



from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean

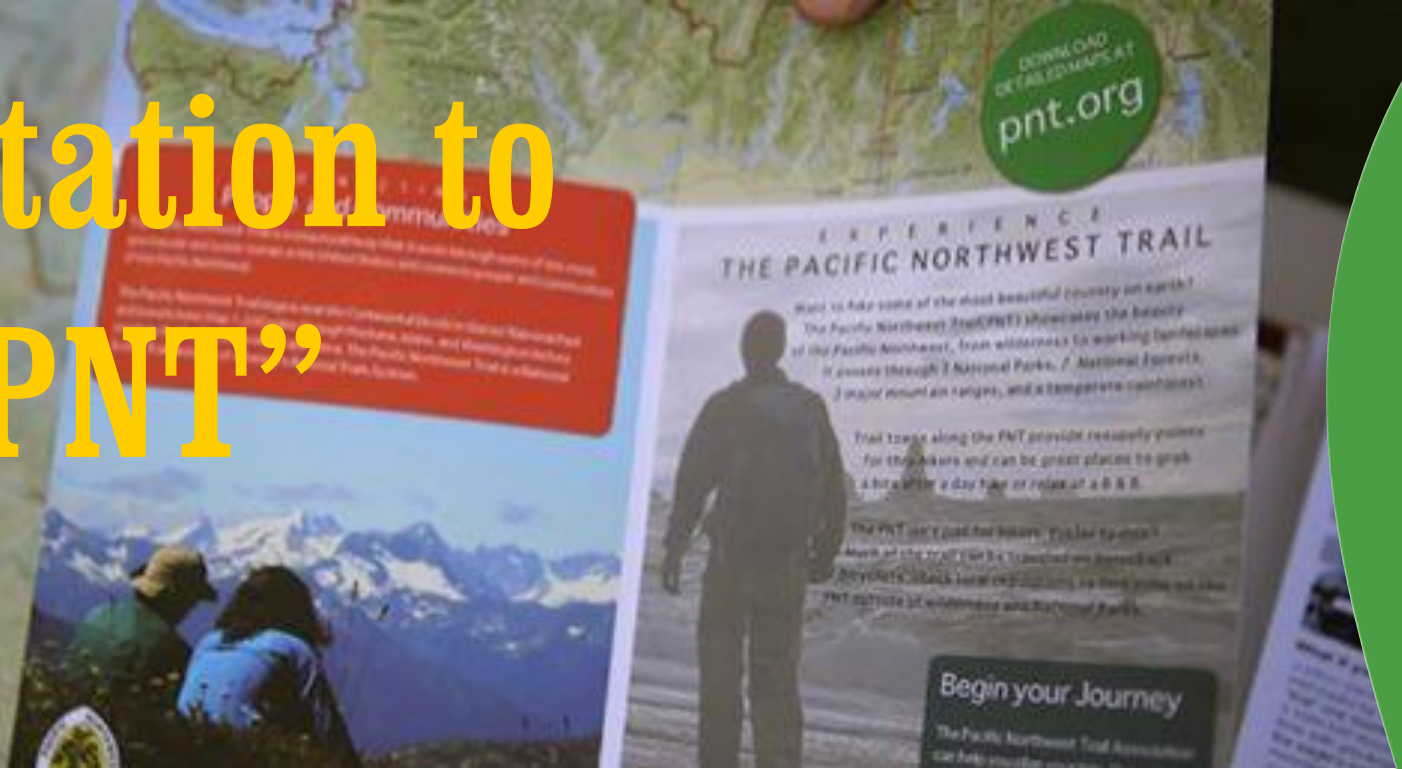
Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

May 4th, 2016



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Orientation to “the PNT”



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

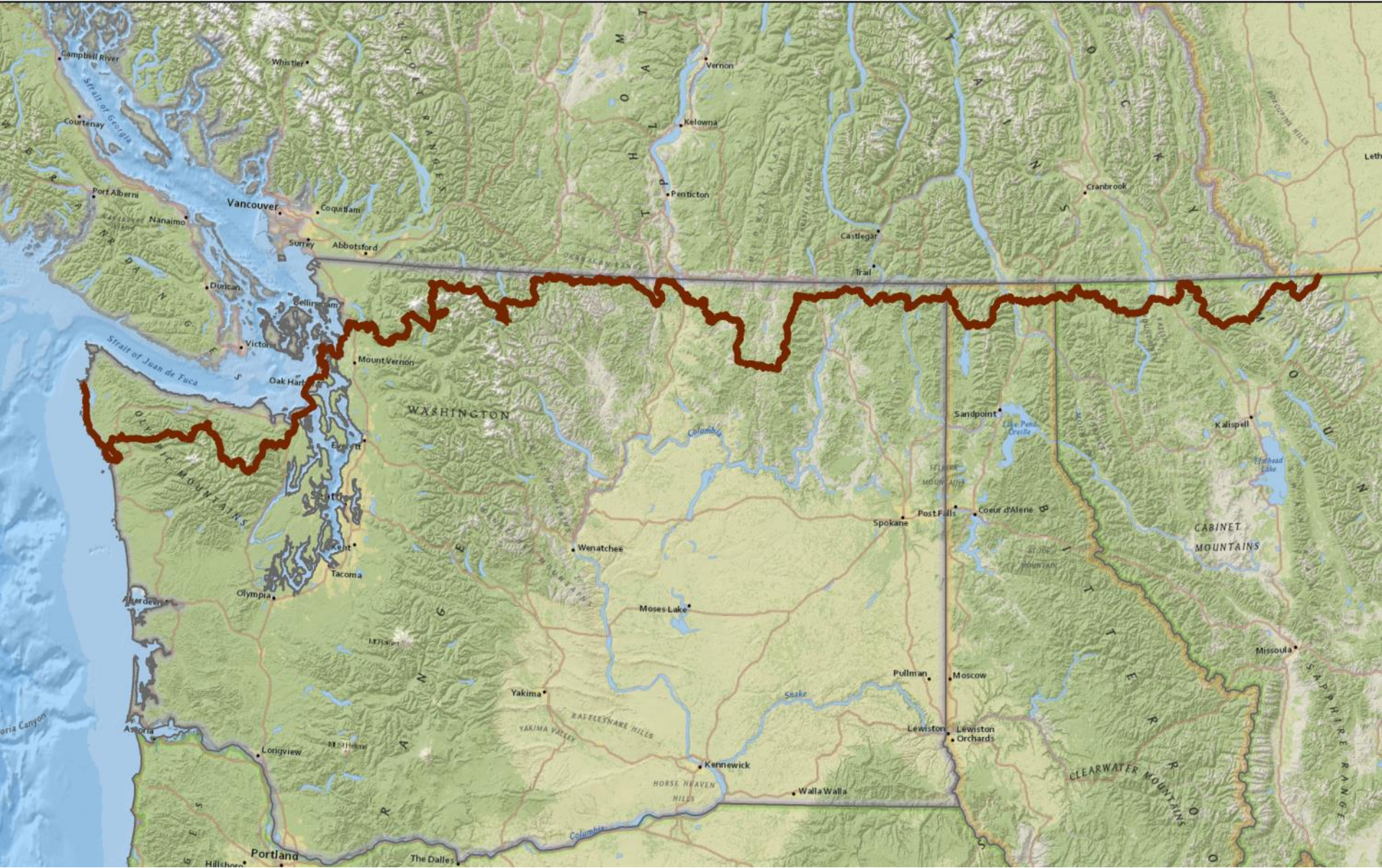
1,200-mile route provides outstanding opportunities for long-distance non-motorized recreation

