



United States Department of Agriculture

National Scenic and Historic Trails Program



Forest Service

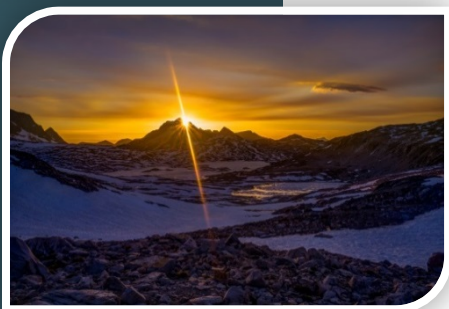
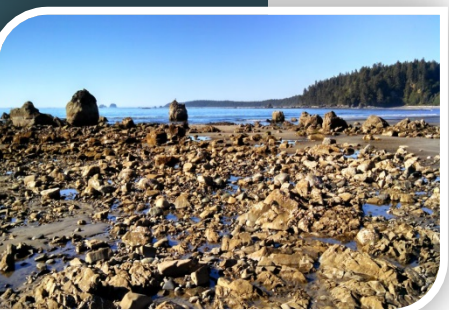
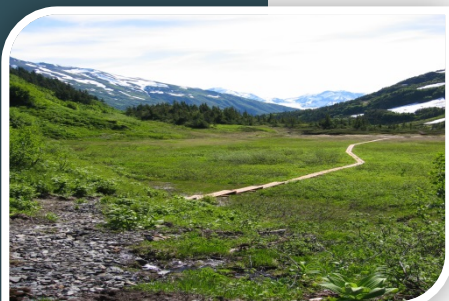


Photo 1: Iditarod Trail
- summer boardwalk.

Photo 2: Pacific
Northwest Trail –
Olympic National Park
Wilderness coast.

Photo 3: Pacific Crest
Trail – sunset at Muir
pass.

Purpose

National scenic and historic trails are routes through iconic landscapes that provide opportunities to explore and conserve the most pristine natural, scenic, cultural and historical resources of America. These premiere trails provide visitors with profound experiences that not only create lasting memories, but instill a stewardship ethic for generations to come.

This document describes the NSHT program's major policy elements and legislative requirements. Administrators and partners should use this information to guide their development of NSHT programs and identify priorities.

Introduction

The **National Trails System Act (NTSA) of 1968** created the framework for a system of National Scenic and Historic Trails. The resulting **National Trails System** connects landscapes, communities and people across large linear landscapes for recreation, conservation, and interpretation. The system reaches every region and nearly every state in the country, and crosses multiple federal, tribal, state, and local jurisdictions, as well as private lands.

National Scenic Trails (NSTs) are continuous, extended trails - typically footpaths - that provide outstanding opportunities for long-distance, non-motorized recreation. The Forest Service (FS) is the administering agency for 5 of America's 11 NSTs:

Arizona National Scenic Trail (AZT),
Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST),
Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT)

Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT)
Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT)

National Historic Trails (NHTs) are historic travel routes of national significance that provide historic appreciation, interpretive, and recreation opportunities. NHTs are not necessarily continuous on the ground; they are corridors comprised of historic sites and segments linked via marked tour routes that follow the original trail as closely as possible. The FS administers one of America's 19 NHTs, the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail (NPNHT).

The FS also manages 16 other NSHTs where they are on National Forest System lands (Table B.)

While NSHTs have many similarities to other congressionally designated areas such as Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers (WSRs), they have one key difference. Wilderness and WSRs are completely or mostly on federal lands; however NSHTs may be mostly on non-federal lands. For example, only 33% of the NPNHT is

on federal lands and only 20% on National Forest System lands. The responsibility for this level of coordination with tribes, states, local governments and private landowners is unique to NSHTs.

In addition, it is important to note that like WSRs, NSHTs are not just the trail tread but include a **corridor** and the associated natural, recreational and cultural resources that are protected by NSHT designation. Corridors are managed in accordance with the nature and purposes for the trail, and are identified in forest plans with associated standards and guidelines.

