasingly well known and respected throughout the United States. They offer a tremendous opportunity to link the Nation together through nature and history, through shared heritage, and by encouraging discovery. At the same time, many of them are not well supported, are hard to discern in the landscape, and need a fair investment to make them visible and enjoyable. Fears of property rights takings and inappropriate access sometimes discourage local projects. Agencies with this responsibility have to balance it with other competing interests.

The suggestions below aim to encourage discussion and actions which will strengthen America's National Trails System and foster its development into a world class system.

▪ Foster Volunteerism

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the National Trails System. Without a corps of committed citizen volunteers willing to organize around, labor for, and become political advocates for each trail, these trails will eventually exist only on paper. Both the nonprofit trail organizations and the State and Federal agencies that support components of the National Trails System need to do all they can to foster the full range of volunteer involvement encouraged in the National Trails System Act.

“... trails are America’s colorful link with its historic past, and ... the walking for pleasure boom facing the nation has developed into a demand for trails that retrace historic pathways of our founding fathers.”

- Proceedings: National Symposium on Trails, Washington D.C., June 2-6, 1971, p. 6.

The St. Charles Men, as Lewis & Clark reenactors, approach the shore at St. Charles, Missouri, returning from their three-year voyage. September, 2006. Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.



▪ **Conduct Research**

In general, trail offices and partners have not had the funds to carry out much-needed research. A 1979 Yale University Symposium identified resource management and protection, economic impacts and benefits, and organizational development as trail issues that would benefit from sound, scientific study. Little has been done since. Currently, the research that does occur is too narrowly focused to be of systemic benefit. Ideally, a national summit could be held sometime during A Decade for the National Trails on “Science and Trails” to identify top-priority research needs, opportunities, and interested parties and funders to carry out such research.

▪ **Define Uniform Data Standards**

The emergence of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the related Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies have made possible the precise mapping of the National Trails System. The Interagency Trail Data Standards (ITDS) are the first attempt at linking and sharing this critical information among key federal agencies. However, funds will be needed to upgrade existing data sets and mapping services — as well as to bring trail data systems on-line that do not yet exist.

▪ **Build New Partnerships**

Many partners already support the components of the National Trails System — and the System as a whole. However, we must engage additional partners who may want to help enhance the National Trails System. In the future, expanded trail partnerships could easily include schools and universities, state tourism councils, civic organizations, civilian arms of the military (such as local units of the National Guard), the real estate industry, outdoor writers, and the national network of charitable foundations.

▪ **Establish a Federal Lands Trails Program**

Federal surface transportation has financed numerous trail-related projects since 1991. FHWA programs have provided billions of dollars to such projects, greatly enhancing many national trails. Using the Federal Lands Highways Program as a model, a fund should be created specifically for trails on public lands, the “Federal Lands Trails Program,” to assure long-term multi-year funding for trails of all types on Federal lands, or administered by Federal agencies on public lands.

▪ **Open a National Trails Resource Center**

Because three Federal agencies share the administration of the National Trails System, its identity and focus is fragmented. The American public, international guests, and state and local governments all struggle to find a central source of information about the Trails System. Similarly, functions that might be centralized in other systems — such as training, promotion, and standards setting — are now dispersed. A National Trails Resource Center, modeled on America’s Byways Resource Center in Duluth, Minnesota, could foster consistency throughout the National Trails System. Funded either through a stand-alone budget line-item or by a commitment by each of the contributing agencies (not unlike the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho), staff at such an interagency central information center would ensure that the National Trails System reaches its 100th birthday in 2068 unexcelled worldwide.

CONCLUSION

“[Trails] promise the best opportunity yet devised for bringing people into intimate contact with nature and the unspoiled out-of-doors in both wildernesses and also in the relatively developed settings . . . Trails are the most important, the most economical, and the easiest means of providing desirable human access to areas of historic significance, our publicly owned wilderness lands, and areas of scenic beauty.”

