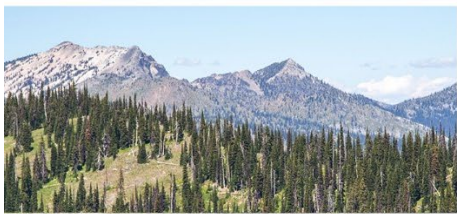




Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan



Cover photo: Clockwise from upper left: Pacific Ocean, Olympic National Park, Washington; Ten Lakes Scenic Area, Kootenai National Forest, Montana; Bowman Lake, Glacier National Park, Montana; Ross Lake National Recreation Area, North Cascades National Park Complex, Washington; Salmo-Priest Wilderness, Colville National Forest, Washington.

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Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan

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Portland, Oregon

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "M".

RANDY MOORE
Chief

December 12, 2023

Date

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Executive Summary

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan is a long-term programmatic plan that fulfills the legislative requirements described in Section 5(e) of the National Trails System Act (Pub.L. 90-543, as amended) (NTSA) (see table 1). This plan is designed to provide guidance and recommendations for future actions that will be pursued through agency and unit-specific land and resource management plans; project-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses; and agreements with landowners, land managers, non-governmental organizations, and volunteers. The comprehensive plan does not authorize site-specific prohibitions or activities.

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) is early in its life and, like other early national scenic trails, much more work is needed to complete the optimal route from end to end.

The PNT crosses lands under the jurisdiction of multiple federal, state, and local agencies, as well as tribal lands (on the Colville Reservation and Swinomish Reservation) and private lands. The goal of the comprehensive plan is to provide a uniform approach to the administration and management of the PNT, while also recognizing the differences in management between the jurisdictions that make them unique and lends diversity to the recreation opportunities the trail provides. The comprehensive plan guides the many entities involved in trail administration and management on how to provide for the “Nature and Purposes” ([chapter 3](#)) and protect the “Trail Values” for which the trail was designated through their land management plans, projects, operations and maintenance, and other activities.

This comprehensive plan identifies that the **primary uses** of the PNT are (1) hiking with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking and (2) pack and saddle stock use. More information on these uses is found in chapter 3 - [Trail Values](#).

The “Nature and Purposes” statements for the PNT were developed by drawing from the basic intent of the National Trails System Act, subsequent executive orders, elements of legislative history, public sensing, and input from the PNT Advisory Council. These statements are found in [chapter 3](#) where PNT trail values are described. The Act does not emphasize the importance of tribal treaty rights, reserved rights, and traditional uses in planning for national scenic trails in a manner that is necessary in the Pacific Northwest. Therefore, the comprehensive plan has featured these concepts in the PNT’s nature and purposes statement and recommends development of trail use monitoring for local managers and their partners to accomplish.

Roles and Responsibilities

Congress identified the Secretary of Agriculture as responsible for administering the PNT. The Secretary has delegated most administrative responsibilities to the Chief of the Forest Service, including the responsibility to approve the comprehensive plan to meet the requirements in the National Trails System Act, Section 5(e) (see table 1). The Chief has delegated to the Regional Forester of the Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) responsibility to prepare the comprehensive plan (see [chapter 2](#)). The Chief of the Forest Service is responsible for approving and submitting this comprehensive plan to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of

Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)). Forest Supervisors would be responsible for initiating NEPA analyses for trail-related forest-level projects on National Forest System lands to determine potential effects and consider any necessary mitigation measures.

In addition to the Forest Service other federal agencies, tribes, state, county, local governments, and private landowners will also have roles and responsibilities. Collaborative management calls for everyone to work together to manage the lands through which the trail crosses.

Collaborative Management Model

A unique cornerstone of the National Trails System Act is collaborative management among the mosaic of public and private interests relevant to long-distance trails and recognition of the contributions made by volunteers and private, nonprofit organizations who plan, develop, manage, and maintain the nation's trails. As the lead administrator for the PNT, the Forest Service works collaboratively with many non-governmental partners, and local, state, federal, and tribal governments with land management responsibilities. The various managing agencies and landowners develop and manage segments of the PNT on lands under their jurisdiction unless management authority has been conveyed elsewhere through agreement. Trail managers should manage the PNT to provide for its nature and purposes and other trail values ([chapter 3](#)).

Trail Location

After the PNT was designated in 2009, the Forest Service coordinated with managing agencies and partner organizations to match the legislative map to the actual trails, roads, and cross-country routes on the ground that comprise the PNT as designated by Congress. This is referred to as the congressionally designated route and can be reviewed in [chapter 4](#), [appendix B](#), and [appendix C](#). That effort identified some locations that the public cannot access due to private property, security concerns, or other restrictions. This leaves several breaks or “gaps” in the trail route that need to be addressed through trail relocations ([chapter 4](#)) or implementation of the land acquisition and protection plan ([appendix D](#)), or both.

Chapter 4 introduces the concepts of the [national trail planning corridor](#) and [national trail management corridor](#). In the context of the National Trails System Act, the national trail right-of-way is the area selected for the general location of a national scenic trail or national historic trail. Throughout this comprehensive plan, and in implementation of the plan, the term **national trail planning corridor** will be used instead of “right-of-way.”

The recommended national trail planning corridor for the PNT is generally a minimum of one mile in width (0.5 miles on either side of the trail's congressionally designated route). The minimum width is based on the Forest Service's Scenery Management System ([chapter 5](#)) and includes the immediate foreground and foreground distance zones as the minimum area that should be included.

The national trail planning corridor and the national trail management corridor are related but distinct concepts. The **national trail management corridor** for a section of a national scenic trail or national historic trail is established by the Federal managing agency through its land

management planning process and policies. A corridor width greater than the minimum of one mile wide could be selected through the land management planning process to protect the relevant scenic resources in the middle ground and background for that area.

Trail relocations must be based on the results of an “optimal location review” process outlined in [chapter 4](#). The purpose of the optimal location review is to identify the trail location that best provides for the PNT’s nature and purposes into the future and satisfies other requirements of the National Trails System Act. The optimal location review has been used successfully to guide the development of other national scenic trails, such as the Continental Divide Trail and Pacific Crest Trail.

Objectives and Practices for Trail Management

[Chapter 5](#) addresses several of the National Trails System Act requirements related to “specific objectives and practices to be observed in management” of the PNT. This includes trail-wide objectives, desired conditions and management practices, and several items that are more fully covered in the appendices such as, the acquisition and protection plan ([appendix D](#)), carrying capacity ([appendix E](#)) which includes limiting factors, and an adaptive management section that relies on monitoring and thresholds for managing visitor use and trail conditions ([appendix F](#)). Any activities identified by triggers within the thresholds will follow Federal and State laws and regulations, including, where applicable, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, land management plan direction, and additional Tribal and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultations.

Implementation and Monitoring

[Chapter 6](#) provides context for implementation of the plan. It emphasizes the need for collaboration across ownerships and managing agencies to implement the general and site-specific development plans outlined in [chapter 5](#), adaptive management and monitoring of visitor use and trail conditions ([appendix F](#)), and recommended priority actions that may be undertaken within the first five years of the comprehensive plan’s adoption ([appendix G](#)). The adaptive management toolbox in [appendix F](#) is intended to aid monitoring efforts so that trail management can respond to changes over time. The specific timing for implementation of these actions will depend on subsequent coordination between the Forest Service, the managing agencies, and relevant partner organizations. For all these actions, the Forest Service and other federal and state managing agencies should undertake consultation and collaboration with affected tribal nations and seek to incorporate tribal expertise and indigenous knowledge.

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How to Use this Comprehensive Plan

This comprehensive plan addresses requirements outlined in Section 5 (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)) of the National Trails System Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-543, as amended) (NTSA) for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT).

Table 1. Required items in a national scenic trail comprehensive plan.

Required components	Location in comprehensive plan	National Trails System Act Reference
"...specific objectives...to be observed in the management of the trail..."	chapter 5	SEC. 5(e)(1) [16USC1244]
"specific...practices to be observed in the management of the trail..."	chapter 5	SEC. 5(e)(1) [16USC1244]
"identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved"	chapter 3	SEC. 5(e)(1) [16USC1244]
"...details of any anticipated cooperative agreements to be consummated with other entities..."	chapter 6	SEC. 5(e)(1) [16USC1244]
"...detailed explanation of anticipated necessary cooperative agreements for any lands not to be acquired..."	chapter 6	SEC. 5(e)(2) [16USC1244]
"...an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation..."	chapter 5 and chapter 6	SEC. 5(e)(1) [16USC1244]
"...an acquisition or protection plan, by fiscal year for all lands to be acquired by fee title or lesser interest."	chapter 5 appendix D and appendix G	SEC. 5(e)(2) [16USC1244]
"...general...development plans including anticipated costs..."	chapter 5 and chapter 6	SEC. 5(e)(3) [16USC1244]
"...site-specific development plans including anticipated costs..."	chapter 6 and appendix G	SEC. 5(e)(3) [16USC1244]

Successful implementation of this plan will require consultation, coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and partnership among the many non-governmental organizations and volunteers; federal, tribal, state, county, and municipal government agencies; tribes; private landowners; and gateway communities involved with the PNT and the lands along the PNT.

As a general convention for the PNT in this comprehensive plan and elsewhere, information tied to locations along the trail is ordered from east to west.

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Chapter 1. Background and Planning Framework

About this Comprehensive Plan

This document is a comprehensive plan for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (Pacific Northwest Trail or PNT). It is a long-term programmatic plan that fulfills the legislative requirements for a national scenic trail described in Section 5(e) of the National Trails System Act (Pub.L. 90-543, as amended) (see table 1). This plan is designed to provide guidance and recommendations for future actions that will be pursued through agency and unit-specific land and resource management plans; project-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses; and agreements with landowners, land managers, non-governmental organizations, and volunteers. The comprehensive plan does not authorize site-specific prohibitions or activities.

About the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

The PNT is a pathway of approximately 1,200 miles that travels through some of the most spectacular and scenic terrain in the United States, connecting the diverse landscapes and communities of the Northwest (inclusive of portions of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest regions). Beginning near the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park, the PNT travels through Montana, Idaho, and Washington before reaching its western terminus at the Pacific Ocean near Cape Alava in Olympic National Park.

The PNT provides a vital link in the National Trails System by connecting and sharing trail tread with both the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (Pacific Crest Trail) and Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (Continental Divide Trail). In contrast to these other long-distance trails, which follow prominent north-south oriented mountain ranges, the PNT travels east-west, crossing seven mountain ranges and numerous valleys. Along its path, the PNT goes through three national parks, seven national forests, six wilderness areas, a wild and scenic river, a national estuarine research reserve, several state parks, rural working landscapes, and small-town main streets. This long-distance, nonmotorized trail showcases the Northwest's diverse geology, vegetation, wildlife, land use patterns, and cultures, providing unparalleled opportunities for hikers as well as equestrians, mountain bikers, and other trail users.

First proposed in the early 1970s, the PNT was designated by Congress as one of America's 11 national scenic trails through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (Pub.L. 111-11), which amended the National Trails System Act. This authorizing legislation identifies:

a trail of approximately 1,200 miles, extending from the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park, Montana, to the Pacific Ocean Coast in Olympic National Park, Washington, following the route depicted on the map entitled 'Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail: Proposed Trail', numbered T12/80,000, and dated February 2008. [16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30)]

The National Trails System Act states that national scenic trails will be located to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential as well as the conservation and enjoyment of the scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources in the areas through which these trails pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)).

Historic Overview and Development of the Trail

Indigenous Homelands

Before long-distance recreational trails emerged as a 20th century phenomenon (Strickland 2001:xi) and long before the PNT was designated as a national scenic trail, the areas the PNT now passes through were home to many distinct indigenous nations. Indigenous oral histories and traditional stories speak of these homelands from time immemorial. The archaeological record shows evidence of at least 15,000 years of indigenous presence in the areas around the PNT, including networks of travel routes connecting western Montana to the Columbia Plateau and farther west to the Pacific Coast. The PNT follows pre-contact and post-contact trail systems, some of which have their origins with the indigenous communities who resided in the area prior to the arrival of non-native settlers.

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) maintains government-to-government consultation relationships with federally recognized tribes regarding the administration and management of the PNT. In alphabetical order, these tribes include: the Blackfoot Tribe of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation of Montana, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Hoh Indian Tribe, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Lummi Tribe of the Lummi Reservation, Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Quileute Tribe of the Quileute Reservation, Quinault Indian Nation, Samish Indian Nation, Sauk-Suiattle Tribe, Spokane Tribe of the Spokane Reservation, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians of Washington, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Tulalip Tribes of Washington, and Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. There are a number of groups and bands that are subsumed within these federally recognized tribes, and some groups retain ties with or belong to the same nation as First Nations in Canada. These tribes retain active cultures and ties to the areas surrounding the PNT.

From the Rockies to the Sea

The idea for the PNT originated with then-Georgetown University political science graduate student Ron Strickland. Three years after President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Trails System Act into law in 1968, Strickland — inspired by Washington-based guidebook author Harvey Manning's call for a cross-Cascades hiking route — envisioned a national scenic trail reaching from the Rocky Mountains across the Cascade Range to the Pacific Ocean. Over the course of several years, Strickland and his collaborators pieced together the initial PNT route by studying maps, hiking sections of the route, and conferring with residents across the trail about potential component trail segments.

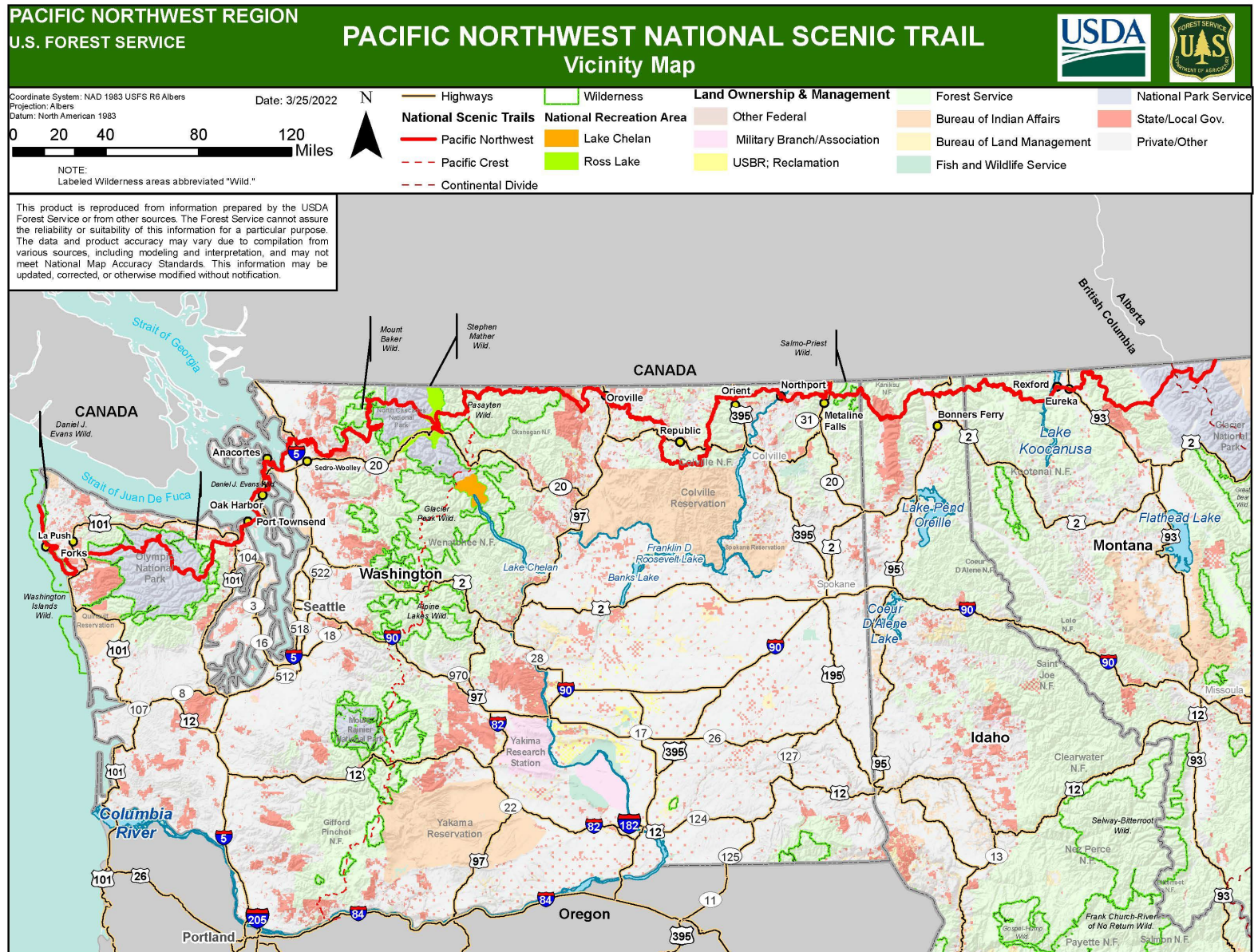


Figure 1. Vicinity map for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

By 1974, a preliminary route had been identified, stitched together from mostly pre-existing trails and roads where trail linkages did not exist. The alignment was developed to emphasize the wide range of geological and ecological diversity across the Northwest and to link mountain ranges, wilderness, and other special places together. In addition, the route was located to maximize the use of public lands as well as to incorporate existing recreation trails, bike paths, old rail beds, dirt roads, bushwhacks, cow paths, beaches, and, where necessary, paved roads, into one continuous route. The originally envisioned alignment was modified as needed in response to local conditions as trail connections were developed on the ground.

Feasibility Study

In 1974 and 1975, Representative Joel Pritchard (WA) and Senator Henry M. Jackson (WA) introduced bills in the House and Senate to authorize a study for the purpose of determining the feasibility and the desirability of designating the PNT as a national scenic trail (feasibility study). In 1975 and 1976, Senator Lawton Chiles (FL) and Representative Roy Taylor (NC) introduced bills in their respective Chambers authorizing feasibility studies for the PNT and seven additional trails. In 1976, both bills passed (S. 2112, and H.R. 1512) and on October 17, 1976, S. 2112 became law (Pub.L. 94-527), amending the National Trails System Act to authorize a feasibility study for the PNT.

A feasibility study was initiated in 1978 as a joint effort by the Forest Service and the National Park Service (NPS). The study resulted in a report released in June 1980 titled: *Pacific Northwest Trail: A report based on a joint study by the Forest Service and National Park Service*. The report analyzed several different potential routes and concluded that the PNT “would have the scenic and recreational qualities needed for designation as a national scenic trail” but recommended against designation, citing concerns including potential impacts to wildlife, fragile natural areas, and cultural resources from overuse. The study also looked at the cost of acquiring land for the entirety of the PNT and determined it to be cost-prohibitive.¹

Momentum Builds

In 1977, Strickland founded the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, the same year that the first five thru-hikers² completed the entire PNT route. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association is a volunteer-based 501(c)(3), not-for-profit corporation formed to “..., protect and promote the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail ... and to enhance recreation and educational opportunities for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” The Pacific Northwest Trail Association continues to serve as the primary partner organization with the Forest Service for the PNT, providing key services including visitor information, trail maintenance, and volunteer programs (see [chapter 2](#) and [chapter 6](#)).

¹ Current strategies to protect the entire PNT route include using cooperative agreements and easements to cross private lands, in addition to land acquisition where feasible and desirable.

² “Thru-hiking” is the widely accepted term used to describe a long-distance hike completed in its entirety from end-to-end in one season. “Thru-travel”, “thru-riding”, and other derivative terms have similar, related meanings that refer to other forms of travel in addition to, or other than hiking alone. “Section hiking” refers attempting to hike the entirety of a long-distance trail section by section, which may or may not occur in a linear sequence, over the course of multiple seasons or years.

In February 1982, the Washington state legislature unanimously passed resolutions supporting the PNT (HFR 82-116 and SR 1981-45). In 2000, the PNT was recognized as a Millennium Trail by the White House Millennium Council under the Clinton Administration. Between 2002 and 2005, more than 300 miles of the PNT were administratively designated by the Forest Service and NPS as national recreation trails, a type of national trail under the National Trails System Act. These sections include the entirety of the PNT in Olympic, North Cascades, and Glacier national parks as well as the Vinal-Mt Henry-Boulder section of the PNT on the Kootenai National Forest.

Congressional Designation

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Act of 2008 was introduced into both houses of Congress on April 30, 2008, by Representative Norm Dicks (WA) (H.R. 5926) and Senator Maria Cantwell (WA) (S. 2943). The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, National Parks Subcommittee, heard testimony on the PNT on June 17, 2008. In January 2009 the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 was introduced with language to designate the PNT as a national scenic trail. The bill was approved by both the House and Senate and was then signed into law (Pub.L. 111-11) by President Barack Obama on March 30, 2009. Section 5205 amended Section 5(a) of the National Trails System Act to add the following:

(30) PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, a trail of approximately 1,200 miles, extending from the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park, Montana, to the Pacific Ocean Coast in Olympic National Park, Washington, following the route depicted on the map entitled ‘Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail: Proposed Trail’, numbered T12/80,000, and dated February 2008 (referred to in this paragraph as the ‘map’).

(B) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Forest Service.

(C) ADMINISTRATION.—The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture.

(D) LAND ACQUISITION.—The United States shall not acquire for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail any land or interest in land outside the exterior boundary of any federally-managed area without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land.”.

Pub.L. 111-11 also designated other new components of the National Trails System, including the Arizona National Scenic Trail, which is administered by the Forest Service, and the New England National Scenic Trail and Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail, which are administered by the National Park Service.

Planning Framework and Authorities

This section discusses key statutory requirements and other authorities that pertain to planning for the PNT.

The PNT crosses lands under the jurisdiction of multiple federal, state, and local agencies, as well as tribal lands (on the Colville Reservation and Swinomish Reservation) and private lands. The goal of the comprehensive plan is to provide a uniform approach to the administration and management of the PNT, while also recognizing the differences in management between the jurisdictions that makes them unique and lends diversity to the recreation opportunities the trail provides. The comprehensive plan guides the many entities involved in trail administration and management on how to provide for the nature and purposes of the PNT and protect the values for which the trail was designated through their land management plans, projects, operations and maintenance, and other activities.

Congress identified the Secretary of Agriculture as responsible for administering the PNT. The Secretary has delegated most administrative responsibilities to the Chief of the Forest Service, including the responsibility to approve the comprehensive plan to meet the requirements in National Trails System Act, Section 5(e) (see table 1). The Chief has delegated to the Regional Forester of the Pacific Northwest Region (R6) responsibility to prepare the comprehensive plan (see [chapter 3](#)). The Chief of the Forest Service is responsible for approving and submitting this comprehensive plan to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)).

National Trails System Act of 1968 and Other Authorities

National Trails System Act of 1968

The National Trails System Act of 1968 (Pub.L. 90-543, as amended) was developed by Congress as a response to the 1966 report *Trails for America: Report on the Nationwide Trail Study* (U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation 1966). This was a nationwide study of America's trails completed by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for the Secretary of Interior in responses to President Johnson's 1965 Nature's Beauty Message to the Nation. The study recommended the development of a national trails system to provide access to public lands for all Americans.

The National Trails System Act established the National Trails System "to provide for addressing the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and 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." The National Trails System includes national scenic trails, national historic trails, and national recreation trails, as well as connecting trails and side trails that may be associated with national trails. Each national scenic trail and national historic trail designated by Congress as a component of the National Trails System is assigned a lead Federal agency to administer the trail. For the PNT, the lead Federal agency is the Forest Service.

Comprehensive plans for national scenic trails have their own legal authority and purpose based on the National Trails System Act. Section 5 (16 U.S.C. 1244) of the National Trails System Act requires the lead Federal agency for each national scenic trail or national historic trail named in

subsection (e)³ to develop a comprehensive plan for the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail, including but not limited to:

- Specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)(1))
- Details of any anticipated cooperative agreements to be consummated with other entities (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)(1))
- An identified carrying capacity and plan for its implementation (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)(1))
- An acquisition or protection plan, by fiscal year for all lands to be acquired by fee title or lesser interest, along with detailed explanation of anticipated necessary cooperative agreements for any lands not to be acquired (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)(2))
- General and site-specific development plans including anticipated costs (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)(3))

Table 1 lists the location of each of these requirements in this comprehensive plan. There are additional requirements for national scenic trails described in the National Trails System Act. These requirements include provisions on trail uses and other uses along the trail, administration and development, selection of a **national trail right-of-way**⁴, and volunteer assistance. These requirements will be addressed as appropriate throughout this comprehensive plan.

Executive Order (EO) 13195, Trails for the 21st Century

Executive Order 13195 was signed by President Clinton on January 8, 2001, with the intent of furthering the purposes of the National Trails System Act and other statutes related to establishing and operating the National Trails System. Among other important components, EO 13195 identifies the need to protect trail corridors surrounding national scenic trails to preserve the values for which each trail was established.

Other Federal Laws, Regulations, Executive Orders, and Presidential Memoranda

In addition to the National Trails System Act, other Federal laws apply to trail management. All trail resources must be managed in compliance with legal and policy requirements intended to protect the nation's natural and cultural heritage and opportunities for the enjoyment of that heritage. The principal laws, regulations, executive orders, and other authorities for administration of National Forest System trails, including national scenic trails administered and managed by the Forest Service, are identified in agency directives in Forest Service Manual 2300 – Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management, Chapter 2350 – Trail, River, and Similar Recreation Opportunities (FSM 2353.01a-d).

The National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C 470) requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of a proposed undertaking on historic properties eligible for the National Register of

³ Sec. 5(e) applies to most national scenic trails, including the PNT. Two national scenic trails (the Continental Divide and North Country National Scenic Trails) and all national historic trails fall under Sec. 5(f).

⁴ As discussed in [chapter 4](#), in this comprehensive plan and its implementation, this will be referred to as the “national trail planning corridor.”

Historic Places in consultation with affected tribes, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, State Historic Preservation Officers, and interested parties. This comprehensive plan provides high-level vision and guidance for the PNT. When trail maintenance or other on-the-ground activities are proposed by local land managers, they will follow the applicable laws, regulations, and policies for the local land manager.

Relationship to Federal Land Management Plans and Special Area Plans

This comprehensive plan is a long-term programmatic plan designed to provide guidance and recommendations for future actions that will be pursued through Federal agency land management plans; project-specific decisions and associated National Environmental Policy Act analyses; and agreements between Federal agencies and with non-federal land managers and private landowners.