National Recreation Trails (NRTs) are also identified in the NSTA. The FS manages or administers over 370 NRTs, which are designated by regional foresters rather than Congress. Direction for these trails is found in FS directives rather than legislation.

Administering Agency vs. Managing Agency Responsibilities

The **administering agency** is responsible for administration of the entire length of each NSHT as one unit. The **managing agency** is the agency, landowner or interest with the authority and/or responsibility for decision making for lands under its jurisdiction.

Administering agency responsibilities involve trail-wide coordination, guidance, technical assistance, and consultation with National Trail managers who have physical site management responsibility. All responsibilities for meeting base program components fall to the administering agency. Table A lists all the NSHTs administered by the Forest Service by Region. Table B lists all the NSHT's where the FS acts as managing agency, and not the lead administering agency.

Table A: FS-Administered (Lead) National Scenic and Historic Trails

National Trail Name	Lead FS Region	Other Regions Managing Trail
Arizona National Scenic Trail	R3	None
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail	R2	R1, R3, R4
Florida National Scenic Trail	R8	None
Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail	R5	R4, R6
Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail	R6	R1
Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail	R1	R2, R4, R6

The National Scenic and Historic Trail program directives may be found in FSM 2353.43. National Recreation Trail program directives are located in FSM 2353.5



Table B: FS Managed (Non-Lead) National Scenic and Historic Trails

National Trail Name	Lead Agency	FS Regions Managing Trail
California National Historic Trail	NPS	R4, R5, R6
El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail	NPS	R8
Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail	NPS	R5
Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail	NPS	R1, R6, R9
Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail	NPS	R4
Oregon National Historic Trail	NPS	R4, R6
Pony Express National Historic Trail	NPS	R4, R5
Appalachian National Scenic Trail	NPS	R8, R9
North Country National Scenic Trail	NPS	R1, R9
Santa Fe National Historic Trail	NPS	R2, R3
Trail of Tears National Historic Trail	NPS	R8, R9
Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail	NPS	R8
Ice Age National Scenic Trail	NPS	R9
El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHT	BLM & NPS	R3
Old Spanish National Historic Trail	BLM & NPS	R2, R3, R4, R5
Iditarod National Historic Trail	BLM & NPS	R10

Forest Service National Scenic and Historic Trails*



* Map shows entire trail length, rather than just the FS administered or managed portions.

FS Administered NSHTs		FS Managed NSHTs	
1	Arizona NST	7	Appalachian NST
2	Continental Divide NST	8	California NHT
3	Florida NST	9	El Camino Real De Tierra Adentro NHT
4	Nez Perce (Nee Me-Poo) NHT	10	El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT
5	Pacific Crest NST	11	Ice Age NST
6	Pacific Northwest NST	12	Iditarod NHT
		13	Juan Batista de Anza NHT
		14	Lewis and Clark NHT
		15	Mormon Pioneer NHT
		16	North Country NST
		17	Old Spanish NHT
		18	Oregon NHT
		19	Overmountain Victory NHT
		20	Pony Express NHT
		21	Santa Fe NHT
		22	Trail of Tears NHT



Meeting Legislative Requirements:

Base Program Components for FS-administered NSHTs

National Scenic and Historic Trails are congressionally designated areas. As such, these special places have specific legislative requirements that are broader than typical trail construction and maintenance activities on National Forest System trails, and go beyond the Forest Service Manual, Handbook, and program direction for trails. These legislative requirements, particularly the requirement for volunteer engagement and the strength of our partnerships with volunteer organizations, are unique to NSHT programs and form a core component of their administration.