*- Stewart W. Brandborg,
Executive Director, The
Wilderness Society, GPO,
1967, Hearing Before the
Subcommittee on National
Parks and Recreation. . . on
H.R. 4865 and Related Bills to
Establish a Nationwide System
of Trails, held March 6-7, 1967,
p. 147.*

The National Trails System has matured in many ways since 1968 (especially since the 1986 report on Federal trail activities). There are many more trails at the national, state, regional, and local levels. Trail use has mushroomed as traditional uses — such as hiking and backpacking — have grown and other modes of recreation — such as mountain bikes and inline skates — have become popular. In many parts of America, trails are becoming a key factor in community quality of life by fostering health and fitness, strengthening non-motorized transportation systems, and opening up opportunities for heritage education.

The components of the National Trails System exist within the context of the Nation’s broader network of trails of all types. The challenges and opportunities associated with the National Trails System are the same as those — just on a larger scale — at the local, regional, and State levels. Together, these tiered systems of trails can be linked together into one of the finest trail systems in the world.

Such coordinated actions will transform these trails into a system that Americans truly understand and use. After all, this nationwide system of trails does not merely represent the unique natural landscapes and cultural heritage of our history. It has now become part of many Americans’ way of life. It is the right of each citizen to know of this heritage nationwide and participate in its preservation and use.



Smith's Island Nature Trail NRT in Scott County, Iowa, is suitably marked to guide visitors to this gem along the floodplain of the Mississippi River. Photo: Cherri Espersen/NPS.



APPENDIX A

THE WHITE HOUSE EXECUTIVE ORDER #13195

TRAILS FOR AMERICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in furtherance of purposes of the National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (Public Law 105-178), and other pertinent statutes, and to achieve the common goal of better establishing and operating America's national system of trails, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Federal Agency Duties.

Federal agencies will, to the extent permitted by law and where practicable — and in cooperation with Tribes, States, local governments, and interested citizen groups — protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types throughout the United States. This will be accomplished by:

- (a) Providing trail opportunities of all types, with minimum adverse impacts and maximum benefits for natural, cultural, and community resources;
- (b) Protecting the trail corridors associated with national scenic trails and the high priority potential sites and segments of national historic trails to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact;
- (c) Coordinating maps and data for the components of the national trails system and Millennium Trails network to ensure that these trails are connected into a national system and that they benefit from appropriate national programs;
- (d) Promoting and registering National Recreation Trails, as authorized in the National Trails System Act, by incorporating where possible the commitments and partners active with Millennium Trails;
- (e) Participating in a National Trails Day the first Saturday of June each year, coordinating Federal events with the National Trails Day's sponsoring organization, the American Hiking Society;
- (f) Familiarizing Federal agencies that are active in tourism and travel with the components of a national system of trails and the Millennium Trails network and including information about them in Federal promotional and outreach programs;
- (g) Fostering volunteer programs and opportunities to engage volunteers in all aspects of trail planning, development, maintenance, management, and education as outlined in 16 U.S.C. 1250;
- (h) Encouraging participation of qualified youth conservation or service corps, as outlined in 41 U.S.C. 12572 and 42 U.S.C. 12656, to perform construction and maintenance of trails and trail-related projects, as encouraged in sections 1108(g) and 1112(e) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, and also in trail planning protection, operations, and education;
- (i) Promoting trails for safe transportation and recreation within communities;
- (j) Providing and promoting a wide variety of trail opportunities and experiences for people of all ages and abilities;
- (k) Providing historical interpretation of trails and trail sites and enhancing cultural and heritage tourism through special events, artworks, and programs; and
- (l) Providing training and information services to provide high-quality information and training opportunities to Federal employees, Tribal, State, and local government agencies, and the other trail partners.

Section 2. The Federal Interagency Council on Trails.

The Federal Interagency Council on Trails (Council), first established by agreement between the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior in 1969, is hereby recognized as a long-standing interagency working group. Its core members represent the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service, the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, and the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. Other Federal agencies, such as those representing cultural and heritage interests, are welcome to join this council. Leadership of the Council may rotate among its members as decided among themselves at the start of each fiscal year. The Council's mission is to coordinate information and program decisions, as well as policy recommendations, among all appropriate Federal agencies (in consultation with appropriate nonprofit organizations) to foster the development of America's trails through the following means:

(a) Enhancing federally designated trails of all types (e.g., scenic, historic, recreation, and Millennium) and working to integrate these trails into a fully connected national system;

(b) Coordinating mapping, signs and markers, historical and cultural interpretations, public information, training, and developing plans and recommendations for a national trails registry and database;

(c) Ensuring that trail issues are integrated in Federal agency programs and that technology transfer and education programs are coordinated at the national level; and

(d) Developing a memorandum of understanding among the agencies to encourage long-term interagency coordination and cooperation to further the spirit and intent of the National Trails System Act and related programs.