This plan was developed under the authority of the National Trails System Act. The comprehensive plan works in concert with local land management plans to provide guidance for management of the PNT. The comprehensive plan does not replace land management plans. The relevant land management plan(s) continue to apply to the PNT and the lands around it. The comprehensive plan and Federal land management plan(s) must be compatible.⁵ Together, they inform project planning as well as day-to-day trail management and operations.

- A **land management plan** addresses management of the land (including the trail and the land around the trail) within the area in which the land management applies, such as a specific national forest, national park, or Bureau of Land Management district.
- The **comprehensive plan** addresses administration and management of the entire PNT, across jurisdictions.
- A **project plan** addresses a specific project or activity that supports and or implements the direction contained in both the land management plan and the comprehensive plan. Examples of project plans might include plans to realign a section of trail to reduce resource impacts, construct a new parking area to improve access, or treat vegetation to preserve or enhance views.

Each Federal land management agency is responsible for developing and managing the segments of the PNT on the lands it manages in a way that harmonizes with other authorized land uses, while ensuring the PNT and its nature and purposes and other trail values are provided for. EO 13195 requires Federal agencies to

... protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types... This will be accomplished by... protecting the trail corridors associated with National Scenic Trails... to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which [the] trail was established remain intact.

⁵ Determining the need to change individual agency land management plans will depend on agency-specific laws, regulations, and policies as well as the compatibility of existing land management plans with the comprehensive plan. Any needed changes to land management plans will be addressed by the appropriate managing agencies upon completion of this plan in accordance with their own directives.

Land management direction applied to the federally managed lands the PNT goes through, such as identifying a management corridor or management area associated with the PNT, will be determined through the Federal land management agency's land management planning processes under the appropriate authorities.

USDA Forest Service

Specific direction on planning and managing trails located on National Forest System lands can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2353 National Forest System Trails
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12 Land Management Planning Handbook; Chapter 20
- FSH 2309.18 Trails Management Handbook

The PNT crosses seven national forests, each of which has a land and resource management plan (forest plan) in accordance with the National Forest Management Act 1976 (Pub.L. 94-588).

Plans that include at least some management direction for the PNT are:

- the Flathead (current forest plan published in 2018),
- Kootenai (2015),
- Idaho Panhandle (2015), and
- Colville (2019).⁶

Forest plans written before PNT designation and contain no PNT-specific direction are:

- the Okanogan-Wenatchee (Okanogan (1989), Wenatchee (1990)),
- Mount Baker-Snoqualmie (1990) and
- Olympic (1990).

Forest plans must reference the identified national trail right-of-way⁷ (see [chapter 4](#)), if established, or otherwise may identify a corridor or geographic area around the trail, or use other means to identify where trail management direction applies (FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.43(1)(b)). Forest land management plan components must provide for managing the national trail right-of-way and for the nature and purposes of the trail. Plan components must be compatible with the objectives and practices identified in this comprehensive plan, including identifying significant resources to be preserved and the trail's carrying capacity (FSH 1909.12 section 24.43 (b), (c), (e)). After this comprehensive plan is complete, the PNT administrator will work with each national forest to identify any changes to forest plans that may be needed for compatibility with the comprehensive plan and to provide for the nature and purposes of the PNT.

⁶ For the Tonasket Ranger District, the Okanogan (1989) forest plan applies.

⁷ As discussed in [chapter 4](#), the national trail planning corridor will serve as the national trail right-of-way for the PNT.

Department of the Interior National Park Service

Policies, procedures, and guidance for the management of national scenic and historic trails associated with the National Park Service are located in:

- Director's Order #45 National Trails System
- Reference Manual #45 National Trails System
- Management Policy 9.2.2.7 National Trails

The PNT crosses five⁸ National Park Service units, each of which has a general management plan. All but Ross Lake National Recreation Area have a foundation document.⁹ These planning documents include:

- Glacier National Park General Management Plan (1999) and Foundation Document (2016);
- North Cascades National Park Complex General Management Plan¹⁰ (1988) and Foundation Document (2012);
- Ross Lake National Recreation Area General Management Plan (2012);
- Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve General Management Plan (2006) and Foundation Document (2018); and
- Olympic National Park General Management Plan (2008) and Foundation Document (2017).

The Forest Service will coordinate with the National Park Service on land management planning that involves the PNT.

Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Direction on the planning and management of trails associated with the Bureau of Land Management is located in:

- BLM Manual MS-6250 National Scenic and Historic Trail Administration
- BLM Manual MS-6280 Management of National Scenic and Historic Trails and Trails under Study or Recommended as Suitable for Congressional Designation
- BLM Handbook H-8320-1 Recreation and Visitor Services Planning
- BLM-WO-GI-06-020-6250 National Scenic and Historic Trails Strategy and Workplan

The national trail right-of-way¹¹ is a key consideration in establishing a national trail management corridor in resource management plans. Bureau of Land Management Manual 6280 guides the agency in establishing national trail management corridors and in inventorying

⁸ North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area are collectively managed as the North Cascades National Park Service Complex. The PNT does not cross Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.

⁹ Foundation documents present a shared understanding of the purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, desired conditions, primary interpretive themes, and special mandates for each unit.

¹⁰ With the completion of the Ross Lake National Recreation Area General Management Plan and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area General Management Plan, this plan now applies only to North Cascades National Park.

¹¹ As discussed in [chapter 4](#), the national trail planning corridor serves as national trail right-of-way for the PNT.

national trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings for consideration in project analyses, whether or not the national trail right-of-way has been selected. Bureau of Land Management Manual 6280.4.1 describes multiple options for incorporating designated national trails into resource management plans, including through a land use resource management plan amendment or revision, or a state-wide trails management plan.

The PNT crosses public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management within the Spokane District, which are managed according to the Spokane Resource Management Plan (1987), developed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1712). The Forest Service will coordinate with the Bureau of Land Management on land management planning that involves the PNT.

Special Area Plans

The PNT passes through special areas designated by Congress or by the Secretaries of Commerce or Interior such as national scenic trails, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, national recreation areas, national heritage areas, national estuarine research reserves, and national marine sanctuaries (see [chapter 4](#) for more information on these areas). Where special area plans apply, the PNT comprehensive plan and the administration and management of the trail should be compatible with the relevant special area plans. As special area plans are revised and when new special area plans are developed, they should be compatible with the PNT comprehensive plan.

Consultation, Coordination, and Collaboration with Tribes

Treaties with Tribal Nations

The government-to-government relationship between the United States and federally recognized tribes is unique and distinct from that of other interests and constituencies served by the Forest Service and the other Federal agencies that have roles in administering and managing the PNT. For the Forest Service, agency policy contained in Forest Service Manual 1500 External Relations, Chapter 1560 State, Tribal, County, and Local Agencies; Public and Private Organizations describes treaty rights and the Federal trust responsibility:

The United States entered into over 300 treaties with Indian tribes prior to 1871. Under these treaties, Indian tribes ceded significant portions of their aboriginal lands to the United States. Each of these treaties is unique but, generally speaking, Indian tribes reserved separate, isolated reservation homelands under the treaties and sometimes retained certain rights to hunt, fish, graze, and gather on the lands ceded to the United States. These rights retained on ceded lands are known as “off-reservation treaty rights” or “other reserved rights.” ... Trust responsibility arises from the United States’ unique legal and political relationship with Indian tribes. It derives from the Federal Government’s consistent promise, in the treaties that it signed, to protect the safety and well-being of the Indian tribes and tribal members. The Federal trust responsibility is a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of Federal law with respect to all federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages. [FSM 1563.01b]

Tribal consultation, coordination, and collaboration, as well as management of National Forest System lands, including lands on which the PNT is located, are also guided by Federal laws, regulations, executive orders, and other authorities, as identified in Forest Service Manual 1500 External Relations, Chapter 1560 State, Tribal, County, and Local Agencies; Public and Private Organizations (FSM 1563.01c).

Joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters

On November 15, 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack issued Order No. 3403, Joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters. It affirms principles the Departments will incorporate in making management decisions for Federal lands or waters, or for wildlife and their habitat, that impacts the treaty or religious rights of Indian tribes. Among these principles are the sovereignty of Indian tribes, collaboration with Indian tribes to ensure that tribal governments play an integral role in decision making related to the management of Federal lands and waters, meaningful consultation with Indian tribes at the earliest phases of planning and decision-making, and consideration of tribal expertise and/or indigenous knowledge as part of Federal decision making related to Federal lands.

Involvement of Partner Organizations and Volunteers

One of the purposes of the National Trails System Act, as stated in section 2, is “to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails” (16 U.S.C. 1241(c)). Section 11 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture, as well as the heads of Federal land management agencies, to encourage and assist volunteers and volunteer organizations in planning, developing, managing, and maintaining trails that are components of the National Trails System (such as the PNT) or that, if developed, could qualify as components of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1250).

Partner organizations and volunteers hold valuable knowledge about the PNT and the areas it goes through. Some have special knowledge and skills based on their personal experiences, professional background, or long-term knowledge of the PNT or the areas it goes through. Partner organizations and volunteers can provide information to aid planning such as how different types of trail users use the PNT, on-the-ground conditions that affect trail users, and resources and values significant to the nature and purposes of the trail and their locations. Because partner organizations and volunteers play a critical role in developing, maintaining, and managing the trail, it is particularly important to involve them in planning, both in developing this comprehensive plan and in future planning for the PNT such as agency’s land management planning efforts for areas the PNT goes through and in project-level planning.

Application to Non-federally Managed Lands

Approximately 30 percent of the PNT is located on lands that are not managed by Federal land management agencies but are instead managed by tribal, state, county, or municipal

governments, or private landowners.¹² The comprehensive plan is not binding on tribal, state, county, or municipal governments or private landowners. However, the objectives and practices, monitoring plan, and other guidance in this plan (see [chapter 5](#) and [chapter 6](#)) may serve as best management practices that can help guide PNT management on non-federal lands. Cooperative agreements for managing the PNT on non-federally managed lands provide a framework of communication and coordination through which non-federal entities can take voluntary actions to provide for the nature and purposes of the PNT and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)). As appropriate, guidance in this plan may be used to inform the provisions included in a cooperative agreement (see [appendix D](#)).

The Forest Service should ensure that pertinent local government plans are taken into consideration in PNT administration and should coordinate with tribal, state, county, and municipal agencies to include consideration of the PNT in local planning and project implementation efforts, as appropriate.

The tribal governments that manage portions of the PNT are the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. The PNT is located on roads in the Colville Reservation and the Swinomish Reservation.

The state government agencies that manage portions of the PNT are the Idaho Department of Lands, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, and Washington Department of Ecology.

The county and municipal governments that manage portions of the PNT where it is on trails include:

Okanogan County, Washington;

Whatcom County, Washington;

Skagit County, Washington;

City of Anacortes, Washington; and

Jefferson County, Washington.

Additionally, portions of the PNT are located on county or municipal roads in the following counties:

Flathead County, Montana;

Boundary County, Idaho;

Lincoln County, Montana;

Pend Oreille County, Washington;

Eureka, Montana;

Stevens County, Washington;

¹² This figure includes segments of the PNT that are currently located on public or private roads through areas of land that are not managed by Federal land management agencies.

Northport, Washington; Anacortes, Washington;
Ferry County, Washington; Island County, Washington;
Okanogan County, Washington; Port Townsend, Washington;
Oroville, Washington; Jefferson County, Washington; and
Whatcom County, Washington; Clallam County, Washington.
Skagit County, Washington;

Special Considerations for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Temporarily Located on Roads Outside Federally Managed Areas

At this time, in order to provide an end-to-end travel opportunity for PNT users, about 33 percent of the PNT route is located on roads. These range from little-used dirt or gravel roads to busy state and interstate highways. The PNT route's location on roads should be considered a temporary **interim location** (see [chapter 4](#)). To meet the intent of the National Trails System Act that national scenic trails are long-distance, nonmotorized trails, segments of the PNT that are currently on roads will need to be realigned or relocated onto nonmotorized trails, as described in [chapter 4](#). Or, in limited situations, the road may be converted to trail, as appropriate. This comprehensive plan emphasizes the objectives and practices to be implemented in the coordinated and long-term effort of completing the PNT through such realignments and relocations. This comprehensive plan does not provide direction to federal, state, county, or municipal transportation departments for managing the roads outside of federally administered areas that are used as interim locations for the PNT. Rather, it encourages coordination and cooperation among the administering agency, transportation departments, and other trail managers and partners to identify opportunities to move the PNT off roads and onto nonmotorized trails and, in the interim, to provide for the nature and purposes of the PNT and other trail values where practicable.

Chapter 2. Roles and Responsibilities

This chapter describes the primary roles and responsibilities for administration and management of the PNT and the consultation, collaboration, cooperation, and partnership that will provide a cohesive effort to plan, develop, maintain, and operate the trail.

Collaborative Management Model

The Forest Service works collaboratively with tribal governments, states, counties, municipal governments, and other partners in a shared stewardship approach to address cross-boundary land management challenges and explore opportunities to improve the health and resilience of forests across jurisdictions. Collaboration involves people working together to share knowledge, ideas, and resources toward common goals and objectives that they could not successfully achieve on their own. Collaboration requires an investment of time and resources from everyone involved, but ideally results in greater long-term rewards such as implementable solutions, positive working relationships, and greater collective capacity to address future challenges that may arise (USDA Forest Service 2011). Collaboration may involve parties seeking agreement on how to resolve an issue or align resources and efforts to achieve a goal through collective action.

Collaboration has been part of the National Trails System from the beginning, going back to the volunteer-led origins of the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail, the first trails to be designated as components of the National Trails System.

The following articulation of the collaborative management model for national scenic trails is drawn from the *Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail Foundation Document* (2022, p. 2). The model and the principles underlying it are relevant beyond the Pacific Crest Trail and applicable for all national scenic trails. The language has been adapted here for the PNT.

A unique cornerstone of the National Trails System Act is collaborative management among the mosaic of public and private interests relevant to long-distance trails and recognition of the contributions made by volunteers and private, nonprofit organizations who plan, develop, manage, and maintain the nation's trails. As the lead administrator for the PNT, the Forest Service works collaboratively with many non-governmental partners, as well as the local, state, federal, and tribal governments with land management responsibilities. Among non-governmental partners, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association plays a leadership role as the only non-governmental organization that works with land managers to maintain and manage the entire PNT with the sole purpose of protecting and promoting the PNT and enhancing recreation and educational opportunities for the enjoyment of generations to come.

To fulfill the vision of a continuous and connected PNT – that provides for the maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities – will require a steady commitment to collaborative management across boundaries at a landscape scale. Embracing this culture of shared stewardship and collaborative management is vital to creating and maintaining a relevant, well located, and cared for PNT. As outlined in the National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System (USDA Forest Service 2017), the Forest Service values collaborative relationships and is

committed to working across jurisdictional, cultural, and other boundaries to maximize diverse skillsets and generate innovative approaches to the work. Partnerships with academia, research, and volunteer scientists ensure that decisions on managing the PNT are made based on the best available science.

Brian O’Neill, former Golden Gate National Park superintendent, created the 21 Partnership Success Factors strategy, which continues to serve as a guide for building a community of stewardship.¹³ Successful collaboration includes development and continued refinement of a shared vision of the work to be accomplished. Nurturing relationships, while developing and focusing on mutual goals, is the key to the success of these partnerships. Successful partnerships demonstrate a culture of full engagement that leads to both collective enthusiasm and achievement of results.

The future of the PNT, and the achievement of its nature and purposes and protection of other trail values, is dependent upon the continued refinement of an inclusive vision of the trail. Teamwork among diverse stakeholders, trail communities, and managing agencies is vital to ensuring future generations have an opportunity to journey along the PNT.

Partner Organizations and Volunteers

The National Trails System Act recognizes the valuable contributions that private nonprofit trail groups and other volunteer groups and individual volunteers have made to the development and maintenance of the nation’s trails and encourages “volunteer citizen engagement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails” (16 U.S.C. 1241(c)). Private organizations and volunteers have played important leadership roles in the development of the PNT since its earliest conception, and they continue to do so.

The Forest Service and other agencies with jurisdiction over lands on and adjacent to the trail may enter into cooperative agreements with private organizations and volunteers to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of the trail within or outside a federally administered area. These agreements may include provisions for limited financial assistance to encourage participation in the acquisition, protection, operation, development, or maintenance of the trail (16 U.S.C. 1246 (h) (1) and 16 U.S.C.1250).

Partner Organizations

In a U.S. government context, **partnerships** are collaborative working relationships between Federal government and non-federal actors, including non-governmental actors, in which the goals, structure, and roles and responsibilities of each partner are mutually determined (Community Partnerships Interagency Policy Committee 2013, p. 1). Some, but not all, partnerships are documented through formal agreements. Partnerships may involve shared monetary responsibility in which money or other resources are transferred to or from the Federal government (in compliance with applicable legal authorities), but non-monetary partnerships can

¹³ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/partnerships/upload/brianoneillbooklet-edited-9-27-13-2.pdf>

also bring partners together to leverage strengths and catalyze collaboration (Community Partnerships Interagency Policy Committee 2013, p. 6).

Partner organizations may be involved in almost all aspects of the PNT. Examples of roles for partner organizations include providing technical assistance to trail managers for planning and project development, implementing projects such as trail construction and maintenance, conducting resource inventories, monitoring trail use and conditions, mapping the trail and maintaining geospatial data, developing and providing visitor information, assisting with interpretation and education, designing and installing signs and kiosks, marking the trail, facilitating land acquisition and protection, providing financial assistance for trail administration and management, training volunteers and trail managers, managing volunteer programs, and coordinating with gateway communities. Many partner organizations have participated in the [PNT advisory council](#).

The Forest Service will, as delegated from the Secretary of Agriculture, coordinate with partner organizations on matters specified by the National Trails System Act:

- obtain the advice and assistance of private organizations and land users concerned in selecting the rights-of-way for the PNT to minimize adverse effects upon the adjacent landowners or land users and their operations (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2));
- consult with appropriate public and private organizations to establish the PNT service mark (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); and
- consult with organizations concerned regarding issuance of regulations governing the use, protection, management, development, and administration of trails of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1246(i)).

Pacific Northwest Trail Association

The non-profit Pacific Northwest Trail Association is a long-standing champion for and steward of the PNT with a mission to “...protect and promote the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail ... and to enhance recreation and educational opportunities for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” The Pacific Northwest Trail Association and the Forest Service have cooperated for decades—long pre-dating the PNT’s 2009 designation as a national scenic trail—to develop, build, and maintain the PNT on National Forest System lands, and have, since the PNT’s designation, cooperated to share trail-wide stewardship of the PNT. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association is the primary partner of the Forest Service and other private and public partners in the development and implementation of PNT programs and projects across the length of the trail. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association’s programs include paid employment programs for youth and young adult trail crew leaders and members, volunteer trail crews, and other volunteer and internship opportunities. In 2021, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association raised and invested more than \$67,000 of private contributions to the PNT (Partnership for the National Trails System 2022).

Other Partner Organizations

Several other non-governmental organizations have made significant contributions to the development and maintenance of the PNT including chapters of the Back Country Horsemen in Montana, Idaho, and Washington; Montana Conservation Corps; Skagit-Whatcom-Island Trail Maintaining Organization (SWITMO); the Student Conservation Association (SCA); and Washington Trails Association (WTA).

Partners also include colleges and universities. Faculty and student researchers from the University of Montana have partnered with the Forest Service to monitor visitation at locations along the PNT in Montana since 2017 and in Idaho since 2021. They have conducted studies of visitor use of the PNT and nearby areas, produced maps and geospatial analyses to inform visitor use management, and shared results with other stakeholders. In 2016, a student intern from Stanford University's Bill Lane Center for the American West worked with the Tri-County Economic Development District and the Forest Service to promote community and economic development tied to the PNT in northeast Washington.

The Forest Service and managing agencies should seek and support new partnerships and foster involvement from a wide range of partner organizations, particularly for groups that have been historically underserved by national scenic trails and other public lands programs. The Forest Service should encourage collaboration among new and existing partner organizations as part of a community of stewardship for the PNT.

Volunteers

Volunteers include individuals volunteering with partner organizations (for example, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association) and those volunteering with the managing agencies (for example, the Forest Service). Adult and youth volunteers contribute their time and skills to projects such as trail maintenance and construction, installing signs or kiosks, providing visitor information, monitoring trail and resource conditions, and delivering educational or interpretive programs. Volunteers may benefit by developing new skills, building social relationships, improving physical and mental health, enjoying time outdoors, and deepening their connection to the land.

In 2021, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association had 160 active volunteers who contributed more than 5,800 hours of service to the PNT, a value of more than \$165,000 (Partnership for the National Trails System 2022).

Trail Administration

When Congress designated the PNT, it assigned the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the trail (16 U.S.C 1244 (a) (27)). This includes consulting with the heads of all other affected state and Federal agencies on trail administration and management (16 U.S.C.1246 (a)(1)(A)). The National Trails System Act directs the Secretary responsible for administration of a national scenic trail to provide for its development and maintenance within federally designated areas (16 U.S.C. 1246 (h)(1)).

For the PNT and other national scenic trails and national historic trails administered by the Secretary of Agriculture, most responsibilities for trail administration under the National Trails System Act have been delegated to the Chief of the Forest Service.

Forest Service as Administering Agency

The Forest Service is one of three Federal land management agencies, collectively referred to as national trail administering agencies, that administer national scenic trails and national historic trails. The Forest Service is the **administering agency** for the PNT. The Forest Service also administers the Arizona National Scenic Trail, Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Florida National Scenic Trail, Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail, and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. The other five national scenic trails and 20 national historic trails that are part of the National Trails System are administered by the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service. The national trail administering agencies “strive to coordinate development of [National Trails System] policies and procedures to enhance interagency consistency in interpretation and implementation of the NTSA” and “work together to ensure that jurisdictional boundaries are as seamless as possible for sound resource management, quality recreational opportunities, and similar public services along National Trails” (The National Trails System Memorandum of Understanding 2017, p. 5).

The administering agency provides leadership to ensure the requirements of the National Trails System Act are met for the national scenic trails and national historic trails it administers. Administering agency responsibilities for a national scenic trail involve trail-wide coordination with Federal land management agencies and non-federal land managers (including private landowners) who manage segments of the PNT on their lands, consultation with other Federal agencies and state and local governments, and cooperation with partner organizations and volunteers. More specifically, these responsibilities include:

comprehensive planning, oversight, and technical support for activities such as trail right-of-way selection, trail site and segment development and protection, trail maintenance, trail marking, ... trail resource and setting protection, trail-wide resource inventories and monitoring, trail data management, trail-wide mapping, trail interpretation, and cooperative and interagency agreements, including cooperative agreements with governmental agencies, landowners, organizations, and individuals to support development, operation, and maintenance of National Trails (The National Trails System Memorandum of Understanding, 2017, p. 5).

One of the primary responsibilities is leading the long-term, collaborative effort to complete the national scenic trail as a continuous, nonmotorized trail with secure public access and a protected trail corridor. Other unique responsibilities delegated to the administering agency, in consultation with other agencies and entities identified in the National Trails System Act, include preparing and approving the comprehensive plan, selecting and publishing the national trail right-of-way¹⁴ (with agreement from the other Federal agencies with jurisdiction for lands the trail goes through), establishing a uniform marker for the trail (**service mark**), and supporting the advisory council. Forest Service policy and guidance for administration of national scenic trails and

¹⁴ As discussed in [chapter 4](#), the national trail planning corridor will serve as the national trail right-of-way for the PNT.

national historic trails is contained in Forest Service Manual 2353, National Forest System Trails.

Lead Regional Forester

The Chief of the Forest Service has identified the regional forester of the Pacific Northwest Region (R6) as the **lead regional forester** for the PNT and has delegated many of the responsibilities for trail-wide administration of the PNT.¹⁵ The lead regional forester's responsibilities are documented in Forest Service Manual 2353, National Forest System Trails. The R6 regional forester coordinates closely with the regional forester of the Northern Region (R1) on trail-wide matters.

Among the key trail-wide responsibilities of the lead regional forester is approving non-substantial relocations of the PNT (see [chapter 4](#)), with concurrence of the land managing agency or agencies with jurisdiction over the lands involved.

Trail Administrator

The Forest Service has identified a full-time employee to serve as the trail administrator for the PNT, referred to throughout this plan as the **PNT administrator**. The PNT administrator functions as the agency-wide program manager for the PNT and provides trail-wide leadership, coordinates planning efforts, develops and maintains partnerships, and provides technical assistance and guidance for trail-wide stewardship of the PNT. The PNT administrator works closely with federal, state, county, and municipal agencies; tribes, non-governmental organizations; and volunteers to support the trail's nature and purposes and implement the comprehensive plan. The PNT administrator is not a line officer or decision-making official; rather, the PNT administrator provides staff support for the lead regional forester and other decision makers such as regional foresters, regional directors, state directors, park superintendents, and forest supervisors. Where this comprehensive plan calls for notification or involvement of, or coordination or collaboration with the Forest Service in its role as the administering agency for the PNT, the PNT administrator should be the point-of-contact unless otherwise specified.

Advisory Council

The Forest Service formed the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Advisory Council in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and Section 5(d) of the National Trails System Act, which directs the Secretary to establish an advisory council for each national scenic trail or national historic trail added to the National Trails System for a period of up to 10 years (16 U.S.C. 1244 (d)) The National Trails System Act further directs:

The appropriate Secretary shall consult with such council from time to time 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 (16 U.S.C. 1244 (d)).

¹⁵ Delegation of authority letter dated June 21, 2017.

The Secretary also consults with the advisory council on the comprehensive plan before the plan is submitted to the relevant committees of Congress (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)).

The unique role of the PNT advisory council has been to function as a collaborative group in which citizens and representatives of federally recognized tribes, tribal organizations, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individual landowners and land users can work together to develop shared recommendations to the Forest Service and the Secretary of Agriculture on matters related to the PNT. The PNT advisory council has been comprised of about 25 (and no more than 35) members representing a balance of interests, including geographic balance, across the trail. The PNT advisory council was established by the Secretary of Agriculture on May 22, 2014. The advisory committee held three multi-day meetings in 2015-2016, and one in June 2023. More information about the PNT advisory council is documented in the Federal Advisory Committee Act Database maintained by the General Services Administration (GSA), which is available online for the public to access.

