

National Trails System 101

The National Trails System is comprised of **11 National Scenic Trails, 21 National Historic Trails, 1,500+ National Recreation Trails, and 2,000+ Rail-Trails**, stretching for one mile or thousands of miles each and more than 100,000 miles in total. In total they connect with:

- 70 wildlife refuges
- 80 National Parks
- 90 Bureau of Land Management areas
- 90 National Forests
- 123 Wilderness Areas
- 100 major metropolitan areas

National Trails System Act

(a) In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established (i) primarily, near the urban areas of the Nation, and (ii) secondarily, within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located.

(b) The purpose of this Act is to provide the means for attaining these objectives by instituting a national system of recreation, scenic and historic trails, by designating the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail as the initial components of that system, and by prescribing the methods by which, and standards according to which, additional components may be added to the system.

(c) The Congress recognizes the valuable contributions that volunteers and private, nonprofit trail groups have made to the development and maintenance of the Nation's trails. In recognition of these contributions, it is further the purpose of this Act to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails.

Partnership for the National Trails System

Established in 1997, the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) connects member not-for-profit trail organizations and Federal agency partners to further the protection, completion, and stewardship of the 32 National Scenic and Historic Trails within the National Trails System.

The PNTS advocates on behalf of the National Trails System as a whole for land preservation and stewardship resources. Other major roles of the PNTS include the collection and dissemination of National Trails news and the development of outreach initiatives and youth programming.

Today, the Partnership has 34 member and 8 affiliate nonprofit organizations. And we work in close collaboration with the 5 Federal agency partners who have jurisdiction over the trails.

32 National Scenic and Historic Trails

Scenic

- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Arizona National Scenic Trail
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Florida National Scenic Trail
- Ice Age National Scenic Trail
- Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail
- New England National Scenic Trail
- North Country National Scenic Trail
- Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
- Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Historic

- Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail
- Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail
- California National Historic Trail
- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail
- El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail
- Chilkoot National Historic Trail
- Iditarod National Historic Trail
- Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail
- Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
- Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail
- Nez Perce (Nee-Mo-Poo) National Historic Trail
- Old Spanish National Historic Trail
- Oregon National Historic Trail
- Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail
- Pony Express National Historic Trail
- Santa Fe National Historic Trail
- Selma To Montgomery National Historic Trail
- Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
- Trail of Tears National Historic Trail
- Washington-Rochambeau R.R. National Historic Trail

National Recreation Trails

- Over 1,500 trails, including 21 National Water Trails designated by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture through regional foresters to recognize exemplary trails of local and regional significance
- Total over 26,000 miles
- Run through all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico

- Database available at nrtdatabase.org from American Trails.

Rail-Trails

- 22,000 miles of completed rail-trails and 8,000 miles of projects in progress
- Over 2,000 rail-trails exist in 50 states, crossing rural, suburban, and urban communities
- 1983 amendment to National Trails System Act allowed unused rail corridors to be preserved for future use by converting them to trails
- Database available at traillink.com from Rails to Trails Conservancy.

Federal Partners

Department of the Interior

- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
 - National Wildlife Refuge System

Department of Agriculture

- US Forest Service

[PDF map of the National Trails System available here](#)