Section 3. Issue Resolution and Handbook for Federal Administrators of the National Trails System.

Federal agencies shall together develop a process for resolving interagency issues concerning trails. In addition, reflecting the authorities of the National Trails System Act, participating agencies shall coordinate preparation of (and updates for) an operating handbook for Federal administrators of the National Trails System and others involved in creating a national system of trails. The handbook shall reflect each agencies' governing policies and provide guidance to each agencies' field staff and partners about the roles and responsibilities needed to make each trail in the national system fully operational.

Section 4. Observance of Existing Laws.

Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to override existing laws, including those that protect the lands, waters, wildlife habitats, wilderness areas, and cultural values of this Nation.

Section 5. Judicial Review.

This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch. It does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable in law or equity by any party against the United States, its agencies, its officers or employees, or any other person.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON
THE WHITE HOUSE, January 18, 2001

APPENDIX B

NST AND NHT

ADMINISTRATION

Trail	Year Established	Administering Agency	Office Location
Ala Kahakai NHT	2000	NPS	Kailua Kona, HI
Appalachian NST	1968	NPS	Harpers Ferry, WV
California NHT	1992	NPS	Salt Lake City, UT
Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT	2006	NPS	Annapolis, MD
Continental Divide NST	1978	FS	Golden, CO
El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT	2004	NPS	Santa Fe, NM
El Cam. Real de Tierra Adentro NHT	2000	NPS & BLM	Santa Fe, NM
Florida NST	1983	FS	Tallahassee, FL
Ice Age NST	1980	NPS	Madison, WI
Iditarod NHT	1978	BLM	Anchorage, AK
Juan Bautista de Anza NHT	1990	NPS	Oakland, CA
Lewis and Clark NHT	1978	NPS	Omaha, NE
Mormon Pioneer NHT	1978	NPS	Salt Lake City, UT
Natchez Trace NST	1983	NPS	Tupelo, MS
Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT	1986	FS	Orofino, ID
North Country NST	1980	NPS	Madison, WI
Old Spanish NHT	2002	NPS & BLM	Santa Fe, NM
Oregon NHT	1978	NPS	Salt Lake City, UT
Overmountain Victory NHT	1980	NPS	Blacksburg, SC
Pacific Crest NST	1968	FS	Vallejo, CA
Pony Express NHT	1992	NPS	Salt Lake City, UT
Potomac Heritage NST	1983	NPS	Harpers Ferry, WV
Santa Fe NHT	1987	NPS	Santa Fe, NM
Selma to Montgomery NHT	1996	NPS	Hayneville, AL
Star Spangled Banner NHT	2008	NPS	Annapolis, MD
Trail of Tears NHT	1987	NPS	Santa Fe, NM

Legend:

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FS	Forest Service
NPS	National Park Service
NHT	National Historic Trail
NST	National Scenic Trail

APPENDIX C

NST AND NHT

CORRIDOR LENGTHS

(in miles)

	Designated Length	Length open for public use
National Scenic Trails		
North Country NST	3,200 (really 4,100)	1,828
Continental Divide NST	3,200	2,057
Pacific Crest NST	2,600	2,650
Appalachian NST	2,110	2,175
Florida NST	1,300	1,165
Ice Age NST	1,000	620
Potomac Heritage NST	700	520
Natchez Trace NST	485	65
Total	14,595 (really 15,500)	11,080

	Designated Length	Length of auto tour route open for public use*
National Historic Trails		
California NHT	5,665	5,839
Lewis & Clark NHT	3,700	~ 6,000
Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT	3,000	n/a
Old Spanish NHT	2,700	n/a
El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT	2,600	n/a
Iditarod NHT	2,350	n/a
Trail of Tears NHT		~ 825
Oregon NHT	2,170	2,130
Pony Express NHT	1,966	2,005
Mormon Pioneer NHT	1,300	1,425
Juan Bautista de Anza NHT	1,200	865
Santa Fe NHT	1,200	~ 1,000
Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT	1,170	n/a
El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHT	404	n/a
Star Spangled Banner NHT	290	n/a
Overmountain Victory NHT	270	313
Ala Kahakai NHT	175	n/a
Selma to Montgomery NHT	54	54
Total	30,214	~ 20,456

* Note: NHT auto tour routes may be longer than the designated route due to braiding, parallel roads, and urban street patterns.