Trail Management

Management of the PNT is accomplished through the collective efforts of the land management agencies and governments (collectively referred to as the **managing agencies**) and private landowners that own or manage lands where the PNT is located, through consultation and collaboration with tribes, and with the involvement of partners and volunteers.

The National Trails System Memorandum of Understanding (2017, p. 5) describes the roles and responsibilities of trail managers:

Many governmental entities, organizations, and individuals own or manage lands along National Trails. National Trail management includes local trail activities such as land use planning, trail site and segment development and protection, trail maintenance, trail marking, trail resource and setting protection, trail resource inventories and monitoring, trail data management, trail mapping, trail interpretation, cooperative and interagency agreements to support development, operation, and maintenance of National Trails, appropriate mitigation of damage along National Trails, provision of appropriate access to National Trails and management of visitor use and experiences along National Trails.

The managing agencies retain jurisdiction for managing the lands on which the PNT is located. They develop and manage the segments of the PNT on lands under their jurisdiction unless management authority has been conveyed elsewhere through agreement. Trail managers should manage the PNT to provide for its nature and purposes and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)).

The managing agencies play an important role – along with the administering agency, partners, and volunteers – in the long-term collaborative effort to complete the PNT as a continuous, connected nonmotorized trail with permanent public access and a national trail management corridor that safeguards the PNT’s nature and purposes and other trail values. The managing agencies participate in [optimal location review](#) processes and use the tools available to them, as appropriate, to achieve this goal. These tools may include but are not limited to acquiring land from willing sellers, easements, cooperative agreements, travel management planning, converting roads to trails, constructing trail, and realigning trail. The managing agencies may recommend relocating segments of the PNT to the lead regional forester. The managing agencies

implement [non-substantial relocations](#) that have been approved by the lead regional forester or substantial relocations as directed by an Act of Congress.

Federal Managing Agencies

The managing agencies manage the PNT and the lands along the trail according to relevant laws, regulations, the land management agency's policies, and land management plans (see [chapter 1](#)). For the Federal land management agencies, the primary sources of direction and guidance for management of national trails are:

- For the Forest Service, FSM 2353 National Forest System Trails; FSH 2309.18 Trails Management Handbook; and FSH 1909.12 Land Management Planning Handbook;
- For the National Park Service, Director's Order #45 National Trails System and Management Policy 9.2.2.7 National Trails and Reference Manual 45 National Trails System; and
- For the Bureau of Land Management, BLM Manual MS-6280 Management of National Scenic and Historic Trails and Trails under Study or Recommended as Suitable for Congressional Delegation, BLM Handbook H-8320-1 Recreation and Visitor Services Planning, and BLM-WO-GI-06-020-6250 National Scenic and Historic Trails Strategy and Workplan.

Each Federal land management agency is responsible for developing and managing the segments of the PNT on the lands it manages in a way that harmonizes with established land and resource management plans, while ensuring the PNT's nature and purposes are provided without substantial interference from other trail or land uses and that the PNT's other trail values remain intact.

The Forest Service will, as delegated from the Secretary of Agriculture, coordinate with the Federal managing agencies on matters specified by the National Trails System Act:

- consult with affected Federal agencies regarding administration and management of the PNT (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(1)(A));
- consult with affected Federal land managing agencies on the comprehensive plan prior to submitting the plan to Congress (16 U.S.C. 1244(e));
- obtain agreement from the Federal land management agency for the location and width of the PNT rights-of-way across lands under the land management agency's jurisdiction (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2));
- obtain concurrence from the Federal land management agency to relocate segments of the PNT involving lands under the land management agency's jurisdiction (16 U.S.C. 1246(b));
- consult with appropriate governmental agencies to establish the PNT service mark (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); and
- obtain concurrence from Federal managing agencies to issue regulations governing the use, protection, management, development, and administration of trails of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1246(i)).

Tribal, State, County, and Municipal Managing Agencies

Managing the PNT on tribal, state, county, and municipal lands will occur through cooperative agreements and, as appropriate, through permits or easements. Currently, about 0.18 percent of the PNT is located on tribal lands on the Colville Reservation and Swinomish Reservation; 8 percent is on state lands managed by the Idaho Department of Lands, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, and Washington Department of Ecology; and 4 percent is on county or municipal lands.¹⁶

The Forest Service and other Federal managing agencies may enter into cooperative agreements with tribes, states, counties, and municipal government agencies to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of the PNT within or outside of a federally administered area (16 U.S.C. 1246(h)(1)). More information about cooperative agreements is in [chapter 6](#) and [appendix D](#). The National Trails System Act directs the Secretary responsible for administration of a national scenic trail to cooperate with and encourage the states to operate, develop, and maintain portions of the trail that are outside the boundaries of federally administered areas (16 U.S.C. 1246(h)(1)).

The Forest Service will, as delegated from the Secretary of Agriculture, coordinate with tribal,¹⁷ state, county, and municipal managing agencies on matters specified by the National Trails System Act:

- consult with affected tribal and state agencies regarding administration and management of the PNT (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(1)(A));
- obtain advice and assistance from tribes, states, counties, and municipal governments in selecting rights-of-way for the PNT to minimize adverse effects upon adjacent landowners or land users and their operations (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2));
- consult with appropriate governmental agencies to establish the PNT service mark (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); and
- obtain consent from tribal, interstate, state, county, or municipal government agencies to locate connecting or side trails across lands they administer (16 U.S.C. 1245).

Private Landowners

The establishing language for the PNT specifies that the United States “shall not acquire for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail any land or interest in land outside the exterior boundary of any federally managed area without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in the land” (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30)). Managing the PNT on private lands will occur through voluntary cooperative agreements or, with the owner’s consent, through land acquisitions or easements.

¹⁶ These figures include segments of the PNT located on roads.

¹⁷ The National Trails System Act does not specify coordination on these items with tribal governments or agencies. However, the Forest Service will coordinate with tribal governments that manage segments of the PNT as it would with other non-Federal managing agencies, as part of and/or in addition to government-to-government consultation between the tribe and the United States.

Currently, about 17 percent of the PNT is on private property or on public roads through areas of private property.¹⁸ Where the PNT is on private property, it is primarily on private forestlands actively managed for timber production. Some landowners allow general public access on roads or trails through their properties. State, county, or municipal government agencies hold easements on some roads and trails that allow public access. Private landowners sometimes close roads, trails, and areas to public access due to active operations, extreme fire hazard, or other safety-related conditions.

The National Trails System Act encourages coordination and collaboration with private landowners to manage national trails. Federal, state, and local governments may enter into written cooperative agreements with private landowners or may acquire such lands or interests from willing landowners to facilitate land management (16 U.S.C. 1251). The Forest Service may also enter into cooperative agreements with private landowners to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of the trail within or outside a federally administered area (16 U.S.C. 1246 (h) (1)). For more information on cooperative agreements, see [chapter 6](#) and [appendix D](#).

The Forest Service will, as delegated from the Secretary of Agriculture, coordinate with private landowners and land users on matters specified by the National Trails System Act to:

- obtain the consent of the owner of land or interest in land as a condition of acquisition (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30));
- obtain the advice and assistance of the land users concerned in selecting the rights-of-way for the PNT to minimize adverse effects upon the adjacent landowners or land users and their operations (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)); and
- obtain the consent of the landowner to locate connecting or side trails on privately owned lands (16 U.S.C. 1245).

The Forest Service will also work with private landowners along the trail and will consult with states, counties, and municipalities on appropriate measures to protect private landowners from trespass or property damage resulting from trail use (16 U.S.C. 1246(h)(1)(A)).

Affected Tribes

As described in [chapter 1](#), the PNT crosses the ancestral lands of tribal nations, including 23 federally recognized tribes. These lands are rich in cultural resources, traditional use areas, and sacred sites. A small portion of the PNT (0.18 percent) is located on roads within the Colville Reservation and Swinomish Reservation; additional information on the role of tribes with jurisdiction for segments of the PNT and the lands on which it is located is in the Tribal, State, County, and Municipal Managing Agencies section of this chapter.

¹⁸ This figure includes segments of the PNT located on roads. This includes private roads, such as timber company roads, as well as federal, state, county, or city roads where the adjacent land ownership is private. The percentage of private property may decrease over time through relocation of segments of the PNT onto public lands or through land acquisitions from willing sellers. Where relocations or acquisitions are not possible or desirable, easements may be sought for portions of the trail crossing private lands.

Consulting with federally recognized tribes regarding administration and management of the PNT must occur on a government-to-government basis (see [chapter 1](#)). If mutually agreeable, the Forest Service and tribes may codify protocols for consulting, coordinating, and collaborating through memoranda of understanding (FSH 1509.13 Chapter 10, 11.41). As described in [chapter 1](#), decisions about the administration and management of the PNT on Federal lands should be guided by principles that include the sovereignty of tribes, collaborating with tribes to ensure tribal governments play an integral role in decision making, consulting meaningfully with tribes at the earliest phases of planning and decision-making, and considering tribal expertise or indigenous knowledge, or both, as part of decision-making related to federal lands.

The Forest Service or other Federal managing agencies and tribes may enter into agreements to partner on projects of mutual interest and benefits, as appropriate. Examples of potential projects include, but are not limited to, developing visitor information and educational resources that reflect the voices and perspectives of tribes, protecting and monitoring resources, involving tribally based youth or young adult crews in trail construction and maintenance, and developing and delivering programs that serve tribal communities.

Other Government Agencies and Officials

In addition to consulting with the federal, Tribal, state, county, and municipal government agencies that manage segments of the PNT and the lands where it is located, the Forest Service will, as delegated from the Secretary of Agriculture, coordinate with other federal, state, county, and municipal government officials and affected agencies on matters specified by the National Trails System Act:

- consult with affected Federal and state agencies regarding administering and managing the PNT (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(1)(A));
- consult with the governors of the affected states on the comprehensive plan prior to submitting the plan to Congress (16 U.S.C. 1244(e));
- obtain the advice and assistance of states and municipal governments in selecting the rights-of-way for the PNT to minimize adverse effects upon the adjacent landowners or land users and their operations (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2));
- consult with appropriate public organizations to establish the PNT service mark (16 U.S.C. 1246(c));
- initiate consultations with affected states and municipal governments to encourage their development and implementation of measures to protect private landowners from trespass from trail use and from unreasonable personal liability and property damage caused by trail use (16 U.S.C. 1246(h)(1));
- initiate consultations with affected states and municipal governments to encourage and, as appropriate, provide assistance under cooperative agreements for their development and implementation of provisions for land practices compatible with the purposes of the National Trails System Act for lands adjacent to the trail (16 U.S.C. 1246(h)(1)); and

- consult with states and municipal governments regarding issuing regulations governing the use, protection, management, development, and administration of trails of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1246(i)).

The Forest Service and the managing agencies also coordinate and consult with other Federal and state agencies that have legal compliance roles and responsibilities related to resources along the PNT. These include, for example, roles and responsibilities related to legal compliance, such as consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and with Tribal and State Historic Preservation Officers regarding the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Forest Service and the managing agencies coordinate with other government agencies to align resources. The Department of Transportation, Federal Highways Administration does not own or manage national trails but provides Federal transportation funds and technical assistance for national trail-related projects; additionally, the PNT may cross or utilize transportation infrastructure built and maintained by federal or state transportation agencies.. State outdoor recreation offices provide competitive grants for national trails projects and strategic direction for trail project investments through State Recreation and Conservation Plans. The administering and managing agencies coordinate with law enforcement agencies and with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, as appropriate, for public safety and resource protection.

Chapter 3. Trail Values

This chapter describes the PNT’s nature and purposes (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); its primary use or uses and the unique opportunity the trail provides for long-distance recreation experiences; and the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values¹⁹ (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)(1)) that support the trail’s nature and purposes. Collectively, these fundamental attributes of the PNT are referred to throughout this plan as the PNT’s **trail values**. The trail values are unique to the PNT based on its legislation and history, but they also reflect its status as a component of the National Trails System. The trail values convey resources, qualities, values, settings, and opportunities that are integral to the PNT’s nature and purposes and its identity as a national scenic trail. The trail values are therefore foundational considerations in all aspects of administering and managing the PNT, including future planning, development, maintenance, and uses along the trail.

Nature and Purposes

The nature and purposes of a national scenic trail describe the character, characteristics, and congressional intent for the trail. For example, it may specify the ideal trail setting, primary trail use(s), breadth of recreation opportunities, and the context for what types of other uses and activities may be appropriate along the trail. The nature and purposes are therefore critical to properly protecting and managing national scenic trails. Section 7(c) of the National Trails System Act introduces the concepts of nature and purposes for national trails (bolded text added):

National scenic or national historic 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 by the Secretary charged with the administration of the trail. Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to such trails and, to the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established.

EO 13195, Trails for America in the 21st Century, 2001, directs Federal agencies to:

... protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types... This will be accomplished by... protecting the trail corridors associated with National Scenic Trails... to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which [the] trail was established remain intact.

The nature and purposes articulate these values.

The nature and purposes for the PNT can be derived, in part, from the National Trails System Act and its guidance for national scenic trails in general. Section 2(a) explains the intent for national trails:

¹⁹ Preserving not only resources but “resources and values” is part of the mission of the National Park Service, and this approach is reflected in its guidance for implementing its responsibilities under the National Trails System Act (Director’s Order #45 and Reference Manual #45). Bureau of Land Management policy for national scenic trail management addresses resources and values, as well as a trail’s qualities, associated settings and primary use or uses (Manual 6280).

In order 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, trails should be established ... within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located.

Section 3(a)(2) describes national scenic trails specifically as:

...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. National scenic trails may be located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation.

House Report No. 90-1631, which accompanied the National Trails System Act, clarified the intent of specific wording in the Act, and therefore the intent of Congress:

...selection of routes for National Scenic Trails – Such rights-of-way shall be (1) of sufficient width and so located to provide the maximum retention of natural conditions, scenic and historic features, and primitive character of the trail area, to provide campsites, shelters, and related public-use facilities, and to provide reasonable public access; and (2) located to avoid, insofar as practicable, established highways, motor roads, mining areas, power transmission lines, existing commercial and industrial developments, range fences and improvements, private operations, and any other activities that would be incompatible with the protection of the trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation.... National scenic trails shall be administered, protected, developed, and maintained to retain their natural, scenic, and historic features; and provision may be made for campsites, shelters, and related public-use facilities; and other uses that will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trails may be permitted or authorized, as appropriate: Provided, That the use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited... (1968 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 3855, 3863-3864, 3867).

The nature and purposes for the PNT were developed by drawing from the basic intent of the National Trails System Act, subsequent executive orders, and elements of legislative history. It is informed by the vision for the PNT described in historic documents from Ron Strickland and the Pacific Northwest Trail Association and in the feasibility study. They are also informed by the results of public sensing that occurred prior to developing this plan, through sensing meetings with stakeholders and managing agencies in communities across the trail in 2012-14 and with the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Advisory Council (advisory council) in 2015-16 and 2023.

Nature

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail is an east-west-oriented long-distance trail that traverses the extreme northern reaches of Montana, Idaho, and Washington from the Rocky Mountains, through the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges, to the Pacific Coast.

The trail invites travelers into the backcountry and wilderness areas, to seek the grandeur of glaciated peaks, tranquil lakes, boundless horizons of majestic mountains, deep canyons, broad river valleys, storm-carved coastlines, and the splendor of wild places. The lands along the trail are the homelands of many distinct indigenous nations. Since time immemorial, natural processes and tribal traditional uses, including tribal treaty rights and reserved rights, have shaped these places and continue to shape them, through exercising their tribal treaty and reserved rights. The trail sometimes passes near communities that are able to share with travelers their histories and connections to the land, evident in the legacy of working forests, farms, ranches, and maritime areas, and in beloved local parks and pathways.

Whether they experience one mile or 1,200 miles, the travelers and stewards of the PNT find year-round opportunities for inspiration and lifelong memories, challenge and personal transformation, the solitude of quiet places and kinship in being part of a larger legacy.

Purposes

National scenic trails are extended trails through iconic landscapes that 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 they go through. These premier trails provide visitors with profound experiences that not only create lasting memories but instill a stewardship ethic for generations to come.

Specifically, the purposes of the PNT are to provide for:

- conservation and enjoyment of scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources and values along the trail that exemplify qualities of the Northwest (inclusive of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest regions).
- maximum outdoor recreation potential as a premier, nationally significant opportunity for (1) hiking, with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking including end-to-end thru-hiking, as a primary use; (2) pack and saddle stock use as a primary use; and (3) other complementary non-motorized recreation, including bicycling, where appropriate to the setting and allowed by local management.
- opportunities for self-discovery, self-reliance, and the satisfaction of making your own way.
- opportunities for community and for service to the trail, its surrounding landscapes, and others through environmental education, interpretation, partnerships, volunteerism, and stewardship that encourage inclusion of all people, cultures, and abilities.

Primary Uses

The primary use or uses of a national scenic trail are the authorized mode or modes of travel identified in the National Trails System Act, enabling legislation, or legislative history, or through the comprehensive plan or other relevant plan(s). While there may be other potentially compatible modes of travel that may be allowed and therefore could co-occur on the trail, the primary use or uses of the trail are the trail uses foundational to its administration and management as a national scenic trail.

The PNT's primary use or uses are not addressed in the National Trails System Act or enabling legislation. Prior to the PNT's designation as a national scenic trail, it was envisioned by PNT advocate Ron Strickland and early supporters as "a passionate walker's trail" and a "trail of superb backpacking" and "adventurous frontier walking" that would be "as much as possible a *wilderness* trail with relatively difficult access, relatively few signs and shelters, and relatively great attention to its walkers' potential wilderness experience." (Strickland 1974, p. 7) The 1980 feasibility study for the PNT includes the following statements regarding trail uses:

In computing the costs of constructing the trail, the assumption was made that it would be built to the multi-mode horse-hiker standard ... with a 24-inch tread suitable for both hiker and horseback rider use. In actual practice, if the trail were to become a reality, the standard could be expected to vary somewhat depending upon the terrain and the kinds of use which would be expected to occur along particular segments. Where the trail would traverse the more fragile areas, the type of use could be limited to foot travel, thereby permitting variance in the standard. In those cases, the potential for an alternate horse travel route would have to be considered. The need for a variable trail standard and taking care not to overbuild were revealed to be major issues at the public meetings and in correspondence. (USDA Forest Service and National Park Service 1980, p. 41)

In his June 17, 2008, testimony before the United States Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, Pacific Northwest Trail Association Director of Trail Management and Acting Executive Director Jon Knechtel testified:

The PNT is, and should always be, a hiker, equestrian, and where permitted, bicycle trail. Existing trail management objectives set forth by the governing agencies or landowners will govern the maintenance and use of the PNT. Trails will not be upgraded to meet a minimum PNT "standard", as is the case for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Changes in management direction would be done on a case-by-case basis, based on other recreational objectives, with the caveat that the trail use remains non-motorized. (Knechtel 2008, p. 2)

Based on a review of the PNT's feasibility study and legislative history, and consultation with the PNT Advisory Council in 2015-16 and 2023, this comprehensive plan identifies that the **primary uses** of the PNT are (1) hiking with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking and (2) pack and saddle stock use. More information is provided in the sections below.

Primary Use – Hiking

Hiking, with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking is one of two primary uses of the PNT. The PNT is administered and managed to ensure it provides a nationally significant opportunity for continuous end-to-end travel to complete the entire PNT on foot (**thru-hiking**). It also provides opportunities for shorter trips on foot, ranging from day hiking to multi-day backpacking trips on sections of the PNT. Some hikers complete the entire PNT by hiking different sections over the course of multiple trips and years (**section hiking**).

Consistent with 36 CFR 212.1, FSM 2353.05, and Title V, Section 507(c), of the Americans With Disabilities Act, wheelchairs and mobility devices, including those that are battery-powered, that are designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion and that are suitable for

use in an indoor pedestrian area are allowed on all National Forest System lands that are open to foot travel.” The agency will continue to work with partners to identify trail segments best suited for wheelchairs or mobility devices.

Thru-hiking use constitutes only a small fraction of overall use of the PNT relative to day-use and short multi-day trips. Currently, the Forest Service estimates that about 80 people attempt to thru-hike the PNT each year. However, the thru-hiking opportunity is central to the nature and purposes of the PNT. The opportunity the PNT provides to thru-hike from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean is the reason the PNT concept was originated and developed, and it was one of the values for which the PNT was designated a national scenic trail in 2009. Even for those who will never attempt a thru-hike, the potential the PNT provides for such a long journey may inspire wonder and a sense of connection across vast areas and diverse landscapes.

Protecting and enhancing this opportunity requires attention to the particular needs and constraints of thru-hikers in the context of the PNT. Thru-hiking is a trail use with unique logistical considerations and challenges, such as weather, permits for backcountry overnight travel in the national parks, the availability of campsites and other overnight accommodations, trail conditions, and the impacts of temporary trail closures. Most thru-hikers travel end-to-end from east to west (westbound). They may begin as soon as the snow melt allows travel across the high mountain passes in Glacier National Park, often in late June or early July. A small proportion of thru-hikers travel west to east (eastbound), although trails in the Olympic Mountains may remain snow-covered through late summer and stream fords on the western half of the trail may be more challenging at higher flow levels earlier in the season. Whether by choice or because of circumstances such as weather, wildfires, or permit availability, thru-hikers may also hike the PNT as a “flip-flop” hike rather than an end-to-end hike, starting somewhere along the trail (such as the PNT’s approximate midpoint at Oroville, Washington) and hiking to one of the termini then completing the rest of the PNT in the same hiking season. For more information on thru-hiking, see [appendix A. Thru-hiking Opportunity Narrative](#).

Primary Use – Pack and Saddle Stock Use

Along with hiking, stock riding and packing is a primary use of the PNT. While it is not possible to “thru-ride” the entire PNT using stock, segments of the PNT provide outstanding opportunities for day and overnight trips using stock for riding or packing.

Pack and saddle stock are allowed on almost all the PNT, including from the eastern terminus in Glacier National Park to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Some of the areas with long-distance travel opportunities for horseback riders include Glacier National Park, the Kettle Crest in the Colville National Forest, the Pasayten Wilderness, Ross Lake National Recreation Area and North Cascades National Park, and the Buckhorn Wilderness in Olympic National Forest to Elwha River in Olympic National Park.

Due to terrain, resource protection, or other local conditions, some sections of the PNT may not be passable by stock or the land managing agency may not allow stock in that location, or both. Currently, pack and saddle stock are prohibited by land management agencies on about 48 miles of the trail in western Washington, including segments near Mount Baker on the Mt. Baker-

Snoqualmie National Forest, near Heart Lake and Lake Erie in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands, in Deception Pass State Park on Whidbey Island, and along the Pacific coast in Olympic National Park. There are other short segments of the PNT where the land management agency allows pack and saddle stock with restrictions, such as season of use or the type of stock allowed. Even in areas where pack and saddle stock are allowed, there may be places where the trail is not passable for stock due to the conditions on the ground. This includes sections where no trail tread exists and the PNT route requires cross-country travel through rocky areas or dense brush. It also includes sections where boulders or logs have fallen across the trail. Particularly in areas that have been burned in wildfires, trail log out and maintenance efforts are not always able to keep up with the volume of logs that fall. Pack and saddle stock users have played an important role in the development and stewardship of the PNT through the work of volunteer organizations, such as chapters of the Back Country Horsemen, and individual volunteers. Notable among these are the volunteer stock packers who contribute their unique skills supporting trail crews who work in remote backcountry and wilderness areas constructing and maintaining sections of the PNT. A shared stewardship approach that involves strategic coordination and deployment of resources and capacity for trail maintenance – including maintenance of access roads and parking facilities – will be needed to ensure the PNT continues to provide premier, nationally significant opportunities for pack and saddle stock use.

For some segments that are impassable to stock or where stock are restricted or prohibited, there may be alternative stock-friendly routes in the area that would allow for continuous travel.

Other Potentially Compatible Uses

The PNT offers diverse and superlative nonmotorized recreation opportunities on one trail, including hiking and trail running, horseback riding and mountain biking; and in winter, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. It connects communities to the outdoors and invites recreationists to explore some of most remote and rugged landscapes in the Northwest. Near gateway communities, the PNT serves as a “backyard” asset for residents’ everyday activities such as getting exercise, spending time with family and friends, walking dogs (where allowed by the managing agency or landowner), relaxing, and connecting with nature.

Bicycling

Along with other nonmotorized modes of travel, bicycling is a potentially complementary mode of travel that is allowable on the PNT, where appropriate to the setting, at the discretion of the local managing agency or landowner.

The PNT provides opportunities for day and overnight trips (“bikepacking”) by bicycle. Due to terrain, resource protection, or other local conditions, some sections of the PNT are either impassable to bicycles, or the managing agency prohibits bicycle use in that location. Federal regulations prohibit bicycles in wilderness areas (36 CFR 4.30, 36 CFR 261.16, 43 CFR 6302), and in wilderness study areas and recommended wilderness areas, bicycles may be restricted by the managing agency. Bicycles are prohibited on most of the PNT in national parks.

Bicycles are allowed on many segments of the PNT, including about 236 miles of the PNT that is on trails. The eastern half of the PNT provides opportunities for long rides through backcountry

areas on the Flathead National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, and Colville National Forest. In western Washington, the PNT is located for short segments on popular bicycle trails and shared-use paths including the Tommy Thompson Trail near Anacortes and the Larry Scott Trail near Port Townsend, which is part of the 130-mile Olympic Discovery Trail. The Olympic Discovery Trail and other regional shared-use paths may provide opportunities for long-distance bicycle trips connecting to the PNT. The Olympic Discovery Trail may become part of the 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail, a transcontinental shared-use path from Washington, D.C., to Washington state being developed by the Rails to Trails Conservancy.

Significant Natural, Historical, and Cultural Resources to Be Preserved

Significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values are those determined to warrant special consideration in trail management and planning processes because they are essential to achieving the nature and purposes of the PNT. One of the most important responsibilities of the Forest Service and the managing agencies is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of the resources, qualities, values, settings, and opportunities that are essential and fundamental to achieving the nature and purposes of the PNT and maintaining its significance as a component of the National Trails System. The managing agency's policies (see chapter 1) and supporting tools or references may provide guidance for how to inventory, assess, or otherwise identify specific instances and locations of these resources and values along the trail in order to monitor and safeguard them. The following significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values have been identified for the PNT:

The Trail Itself

The PNT's 1,200-mile route was selected and refined over decades to highlight the scenic beauty and rugged landscapes of the Northwest. The route largely makes use of existing trails and, where necessary at this time, roads and cross-country routes to allow continuous travel from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean. The majority of the PNT follows forested trails and dirt tracks, with short sections near population centers on paved shared-use paths. The westernmost section is a walk over the rocky beaches and sandy shorelines of the Olympic Coast.

