

Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

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Background

- The Pacific Northwest Trail (“PNT”) was pioneered in the 1970s by hiker Ron Strickland as a way to walk from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean.
- In 2009, after decades of advocacy by a passionate group of citizens who came together to form the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, Congress designated the PNT as a National Scenic Trail in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act. The PNT became one of just 11 National Scenic Trails, joining the iconic Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail.
- The route of the PNT is approximately 1,200 miles. It begins at Chief Mountain Customs on the east side of Glacier National Park and ends at Cape Alava on the Pacific Ocean in Olympic National Park. Along the way, the PNT travels through 7 National Forests, 3 National Parks, BLM, state, tribal, municipal, and private lands in Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

Current Management and Trail Uses

- Congress charged the U.S. Forest Service with responsibility to administer the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail as a unit. The Forest Service does so in cooperation with federal, state, tribal, municipal, and private landowners. Local land managers retain decision authority over the lands they manage. (There is no condemnation authority for the PNT.)
- Trail uses include hiking and pack & saddle, as well as bicycling where permitted by the local land manager. (Bicycling is prohibited in designated Wilderness areas and in National Parks.) As a National Scenic Trail, the PNT is intended for non-motorized uses.
- Thru-hiking has increased in recent years. We estimate between 40-50 thru-hikers will complete the 1,200-mile journey in 2015. Thru-hikers typically start at Glacier National Park in early July and finish in 60-75 days.
- The PNT is a work in progress. It mostly connects existing trails, but in some areas where no trails exist, hikers currently must use roads (~400 miles) or travel cross-country (~ 10-15 miles.) In coming years, the Forest Service will work with local land managers to identify opportunities to move the PNT off roads and onto non-motorized trails. (Where the PNT temporarily uses open roads and motorized trails to connect the route, motorized use may continue.)

Comprehensive Plan / EIS

- The Forest Service is responsible to Congress for writing a Comprehensive Plan for the PNT. Key parts of the plan a description of the trail corridor (including any changes to the route approved by Congress in 2009), objectives and practices for protecting the trail corridor, a statement of the nature and purposes of the trail, and a plan for cooperating with local landowners to manage the trail.
- Under the National Environmental Policy Act, documentation will be a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). There will be public meetings and opportunities for public comment, as well as consultation with tribes, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and state historic preservation offices. The Forest Service will be advised by a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)-compliant Advisory Council that includes citizens and representatives of the states.
- The Comprehensive Plan/EIS should be completed in 2018..



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