APPENDIX D
NST AND NHT ON-
THE-GROUND
MANAGEMENT,
BY AGENCY (in miles)

	FS	BLM	NPS	Other Fed. ¹
National Scenic Trails				
Appalachian NST	804	--	351	--
Continental Divide NST	1,887	377	192	--
Florida NST	155	--	90	325
Ice Age NST	60	--	--	--
Natchez Trace NST	--	--	65	--
North Country NST	300	--	45	75
Pacific Crest NST	2,118	231	249	--
Potomac Heritage NST	--	--	~ 200	--
NST Subtotal	5,324	608	1,192	400
National Historic Trails				
Ala Kahakai NHT	--	--	30	7
California NHT	486	1,391	--	151
Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT	--	--	--	--
El Camino Real/Tejas NHT (n/a)	--	--	--	--
El Camino Real/Adentro NHT	11	60	--	90
Iditarod NHT	38	418	--	407
Juan Bautista de Anza NHT	8	116	--	88
Lewis and Clark NHT	300	369	--	2,800 ²
Mormon Pioneer NHT	--	264	--	214
Nez Perce NHT	234	70	86	--
Old Spanish NHT	--	887	--	--
Oregon NHT ³	37	656	--	7
Overmountain Victory NHT	10	--	--	2
Pony Express NHT	75	697	--	16
Santa Fe NHT	3	--	1	--
Selma to Montgomery NHT	--	--	--	--
Trail of Tears NHT	77	--	--	1,226 ²
NHT Subtotal	1,279	4,928	117	5,008
Grand Totals	6,603	5,536	1,309	5,408

Notes:

¹ Some of these figures also include Indian reservation lands.

² Most of this mileage occurs in rivers under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

³ High potential segments only.

APPENDIX E NATIONAL RECREATION TRAILS ON FEDERAL LANDS (combined lengths in miles)

National Recreation Trails have been designated by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture since 1971. Today, over 1,050 trails have been so recognized in all 50 states and some U.S. territories. (States not listed have no NRTs on Federal lands or waters.) *Source: NRT Database c/o American Trails website.*

State	Forest Service	NPS	BLM	USFWS	USACE	Other
Alabama	116					
Alaska	65	7	31	112		
Arizona	267	34	1	6		
Arkansas	365	1			33	
California	480	58	95	1		
Colorado	167	3		13		
Dist. of Columbia		20				
Florida		107		1		18
Georgia	83	15		104	1	
Hawaii		36				
Idaho	405	22	9			
Illinois	2				13	
Indiana	16	1				
Iowa		3			14	
Kansas					50	30
Kentucky	303				4	70
Louisiana	32			5		
Maine		8		1		
Massachusetts		9			9	
Michigan	125	12		14		
Minnesota	248			3		
Mississippi	109			3	8	
Missouri	51			1	10	
Montana	526	65	39	3		
Nebraska	6			6		
Nevada	120	10	1			
New Hampshire	6			1		
New Mexico	130	44	24			
New York	12	8				
North Carolina	153	3		1	16	
North Dakota	96			23		
Ohio		3		9	2	
Oklahoma	224			11	36	
Oregon	639		33	3		
Pennsylvania	1	5		3	4	
Puerto Rico	8					
South Carolina	43	17				
South Dakota	122	1		1	9	
Tennessee	24	6		1	37	49
Texas	148			4	36	
Utah	87		28	1		
Vermont	55					
Virginia	171	32				
Washington	208	260		9	16	
West Virginia	1				10	
Wisconsin	81					
Wyoming	124	11	2			
TOTALS	5,819	801	263	340	308	167