The PNT links other components of the National Trails System, overlapping for short segments with the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (in the Pasayten Wilderness) and Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (in Glacier National Park). This makes it possible for travelers to connect multiple long trails into epic journeys such as the 7,700-mile transcontinental Sea-to-Sea Route and the nearly 7,000-mile Great Western Loop.

Citizen volunteers have been critical to developing and maintaining the PNT. In limited locations, the trail was purpose-built by volunteers to serve as part of the PNT. One example is Washington's Blanchard State Forest where trail names memorialize the individual Pacific Northwest Trail Association volunteers and volunteer groups that designed and constructed them. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association and other trail organizations and youth conservation corps contribute tens of thousands of hours each year to improve and maintain the PNT for the enjoyment of all trail users.

Exceptional Scenic Beauty and Variety

The PNT's east-west route travels through some of the most spectacular and scenic terrain in the United States. The PNT undulates “against the grain” over a series of distinct mountain ranges and river valleys before reaching Puget Sound and, eventually, the Pacific Ocean. A scenic inventory conducted in 2015 documents the visual resources and existing conditions across the trail (Stringham et al. 2016). Areas along the trail that exemplify areas of distinctive or unique visual quality and scenic attractiveness include Stony Indian Pass and Brown Pass in Glacier National Park, the crest of the Selkirk Range in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, the Pasayten Wilderness sections that include Devils Dome and the crest of the North Cascades, Whatcom Pass in North Cascades National Park Complex, the heart of the Olympic Mountains, and the Pacific Coast in Olympic National Park. Cultural features such as historic structures (fire lookouts; rustic ranger stations, cabins, and trail shelters, and farmhouses and barns), and land uses and features that contribute to sense of place (culturally modified trees²⁰ and other visual signs of indigenous peoples' heritage and long connections to these lands; vantages of timberlands, agricultural fields, and pastures; quaint small-town storefronts and streetscapes; dams and flumes; and waterfront harbors, piers, and ferries) add elements of visual variety that contribute to the diversity of scenic character along the trail.

Wilderness and Backcountry Settings

Opportunities to experience wilderness and remote backcountry areas was a major focus since the earliest concept for the PNT. Founder Ron Strickland envisioned the trail as being “as much as possible a *wilderness* trail, with relatively difficult access, relatively few signs and shelters, and relatively great attention given in planning to its walkers' potential wilderness experience” (emphasis in original) (Strickland 1974: 7). Today, the trail travels through 6 federally designated wilderness areas (the Salmo-Priest Wilderness in Washington; and the Pasayten, Stephen Mather, Mount Baker, Buckhorn, and Daniel J. Evans wilderness areas in Washington), the Chopaka Mountain Wilderness Study Area in Washington, and other lands managed for wilderness characteristics, and rugged backcountry areas. This is perhaps best epitomized by the 95-mile section of the PNT that traverses the 531,371-acre Pasayten Wilderness, which is one of the most remote, physically demanding, and scenic sections of the trail. The westernmost section of the PNT in the Daniel J. Evans Wilderness offers a unique coastal wilderness experience, with travel ruled by the tides and with views over the surf to the islands, rocks, and reefs of the Washington Islands Wilderness. Although visitors to these areas today may experience them as undeveloped and primeval, Native Americans lived in and travelled through these portions of their ancestral homelands prior to and following the arrival of explorers, trappers, and settlers in the region.

Diverse Ecological Communities and Valued Plant Species

The PNT is the only national scenic trail with an east-west orientation, from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean. It crosses three major cordilleras (Rockies, Cascades, and Olympics) and seven lesser mountain ranges (Okanogan, Kettle, Selkirk, Purcell, Cabinet, Salish, Whitefish); passes volcanoes and peaks rising above 10,000 feet; and bisects multiple

²⁰ Culturally modified trees are trees which have been cut or modified by humans for myriad uses including food sources, building materials, wayfinding markings, and more.

major river valleys, Whidbey Island (the second-largest island in the contiguous 48 states), the Puget Sound estuary, and ocean beaches. Within this larger physiographic landscape lie unique terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that provide habitat for countless plant, animal, and fungus species. These include alpine tundra, subalpine dwarf forests and meadows, sagebrush steppe, coastal headlands, fresh- and saltwater wetlands, tidepools, and beaches. Biological communities evolved to the relative abundance or scarcity of water. Wet inland temperate rainforests occur in the Purcell and Selkirk Mountains of Montana, Idaho, and eastern Washington, while even wetter Pacific temperate rainforests are found on the west slope of the Cascades and throughout the Olympic Mountains of western Washington. East of the Cascade crest through the Columbia Mountains lies a rain shadow region, characterized by dry open pine forests and grasslands. Several tree species stand out as ecological and cultural keystone species. Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, is an important food plant for birds and bears. And western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), a significant cultural species for many Northwest tribes. Nontimber forest products hold economic, recreational, and cultural importance in addition to their ecological roles. Notable nontimber forest products include plants such as huckleberries (*Vaccinium* spp.) and camas (*Camassia* spp.), and fungi such as morels (*Morchella* spp.) and chanterelles (*Cantharellus* spp.).

Iconic Wildlife and Fish Species

Many animal species are important to the PNT. Some animals are unique to the region, including endemics like the Olympic marmot. Others are protected under the Endangered Species Act, such as the grizzly bear, Canada lynx, Kootenai River white sturgeon, Southern Mountain Caribou, bull trout, Northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, southern resident killer whales, chinook and sockeye salmon, and steelhead trout. Some species are frequently sighted along the trail, such as black bear and deer. Still other species are rarely, if ever, encountered yet still impart a special feeling and humility for trail users passing through these animals' habitats, as with grizzly bear and gray wolf. Other iconic Pacific Northwest species of note include cougar, bobcat, fisher, wolverine, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, moose, elk, pika, and bald eagle; myriad fresh and saltwater fish species including westslope cutthroat trout, burbot, kokanee, and Pacific lamprey; river and sea otters; multiple seal, sea lion, and whale species including porpoise and dolphin; Dungeness crab; and bivalves such as the geoduck and razor clams.

Places of Importance to Tribes

The lands where the PNT is located – including lands that are now national forests, national parks, wilderness areas, and other public lands – are the ancestral homelands of indigenous nations, including at least 23 Native American tribes. Additional groups and bands are subsumed within these federally recognized tribes, and some tribes belong to the same cultural nation as Indigenous First Nations groups in Canada. The cultural landscape surrounding the PNT is replete with indigenous travel routes that preceded Euro-American contact, and tribal members continue to use some of these routes to access sacred sites and to exercise treaty rights including hunting and fishing; and gathering food, medicine, and ceremonial materials in open and unclaimed lands within their ceded territories. Federally recognized tribes consult government-to-government with Federal agencies regarding management of their ancestral lands and waters.

Traces of the Past

The cultural landscape through which the PNT passes still bears the marks of those who came before. Cultural resources are valuable touchstones of our collective national heritage. They include prehistoric, historic, archaeological, and architectural sites, structures, places, or objects and traditional cultural properties²¹ associated with groups, patterns of land use and other aspects of the history of the Northwest (inclusive of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest regions). Areas surrounding the PNT contain hundreds of archaeological sites representing millennia of indigenous use and more recent sites tied to numerous other groups and historic time periods including a continued indigenous presence, Chinese sojourners, explorers, fur traders, miners, loggers, homesteaders, among others. Archaeological remains represent only a very small sample of the complex, rich, and dynamic past lifeways associated with each group and time period. Interpreting and enjoying cultural resources, as appropriate, enriches the PNT experience. Examples of locations along or near the PNT where visitors may experience and enjoy cultural resources include the Belly River Valley in Montana, with its views of Chief Mountain; Snyder Guard Station, built as a remote workstation for early Forest Service employees on the Moyie River in Idaho; and Ebey's Prairie and nearby World War I- and World War II-era coastal fortifications on Washington's Whidbey Island, part of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve.

Rivers and Shorelines

From rushing streams and broad reservoirs to brackish waters and ocean shores, the PNT experience is truly one defined by water. The thru-hiker's journey begins and ends with snow in the mountains on both ends of the trail; and most travel westbound, like a raindrop, from the headwaters of mountain streams to the ocean. The eastern half of the PNT transects the expansive Columbia River Basin, which drains parts of seven U.S. states and the Canadian province of British Columbia. The PNT crosses several tributaries of the Columbia — the North Fork Flathead (part the Three Forks of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River), Kootenai, Pend Oreille, Sanpoil, Okanogan, and Similkameen rivers — that are great rivers in their own right. The PNT's crossing of the mainstem Columbia River at Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake (Lake Roosevelt) highlights the historic importance of the Columbia and its tributaries as sources of hydroelectric power and other ecosystem services, including irrigation, navigation, recreation, fish and wildlife, and economic development. The western half of the PNT features a dramatic crossing of the Upper Skagit River on Ross Dam in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area and encounters with the Baker River and Nooksack River and their headwaters in the North Cascades. Descending to sea level on the Salish Sea, the PNT enters the Washington Maritime National Heritage Area, which encompasses 3,000 miles of saltwater coastline that were set aside to tell the nationally important story of maritime heritage, from Native American canoe cultures to industrial working waterfronts. The PNT skirts the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, offering views of the distant San Juan archipelago, before heading south along the Whidbey Island shoreline and culminating with a ferry sailing across Admiralty Inlet from

²¹ A traditional cultural property is a property, a place, that is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with cultural practices and beliefs that are (1) rooted in the history of a community, and (2) are important to maintaining the continuity of that community's traditional beliefs and practices.

Coupeville to Port Townsend. On the Olympic Peninsula, the PNT provides an opportunity to observe the dynamic transformation of the Elwha River - free-flowing following the removal of Elwha Dam in 2011 and Glines Canyon Dam in 2014. Nearing its western terminus, the PNT descends from glacial headwaters near Mount Olympus to the outflow of the Hoh and Quillayute rivers at the Pacific coast. The final miles of the PNT follow Olympic National Park's wilderness coast, showcasing sand and pebble beaches, tidepools, coastal bluffs, and offshore sea stacks teeming with wildlife.

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Chapter 4. Trail Location

The National Trails System Act established national scenic trails as one of four types of trails that compose the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1242):

National scenic trails ... will be 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. National scenic trails may be located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation. [16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)]

In designating the PNT in 2009, Congress described it as:

...a trail of approximately 1,200 miles, extending from the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park, Montana, to the Pacific Ocean Coast in Olympic National Park, Washington, following the route depicted on the map entitled 'Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail: Proposed Trail', numbered T12/80,000, and dated February 2008... [16 USC 1244 (30)].

Figure 2 and [appendix B](#) display the legislative map²² referenced in the establishing language above.

After the PNT was designated in 2009, the Forest Service coordinated with managing agencies and partner organizations to match the legislative map to the actual trails, roads, and cross-country routes on the ground that comprise the PNT as designated by Congress. This is referred to as the **congressionally designated route**. The congressionally designated route is shown in the detail maps accessible online through the hyperlink here ([REFERENCE PNNST_MapBook041822.pdf](#)) and in [appendix C](#).

That effort identified some locations along the congressionally designated route that the public cannot access due to private property, security concerns, or other restrictions. One notable location where public access is prohibited is Boundary Dam on the Pend Oreille River in northeast Washington. **Please be aware that the maps in this comprehensive plan are for administrative purposes only; they do not convey a right of access and should not be used for trip planning or navigation.** As this chapter describes, future collaborative efforts will relocate sections of the PNT to avoid areas without public access.

²² The map was prepared by the National Park Service at the request of members of Congress to accompany legislation introduced that would designate the PNT as a national scenic trail. The map title's inclusion of "proposed trail" reflects the PNT's status at the time the map was created. The PNT was established as a national scenic trail on March 30, 2009, through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009.

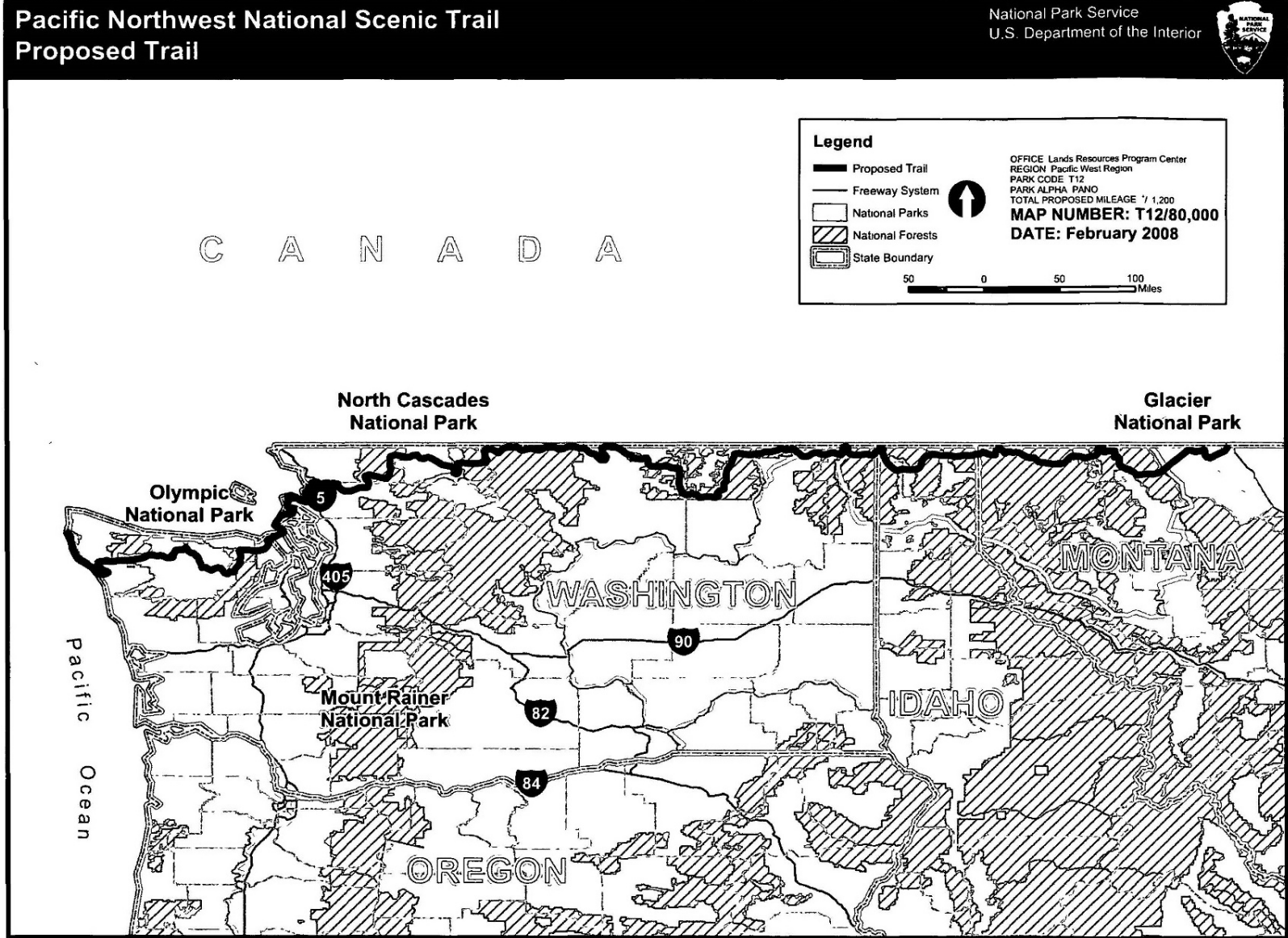


Figure 2. 2008 legislative map for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Visitor information provided by the Pacific Northwest Trail Association (PNTA) on their website <https://www.pnt.org/pnta/maps/> depicts a **PNTA primary route** that allows for continuous, end-to-end travel, avoiding areas the public cannot access, and areas that may be impassible due to the condition of the trail or the areas it goes through. The PNTA primary route follows the congressionally designated route to the extent practicable. The PNTA primary route is determined by the PNTA based on consultation with managing agencies and landowners about public access and on-the-ground conditions. Because these are dynamic, the PNTA updates the primary route each year as needed. Visitor information provided by the PNTA also depicts various **PNTA alternate routes** that depart from the primary route. According to the PNTA, their alternate routes may reflect the historical vision for the PNT (such as routes described in guidebooks by Strickland and others), offer a different experience than the PNTA primary route, allow visitors to bypass sections of the trail with adverse conditions, be better suited during inclement weather, or be better suited for stock use (Pacific Northwest Trail Association, 2021, p. 3). The PNTA also provides information on **PNTA connecting routes** that provide additional ways of detouring around sections of the PNTA primary route or connecting between the PNTA primary route and PNTA alternate routes.

Other sources of visitor information (such as guidebooks, mobile apps, maps, websites, blogs and videos) may present yet more variations on the PNT route.

At this time, the Forest Service administers only the congressionally designated route as the “official” PNT for the purposes of implementing the National Trails System Act. In the future, as segments of the PNT are relocated, they will become part of the official PNT route, replacing the previous location for those segments.

The experience of other, longer-established national scenic trails such as the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail suggests that over time, as the PNT is developed and trail conditions improve, including relocating segments off roads and motorized trails and onto nonmotorized trails with secure public access, many underlying issues that have driven the proliferation of various routes will be resolved. The need for different route options in some areas may remain; for example, to allow pack and saddle stock to bypass areas closed or impassable to stock. Visitors will remain free to depart from the official route if they prefer to use other trails and roads open for public use (consistent with the managing agency’s or landowner’s restrictions or requirements, such as permit requirements.)

In this comprehensive plan, information for the PNT refers to the congressionally designated route unless otherwise noted. General convention for the PNT is to provide geographic information from east to west, reflecting the predominant direction of travel on the PNT.

Route Description

A link to maps of the PNT is provided here ([REFERENCE PNNST_MapBook041822.pdf](#)) and in [appendix C](#).

Geographic Regions

Along its 1,200-mile journey from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean, the PNT travels through some of the most spectacular and diverse terrain in the Northwest (inclusive of parts of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest). The trail passes through five primary biogeographic areas. From east to west, these areas include the Rocky Mountains, Columbia Mountains, North Cascades, Puget Sound, and Olympic Peninsula. They are organized based on similarities in biotic, physical, terrestrial, and aquatic components.

Rocky Mountains (Maps 1 through 4)

The PNT's eastern terminus is located within sight of the Canadian border at Chief Mountain Customs in Glacier National Park. This easternmost section of the trail spans approximately 239 miles. The PNT shares 26 miles of tread during this initial leg with the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail before reaching Waterton Lake, where the PNT departs for Bowman Lake before exiting the park at the small community of Polebridge, Montana.

The trail continues into the Flathead National Forest and travels up Hay Creek to the Whitefish Divide and then into the Kootenai National Forest and through the Ten Lakes Scenic Area before dropping down into the town of Eureka. From Eureka, the trail parallels Lake Koocanusa for several miles before climbing into the Purcell Mountains and passing near the unincorporated community of Yaak. In the Northwest Peaks Scenic Area, the trail follows mountain ridgelines around the Northwest Peaks and then crosses the Montana-Idaho state line near Canuck Pass. Once in Idaho, the trail drops down to cross the Kootenai River about 18 miles north of the city of Bonners Ferry before entering the Columbia Mountains.