For Both NSTs and NHTs:

- **Advisory Council** – A FACA-compliant advisory council is generally required within one year of designation.
 - **NSTA Sec. 5(d):** The advisory council will have a ten-year term. The Secretary of the administering agency shall consult with the council on matters relating to the trail, including selection of rights-of-way, standards for the erection and maintenance of markers along the trail, and administration of the trail.
- **Comprehensive Plan** – Generally within two fiscal years of designation a Comprehensive Plan should be written which outlines the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail including carrying capacity.
 - **NSTA Sec. 5 (e & f).** This plan includes, but is not limited to management objectives and practices; agreements; carrying capacity for the trail and plan for its implementation; acquisition and protection plan; and general and site-specific development plans.
 - The effective implementation of this plan necessitates on-going involvement in Forest Plan revisions, project NEPA compliance, both on and off NFS lands, and other state, county level and local level comprehensive plans, to ensure that the trail is protected across land management boundaries.
- **Rights-of-Way /Trail Corridor** – The trail corridor must be selected, with the advice and assistance of landowners, land managers, and others concerned, and published in the *Federal Register*.

The National Trails System was created by the National Trails System Act, P.L. 90-543,¹ which became law October 2, 1968. The Act created a series of national trails "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," and was last amended in 2009 with the designation of the Arizona and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trails.

¹<http://www.nps.gov/nts/legislation.html>

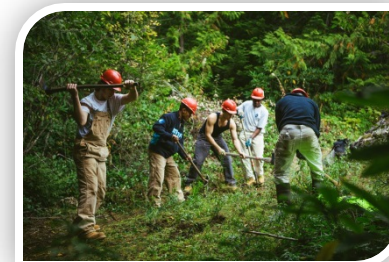


Photo 1: Pacific Northwest Trail – Olympic National Forest youth crew volunteers.

Photo 2: Pacific Crest Trail – volunteers repair trail on a rocky mountainside.

- **NSTA Sec. 7(a)(2).** The Secretary shall select the rights-of-way. Legislative history indicates that the term “rights-of-way” is intended to mean *trail corridor* rather than legal rights and privileges typically associated with the term. Some NSHTs have authority to acquire lands within the corridor for long term trail protection.
- NSHTs should have a designated corridor established of sufficient width to encompass the resources, qualities, values and associated settings and the primary use or uses that are present or to be restored.
- **Cooperation to Provide and Protect the Trail Corridor** – Due to the sheer length of NSHTs, ranging from hundreds to thousands of miles, coordinating management can include upwards of 30 federal, state, local and private organizations across 70 or more management units, and a variety of stewardship groups, which demonstrates the need for a strong program focus on partnerships and entails substantial grants and agreements administration responsibilities. These lengthy corridors are also susceptible to development pressure, including energy and transmission lines, changing recreation uses, and increasing use numbers which requires additional partner cooperation for effective trail management and long term protection.
 - **Interagency and intergovernmental cooperation (Sec. 7 (d) (h)** –The Secretary shall consult with the heads of all other affected tribal, state and federal agencies in administering and managing the trail. (Sec. 7 (a)(1)(A)) The administering agency shall provide for the development and maintenance of trails on federal lands. (Sec. 7 (h)) The Secretary shall encourage state governments to enter into cooperative agreements to provide the trail right-of-way on state lands.
 - **Landowner and local community engagement (Sec. 7 (d) (h)** – Local governments and private landowners are also encouraged to enter into cooperative agreements to provide the trail right-of-way on municipal and private lands.
- **Volunteer Stewardship** – Congress recognized the valuable contributions that volunteers and non-profit groups make in the development of the National Trail System and emphasized their continued involvement in future trail management.
 - **Volunteer assistance in all steps (Sec 11)** – Volunteers and volunteer organizations are encouraged to be involved in planning, developing, constructing, maintaining, and managing trails.
 - For NSHTs, much of our volunteer engagement is through our trail associations, the non-profit partner group or groups specific to each NSHT (i.e., Arizona Trail Association, Pacific Crest Trail Association, etc.). These partners assist us with planning and on-the-ground management, recruit and train volunteers, run volunteer and youth crews to perform much of the maintenance on our trails, provide visitor education

Cooperative agreements with both federal and non-federal partners are a critical part of managing NSHTs. For more information about these partnership tools use the [Grants & Agreements Quick Guide](#)² for National Forest System Program Managers.