APPENDIX F

ORGANIZATIONS

SUPPORTING THE

NATIONAL TRAILS

SYSTEM

Trail Groups	Associated Trail(s)	Year Trail Est'd	Year Group Est'd	Current Membership Size	Volunteer hours contributed in 2007
Appalachian Trail Conservancy	Appalachian NST	1968	1925	35,000	196,620
Pacific Crest Trail Association	Pacific Crest NST	1968	1977	6,850	62,520
Continental Divide Trail Alliance	Continental Divide NST	1978	1995	3,000	37,490
Continental Divide Trail Society	Continental Divide NST	1978	1978	250	1,500
Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance	Iditarod NHT	1978	2000	n/a	1,900
Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Fdtn.	Lewis & Clark NHT	1978	1969	3,500	24,040
Mormon Trails Association	Mormon Pioneer NHT	1978	n/a	n/a	3,160
Iowa Mormon Trails Assoc.	Mormon Pioneer NHT	1978	n/a	n/a	750
Oregon-California Trails Assoc.	Oregon NHT	1978	1982	1,650	56,400
	California NHT	1992	1982		
Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation	Ice Age NST	1980	1958	3,100	48,190
North Country Trail Association	North Country NST	1980	1981	3,000	44,000
Overmountain Victory Tr. Assoc.	Overmountain Vict. NHT	1980	1975	~ 250	8,960
Florida Trail Association	Florida NST	1983	1964	~ 6,000	69,900
Potomac Heritage Trail Assoc.	Potomac Heritage NST	1983	~ 2000	~ 200	3,690
Allegheny Trail Alliance	Potomac Heritage NST	1983	n/a	7 orgs.	n/a
Nez Perce Trail Foundation	Nez Perce NHT	1986	1991	~ 1,000	8,250
Santa Fe Trail Association	Santa Fe NHT	1987	1986	725	47,120
Trail of Tears Association	Trail of Tears NHT	1987	1994	600	36,600
Anza Trail Foundation	J B de Anza NHT	1990	(in process)	20	
Amigos de Anza	J B de Anza NHT	1990	~ 1990	n/a	6,790
Anza Trail Coalition of AZ	J B de Anza NHT	1990	1992	~ 300	2,230
National Pony Express Assoc.	Pony Express NHT	1992	1978	800	34,270
Pony Express Trail Assoc.	Pony Express NHT	1992	n/a	n/a	
E Mau Na Ala Hele	Ala Kahakai NHT	2000	1979	220	
Ala Kahakai Trail Assoc.	Ala Kahakai NHT	2000	2007	~ 20	
El Camino Real TA NHT Assoc.	El Camino Real/TA	2000	~ 2005	~ 300	1,720
Old Spanish Trail Association	Old Spanish NHT	2002	1994	480	23,720
El Camino Real Tejas NHT Assoc.	El Camino Real/Tejas	2004	2006	~ 150	
Friends of the Cpt. John Smith Tr.	Capt. John Smith C. NHT	2006	2008	60+ orgs.	
		Totals		~ 67,400	719,820
National Groups					
American Hiking Society			1976	~ 10,000	
American Trails			1988	~ 200 groups & individuals	
Partnership for the National Trails System			1995	30 groups (see above)	
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy			1982	110,000	



Benton MacKaye, who originally conceived the Appalachian Trail in 1921, looks out over the Great Smoky mountains, ~ 1934. Photo: Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

The Star-Spangled Banner NHT consists largely of water trail routes in the Potomac, Patuxent, and Patapsco Rivers and features Fort McHenry, where the national anthem was written. Photo: GREATgraphics!



Alex Davis, Emily Reisinger, Jackie Zinger and Richard Larson admire the view from Chikamin Ridge near Snoqualmie Pass, Washington. Photo: Connie Davis/PCTA from her 2005 PCT hike.



Visitors explore a section of La Jornada del Muerto, "the Journey of Death", along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, near Socorro, New Mexico. Photo: NPS.



The Pochuck Bridge along the Appalachian NST in northern New Jersey was built by volunteers in several phases funded, in part, by NPS Challenge Cost-Share funds. Photo: NPS.



Trail Superintendent Catherine Light guides marchers in Montgomery, Alabama, during the 40th anniversary re-enactment of the Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, following the Selma to Montgomery NHT, March 2005. Photo: NPS.



Hikers explore the Ala Kahakai Trail on National Trails Day, 2004, at the black sand beach of Luahinewai. Photo: E Mau Na Ala Hele.



*Pony Express re-enactors swearing in
before their re-ride. Photo: Pat Hearty/
National Pony Express Association.*