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

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



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Pacific Northwest National Scenic

What is a National Scenic Trail?



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Why we have NSTs

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 NSTs?

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



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



Allowable uses of NSTs

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

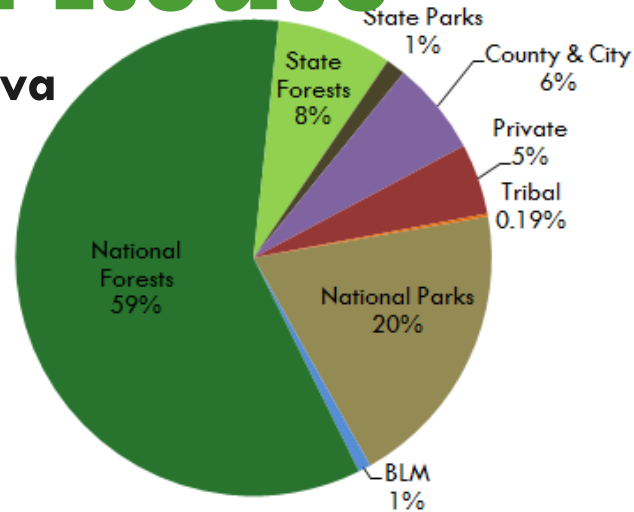
Potential trail uses allowed on designated components of the national trails system may include, but are not limited to, the following: bicycling, cross-country skiing, day hiking, equestrian activities, jogging or similar fitness activities, trail biking, overnight and long-distance backpacking, and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



The Congressional Route

1,206 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



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 relocated?

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.*





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

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

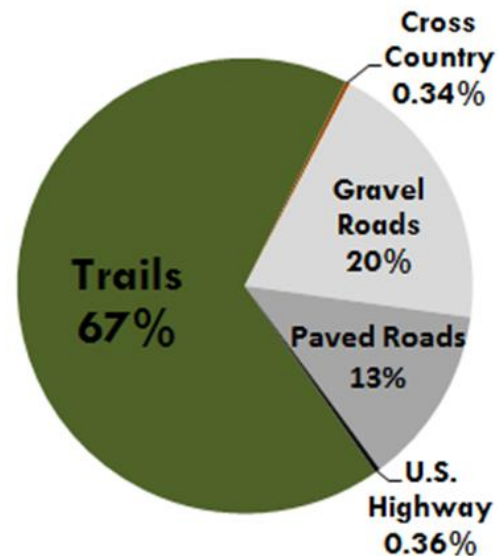


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Management challenges

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





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*



Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Update



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National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Programmatic **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** will analyze and document the effects of the proposed action (trail route, corridor, management, and uses 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





NEPA planning questions

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

Congress approved the **route** in 2009—are there places it will be relocated?

How wide will the **trail corridor** be? Which **uses** will be allowed in the corridor?

How will we to **protect the trail experience** and resources? Will this include implementing a **carrying capacity** for the trail?



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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

Forest Service **PNNST staff** write the **Comprehensive Plan**.

An **Interdisciplinary team** (comprised of Forest Service resource specialists) 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

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

The Forest Service submits the Comprehensive Plan to **Congress** and publishes the trail corridor in the **Federal Register**



Spring 2016 Update

Spring 2016: **Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)** members have been confirmed.

Summer 2016: IDT members gather data on the current resource conditions.

Fall 2016: Chief issues **Project Initiation Letter** to formally begin NEPA. IDT members develop a **preliminary proposed action** that addresses any priorities and sideboards in the Chief's letter.

Spring 2017: Preliminary proposed action is put out for **public scoping**. IDT uses comments from scoping to shape **proposed action** and **alternatives**. IDT members write existing conditions reports and begin to analyze impacts of the proposed action and each alternative.