²http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/aqm/grants/static/GA_Fin_al_04April_2011.pdf

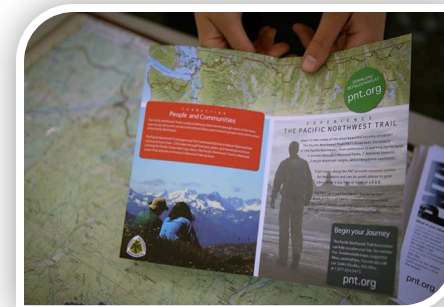


Many of the NSHTs have supporting non-profit organizations dedicated to engaging volunteer stewards in the long term maintenance and management of the trail. Sponsored volunteer agreements are another important tool for engaging volunteer partners. For more information, use the [Volunteers in the Forest Service: A Coordinator's Desk Guide](#)³

³<http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf09672814/pdf09672814dpi72pt01.pdf>

and information services, and promote the trail. These trail associations coordinate through the Partnership for the National Trails System (www.pnts.org), a coalition that promotes and advocates for NSHTs and conducts trainings and policy workshops for partners and agency staff.

- In addition, NSHTs work with many of the groups that partner with the FS on National Forest System Trails, such as recreation groups, outdoor environmental education, conservation and stewardship organizations. Our shared work is achieved through MOUs and Challenge Cost-Share agreements with stewardship non-profit organizations and sponsored volunteer agreements.
- Our partners assist the FS in engaging a diverse community of adult and youth volunteers. In 2013, the National Trail System accounted for **1,144,407 volunteer hours valued at \$25,337,171**.
- **Visitor Information and Education** – Each long distance national trail has its own nature and purposes, which is reflected in the wide variety of partner organizations that support these trails. The public views each trail as a unique resource with many users planning long distance travel across a mix of land ownership. Providing information on how to access and utilize the trail, trail conditions, closures (temporary due to fire/seasonal restrictions), maps and guidebooks, and permits needed is an agency responsibility that may be shared with the partner organizations.
 - Signage and interpretation for NSHT's require considerable coordination within and across agencies to implement and should be considered part of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Cultural and Historic Requirements** – The historic and cultural settings are the geographic extent of the historic and/or cultural landscape



Photos: 1- Visitor Information Brochure for PNTA. 2- Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail - Big Hole National Battlefield.

elements that influence the actual and vicarious trail experiences that are important for all national trails. Additional requirements for National Historic Trails include consideration of:

- a) the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance to maximize vicarious experiences and provide resource protection,
 - b) the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment and
 - c) the Federal Protection Components of a historic trail on federally owned lands which meet national historic trail criteria established in the NTSA, including high potential historic sites and high potential route segments.
- **Trail Administrator** – For each National Trail, an official is identified who will be responsible for administration of the trail and related resources (see “administering agency” above.) The National Trail shall provide trail-wide leadership and guidance for trail-wide stewardship responsibilities.








For National Historic Trails Only:

- Comprehensive Plan must identify “high potential historic sites and high potential route segments” and select the federal protection components. (Sec. 5 (f) (3))
- 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 (along with high potential historic sites and high potential route segments in the case of national historic trails. (Sec. 5 (f) (1))
- The anticipated impact of public outdoor recreation use on the preservation of a proposed national historic trail and its related historic and archeological features and settings, including the measures proposed to ensure evaluation and preservation of the values that contribute to their national historic significance. (Sec. 5 (b) (10))
- **Auto Tour Routes:** National historic trail segments may be marked to facilitate retracement of the historic route, and where a national historic trail parallels an existing public road, such road may be marked to commemorate the historic route. (Sec. 7 (c))
- **Site Certification:** Certify other lands as protected segments of a historic trail if such segments meet the national historic trail criteria. (Sec .3 (a) (3))



Photo: Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail interpretive sign, Chief Joseph Scenic Byway.

