



from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean

Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

October 14, 2015



Orientation to “the PNT”



Designated by Congress in 2009 as one of America's 11 National Scenic Trails

1,200-mile route provides outstanding opportunities for long-distance non-motorized recreation

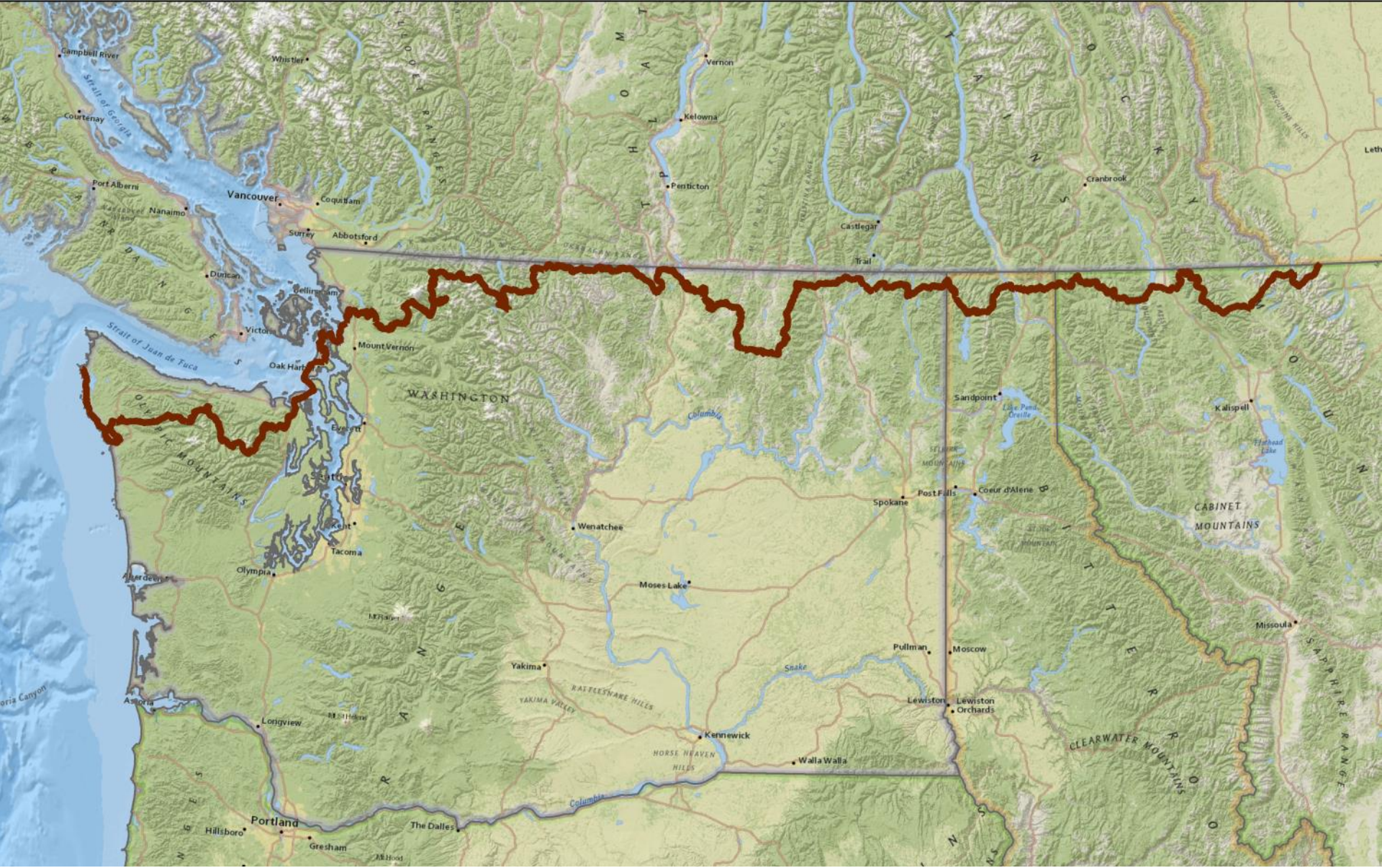
Starts at the Continental Divide: Chief Mountain in Glacier National Park, Montana

Ends at the Pacific Ocean: Cape Alava in Olympic National Park, Washington

Experience wilderness, working landscapes, and small town Main Streets



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Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail



All about the PNT

What is a National Scenic Trail?

About the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

What's happening on the PNT:

Planning

Projects & Partnerships

2015 Season Review



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What is a National Scenic Trail?



