



National Recreation Trails

Explore America's national system of trails and greenways

Search our Website



Browse Common Topics

Topic Index

NRT Home

About NRT Program

Featured NRTs

What's Hot

Calendar

Training

Resources

Support Trails

Symposium

HOW TO APPLY for NRT Designation

Hosted by AmericanTrails.org

Is your trail a good candidate for National Recreation Trail designation? This page will tell you the requirements and how to nominate your trail.

▶ **USDOJ APPLICATION for NRT designation** (for all trails EXCEPT those on National Forests and Grasslands)

▶ **USDA PROCESS for NRT designation** (for land administered by the US Department of Agriculture: National Forests, National Grasslands, and National Recreation Areas, and associated lands)

▶ Learn about [National Water Trails System](#) designation

Who can apply for National Recreation Trail designation?

Any public or private trail manager, operating a trail that meets the definition and criteria below may apply for NRT designation.

What kinds of trails are eligible?

- A **trail** is a travel way established either through construction or use and is passable by at least one or more of the following, including but not limited to: foot traffic, stock, watercraft, bicycles, in-line skates, wheelchairs, cross-country skis, off-road recreation vehicles such as motorcycles, snowmobiles, ATVs, and four-wheel drive vehicles.
- Roads and highways suitable for passenger car travel are not eligible for NRT designation. Other programs are more appropriate for their recognition, such as the National Scenic Byways Program: see <http://www.byways.org> or call (800) 429-9297.
- For examples of the kinds of trails that eligible, see descriptions of trails designated as NRTs in [NRT designations year by year](#).

What are the criteria for NRT designation?

- The trail must be open to public use and be designed, constructed, and maintained according to best management practices, in keeping with the use anticipated. Trails that demonstrate state-of-the-art design and management are especially encouraged to apply for NRT designation.
- The trail is in compliance with applicable land use plans and environmental laws.
- The trail will be open for public use for at least 10 consecutive years after designation.
- NRT designation must be supported by the landowner(s), public or private, whose property the trail crosses.

How do I apply for National Recreation Trail designation?

There are [two procedures](#) depending on whether the trail is on land administered by the US Department of Agriculture (typically National Forests), or on any other land.

If your trail is on federal land administered by (or associated with) the US Department of Agriculture:

- The USDA Forest Service has authority for designating NRTs on [land administered by the Department of Agriculture](#) (National Forests, National Grasslands, and National Recreation Areas) and associated lands.

NRT Designations:

- NRT designations year by year
- US Forest Service designated NRTs
- Bureau of Land Management NRTs
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service NRTs
- US Army Corps of Engineers NRTs
- National Water Trails System designation
- Featured National Recreation Trails
- Search the NRT Database

NRT application process:

- How to apply for NRT designation
- Update online trail information
- Online application for DOI trails
- Contacts

NRT Program Links

- NRT Home Page
- About NRT Program
- Featured Trails
- Photo Contest
- Annual Designations
- Application Process
- Benefits
- News
- Update Trail Info
- NRT Signs
- National Trails System
- Contacts



More Resources

- Bibliography
- Quotations
- Glossary
- Acronyms
- Tools
- Cool trail solutions
- Trailbuilding
- Wildlife and trails
- Planning
- Maintenance
- Volunteers
- Products & services



Stay up to date on legislative issues for trails, follow us on Facebook and Twitter.



LENA LAKE TRAIL IN WASHINGTON'S OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST

- See the list of [Regional Contacts](#) for NRTs for the USDA Forest Service
- See the details of the [US Forest Service designation process for NRTs](#).
- Contact the USFS National Recreation Trails Program Coordinator, Jonathan Stephens, USDA Forest Service, (202) 205-1701 - Fax (202) 205-1145 - Email: jstephens02@fs.fed.us



THE PAINTED DESERT NATIONAL RECREATION TRAIL IN THE IMPERIAL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

If your trail is on other federal land (outside the Department of Agriculture) or on state, local, or private land:

- The Secretary of the Interior is the designating official for NRT's on all other federal lands and on state, local, and private lands, and has delegated responsibility to the National Park Service for the overall administration of the NRT program under that department's jurisdiction.
- See the schedule and timeline for [Department of Interior designation process for NRTs](#).
- **Online Application Process:** Nominations for NRT designation for the Department of the Interior are done online through the NRT Database. See a [checklist of the information and documents required](#). Supporting materials, such as maps, brochures, photos, and letter of support must be in electronic format and are uploaded as part of the online submission process.
- Note that trails on state, local government, or private land (anything other than Federal) should submit a letter of support from the appropriate [State Trails Administrator/Coordinator](#). See a [Sample Letter of Support](#).
- See the list of [Regional Contacts](#) for NRTs for assistance by National Park Service staff.
- The Washington, DC contact is the Department of the Interior's NRT Coordinator at National Park Service: (202) 354-6910 or email: helen_scully@nps.gov

When can I apply for NRT designation?

National Recreation Trail applications are processed by both departments on an annual cycle.

- DOI applications must be submitted by November 1 for or the designation to be announced for the following National Trails Day (celebrated first Saturday each June).
- USDA applications MAY be sent at any time, but must be submitted by February 15 to be included in publicity with DOI designations each June.
- See the [Application Schedule](#) page for current details.

Details of National Recreation Trails in different states are on line at the [NRT State-by-state page](#) and the searchable [NRT database](#).



We frequently add NRT information, photos and maps to these pages. Send suggestions and information requests to [American Trails](#). Research additional NRTs in the [NRT database](#). Update trail/contact information by sending us a completed [update form](#) (PDF format). You may also [e-mail this information](#).

▶ **The on-line database has details on the currently designated National Recreation Trails. The NRT Program online is hosted by American Trails: www.AmericanTrails.org**

▶ The NTP Online Calendar connects you with courses, conferences, and trail-related training

▶ Promote your trail through the National Recreation Trails Program



Some of our documents are in PDF format and require free *Adobe Acrobat Reader* software.
[Download Acrobat Reader](#)



American Trails and NTP support accessibility with Section 508: [read more](#).

Better Skills for Better Trails

- Accessibility
- Management
- Planning
- Trail Building
- Backcountry Trails
- Urban Trails

TrailsTraining.net
For Professionals & Volunteers

The National Recreation Trails Program
American Trails, P.O. Box 491797, Redding, CA 96049-1797
Phone (530) 605-4395 • Fax: (530) 547-2035 •

AmericanTrails.org
The World's Largest Online Trails Resource