Table C: Status of Major Legislative Required Base Program Components for FS - NSHTs

NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL SYSTEM 	Pacific Crest Trail NST	Continental Divide Trail NST	Florida NST	Nez Perce NHT	Arizona NST	Pacific Northwest NST
						
Advisory Council	1970-1989	1978-1985	1984-1994	Established 1989-1991	Charter established, currently collecting applications	Charter established, currently collecting applications
Comprehensive Plan	Completed 1982	Completed 1985. Revised 2009	Completed 1986	Completed 10/1990. Revision underway	Pre-NEPA public engagement 2011-12. Beginning 2014	Beginning 2014
Rights-of- way / Corridor selection	1973	No	Corridor selection identified in 1986 Comp Plan	No*	No	No
Acquisition plan development	Ongoing	Ongoing	2002	No* Some agreements in place	No specific plan but several agreements are established	Ongoing
Inventory of high potential historic sites and routes	NA	NA	NA	Some identified in 1990 CP*	NA	NA
Inventory significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing locally*	In progress	Ongoing at local level
Identify and protect historic remnants and artifacts	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing locally*	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level
Consult with appropriate state and local agencies in the planning and development of the trail AND Federally recognized tribes on all trail and auto tour route actions including interpretive and educational materials.	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).	On-going through formal certification agreements and FNST Coalition	Ongoing project specific*	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).

*Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT – Items to be included or expanded in the Comprehensive Plan revision

Appendices

Appendix A: National Scenic & Historic Trails Budget

Figure 1 Net to Regions and NSHTs 11

Figure 2 Percent of Net Region CMTL to NSHTs 11

Figure 3 National Scenic and Historic Trail Allocation 12

Figure 4 Allocations to Region for Non-lead "Other Trails" 12

Appendix B: Administering vs. Agencies 14

Appendix A: National Scenic and Historic Trails Budget

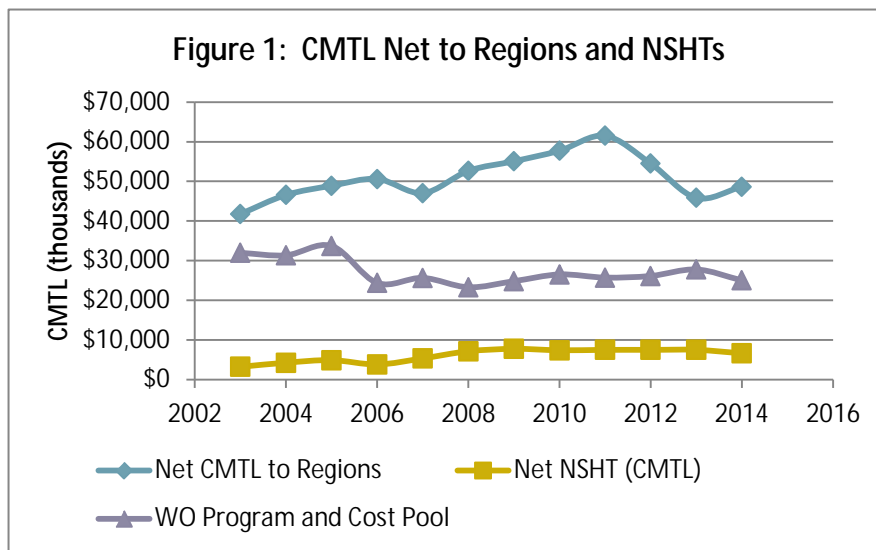
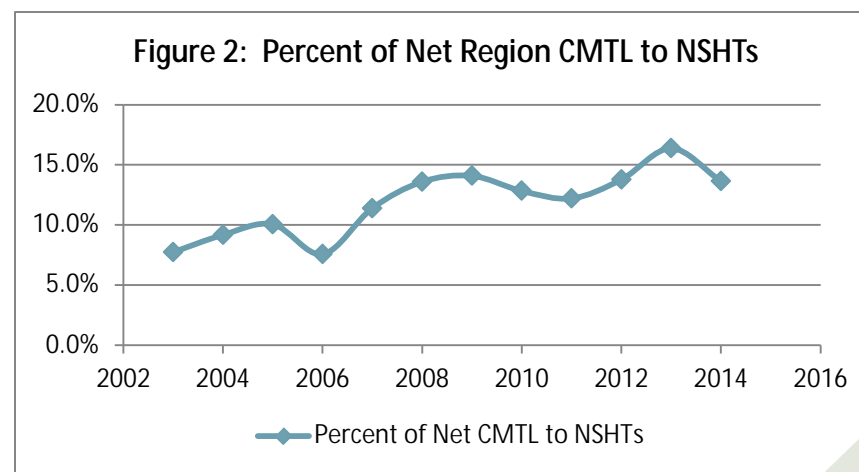