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History of National Trails

Early long-distance recreation trails: Appalachian, Pacific Crest

1966: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's **Trails for America** report recommends a series of long-distance trails across America, defined as *extended trails which have natural, scenic, or historic qualities that give them recreation-use potential of national significance.*





History of National Trails

1968: President Johnson signs the **National Trails System Act**

- Established National Scenic Trails (NSTs) and National Historic Trails (NHTs)
- Designated Appalachian and Pacific Crest as the first NSTs

Amended many times since to include 11 NSTs and 19 NHTs



National Trails System





Why we have

National Scenic Trails

Section 2(a) of the National Trails System Act:

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.



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What are National Scenic Trails

Section 3(a) of the National Trails System Act:

extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass



Section 7(c) prohibits use of motorized vehicles on NSTs














Allowable Uses of National Scenic Trails

Section 7(j) of the National Trails System Act:

Potential trail uses allowed on designated components of the national trails system may include, but are not limited to, the following: bicycling, cross-country skiing, day hiking, equestrian activities, jogging or similar fitness activities, trail biking, overnight and long-distance backpacking, snowmobiling, and surface water and underwater activities.



11 National Scenic Trails

Trail Name	Year Designated	Miles	Lead
Appalachian	1968	2,174	
Pacific Crest	1968	2,638	
Continental Divide	1978	3,100	
North Country	1980	4,600	
Ice Age	1980	1,200	
Florida	1983	1,400	
Potomac Heritage	1983	700	
Natchez Trace	1983	695	
Arizona	2009	807	
New England	2009	220	
Pacific Northwest	2009	1,200	

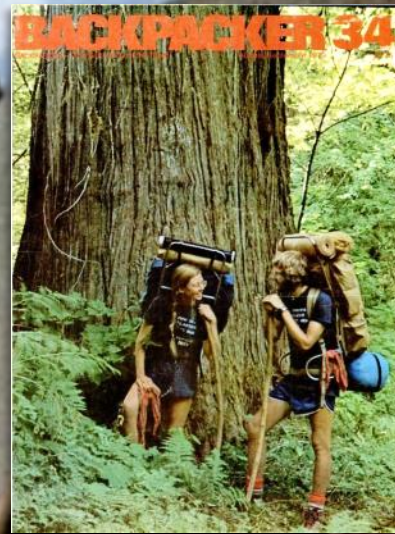
The Pacific Northwest NST and Arizona NST were designated by Congress in 2009 and are administered by the Forest Service.



About the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail



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History of the PNT

- 1970: Ron Strickland's big idea
- 1977: First thru-hike completed by Janet Garner & Rex Bakel
- 1980: Feasibility study
- 1990s: First local trail maintenance organization formed
- 2000s: Volunteers advocated for National Scenic Trail status
- 2009: Congress designated the PNT as a National Scenic Trail



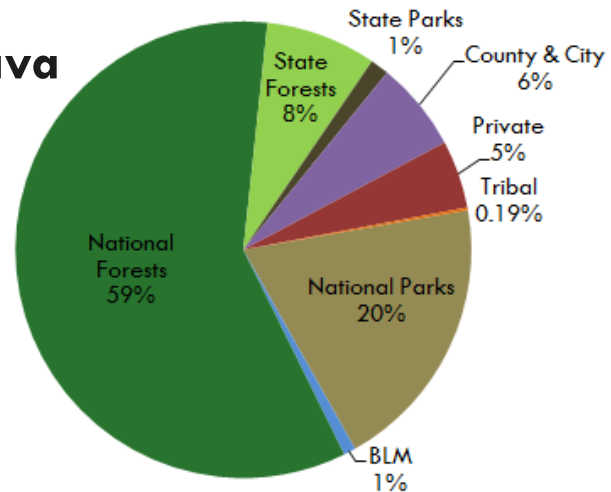
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The Congressional Route

1,200 miles from Chief Mountain to Cape Alava

- 3 states: Montana, Idaho, Washington
- 7 National Forests and 3 National Parks
- 6 Wilderness areas (300+ trail miles)
- 2 other NSTs: Continental Divide, Pacific Crest
- 3 major mountain ranges, the Columbia River, and Puget Sound



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What is our PNT niche?