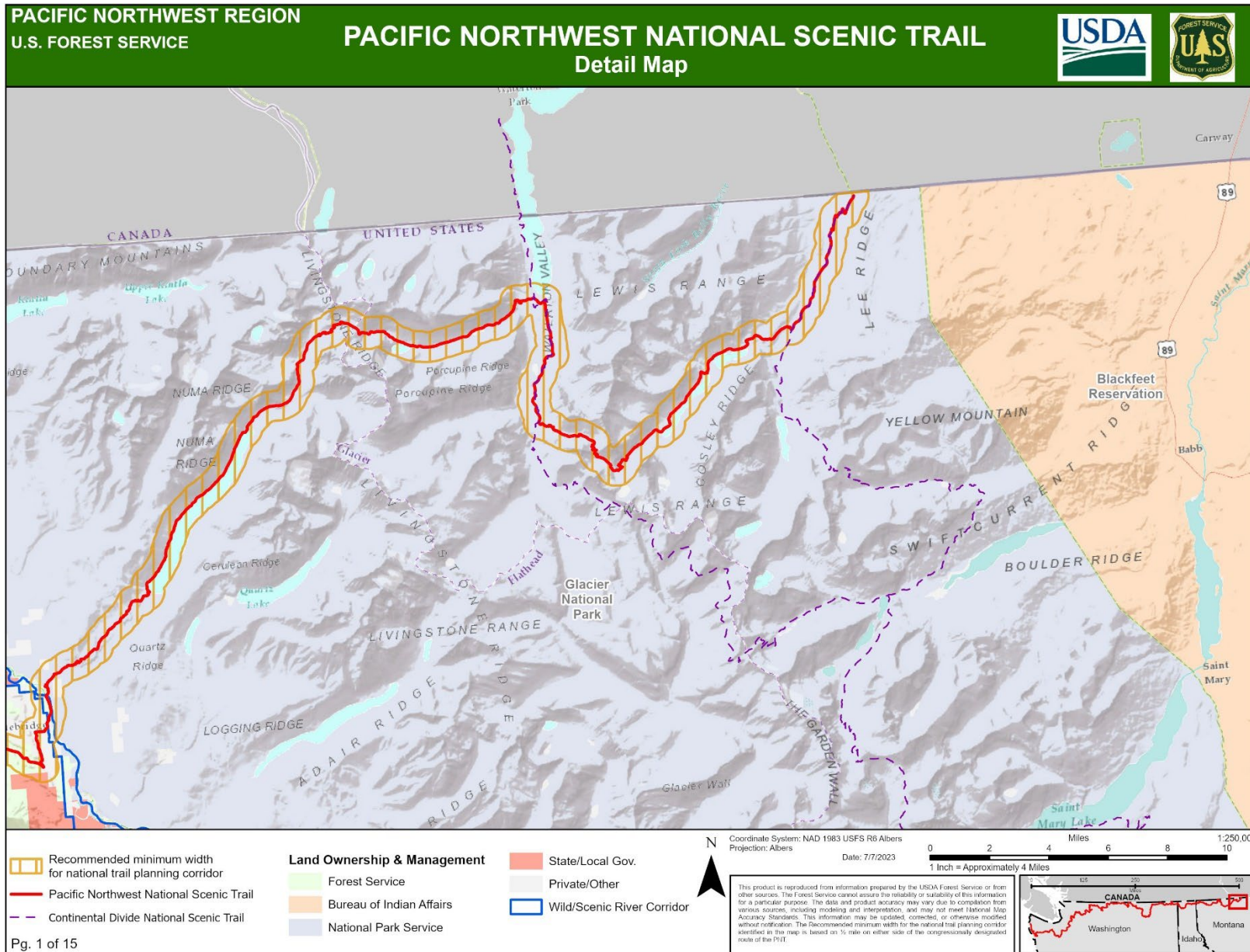


Figure 3. Map 1 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

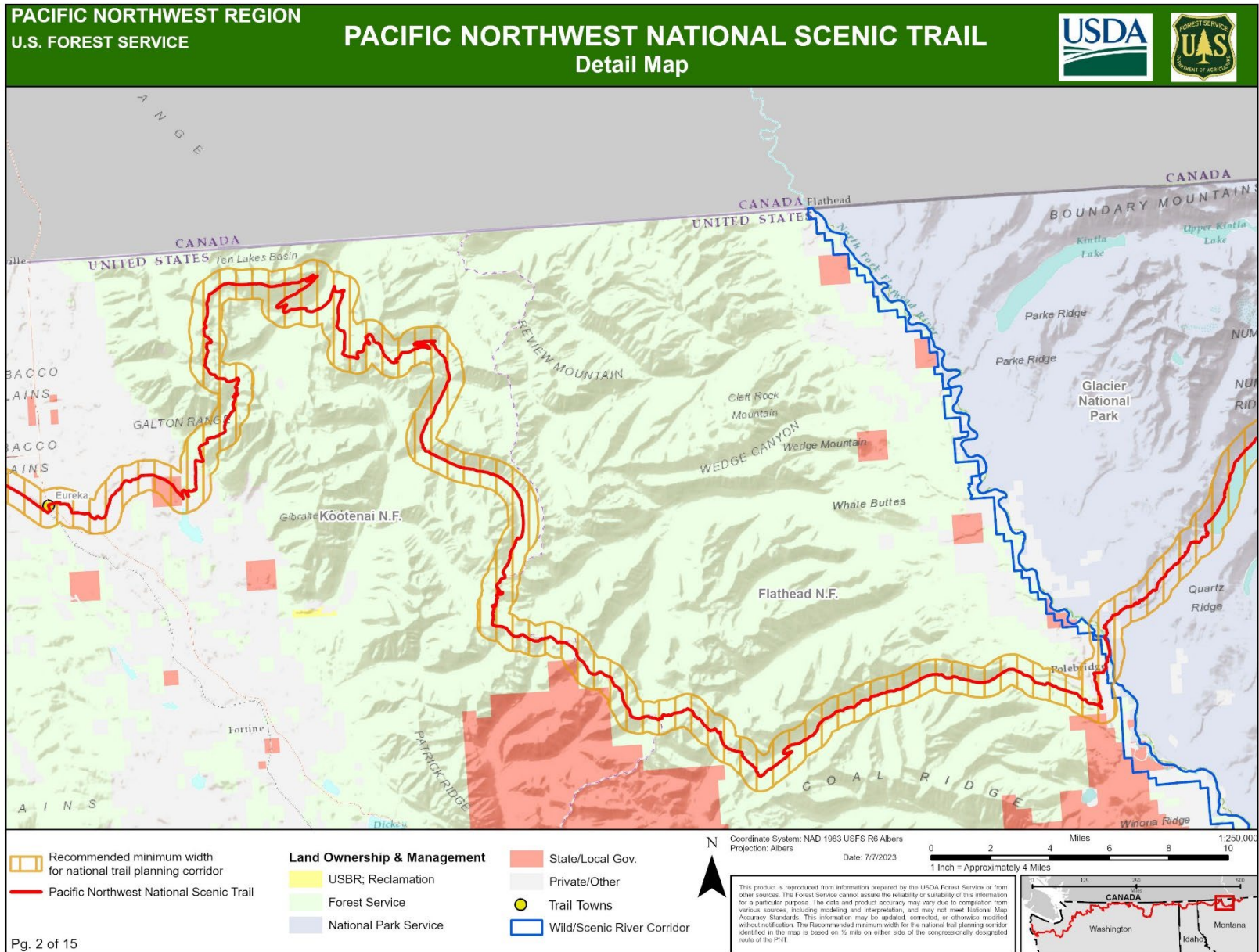


Figure 4. Map 2 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

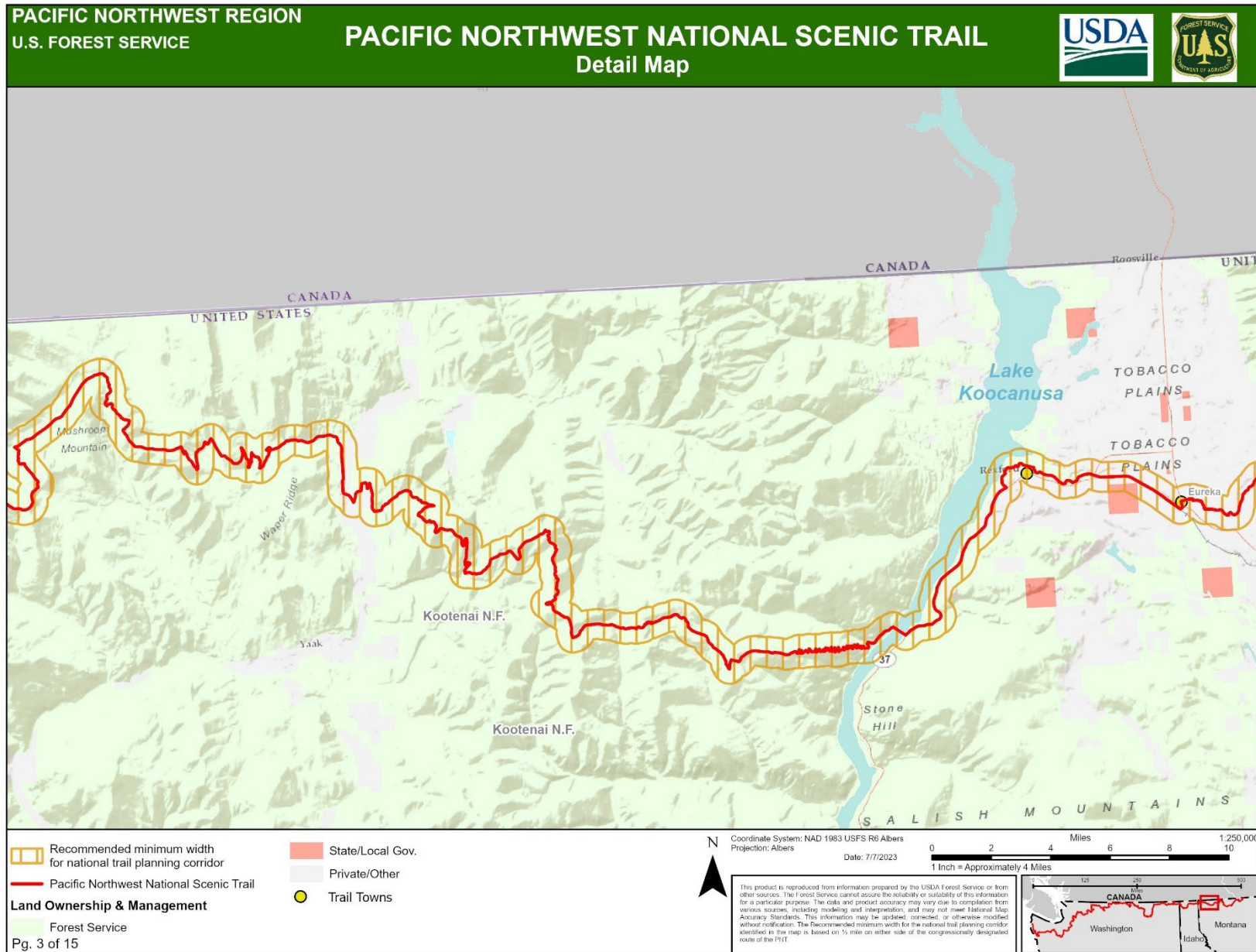


Figure 5. Map 3 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

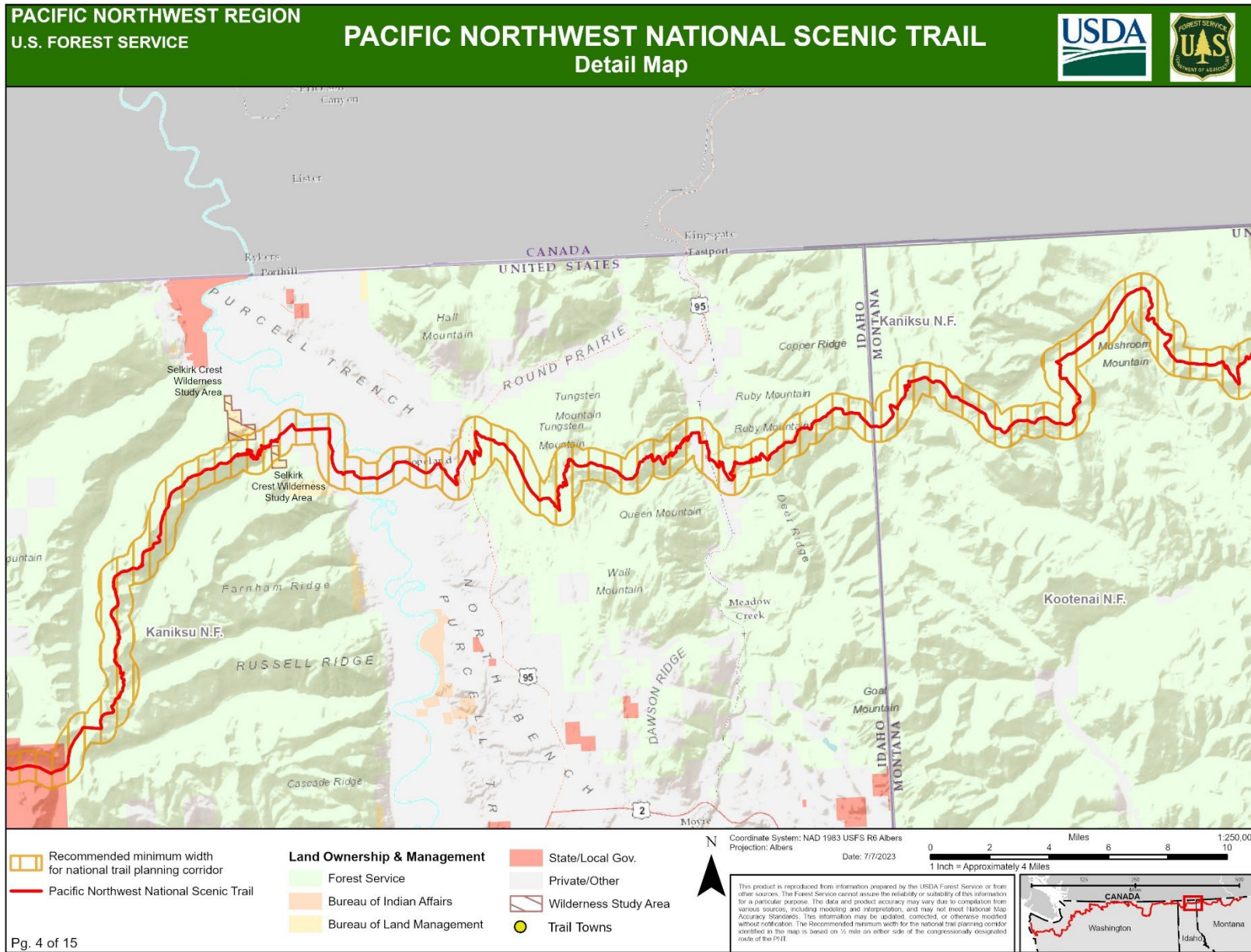


Figure 6. Map 4 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Columbia Mountains (Maps 4 through 8)

The Columbia Mountains region is the largest geographic area the PNT passes through and includes a mix of rugged mountain ranges interspersed with rolling hills and river valleys. This section of the trail is approximately 345 miles long.

After crossing the Kootenai River, the trail climbs into the Selkirk Range and over the Selkirk Crest. As the trail crosses the crest it leaves the Idaho Panhandle National Forests and crosses onto land managed by the Idaho Department of Lands. The trail then descends into the Priest River valley, passing Upper Priest Lake before ascending back into the Idaho Panhandle National Forests and crossing into the Colville National Forest at the Idaho-Washington state line.

Once in Washington, the trail passes through the Salmo-Priest Wilderness before crossing the Pend Oreille River. It crosses the Columbia River at Northport and then dips south along the Kettle Crest and the trail's first crossing of Highway 20 at Sherman Pass. While meandering along the Kettle Crest, the trail passes near the towns of Curlew, Kettle Falls, and Republic. It enters the Colville Reservation north of the Sanpoil River. The trail turns north again and makes its second crossing of Highway 20 near Clackamas Mountain.

From Mt. Bonaparte, the trail wanders through grassy hillsides before dropping down Whistler Canyon to cross the Okanogan River in the town of Oroville. From Oroville, the trail follows the Similkameen River to Palmer Lake and into the North Cascades.

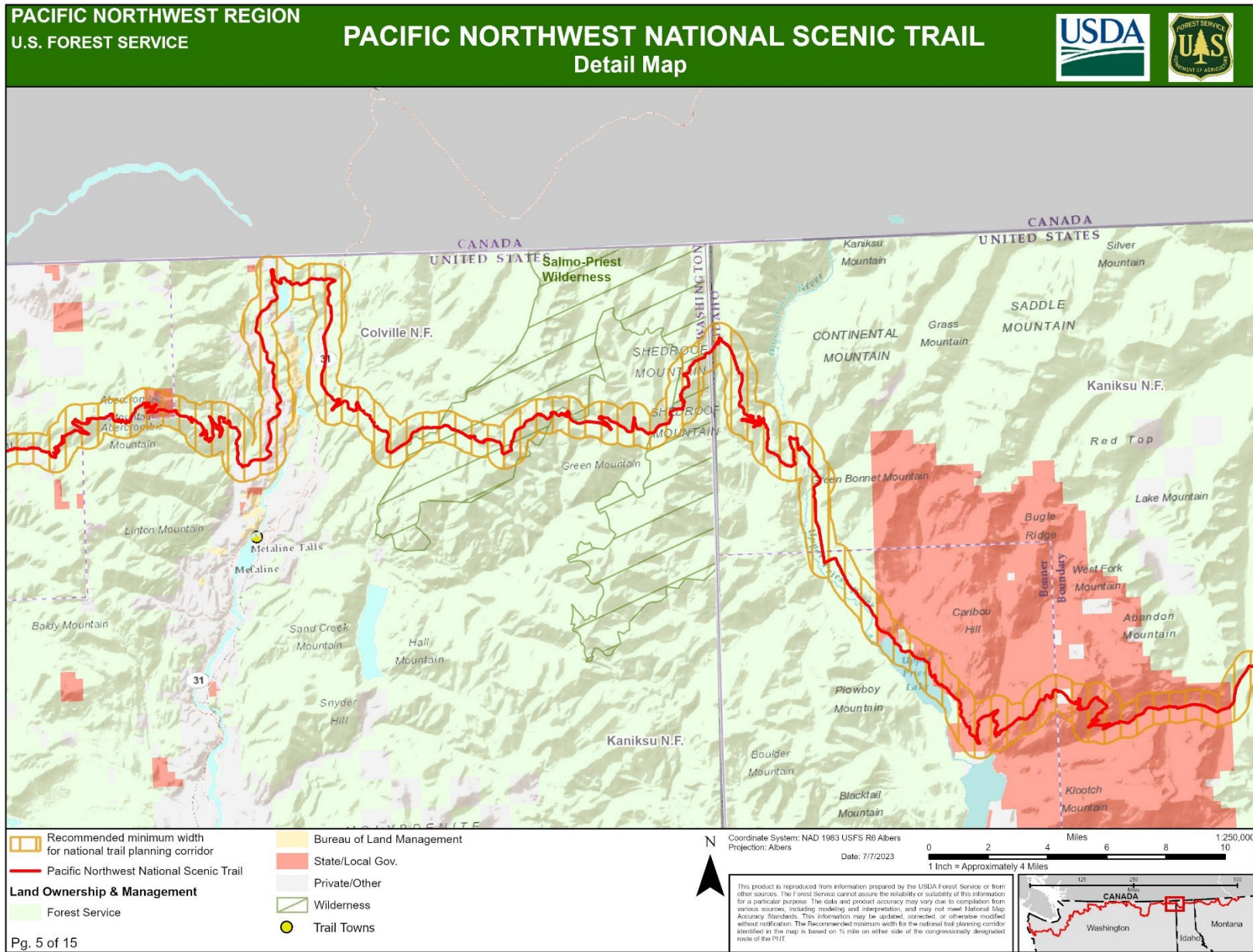


Figure 7. Map 5 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

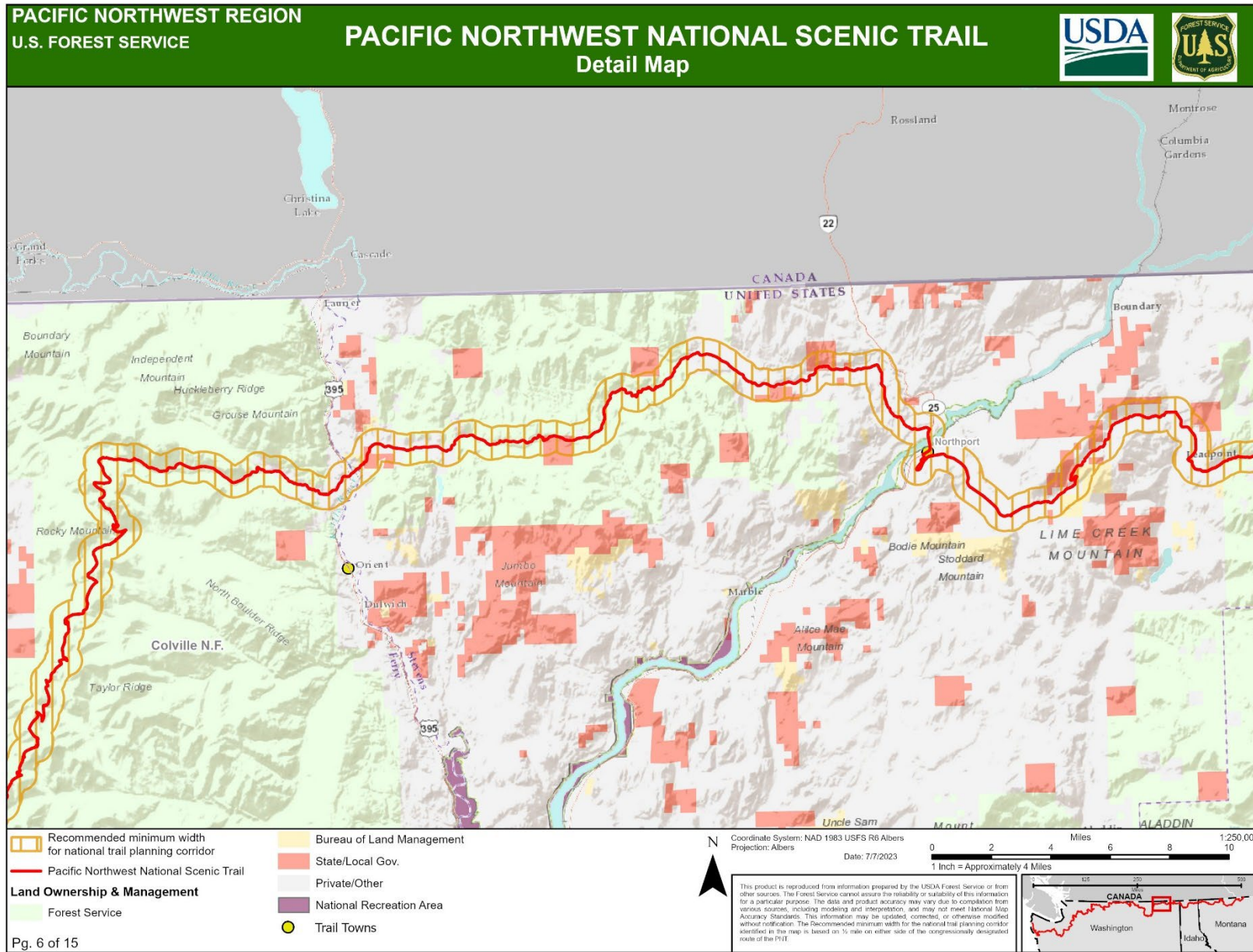


Figure 8. Map 6 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

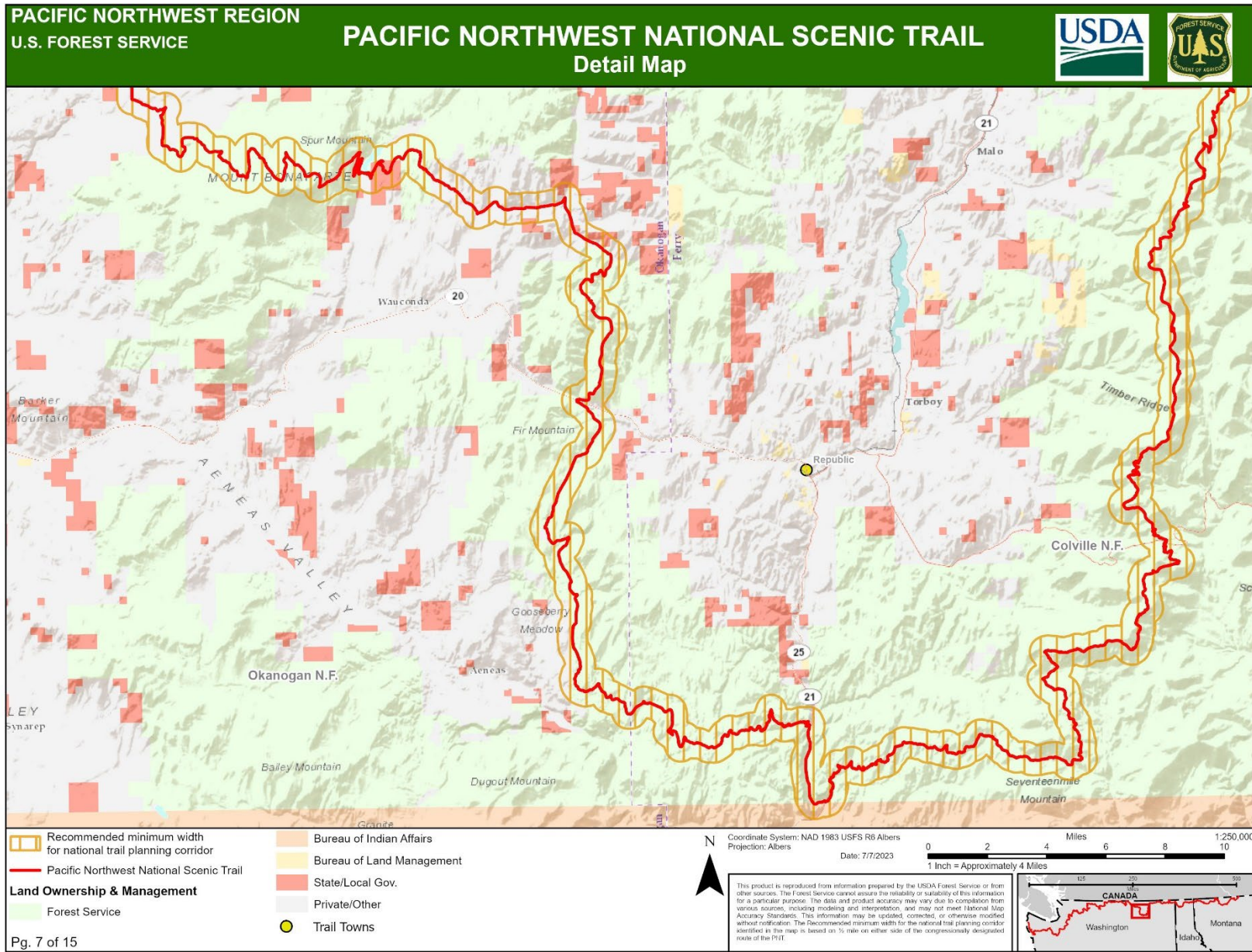


Figure 9. Map 7 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

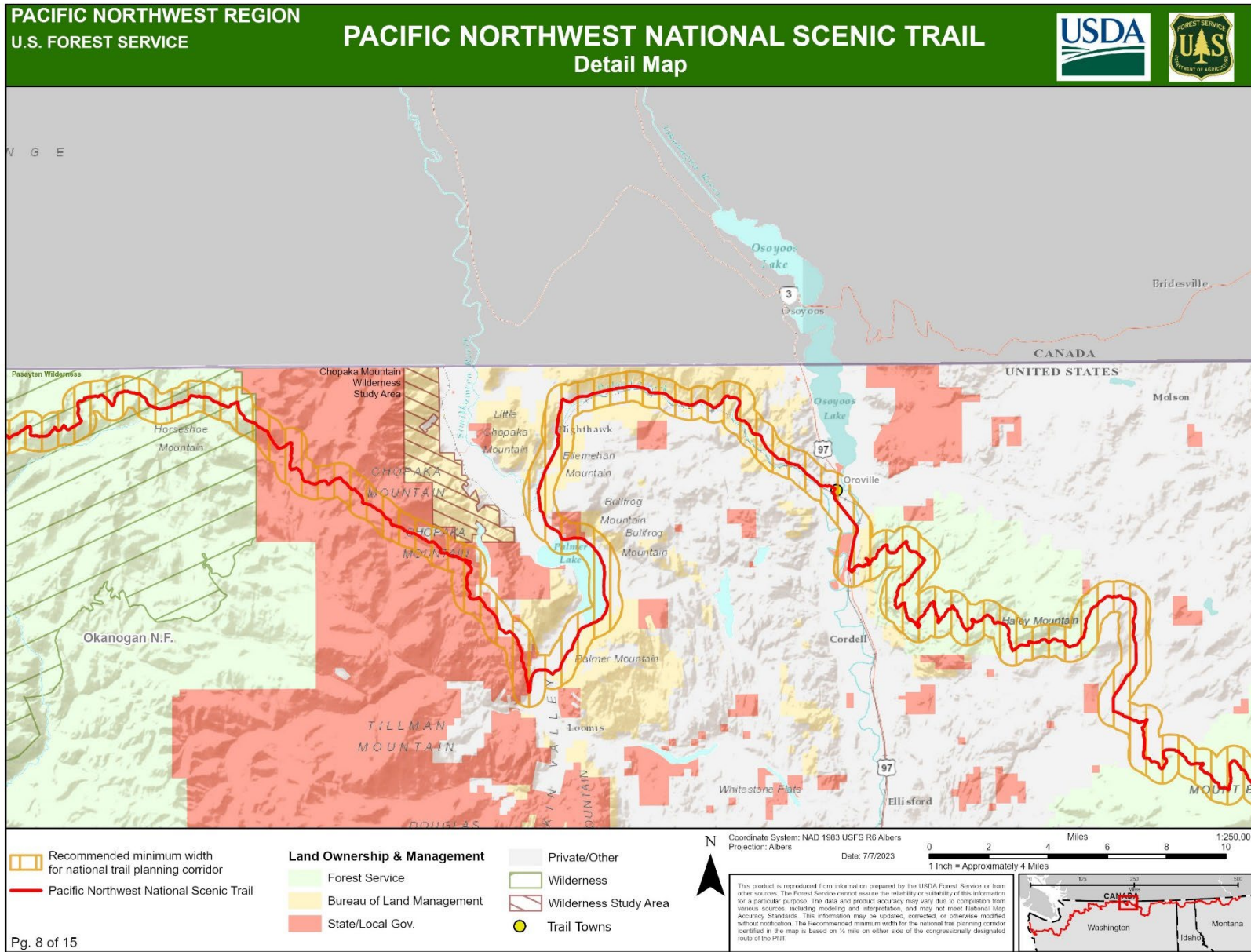


Figure 10. Map 8 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

North Cascades (Maps 8 through 11)

The North Cascades section of the PNT covers approximately 267 miles. The transition from the Columbia Mountains to the North Cascades is subtle at first but soon reveals a much different character. The North Cascades geographic area is much more remote and difficult to access with a long section through the Pasayten Wilderness.

The transition begins as the PNT climbs from Palmer Lake into Loomis State Forest, managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources. The trail then enters the Pasayten Wilderness and follows the Boundary Trail past Cathedral Peak and Sheep Mountain before crossing the Pasayten River. After crossing the Pasayten River, the Pacific Northwest Trail climbs through Frosty Pass to Castle Pass, where it turns south and shares 13 miles of trail tread with the Pacific Crest Trail until the Pacific Northwest Trail continues west at Holman Pass before entering the Ross Lake National Recreation Area, a part of the North Cascades National Park Complex.

The trail wraps south around Ross Lake and crosses the Skagit River at Ross Dam. It resumes its journey around Ross Lake before turning west up Beaver Creek, eventually crossing Whatcom Pass and dropping down to the Chilliwack River. The trail climbs out of North Cascades National Park and into the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest where it crosses Hannegan Pass and down Ruth Creek. Here a relatively long road-walk begins and the trail winds its way up the Mt. Baker Highway past the Mt. Baker Ski Area and Heather Meadows Visitor Center. The trail then leaves the road and drops down the Swift Creek drainage to wrap around Baker Lake before heading up to Schriebers Meadow below the summit of Mt. Baker.

From Schriebers Meadow, the trail meanders through miles of spectacular alpine meadows below Mt. Baker and passes next to the Park Butte Lookout before dropping down into the South Fork of the Nooksack River valley and entering the Puget Sound region.