Figure 1.

This figure illustrates the total CMTL allocation to regions between FY03 and FY14 while highlighting the portion allocated to National Scenic and Historic Trail programs and the WO program and cost pool, which includes the National Trails program. The net CMTL allocation to regions has ranged from approximately \$41 million in FY13 to a peak \$61 million in 2011, reducing to \$49 million in FY14. The National Trails, WO and Cost Pool programs received a peak of \$32 million in FY03, and remained closer to \$25 million between FY10 and FY14. Finally, the NSHT allocation within CMTL has ranged from \$3.2 million in FY13 to a peak of \$7.75 million in FY11. The bulk of the responsibilities described in this paper are funded from this portion of CMTL.

Figure 2.

The National Scenic and Historic Trail allocation has ranged from a total of 7.7% in FY03 to a peak of 16.4% in FY13 of the overall CMTL funding to regions.



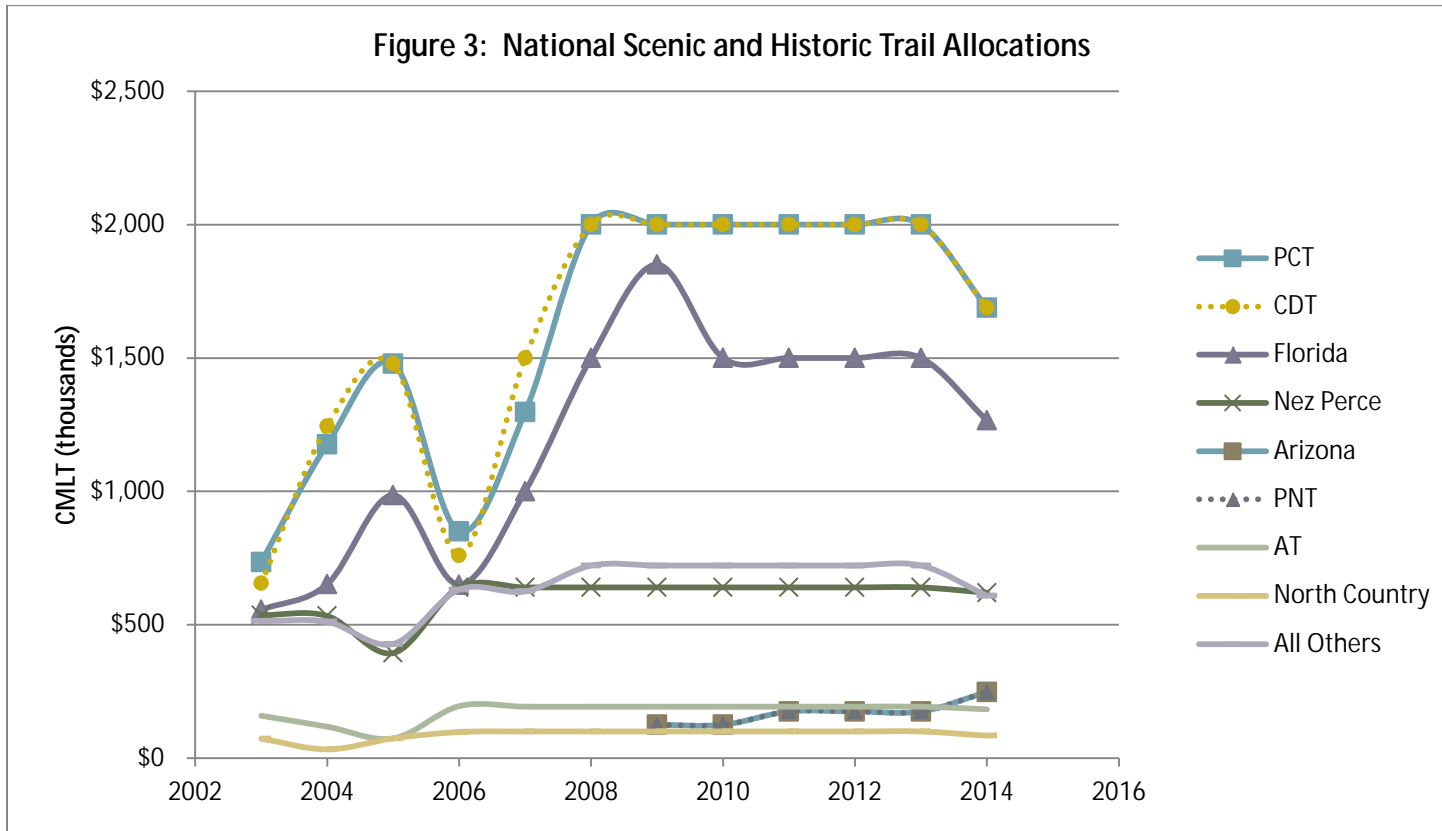


Figure 3.

Between FY03 and FY08, the FS administered trails included the Pacific Crest NST, Continental Divide NST, Florida NST, and Nez Perce NHT. The funding allocation between the FS managed trails was determined by congressional earmarks between FY1996 and FY2010. The Arizona and Pacific Northwest NST's were added to the National Trail System in FY09 and saw some funding allocated for the program administrator and planning costs reaching a peak of \$248,000 in FY14 but did not benefit from historical congressional earmarks to allocate sufficient program funding.

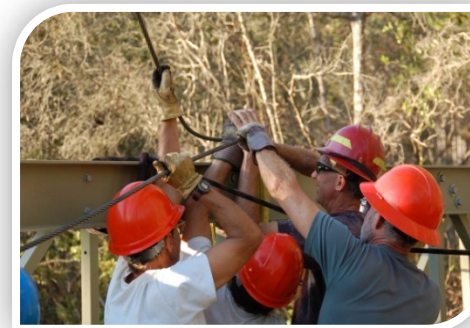


Photo: Florida National Scenic Trail-volunteers building a bridge.