“Vital link” connecting the National Trails System

East-west orientation: up into mountain ranges, down into river valleys

Crown of the Continent to the Sea: traveling like a raindrop

Diversity of lands: wilderness, working landscapes, small town Main Streets

1,200 miles: a summer-sized challenge





What NST status does:

- Directs the Forest Service to collaborate with partners to manage the PNT as one linear unit
- Provides additional resources for management of the PNT and helps improve adjacent trail systems
- Provides increased support for environmental education, youth and diversity outreach, interpretation
- Can be a valuable promotional tool for local communities



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What NST status does not do:

- Does not grant access across private lands or affect private landowner rights
- Does not prohibit motorized use on existing motorized routes
- Does not take away the decision authority of local land managers on the PNT in their area

Planning



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Comprehensive Plan

When it designated the PNNST, Congress charged the Forest Service with developing *a comprehensive plan for the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail* [National Trails System Act, Sec. 5(e)]

- Guides long-term administration and management of the trail as one unit
- “All lands” shared vision for connectivity, stewardship, and services developed with the National Park Service, BLM, other land managers
- Establishes *rights-of-way* (corridor route) published in Federal Register and *objectives and practices* (standards and guidelines) for management





Planning questions

What are the unique **nature and purposes** of the PNNST?

Congress approved the **route** in 2009—are there places it should be refined?

How wide should the **trail corridor** be, where might width vary?

How will we to **protect the trail experience** and resources?

How will we determine and monitor the **carrying capacity** of the trail?



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Nature and purposes

Section 7(c) of the National Trails System Act:

*National scenic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related public-use facilities. **Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail may be permitted ... to the extent practicable, efforts shall be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established.***

Comp Plans include **nature and purposes statement** that also identifies **trail uses** and key characteristics of trail experience



Trail route

Section 3(a) of the National Trails System Act:

*so located as to provide for **maximum outdoor recreation potential** and for the conservation and enjoyment of the **nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities** of the areas through which such trails may pass*

Congressionally designated route includes roads, gaps

Working toward **continuous, non-motorized** [Sec. 7(c)] trail route

Can relocate sections of route to achieve these requirements



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Corridor/“rights-of-way”

Section 7(a) of the National Trails System Act:

*Secretary shall select the **rights-of-way** ... and shall publish notice thereof*

In policy and practice, more than linear feature of trail tread:

*provide for ... the conservation and enjoyment of the **nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities** [Sec. 3(a)]*

Executive Order 13195 “Trails for America in the 21st Century”:

Federal agencies have duty in *protecting the **trail corridors** associated with national scenic trails ... to the to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact.*



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Trail protection plan

National Trails System Act [Sec. 5(e)] says Comp Plan must include:

- (1) specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved,*
- (2) acquisition plan for all lands to be acquired and anticipated necessary cooperative agreements for any lands not to be acquired,*
- (3) general and site-specific development plans.*

Objectives and practices will direct how we manage the trail corridor



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Carrying capacity

Trail protection plan also includes, as part of the **objectives and practices**, *an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation* [Sec. 5(e)]



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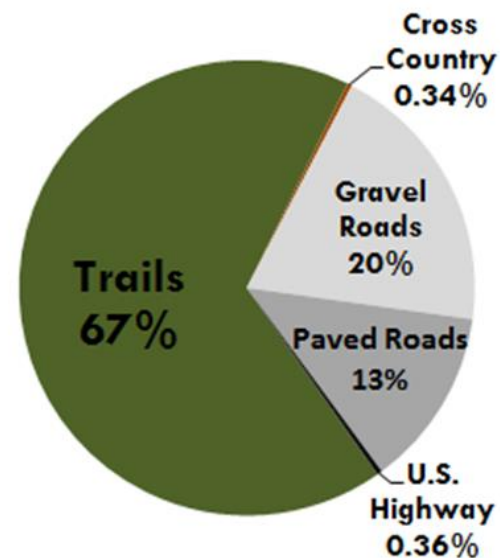


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Management challenges

To make the 1,200-mile connection, more than 400 miles of the PNT is currently on roads.

- In the context of declining budgets, we need a plan to move the PNT off roads and onto non-motorized trails
 - Took the PCT 40 years but it can be done!
- 20% of the PNT is off federal lands
- We must work with landowners to establish access agreements and a shared vision



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National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Programmatic **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** will evaluate and document the consequences of the proposed action (trail corridor and management in the Comprehensive Plan) and alternatives

For future projects like any trail construction, project-level NEPA analysis will tier from this programmatic EIS

Opportunities for public comment through meetings, mail, and email





Advisory Council

Required under National Trails System Act [Sec. 5 (d)] and compliant with the **Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)**, the Council provides recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture