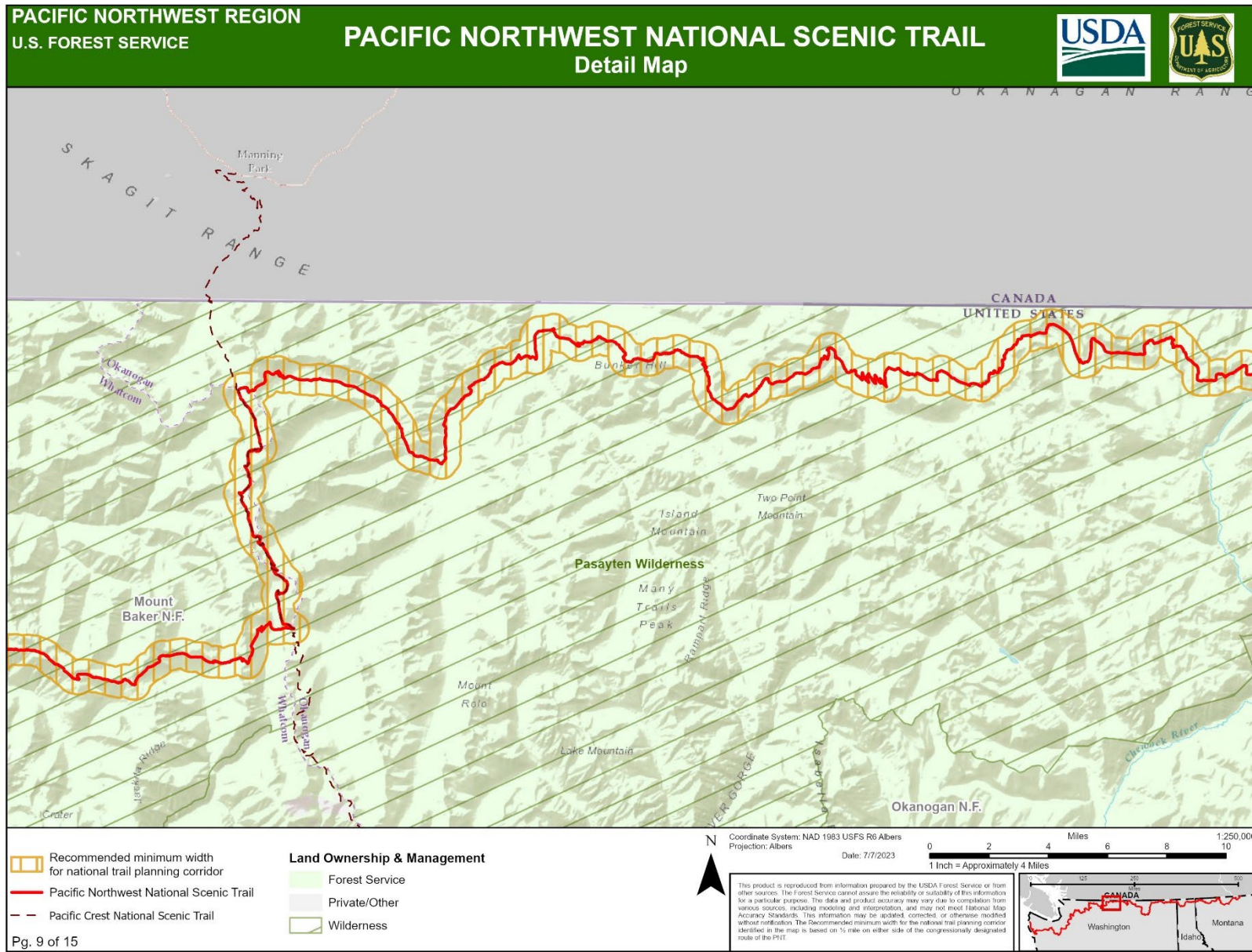


Figure 11. Map 9 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

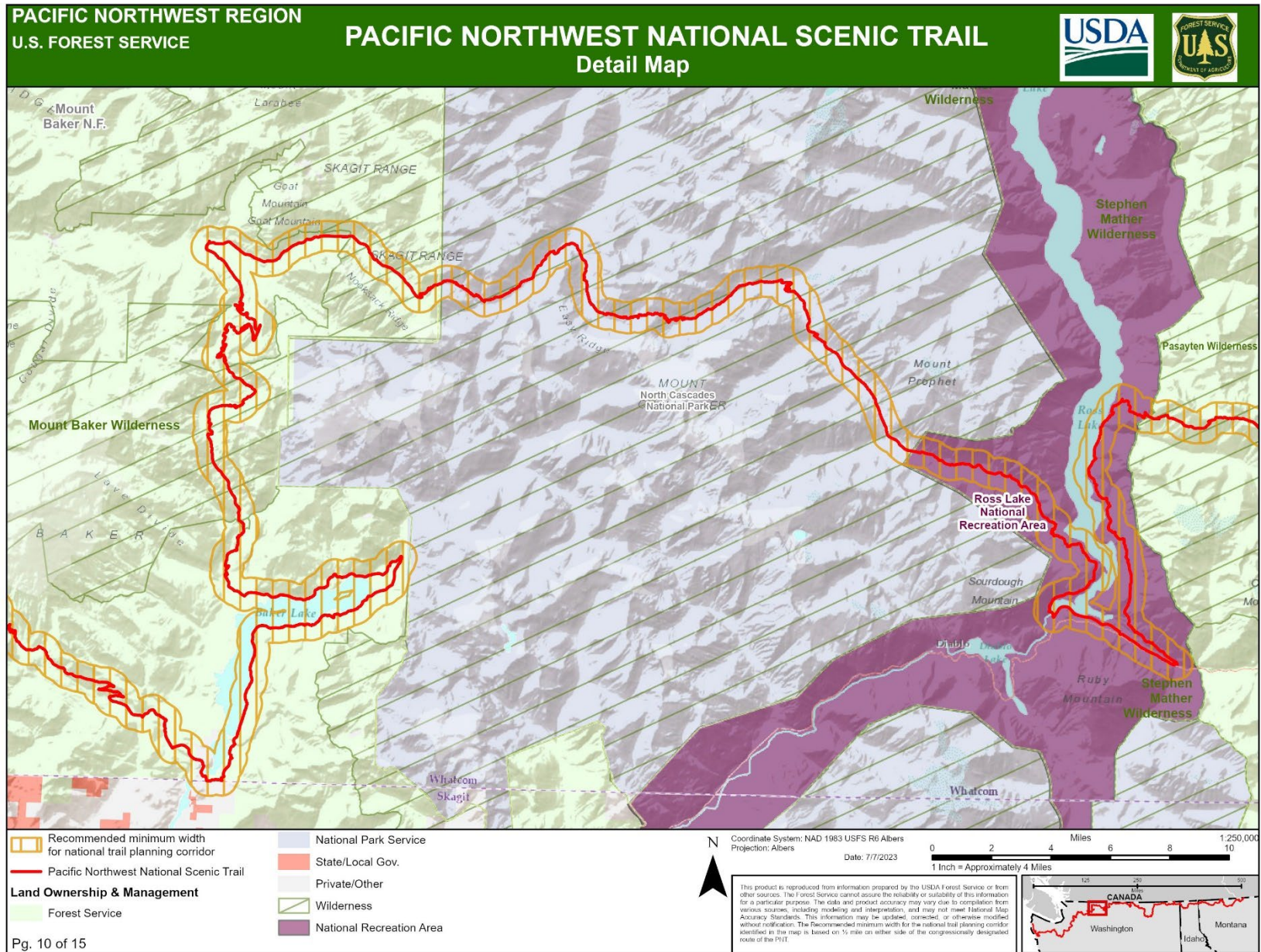


Figure 12. Map 10 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

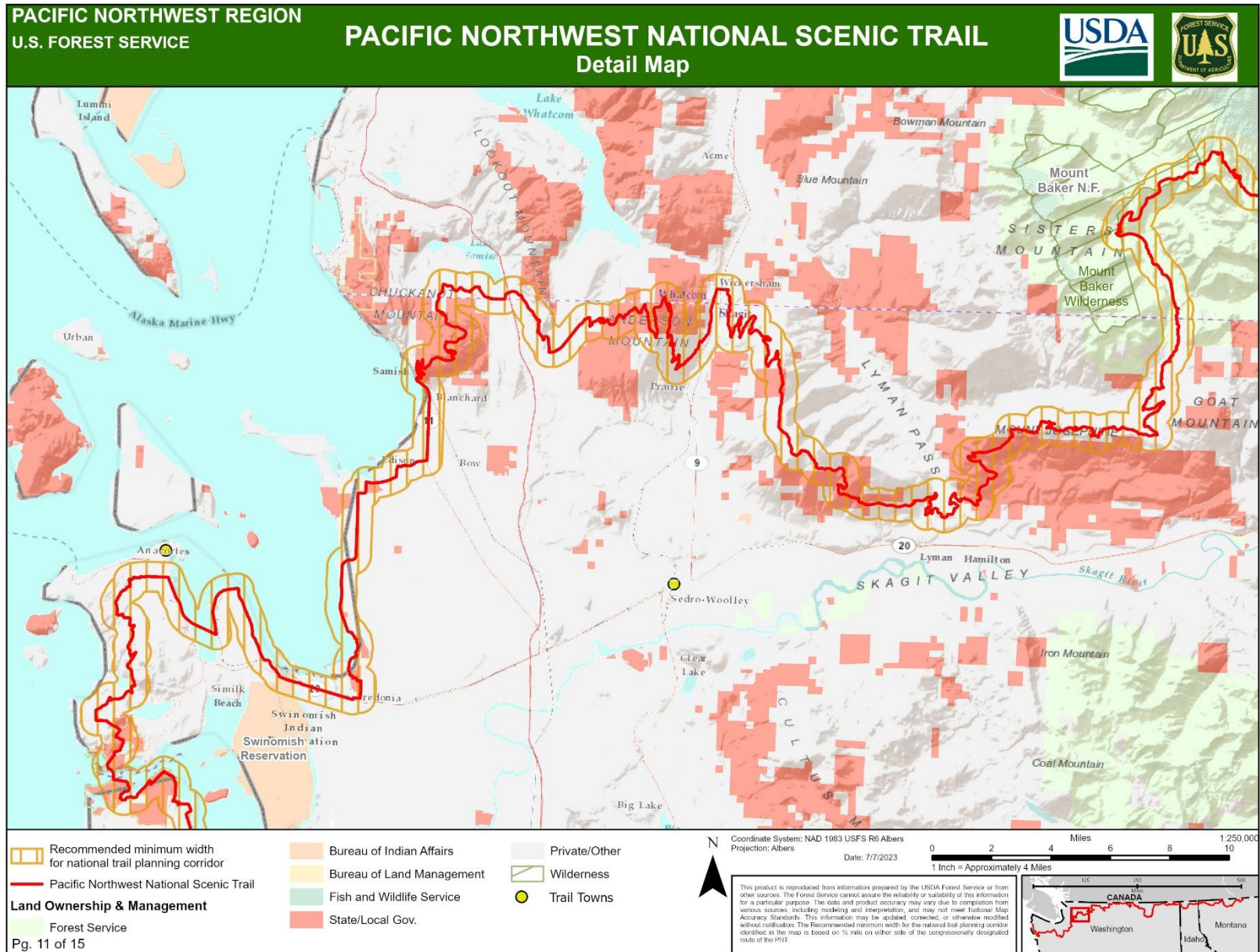


Figure 13. Map 11 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Puget Sound (Maps 11 through 12)

This section, from Mt. Josephine to Whidbey Island, is the shortest and one of the most easily accessed sections of the PNT, spanning approximately 139 miles. Most of the trail in this area is at or near sea level and remains snow-free year-round.

The trail leaves the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and crosses onto land managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and then onto a couple of large section of private timber land. The owners of these private lands allow use of the Pacific Northwest Trail on their land. The trail crosses Interstate 5 near Samish Lake and climbs the DNR-managed Blanchard Mountain on Puget Sound.

The trail passes through the community of Edison and Bay View State Park before entering the Swinomish Reservation along Highway 20 and the crossing of Fidalgo Bay on the Tommy Thompson Trestle leading to the town of Anacortes.

The trail winds through the Anacortes Community Forest Lands and down to its spectacular crossing of Deception Pass at Deception Pass State Park onto Whidbey Island.

The trail across Whidbey Island is unique – there are several miles of road walking in this developed area mixed in with remarkable walks in the coastal bluffs near Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve and Fort Ebey State Park.

After a walk through Fort Casey State Park and Ebey’s Landing, the trail crosses the Puget Sound by ferry, the only saltwater ferry crossing in the National Trails System. Travelers disembark the ferry in the scenic seaside town of Port Townsend, before heading into the interior of the Olympic Peninsula.

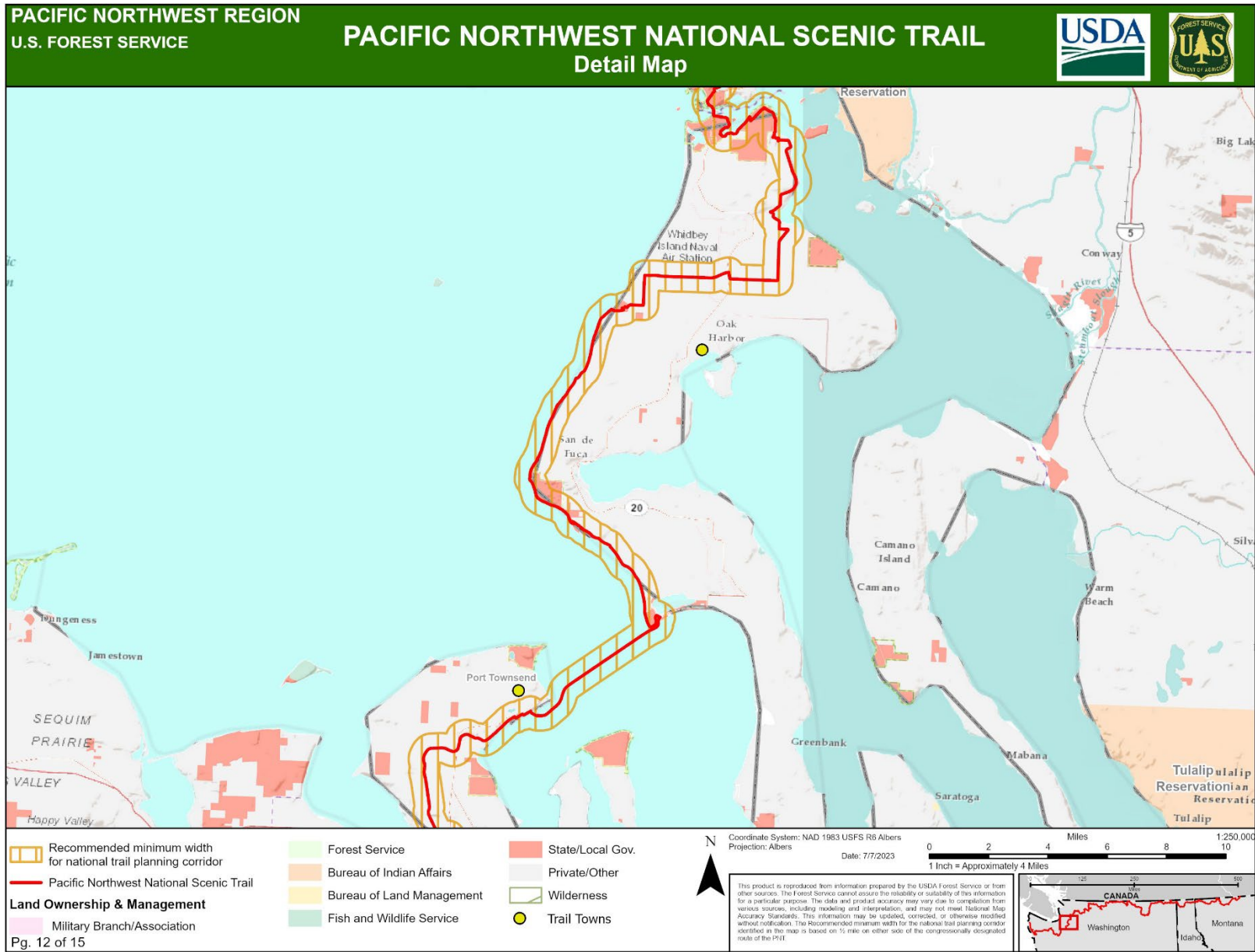


Figure 14. Map 12 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Olympic Peninsula (Maps 12-15)

The 223-mile Olympic Peninsula section of the PNT is an experience of extremes – it begins and ends at sea level, a ferry on one end and pristine, rocky beach on the other. In the middle is some of the most remote country in the contiguous United States, deep within the heart of Olympic National Park.

From Port Townsend, the trail maintains a suburban character before entering the Olympic National Forest and entering the Buckhorn Wilderness. The trail soon begins its long, 140-mile journey through Olympic National Park. The trail follows the Dosewallips and Elwha Rivers, heads up to the Seven Lakes Basin and the High Divide, and then drops down into the Bogachiel River and out of the park. The trail passes near the town of Forks and across Department of Natural Resource and private timberland before reentering Olympic National Park and following the Hoh River to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean north of the Hoh Indian Reservation.

The trail turns north at the coast and follows the bluffs and beaches before passing just east of the Quileute Indian Reservation to a bridge crossing of the Quillayute River. The trail follows the coastline to the western terminus at Cape Alava.

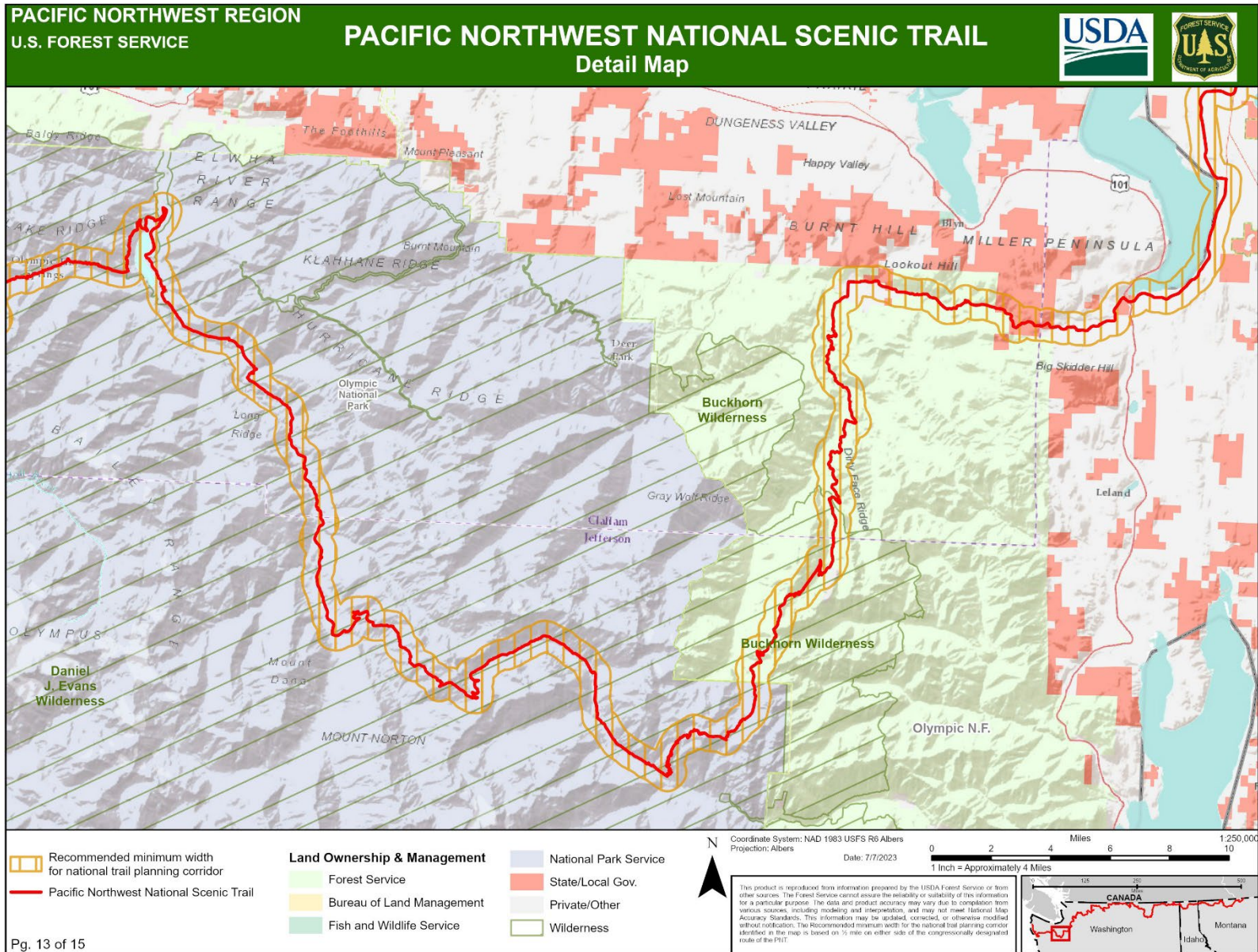


Figure 15. Map 13 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

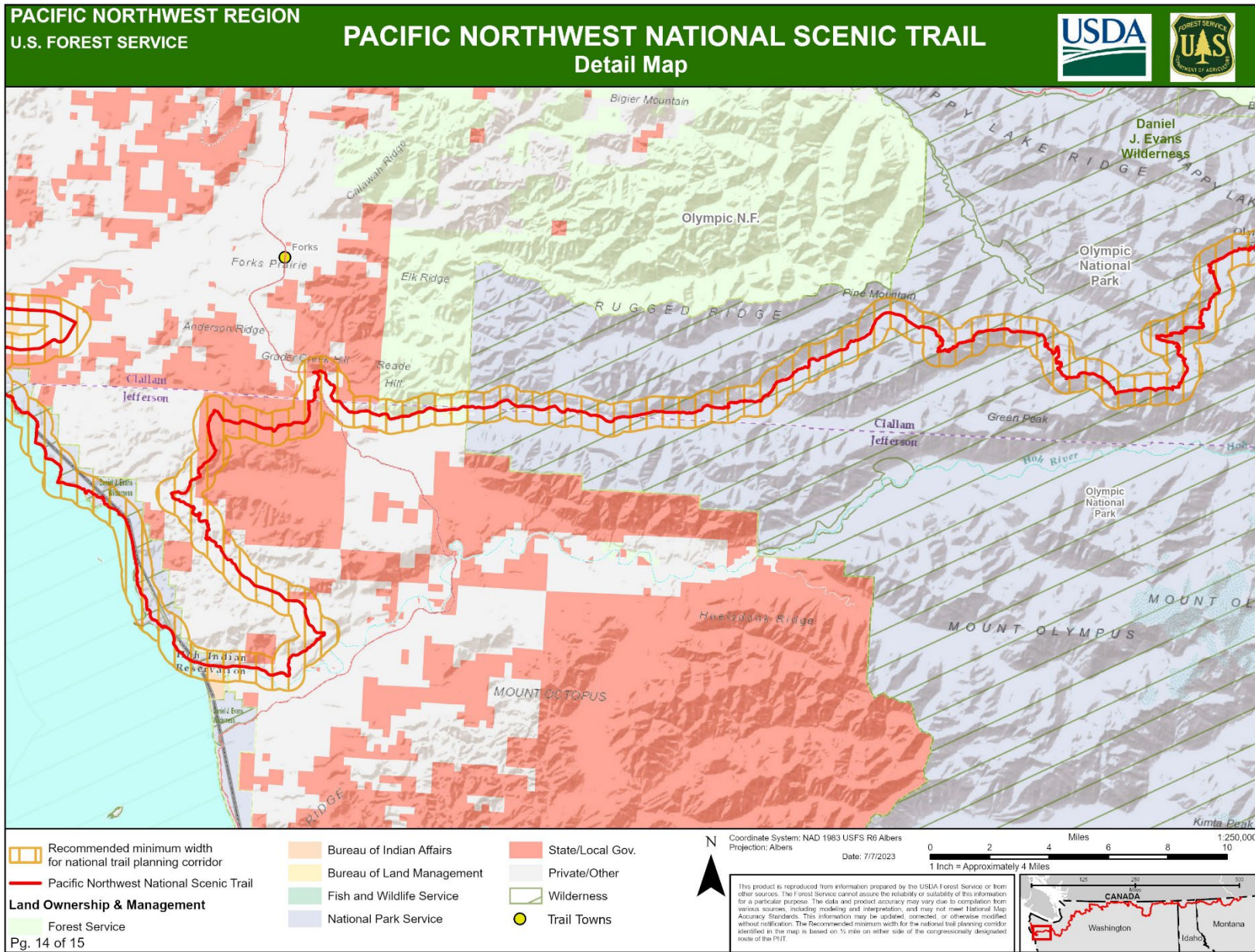


Figure 16. Map 14 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

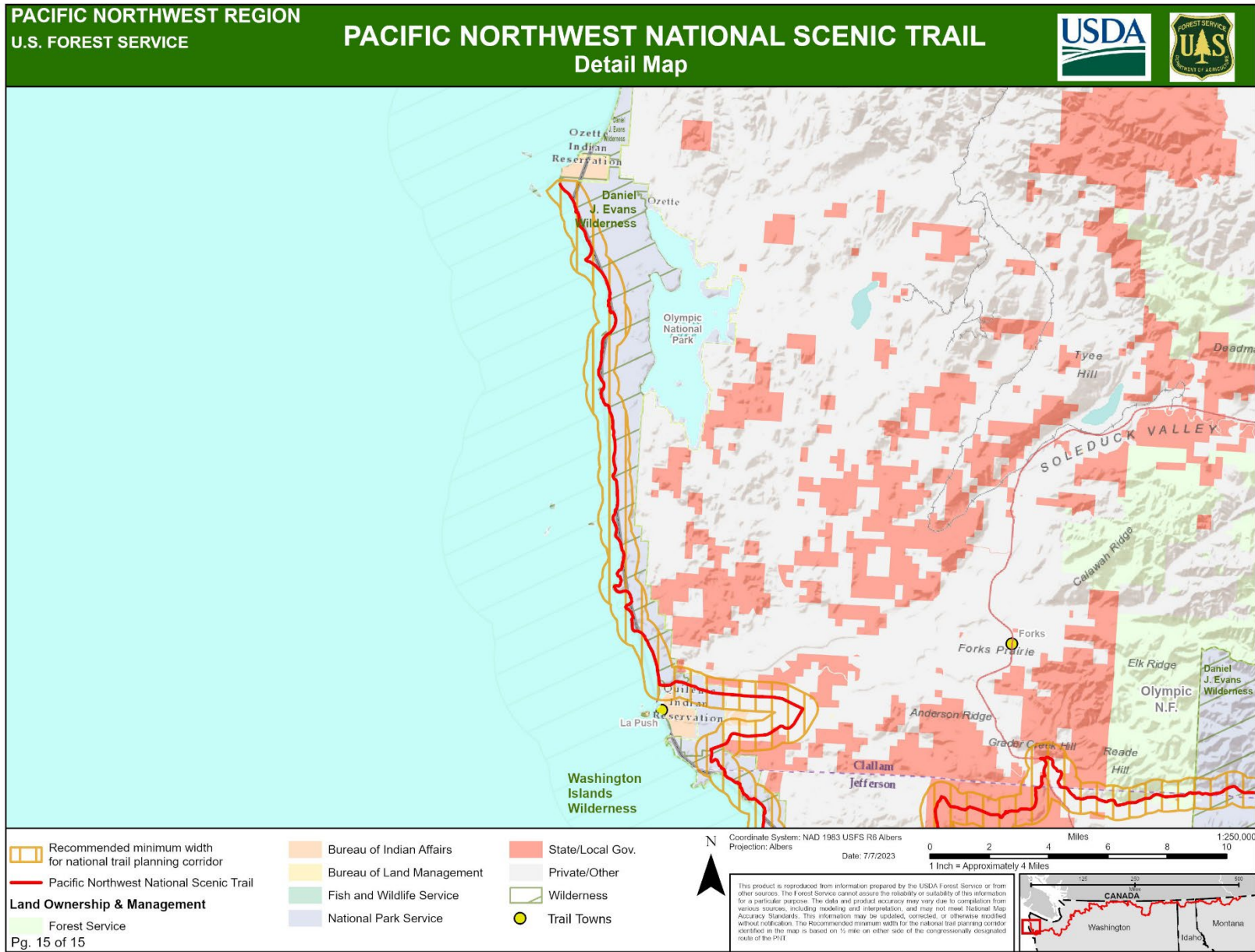


Figure 17. Map 15 of 15 - Detail map of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Public Land Management Units

The PNT crosses the following public land management units:²³

- Montana
 - Glacier National Park²⁴
 - Flathead National Forest²⁵, Glacier View Ranger District
 - Flathead National Forest, Tally Lake Ranger District
 - Kootenai National Forest, Fortine Ranger District
 - Kootenai National Forest, Rexford Ranger District
 - Kootenai National Forest, Three Rivers Ranger District
- Idaho
 - Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Bonners Ferry Ranger District
 - Idaho Department of Lands, state endowment lands in the vicinity of Priest Lake
 - Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Priest Lake Ranger District
- Washington
 - Colville National Forest, Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger District
 - Colville National Forest, Three Rivers Ranger District
 - Colville National Forest, Republic Ranger District
 - Spokane District, Bureau of Land Management²⁶
 - Colville National Forest, Tonasket Ranger District, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Loomis State Forest and Northeast Region lands
 - Okanogan County, Similkameen Trail
 - Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Methow Valley Ranger District
 - North Cascades National Park Service Complex, Ross Lake National Recreation Area
 - North Cascades National Park Service Complex, North Cascades National Park
 - Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Mt. Baker Ranger District

²³ For National Forest System units, the administering national forest unit is listed rather than the proclaimed national forest (e.g., Idaho Panhandle National Forests rather than Kaniksu National Forest.) Where lands are intermingled, each land management unit is only mentioned once although the PNT may enter and leave each unit multiple times. For example, the PNT travels along the Whitefish Divide in Montana, the ridgeline of which is also the boundary between the Glacier View Ranger District and Tally Lake Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest. Each district is listed here once, though the PNT goes back and forth between the districts more than once.