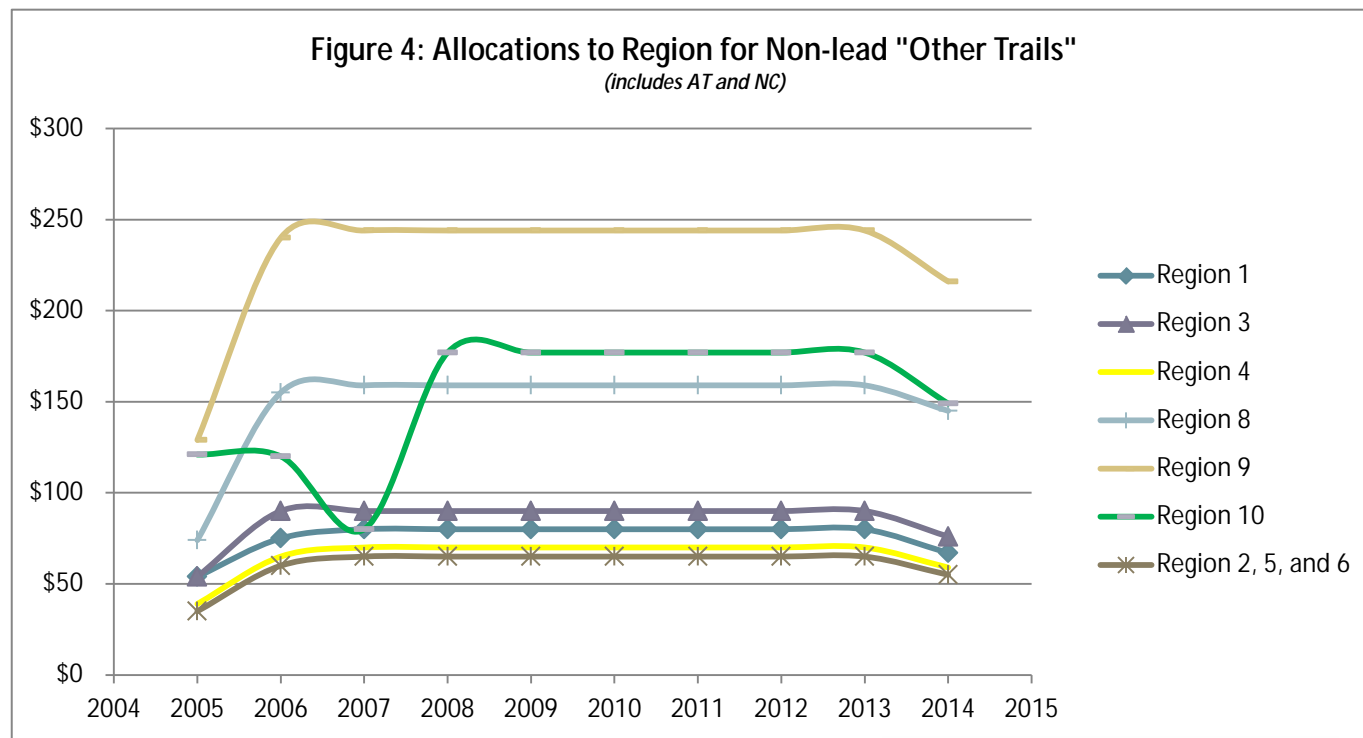


Figure 4.

Figure shows the total CMTL-NSHT allocation to NSTs for which the Forest Service is not the lead administrator. These figures have remained relatively stable by region.



Photo: Arizona Scenic Trail

Appendix B: Administering vs. Managing Agencies

The **administering agency** is responsible for administration of the entire length of each NSHT as one unit, in coordination with federal agencies, tribes, state and local governments, private landowners, and partners. Trailwide responsibility for administration is assigned to the FS when the Department of Agriculture is named as the responsible lead in National Trail-specific legislation. (For the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Land Management or National Park Service may be administering agencies.)

The administering responsibility involves:

- meeting NTSA legislative requirements,
- providing standards, technical assistance, and
- coordination with National Trail managers who have physical site management responsibility.

NSHT administration includes leadership in the development of the statutorily required Comprehensive Plan, which should provide strategic direction for National Trail administration and management, including identification of the nature and purposes of the NSHT and selection of the National Trail rights-of-way. Additional responsibilities of the administering agency may be found in the National Trail System Act and are described in the “base program components” section of this paper.

For segments of the trail that lie outside the jurisdiction of the administering agency (i.e., off the National Forest System), the National Trail manager is the agency, landowner, or interest with the authority and/or responsibility for decision making for lands under its jurisdiction. For example, the FS administers the Pacific Northwest Trail, which travels through Glacier National Park (GNP) where the National Park Service is the **managing agency** and the local unit, GNP, has physical site management responsibility. Federal managing agencies are expected to cooperate with the administering agency to implement the Comprehensive Plan, incorporate the National Trail into planning, and manage the physical site of the trail.



Photo: Pacific Northwest Trail sign, Upper Swift Creek.



Photo: Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail - Big Hole National Battlefield.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.