*with respect to matters relating to the trail, including the selection of **rights-of-way**, standards for the erection and maintenance of **markers along the trail**, and the **administration of the trail***



Advisory Council

(comprised of citizens and officials from federal agencies and tribal, state, and local governments) provides recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture on trail route, trail uses, public values and interests along the trail corridor, and long-term vision for management of the trail

Interdisciplinary team

(comprised of Forest Service planners and specialists) writes the **Comprehensive Plan** and prepares a programmatic **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** for the Comprehensive Plan

Endangered Species Act consultation with
US Fish & Wildlife Service and NOAA

Government-to-government consultation
with **Tribes**

Public scoping meetings solicit issues for consideration in the EIS

Public comment on the Draft EIS (DEIS)

Objection period for the EIS

Forest Service Responsible Official issues a **Record of Decision (ROD)** for the EIS and **signs the Comprehensive Plan**

Comprehensive Plan is submitted to **Congress** and the trail corridor is published in the **Federal Register**



Scenery Assessment

Baseline assessment of scenery will help us protect the trail experience:

- What are the nationally significant scenic resources of the trail?
- What characterizes the different regions and landscapes along the trail?
- What is visible from the trail? What is the trail viewshed?
- Do we expect the scenery to change? How to protect key views?



Landscape architects are completing report based on summer 2015 fieldwork



Lands Inventory

Inventory of land ownership will inform trail protection options:

- How much of the trail is in federal, tribal, state, municipal, private ownership?
- Who are the private landowners that we will need to contact and work with?
- For non-federal lands, where do we have existing access agreements and where are agreements (or trail relocation) needed?



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Realty & special uses specialist is conducting GIS analysis and records search

Projects, Partnerships & Public Services



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Forest highlights

Kootenai National Forest (MT): Laying out new trail along Lake Koocanusa to connect the town of Eureka to Webb Mountain, gets PNT off busy Hwy 37

Idaho Panhandle National Forests (ID): Collaborating with neighboring Colville National Forest to maintain trails in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness

Colville National Forest (WA): Reconstructing trails in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness, assessing needs after 2015 wildfires along 15+ miles on the Kettle Crest

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (WA): Rock blasting to clear trail

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (WA): Reconstructing one mile of trail along the South Fork Nooksack River that had been washed out



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Partnerships

National Trails System Act emphasizes role of **citizen volunteers** and private trails groups in “**planning, development, maintenance, and management**”.

Partners inventory and monitor trail conditions, perform trail maintenance, provide maps and visitor information, and work with gateway communities.

In 2014, private trails groups contributed **1,053,896 volunteer hours** (valued at \$23,765,355) and **invested \$10,836,694** of private contributions in the National Trails System.



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Gateway communities

The PNT brings **outdoor recreation-based tourism** to 18 gateway communities that provide access to the trail and services for visitors

NSTs can be a catalyst for **economic development** in trail towns:

- The U.S. “outdoor economy” generates \$646 billion in direct yearly spending, supporting 6.1 million American jobs
- Hikers patronize cafes, grocery stores, laundromats, motels, resorts

The PNT improves **quality of life** for local people, strengthening local trail systems and making it easier to stay healthy and connect to the outdoors



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2015 Hiking Season

About 50 thru-hikers attempted the trail -- big increase from past years

Low snow in the Olympics and Cascades aided early starts, eastbounders

13 wildfires impacted the PNT, with about 50 miles of trail affected

PNT community building on the trail and through social media



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Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

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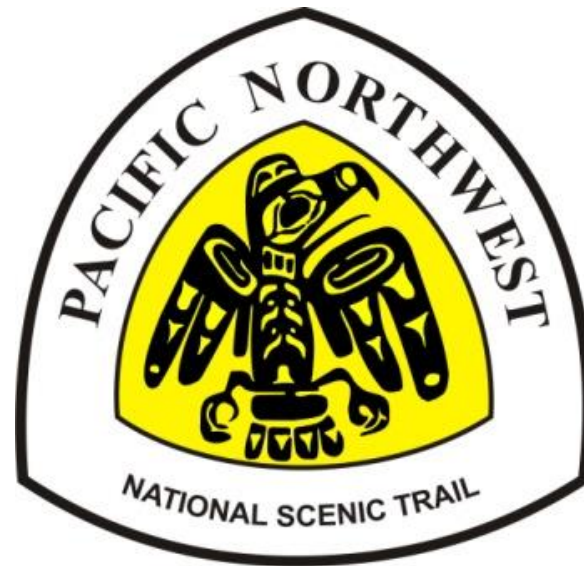
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