²⁴ National parks and Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve are managed by the National Park Service, Department of Interior.

²⁵ National forests are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture.

²⁶ The Bureau of Land Management is an agency within the Department of Interior.

- Washington Department of Natural Resources, Harry Osborne State Forest, and Northwest Region lands
- Whatcom County, Squires Lake Park
- Washington Department of Natural Resources, Blanchard State Forest
- Skagit County Parks and Washington Department of Ecology, Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Washington State Parks, Bay View State Park
- City of Anacortes, Tommy Thompson Trail
- City of Anacortes, Anacortes Community Forest Lands
- Washington State Parks, Deception Pass State Park
- Washington State Parks, Joseph Whidbey State Park
- Washington State Parks, Fort Ebey State Park
- Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve
- Washington State Parks, Fort Casey State Park and Ebey's Landing
- Jefferson County, Larry Scott Trail/Olympic Discovery Trail
- Olympic National Forest, Hood Canal Ranger District
- Olympic National Park
- Olympic National Forest, Pacific Ranger District
- Washington State Parks, Bogachiel State Park

Congressionally Designated Areas and Other Special Areas

The PNT is a congressionally designated area, established by Congress in 2009 through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009, which amended the National Trails System Act of 1968, as described in chapter 1.

In addition, the PNT passes through various special areas designated by Congress or the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, or Interior, or recognized by international entities for their special characteristics and the opportunities they offer. These designated areas include national scenic and historic trails, national recreation trails, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, national estuarine research reserves, national heritage areas, national marine sanctuaries, international biosphere reserves, international peace parks, and world heritage sites. As described in [chapter 1](#), management of the PNT will harmonize with Federal planning documents for these and other future designated areas where the PNT intersects them.

National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails, and National Recreation Trails

National scenic trails and national historic trails are components of the National Trails System that are designated by Congress under the National Trails System Act. National scenic trails are continuous, extended outdoor recreation routes within protected corridors. National historic trails

recognize original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance including past routes of exploration, migration, and military action. The PNT intersects and shares trail tread with two other national scenic trails. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, designated in 1978, joins the PNT for 26 miles from Chief Mountain Border Crossing to Waterton Lake in Glacier National Park, Montana. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, designated in 1968, joins the PNT for 13 miles in the Pasayten Wilderness, Washington, in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (administered by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest).

National recreation trails are also components of the National Trails System, but they are administratively designated by the Secretary of Interior or Secretary of Agriculture and do not entail the same planning and other requirements as national scenic trails and national historic trails, which are designated by Congress. National recreation trails provide a variety of outdoor recreation uses in or reasonably accessible to urban areas (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(1)). The PNT route through Glacier National Park, North Cascades National Park Service Complex, and Olympic National Park also has national recreation trail status. The PNT crosses or shares tread with several other national recreation trails. One outstanding example is the Kettle Crest National Recreation Trail near Republic, Washington, which provides opportunities for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing.

Wilderness

The National Wilderness Preservation System was established under the Wilderness Act of 1964. Wilderness areas are congressionally designated portions of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions. The Federal agencies that manage wilderness areas are responsible for preserving the area's wilderness character, which is comprised of the following qualities: untrammeled; natural; undeveloped; opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation; and, for some wilderness areas, other features of value (these vary by wilderness area; potential examples include ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, or historical features) (Landres et al. 2015).

The PNT crosses six federally designated wilderness areas with over 287 miles, or approximately 24 percent, of the trail within wilderness areas (see table 2).

Table 2. Wilderness areas along the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Wilderness Area	Acres of Wilderness¹	Miles of PNT²	PNT Geographic Region	Managing Agency and Unit
Salmo-Priest	41,307	10.25	Columbia Mountains	Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Colville National Forest
Pasayten	531,371	96.00	North Cascades	Forest Service, Colville National Forest, and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
Stephen Mather	638,173	57.85	North Cascades	Park Service, North Cascades National Park Service Complex
Mount Baker	119,417	15.90	North Cascades	Forest Service, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
Buckhorn	44,270	10.75	Olympic Peninsula	Forest Service, Olympic National Forest
Daniel J. Evans	876,447	96.50	Olympic Peninsula	Park Service, Olympic National Park

1 – Acres of wilderness are as reported on Wilderness Connect (<https://wilderness.net/>), a website collaboratively maintained by interagency Federal and non-federal partners.

2 - Miles of PNT per wilderness determined by Forest Service geospatial analysis

The PNT also goes through some areas that have been identified by Congress or the managing agency as wilderness study areas or by the managing agency as recommended wilderness or potential wilderness based on the area's wilderness characteristics. These areas are typically managed to maintain wilderness characteristics and retain the area's eligibility for future wilderness designation. Management direction may be found in agency policy (for example, Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70, 74.1 Management of Recommended Areas; NPS Policies 2006, RM-41 and DO-41 Wilderness Stewardship) or the relevant land management plan(s), or both.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.

The Three Forks of the Flathead River (portions of the North Fork, Middle Fork, and South Fork) was designated by Congress as a wild and scenic river in 1976. The PNT crosses the scenic river segment of the North Fork Flathead River on a road bridge near Polebridge, Montana. Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest cooperate to manage the North Fork Flathead River segment of the Three Forks of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River to protect and enhance free-flow, water quality, and the outstandingly remarkable values identified for this segment,

which are recreation, fisheries, water quality, wildlife, botany, geology, scenic, historic, and ethnographic (USDA Forest Service, Flathead National Forest, and Glacier National Park 2013).

The PNT also intersects with rivers that are being studied for their potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (referred to as study rivers), rivers that have been found eligible for inclusion (eligible rivers), rivers that have been found suitable for inclusion (suitable rivers), and rivers that have been recommended by the managing agency to Congress for designation as wild and scenic rivers. Within the one-mile PNT corridor, there are approximately 10 miles of eligible rivers in Montana, 11 miles of eligible rivers in Idaho, and 263 miles of eligible rivers and 22 miles of suitable rivers in Washington. These areas are typically managed to retain the river's eligibility or suitability, or both, for future designation. Management direction may be found in agency policy (for example, Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 80, 84.3 Interim Protection Measures for Eligible or Suitable Rivers) and/or the relevant land management plan(s).

National Recreation Areas

National recreation areas are Federal lands designated by Congress to preserve recreational opportunities and other special characteristics and resources.

Ross Lake National Recreation Area was designated in 1968 and includes lands around the Ross Lake, Diablo Lake, and Gorge Lake reservoirs. Ross Lake National Recreation Area complements the adjacent North Cascades National Park and conserves the scenic, natural, and cultural values of the Upper Skagit River Valley for outdoor recreation and education. The many recreation opportunities that Ross Lake National Recreation Area provides, including water-based opportunities, accommodate people with a wide range of interests and abilities. Ross Lake National Recreation Area is managed by the Park Service as part of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex. The PNT travels on trails through Ross Lake National Recreation Area along the east and southwest banks of Ross Lake and heads west into North Cascades National Park.

Mount Baker National Recreation Area was designated in 1984 and includes 8,473 acres on the south flank of Mt. Baker in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Mount Baker National Recreation Area was established to accommodate mixed recreation use in the Schriebers Meadow area on the south flank of Mt. Baker to complement the adjacent Mount Baker Wilderness. Mount Baker National Recreation Area is managed by the Forest Service. Popular activities include hiking, horseback riding, camping, mountain climbing, and, in winter, snowmobiling. The PNT goes through Mount Baker National Recreation Area on the Park Butte Trail and Bell Pass Trail.

National Estuarine Research Reserves

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System was established under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. National Estuarine Research Reserves are a partnership between the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and a coastal state, in addition to other federal, tribal, nonprofit and university partners. They are established for long-term research, education,

and coastal stewardship and generally consist of state lands and waters and may include uplands, beaches and dry land associated with the estuaries.

The 11,966-acre Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve was designated in 1980 and protects one of the largest eelgrass beds in the contiguous United States. The Reserve is located in western Skagit County in western Washington state. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration administers the national estuarine research reserve system. The PNT goes through the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on Bayview Edison Road and the Padilla Bay Shore Trail (managed by Skagit County Parks). Along the way, it passes through Bay View State Park (managed by Washington State Parks) and the Breazeale property where the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's facilities are located.

National Heritage Areas

The National Heritage Areas Program supports community stewardship of nationally important landscapes. National heritage areas are coordinated by organizations that partner with the National Park Service on grassroots heritage conservation, recreation, and education efforts. National heritage areas are not national park units and the National Park Service does not assume ownership of land inside the boundary of national heritage areas nor does the National Park Service impose land use controls as a result of national heritage area designation.

The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area in Washington State was designated in 2019. The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area spans 3,000 miles of Washington's saltwater coastline, from Grays Harbor County through Puget Sound to the Canadian border. The Maritime Washington National Heritage Area boundaries extend one-quarter mile inland from the shoreline. The goal of the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area is to celebrate the water-based stories and cultures of Washington's saltwater shores. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, a state-wide nonprofit dedicated to preserving historic resources, is the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area's coordinating entity. Sections of the PNT in western Washington along Samish Bay and Whidbey Island, near Port Townsend, and along the Pacific Ocean coast are within the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area.

National Marine Sanctuaries

National marine sanctuaries are designated under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act of 1972 to protect marine and Great Lakes environments with special national significance due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, scientific, cultural, archaeological, educational, or aesthetic qualities.

The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1994. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries provides day-to-day management. The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary contains 3,188 square nautical miles of marine waters off Washington state's Olympic Peninsula. The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary includes intertidal areas to the mean higher high-water line²⁷ when adjacent to

²⁷ According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the mean higher high-water line is a tidal datum that is "the average of the higher high-water height of each tidal day observed over the National Tidal Datum Epoch" or the equivalent datum for stations with a shorter series. (<https://shoreline.noaa.gov/glossary.html>)

federally managed lands and extends to 25 to 50 miles seaward. Portions of the PNT along the Pacific coast in Olympic National Park, such as portions on beaches, are located below the mean higher high-water line and are therefore within the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

International Peace Park

In 1932, Glacier National Park and Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park were designated as Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park to celebrate the longstanding peace between the United States and Canada. Glacier National Park and Waterton Lakes National Park have both been recognized as biosphere reserves and recognized together as a world heritage site.

International Biosphere Reserves

Glacier National Park was recognized as a biosphere reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1976. Olympic National Park was recognized as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 1976. Biosphere reserves are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable development, that promote reconciling conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. Biosphere reserves remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the nations in which they are located.

World Heritage Sites

Olympic National Park was recognized as a world heritage site in 1981, with Glacier National Park (as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park) following in 1995. World heritage sites are designated through the World Heritage Convention, joining these parks to an international system of natural and cultural properties that are considered irreplaceable treasures of outstanding universal value. World heritage sites remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the nations in which they are located.

National Trail Planning Corridor

Section 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act requires selecting a national trail right-of-way and publishing a notice of the availability of appropriate maps or descriptions of the trail right-of-way in the Federal Register (16 U.S.C. 1246 (a)(2)). For the national scenic trails and national historic trails administered by the Forest Service, selecting a national trail right-of-way is an administrative action undertaken by the Chief of the Forest Service (FSM 2353.04b).

In the context of the National Trails System Act, the national trail right-of-way is the area selected for the general location of a national scenic trail or national historic trail and published in the Federal Register. The national trail right-of-way does not constitute a land use allocation (which occurs through land management plans, congressional designations, and presidential proclamations) nor does it carry the legal rights and privileges typically associated with the term "right-of-way" outside of the National Trails System Act context.

To avoid confusion with other ways the term "right-of-way" is used outside the National Trails System Act context (such as in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Title V) and to avoid any implication of a right to use or access non-federal lands, the PNT will instead adopt the term **national trail planning corridor**. Throughout this comprehensive plan and in implementation of the plan, the national trail planning corridor indicates the area referred to as

the “right-of-way” in Section 7 of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246). Use of the term “corridor” here is consistent with its use in EO 13195.

The national trail planning corridor will extend across the PNT. However, the management context, and therefore the primary considerations and opportunities for the national trail planning corridor, differ for segments of the trail within and outside of federally administered areas.

- On Federal lands, the primary consideration is the managing agency’s responsibility to provide for the PNT’s nature and purposes and to protect trail opportunities, settings, and values (e.g., instances of the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources along the trail). Federal agencies are responsible for ensuring the values for which the trail was designated remain intact (EO 13195). The primary opportunity for the national trail planning corridor is to inform the managing agency’s identification, through its land management planning processes, of the area (e.g., management area, geographic area, mapped corridor, or similar) where it will establish and implement management direction to provide for the PNT’s nature and purposes and other trail values. The national trail planning corridor provides a starting guideline for the managing agency to use in its land management planning. (See discussion of the national trail management corridor below.)
- On non-federal lands, the primary consideration for the national trail planning corridor is the opportunity to use tools identified in Section 7 of the National Trails System Act to achieve the objectives of completing the PNT as a continuous and connected nonmotorized trail, to secure public access, to safeguard the trail settings and values, and to cooperate with non-federal managing agencies and private landowners to provide for the PNT’s nature and purposes and other trail values. The National Trails System Act includes provisions and tools that may be used outside the boundaries of federally administered areas within the national trail planning corridor such as acquisition of lands and interests in lands from willing landowners and use of voluntary cooperative agreements to coordinate management of the trail across land ownership (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30), 1246). In most cases, the width of lands or easements acquired – or the width of any area voluntarily maintained to provide access for the PNT by the managing agency or private landowner – will be less than the width of the national trail planning corridor. The national trail planning corridor is the broader area where, under the National Trails System Act, there is the *opportunity*, with willing landowners, to apply the provisions and tools in Section 7 of the Act.

This comprehensive plan provides a recommendation regarding the general location and width of the national trail planning corridor. This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service. The Chief is responsible for publishing the PNT’s national trail planning corridor in the Federal Register (FSM 2353.04b, item 4). However, selection of the national trail planning corridor requires broader coordination and consultation. Affected tribes will be consulted. Other Federal agencies that manage segments of the PNT must concur with the location and width of the national trail planning corridor for lands they manage (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)). Selection of the national trail planning corridor will be informed by the advice and assistance of states, local governments, private organizations, landowners, and land users concerned in order to minimize adverse effects upon adjacent landowners or land users (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)).

The national trail planning corridor will be selected through a separate administrative decision by the Chief and published in the Federal Register after this comprehensive plan is completed. Longer-established national scenic trails have taken different approaches to publishing the national trail planning corridor in the Federal Register (NPS Reference Manual 45, p. 96). The Forest Service will coordinate with the other Federal managing agencies and relevant non-federal entities and determine which approach or combination of approaches would provide the best efficiency and effectiveness for the PNT.

Recommended National Trail Planning Corridor for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

The recommended national trail planning corridor for the PNT is generally a minimum of one mile in width (0.5 miles on either side of the PNT). The area within 0.5 miles of the centerline data for the congressionally designated route of the PNT is shown on the detail maps (labeled “Recommended minimum width for national trail planning corridor”) in the [Geographic Regions](#) descriptions starting on page 42 and via the hyperlink in [appendix C](#); this is for illustration purposes only and does not indicate a decision on the national trail planning corridor.

Recommended National Trail Planning Corridor Location

At this time, the location of the recommended national trail planning corridor follows the congressionally designated route of the PNT as determined by the Forest Service, managing agencies, and partner organizations based on the legislative map (see [appendix B](#)), the legislative history of the PNT, and agency and partner organization data (such as geospatial data for trails and roads). This route is illustrated in the detail maps in the [Geographic Regions](#) descriptions starting on page 42 and via the hyperlink in [appendix C](#).

As introduced in [chapter 1](#), segments of the PNT’s congressionally designated route that are located on roads or motorized trails or where public access is not allowed (such as Boundary Dam) are temporary interim locations. Pursuant to the authority in Section 7(b) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)), when the Forest Service selects the national trail planning corridor for the PNT, the agency intends to move the PNT off a road or motorized trail segment or, in limited cases where appropriate, convert a road segment to a nonmotorized trail segment (see Relocating Segments of the Trail below). Maps or descriptions of the selected national trail planning corridor should make the status of these segments clear and note where there are changes from the Congressionally designated route.

Where the PNT’s location is proximate to the United States-Canada border, the national trail planning corridor would not include lands outside the United States.

Recommended National Trail Planning Corridor Width

The National Trails System Act, EO 13195, and other guidance for administration and management of national scenic trails and national historic trails recognize the importance of lands and resources along the trail in contributing to the recreation settings, opportunities, and visitor experiences that a national trail provides.

Because of the important influence of scenery resources on visitor experiences for a national scenic trail, the minimum width of the recommended national trail planning corridor for the PNT is based on the Forest Service's Scenery Management System (see [chapter 5](#)) and includes the immediate foreground and foreground distance zones as the minimum area that should be included in the national trail planning corridor. In addition to scenery in the immediate foreground and foreground viewing area, the recommended minimum 1-mile width would be wide enough to contain many (but not all) instances of the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources associated with the PNT that support its nature and purposes (see [chapter 3](#)). It would also be wide enough to contain campsites, shelters, and other public use facilities (for example, trailheads and other trail amenities), as appropriate, along but at a reasonable distance from the trail.

The actual width of the selected national trail planning corridor can vary across the trail. To provide for the nature and purposes and other trail values, while considering effects upon adjacent landowners or land users, and other resource concerns, the national trail planning corridor should be wide enough to allow flexibility to identify an optimal location for the trail.

Relationship Between the National Trail Planning Corridor and the National Trail Management Corridor in Federal Land Management Plans

The national trail *planning* corridor and the national trail *management* corridor are related but distinct concepts. While the national trail right-of-way for the PNT is selected by the administering agency for the trail (as delegated by the Secretary of Agriculture or Secretary of Interior) through an administrative process, the **national trail management corridor** for a section of a national scenic trail or national historic trail is established by the Federal managing agency through its land management planning process and policies (see [chapter 1](#) and [chapter 2](#)). For example, for sections of the PNT on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service selects the national trail management corridor through revision or amendment of the relevant forest plan(s) in accordance with guidance in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 20, and Forest Service Manual 2353.

For federally administered lands, the land management plan will include plan components to provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)) in accordance with the managing agency's policies. The national trail management corridor is the land area in which those plan components apply. Managing agencies might use other terms for the national trail management corridor (for example, management area or geographic area) depending on agency policy.

Federal land management agencies should consider the following best management practices when selecting the national trail management corridor for the PNT:

- The national trail management corridor's location should follow the location of the PNT route in the national trail planning corridor. If the national trail planning corridor has not yet been published, the location should follow the congressionally designated route. Communicate with the Forest Service regarding how any interim locations or

realignments of the PNT would be addressed in selection of the national trail management corridor.

- While the width of the national trail management corridor will be identified by the managing agency based on its policies and guidance, a width of 0.5 miles on either side of the trail's **travelway** should generally be considered the minimum needed to provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values, with limited exceptions. In some areas, depending on topography, it may be appropriate to have the national trail management corridor based on the visible foreground from the trail, which may result in a national trail management corridor less than 1 mile wide. In areas adjacent to non-federally managed lands, the national trail management corridor may be less than 1 mile wide to avoid including non-federally managed lands. Where there are facilities or features associated with the trail but located off the trail travelway (such as viewpoints, campsites, or water sources), managing agencies are encouraged to include them, in addition to the travelway, when establishing the width of the national trail management corridor to ensure features integral to the nature and purposes of the trail are adequately protected.

The managing agency should communicate with the Forest Service during the managing agency's planning process to ensure the relevant requirements of the National Trails System Act and EO 13195 could be met by the managing agency's proposed national trail management corridor.

Relationship Between the National Trail Planning Corridor and Land Protection Outside Federally Administered Areas

Section 7 of the National Trails System Act includes provisions related to acquiring lands or interests in lands for a national scenic trail or entering into voluntary cooperative agreements with landowners to provide for the trail (16 U.S.C. 1246). These provisions apply in relation to the location of the national trail planning corridor.

For lands included in the national trail planning corridor that are outside the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas, the Forest Service will first encourage states or municipal governments to (1) enter into written cooperative agreements with landowners, private organizations, and individuals "to provide the necessary trail right-of-way" or (2) to acquire such lands or interests therein to be utilized as segments of the national scenic trail (16 U.S.C. 1246(e)). If state or municipal governments do not enter into written cooperative agreements or acquire lands or interests therein, the Forest Service may:

- enter into written or cooperative agreements with landowners, states, municipal governments, private organizations, and individuals for the use of lands for trail purposes (16 U.S.C. 1246(e));
- acquire private lands or interests therein by donation or purchase with donated or appropriated funds (16 U.S.C. 1246(e));
- acquire private lands or interests therein by exchange (16 U.S.C. 1246(e and f)); and

- acquire lands or interests therein from municipal governments or governmental corporations with the consent of those entities (16 U.S.C. 1246(e)).

Importantly, for the PNT, this is limited to willing landowners (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30)). More information on acquiring lands and interests therein for the PNT, including management objectives and practices, is in [chapter 5](#) and [appendix D](#). Acquiring lands and interests therein for the PNT should generally not occur until an optimal location review has been conducted for the segment(s) concerned to avoid acquiring lands that may not remain part of the PNT if it is relocated in the future. More information on the optimal location review is in chapter 4 (see [optimal location review](#)).

Relocating Segments of the Trail

Relocation occurs when a segment of a national scenic trail needs to be moved outside²⁸ of the existing national trail planning corridor. Through relocation, the segment of the national scenic trail and the corresponding national trail planning corridor for that segment are moved to a new permanent²⁹ location. The National Trails System Act establishes the conditions under which relocation may occur.

Substantial relocations of segments of a national scenic trail shall only occur by Act of Congress (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)).

Non-substantial relocations of segments of a national scenic trail *may only* occur if *all the following conditions* are met:

- the *administering agency*³⁰ has determined that the relocation *is necessary* to either (1) preserve the purposes for which the trail was established or (2) promote a sound land management program in accordance with multiple use principles;
- the heads of the Federal land management agencies³¹ that manage the lands involved have concurred; and
- notice has been published in the Federal Register of the availability of appropriate maps or descriptions (16 U.S.C. 1246(b), emphasis added).

Realignment of segments of the PNT *within* the national trail planning corridor are not considered relocations under Section 7(b) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)) and are addressed in chapter 5 (see Trail Alignment and Design).

Relocation is an important tool to realize the nature and purposes of the PNT as a continuous, nonmotorized trail consistent with the National Trails System Act. The goal of any relocation

²⁸ Relocations differ in this way from realignments, which move the PNT within the existing national trail planning corridor. Information on realignments is in [chapter 5](#).

²⁹ Relocations differ in this way from temporary detours, which are routes visitors may use to travel around areas on the PNT that are closed or impassable for a limited period of time. Information on temporary detours is in [chapter 5](#).

³⁰ For the PNT, this responsibility has been delegated by the Secretary of Agriculture to the Forest Service.

³¹ Or their designees, as delegated by managing agency policy and practices.

should be to select a location that is equal to or superior to the former location in terms of its ability to provide for the nature and purposes of the PNT.

For the segments of the PNT where the congressionally designated route is in a temporary interim location (such as on a road, motorized trail, or where public access is restricted) the administering agency, managing agencies, landowners, and partner organizations will need to collaborate to identify a new location for the trail or use other tools (for example, constructing trail or converting roads to trails), as appropriate, so that the PNT is on nonmotorized trails with secure public access and optimally located to provide for the nature and purposes and other trail values. Once the permanent location for that segment has been identified, the associated national trail planning corridor for the segment should be selected and notice of the availability of maps or descriptions should be published in the Federal Register.

Responsibilities and Process for Non-Substantial Relocations

As the administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service has unique trail-wide responsibility for selecting the national trail planning corridor for the PNT and for approving any non-substantial³² relocations of the PNT. All non-substantial relocations, including relocations involving lands owned or managed by agencies or entities other than the Forest Service, require the approval of the lead regional forester (FSM 2353) and concurrence of the relevant managing agency or agencies. The trail location must provide for the PNT's nature and purposes (FSM 2353.43c).

Identifying the location of the PNT route and the corresponding national trail planning corridor is an administrative action. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and provisions of other laws (for example, the National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, and the Wilderness Act) may be necessary for actions that would *implement* a relocation (for example, trail construction). The administering agency and managing agency will need to coordinate to identify the appropriate legal compliance required depending on the specific proposal.

Relocating trail segments requires close coordination and collaboration among the Forest Service, managing agency or agencies, partner organizations, and, as appropriate, tribes, landowners or land users, and gateway communities. Implementation may involve tasks such as mapping, surveying, trail design and layout, constructing and maintaining the trail and trail-related facilities, installing signs and kiosks, carrying out resource protection or restoration activities, mapping, updating visitor information, and educating visitors about the new location.

The process for a non-substantial relocation of the PNT is as follows:

1. The proponent(s)³³ should notify and consult with the PNT administrator as early as possible. The PNT administrator will advise the proponent(s) on the conditions from National Trails

³² Substantial relocations shall be by Act of Congress. (16 U.S.C. 1246(b))

³³ For segments within federally administered areas, the proponent should be the Federal managing agency or agencies. For segments outside federally administered areas, the proponent may be the administering agency, non-Federal managing agency, or a partner organization (in accordance with the provisions of cooperative agreements.)

System Act under which a relocation may be allowed and other relevant guidance, as well as the need for an optimal location review.

2. Conduct an optimal location review if one has not been completed for the area. (More information on the optimal location review can be found on page 76.)
3. Develop an initial relocation proposal based on the results of optimal location review. In developing the proposal, the managing agencies for the segment and lands concerned should engage the PNT administrator and relevant partner organization(s). The initial relocation proposal should address the rationale for the relocation and its consistency with the optimal location review results (providing justification if there is inconsistency), and it should include maps and images to aid understanding. The initial relocation proposal should also indicate how the advice and, as appropriate, assistance of the states, local governments, private organizations, landowners, and land users concerned will be obtained (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)) and how tribes will be consulted. Submit the initial relocation proposal to the lead regional forester.
4. The lead regional forester will review the proposal and provide a timely preliminary determination of the consistency of the proposal with:
 - a) Section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)) and
 - b) this comprehensive plan (including any subsequent amendments or revisions).

If the review indicates the proposal may potentially involve a substantial relocation, the lead regional forester will consult with the USDA Office of the General Counsel on consistency with item a. If the preliminary determination is not consistent with both items a and b, further coordination between the administering agency and proponent(s) is needed to refine the proposal before proceeding.

5. After the lead regional forester has provided an affirmative preliminary determination, the managing agency may initiate National Environmental Policy Act review if needed for projects associated with relocating the trail or trail-related facilities. The Forest Service and the managing agency should coordinate regarding the necessary National Environmental Policy Act documentation, if applicable, based on the specific proposal. In general, the managing agency will be responsible for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws.
6. Prior to the managing agency issuing a final decision document, the lead regional forester will review the selected alternative and issue a final determination confirming its consistency with:
 - a) Section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act; and
 - b) this comprehensive plan (including any subsequent amendments and revisions).

The final determination may document the implementation steps agreed upon between the administering agency and managing agency, such as constructing and marking the trail and developing updated maps and visitor information. If the determination is that the proposed action would not be consistent with items a and b, additional coordination is needed between the administering and managing agency.

7. After the managing agency issues a final decision. The lead regional forester will publish notice in the Federal Register of the new location of the PNT segment and associated change to the national trail planning corridor for that segment; the notice may provide a timeline for when the relocation will go into effect (for example, after trail construction and marking is completed).
8. The managing agency will follow relevant agency policy and management direction to implement the project and communicate with the Forest Service regarding its progress. The Forest Service should assist with implementation, as appropriate.
9. Once the relocation is in effect, the new location is part of the PNT and the previous location is no longer part of the PNT.³⁴ The managing agency should review the land management plan(s) for the area to ensure the national trail management corridor and associated management direction is sufficient to protect the PNT and its nature and purposes in the new location. The managing agency is responsible for updating the land management plan(s) if needed. Similarly, the Forest Service will review this comprehensive plan to determine if the relocation warrants an update and make the update if needed.

Optimal Location Review

Relocations must be based on the results of an optimal location review. The purpose of the optimal location review is to identify the trail location that best provides for the nature and purposes of the PNT into the future and satisfies other requirements of the National Trails System Act. The optimal location review is not a National Environmental Policy Act analysis or decision document. Rather, the optimal location review is a tool to inform and support administrative actions such as acquiring lands or interests in lands for the PNT and, where necessary, relocating segments of the PNT. The optimal location review helps the administering agency, managing agencies, and partner organizations direct efforts to plan, develop, and protect the PNT to the best long-term location and avoid misdirecting resources to temporary locations. Optimal location review has been used successfully to guide the development of other national scenic trails, such as the Continental Divide Trail and Pacific Crest Trail. The specific process and criteria are uniquely tailored to each trail, but the overall goal – to identify the best location to provide for the trail’s nature and purposes – is the same for all trails.

Optimal Location Review Process and Documentation

In the future, the Forest Service may collaborate with the partner organization(s) and managing agencies to develop additional guidance for the optimal location review process, such as a standard template for documentation. In the meantime, optimal location reviews should proceed using the guidance below.

At a minimum, the optimal location review team should include:

- the PNT administrator (or their designee),

³⁴ The Forest Service may continue to collaborate with the managing agency or landowner to carry out tasks at the old location, as necessary, such as sign removal, trail decommissioning, resource protection, and restoration.

- a staff member or volunteer representing the partner organization(s) (in accordance with the provisions of relevant cooperative agreements),
- a recreation / trails specialist from each of the managing agencies for the segment under review (or, for segments outside federally administered areas, a recreation / trails specialist from a nearby managing agency unit), and
- a landscape architect or other qualified scenery specialist.

The optimal location review team may include other participants as appropriate to the segment under review (e.g., lands and realty specialists, GIS specialists, and participants with expertise relevant to natural and cultural resources in the area). Questions about the composition of the optimal location review team may be decided by the lead regional forester. The PNT administrator provides coordination for the optimal location review team.

The optimal location review team will use a collaborative approach to agree on the optimal location for the segment of the PNT under review based on the principles below and the professional judgment of the team members. The optimal location review will likely make use of existing data and resources (such as maps, geospatial data, photographs, land ownership information, visitor use data, resource inventories and assessments, land management plans, special area plans, and guidebooks or other media) but should also be informed by field visits and on-the-ground knowledge of the segment and area concerned. Strive to incorporate knowledge relevant to the primary uses (see [chapter 3](#)), which may be provided through input from the partner organization(s), volunteers, or managing agency employees.

Documentation of the optimal location review should include:

- a detailed map and general description of the optimal location, as recommended by the optimal location review team;
- maps and general descriptions for other locations considered;
- a summary of the optimal location review team's evaluation of the optimal location and other locations considered based on the optimal location review principles in this section; and
- a summary or list of reference materials used in the evaluation.

The optimal location review document should be signed by the members of the review team. The optimal location review document should then be signed by the responsible officials or line officers for the local unit(s) of the relevant managing agency or agencies (for example, the district ranger and forest supervisor for National Forest System lands or the park superintendent for a national park). The approved document should be provided to the relevant managing agency or agencies and partner organization(s). It should become part of the administering agency's files.

For some areas, processes similar to optimal location reviews were conducted prior to the completion of this comprehensive plan. These efforts may satisfy many of the steps for the optimal location review process. In that case, optimal location reviews may proceed toward completion from the steps that have already been taken.

Guiding Principles for the Optimal Location Review

The optimal location review is guided by the following 10 principles to evaluate location options:

1. Relocations are opportunities to improve the PNT and better provide for its nature and purposes and other trail values.
2. Relocations promote the seamless connectivity of the PNT and reduce the miles of the PNT on roads and motorized trails.
3. Relocations favor public lands and legal easements over areas where public access cannot be permanently secured.
4. Relocations highlight the outstanding scenery and physiographic features of the Northwest and realize opportunities to improve the overall visual quality and scenic attractiveness of the PNT.
5. Relocations provide high-quality settings and opportunities for the primary uses: hiking with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking and, where feasible to accommodate, pack and saddle stock use. In general, relocations should seek to improve the quality of the settings and opportunities for the primary uses.
6. Relocations generally favor natural-appearing wilderness and nonmotorized backcountry settings (including lands with wilderness characteristics) or other places with less development and a more primitive level of access.
7. Relocations allow for a trail alignment on the ground that can sustain the types and amounts of expected use and can be maintained to avoid unacceptable environmental or financial costs.
8. Relocations would allow the trail to be developed and managed in a way that would harmonize with established multiple-use land management plans for that area.
9. Relocations minimize adverse effects on adjacent landowners or land users and their operations.
10. Relocations do not adversely impact or impede access to treaty resources; usual and accustomed fishing, hunting, and gathering areas; or areas of critical tribal concern for affected tribes.³⁵

Substantial Relocations

Substantial relocations are outside the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture (or the Forest Service) and require an Act of Congress (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)).

The lead regional forester should consult with the relevant managing agency and USDA Office of the General Counsel to determine if a proposed relocation would be substantial.

³⁵ Principle 10 will be addressed through government-to-government consultation and coordination with tribes regarding the relocation proposal. The optimal location review must not disclose sensitive information about the nature or location of cultural resources or areas of critical tribal concern.

When reviewing proposed relocations to identify whether they may be substantial, consider, among other factors, the extent of the relocation and the degree of divergence from the following: the congressionally designated route of the PNT, the values for which the PNT was designated (see [chapter 3](#)), and/or the trail-wide objective to complete and maintain the PNT as a continuous *nonmotorized trail* (see [chapter 5](#)).

Substantial relocations should be informed by the results of an optimal location review (see [optimal location review](#)). Even if the new location is specified by Congress (for example, in a case where the relocation was not proposed by the Forest Service or another Federal managing agency) the optimal location review can inform the trail alignment and design to implement the relocation.

The administering agency and the affected managing agency or agencies should coordinate and collaborate (as in steps 8 and 9 in the process for non-substantial relocations) to implement substantial relocations directed by Act of Congress.

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Chapter 5. Objectives and Practices for Trail Management

The National Trails System Act requires a comprehensive plan to include “specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of significant natural, historical and cultural resources to be preserved ... details of any anticipated cooperative agreements to be consummated with other entities, and an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation” (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e)(1)). This chapter addresses objectives and practices for management of the PNT, including the carrying capacity of the trail.³⁶ These management objectives and practices also address the requirement for a general development plan for the PNT (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)(3)).

Throughout this chapter, “nature and purposes and other trail values” is used to refer to the items in [chapter 3](#): nature; purposes; primary uses; and significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values to be preserved. “Administering agency” is used to refer to the Forest Service in its role as the administering agency for the PNT; the Regional Forester of the Pacific Northwest Region is the lead regional forester and responsible official for trail-wide administration as delegated by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the Forest Service, and the PNT administrator is the primary staff-level point-of-contact (see [chapter 2](#)).³⁷

Trail-wide Objectives

The trail-wide objectives build on the PNT’s nature and purposes, further clarifying the vision for the trail; the trail settings, opportunities, and experiences; and the trail community of stewards and visitors. Additionally, the trail-wide objectives provide support for how the PNT will “provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities” of the areas through which it passes (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2))

The trail-wide objectives for managing the PNT are:

1. Complete and maintain the PNT as a continuous, nonmotorized trail from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean.
2. Safeguard the PNT’s nature and purposes and other trail values.
3. Maximize the outdoor recreation potential of the PNT by providing premier settings and nationally significant opportunities for hiking, with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking; pack and saddle stock use; and, where appropriate to the setting and allowed by local management, other compatible non-motorized trail uses. Minimize conflicts between different modes of travel.

³⁶ The identification of significant resources to be preserved is addressed in [chapter 3](#). Cooperative agreements are addressed in [chapter 6](#). Additional information about the carrying capacity and its implementation is in [chapter 3](#), [appendix D](#), and [appendix E](#).

³⁷ Forest Service units that manage segments of the PNT and the lands along the trail (such as a national forest or ranger district) are considered managing agencies and, unless otherwise delegated, coordinate with the lead regional forester and/or PNT administrator for the Forest Service’s administering agency roles and responsibilities as other Federal managing agencies (National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, etcetera) would.

4. Support and contribute to the conservation of the scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the lands along the PNT, and improve conditions on the ground. Minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other natural resources.
5. Promote responsible public enjoyment of scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the lands along the PNT. Cultivate a stewardship ethos in current and future generations of trail users that includes appreciation of natural, historical, and cultural resources and values and respect for the unique relationships tribal nations have with the lands through which the PNT travels.
6. Foster a vibrant stewardship community that engages collaboratively to address challenges and achieve shared goals, made up of non-governmental partner organizations and other private entities; volunteers; gateway communities; landowners; state, county, and municipal governments; tribes; and Federal agencies. As the Forest Service's primary non-governmental partner for the PNT, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association plays an essential role in its stewardship.
7. Use an equity lens to identify and address barriers that limit people's enjoyment of the trail and its benefits.³⁸
8. Sustain and share the collective knowledge and skills of trail stewards and visitors through training, education, and outreach, and facilitate continued learning and improvement.

Desired Conditions and Management Practices

General Management Approach and Practices

Even if not explicitly stated in the sections of this chapter below – and for additional management topics and activities not addressed in this chapter – apply the following approaches to administering and managing the PNT:

1. Strive to take a collaborative approach to all aspects of administering and managing the PNT, involving partner organizations and volunteers, managing agencies and landowners, tribes, and the administering agency as appropriate (see [chapter 2](#)). Managing agencies and landowners should notify and, as appropriate, involve the PNT administrator and partner organization(s), particularly the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, as early as possible in projects and actions that affect the PNT. The PNT administrator should advise on the relevant provisions of the National Trails System Act and this comprehensive plan.
 - a) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Encourage volunteers and volunteer organizations to plan, develop, maintain, and manage trails, where appropriate (16 U.S.C. 1250(a)).

³⁸ The purpose of an equity lens is to be deliberately inclusive as an organization makes decisions. It introduces a set of questions into the decision that help the decision makers focus on equity in both their process and outcomes. Equity lenses can be customized for different organizations and decisions. The standard elements, however, ask for the decision makers to consider equity dimensions of involvement, process, values and assumptions, and outcomes, from a perspective that highlights how practices hold potential to shift power toward inclusion and equity. (<https://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/files/2020/12/What-is-an-Equity-Lens.pdf>)

2. Seek options that best provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)) over the long run. Develop and sustain the PNT as a legacy for present and future generations.
 - a) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Other uses along the PNT shall not substantially interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).
 - b) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Reasonable efforts shall be made to avoid activities incompatible with the PNT's purposes (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).
 - c) Prioritize actions that will complete the PNT as a continuous, connected nonmotorized trail with protected public access and a seamless visitor experience across jurisdictions (see [chapter 4](#)).
 - i. **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to the PNT (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).
 - ii. **National Trails System Act Requirement:** General public use of motorized vehicles along the PNT shall be prohibited (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).
 - d) Involve tribes that have ancestral lands and other connections along the PNT. The Forest Service and the Federal land managing agencies will involve affected tribes through consultation, coordination, and collaboration, as appropriate (see [chapter 1](#) and [chapter 2](#)).
 - e) Ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies; examples include, but are not limited to, the National Trails System Act, National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Architectural Barriers Act, Wilderness Act, and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Ensure consistency with the relevant Federal land management plan(s) (see [chapter 1](#) and [chapter 2](#)).

Trail Uses

Managing agencies retain discretion to manage modes of travel on the segments of the PNT within the lands they manage. The management practices in this section ensure that managing agencies provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values, particularly the primary uses.

Primary Uses

As described in [chapter 3](#), the primary uses of the PNT guiding its administration and management are (1) hiking, with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking, and (2) pack and saddle stock use.

Motorized Use Prohibited

Public use of motorized vehicles on or along any national scenic trail is prohibited (16 U.S.C. 1246), except as specified in the trail's enabling legislation, for specific exceptions authorized by regulation, or on private lands that are part of the trail by cooperative agreement with the landowner. Segments of the PNT located on open roads or motorized trails are interim locations for the PNT (see [chapter 4](#)) and are not subject to the prohibition.

Desired Conditions

1. The PNT provides a premier, nationally significant opportunity for hiking, including long-distance backpacking and continuous, end-to-end travel by thru-hikers.

2. The PNT provides premier, nationally significant recreation opportunities for using pack and saddle stock, where feasible to accommodate.
3. The PNT provides recreation opportunities for other types of nonmotorized trail uses, including bicycling, where appropriate to the setting and allowed by local management, and where compatible with the PNT's nature and purposes, primary uses, and other trail values.
4. Conflicts between different types of trail uses and activities are minimal and do not interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
5. Public use of motorized vehicles does not occur on or along the PNT.³⁹ Where motorized use is allowed for other specified purposes (emergency response, private landowner or land user access, or by the public at designated motorized crossings of the PNT) it is limited and does not interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.

Management Practices

Primary Uses

1. In general, when balancing potentially competing needs of different trail uses on the PNT, favor hiking as a primary use that provides an opportunity for trail-wide, end-to-end travel.⁴⁰
2. Enhance opportunities for pack and saddle stock use as a [primary use](#) where feasible to accommodate and allowed by local management. Where pack and saddle stock use are not feasible to accommodate, the administering agency, managing agency or landowner, and partner organizations may coordinate to identify alternative routes for pack and saddle stock users to bypass sections of the PNT where that use is restricted or the route is impassable.
3. Other non-motorized modes of travel, including bicycling, are potentially compatible trail uses that may be allowed by local management as appropriate to the setting.
4. Where the PNT is in wilderness areas and wilderness study areas (WSAs), manage for trail uses compatible with relevant wilderness or WSA management direction and regulations. Where the PNT is in recommended wilderness, manage trail uses to be consistent with the applicable managing agency direction for the recommended wilderness so use of the PNT does not negatively impact its wilderness characteristics.
5. Where the PNT is co-located with another national trail, such as the Pacific Crest Trail or Continental Divide Trail, coordinate management of trail uses to ensure they are compatible and will not interfere with either trail's nature and purposes and other trail values.
6. Notify and involve the PNT administrator regarding travel management planning, visitor use management, or other proposals that would affect the primary uses or that would allow motorized uses.
7. Monitor trail uses on the PNT, including use levels and patterns for the primary uses, other trail uses (including new and emerging trail uses), and user conflict. (See [chapter 6](#).)

³⁹ With the exception of where the PNT is in an interim location on open roads or motorized trails.

⁴⁰ For the interim location on open roads and motorized trails, motor vehicle use may continue as the predominant use.

Motorized Uses

1. **National Trails System Act Requirement:** General public use of motorized vehicles along the PNT shall be prohibited (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).⁴¹
2. **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Limited motorized use on and along the PNT (for purposes other than general public use) may only be authorized where such use is consistent with the applicable land management plan and meets one of the following criteria:
 - a) It is necessary to meet emergencies;
 - b) It is necessary to enable adjacent landowners or land users with valid existing rights to have reasonable access to their lands or rights; or
 - c) It is for the purpose of allowing private landowners who have agreed, by cooperative agreement, to include their lands in the PNT to use or cross those lands or adjacent lands from time to time (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).
 - d) Except for emergency situations (criterion 1), notify and involve the PNT administrator prior to authorization.
3. Strive to limit the PNT's interaction with motorized uses and the impacts of motorized uses on the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values. Consider and minimize the cumulative impacts of motorized uses across the trail. Ensure travel management decisions safeguard the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
4. Motorized crossings of the trail, if necessary, should be limited.
5. Provide sufficient separation between the PNT and motorized routes or areas to avoid substantial interference to the PNT's nature and purposes.
6. Realign or relocate segments of the PNT off open roads or motorized trails. Information on realignment is in the Trail Alignment and Design section, and information on relocation is in the Relocating Segments of the Trail section.

Trail Setting

National scenic trails are to be “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” (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)).

The PNT represents a connected landscape that encompasses some of the most scenic and remote areas of the Northwest (inclusive of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest). Trail users' opportunities for experiences on the PNT are influenced by the surrounding landscape beyond the trail travelway.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The recreation opportunity spectrum is a framework for inventorying and managing outdoor recreation opportunities based on the physical, social, and managerial aspects of the setting. The spectrum is divided into six major classes: urban, rural, roaded natural, semiprimitive motorized, semiprimitive nonmotorized, and primitive. Opportunities for experiences along the spectrum

⁴¹ except for where the PNT is in an interim location on an open road or motorized trail.

represent a range from a very high probability of solitude, self-reliance, challenge, and risk to a very social experience where self-reliance, challenge, and risk are relatively unimportant (USDA Forest Service 1986). In recent years, the Bureau of Land Management has developed a similar system of recreation setting characteristics describing a range of recreational settings, based on current physical, social, and operational factors, divided into five classes: primitive, backcountry, middle country, front country, and rural settings.

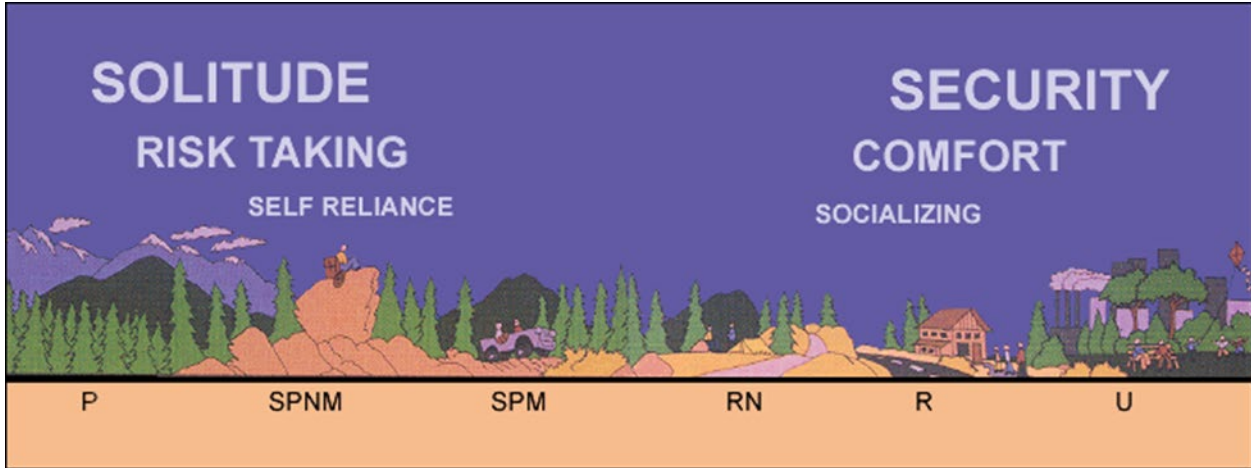


Figure 18. Recreation opportunity spectrum image

Segments of the PNT on lands managed by entities other than the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management may not have a formal setting classification. The recreation opportunities provided by these lands, however, can be correlated and described in terms of recreation opportunity spectrum classes. Therefore, for purposes of uniformity across the PNT, the settings and experience opportunities have been described using recreation opportunity spectrum terminology.

The recreation opportunity spectrum categorizes the capability and feasibility of given areas of land to provide the opportunity for specific types or classes of outdoor recreation experiences. The agency’s land management plans then provide specific direction and management practices for maintaining the existing recreation opportunities or modifying them to meet needs and demands within the national trail planning corridor.

Table 3. Scenic integrity (Forest Service) and visual resource management (Bureau of Land Management) objectives

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Class	Very High Class I	High Class II	Moderate Class III
Primitive	Norm	Inconsistent	Unacceptable
Semiprimitive Nonmotorized	Fully Compatible	Norm	Inconsistent
Semiprimitive Motorized	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm
Roaded Natural-Appearing	Fully Compatible	Norm	Norm
Rural	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Class	Very High Class I	High Class II	Moderate Class III
Urban	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible

Recreation opportunity spectrum classes are also linked to scenic integrity and visual resource management objectives, which are an important consideration for national scenic trails.

Desired Conditions

1. High-quality recreational settings and opportunities befitting a national scenic trail are maintained across the PNT.
2. The PNT is predominantly located in settings consistent with the primitive or semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation opportunity spectrum classes.

Management Practices

1. Inventory recreation setting characteristics across the entire PNT. Complete inventories for un-inventoried trail segments.
2. Consider recreation setting characteristics in locating and managing the PNT and other uses on or along the PNT.
3. Changes to recreational settings and opportunities on the PNT should generally move the trail toward the more primitive, less developed end of the recreation opportunity spectrum.
4. Favor providing access to gateway communities, developed areas, and amenities by trails that intersect the PNT rather than the PNT itself.
5. Intermittently, near towns and developed recreation facilities, the PNT may become a more accessible and highly developed route in settings consistent with the roaded natural, rural, or urban Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes. The extent of these sections should be minimized.

Land Acquisition and Protection

The National Trails System Act provides a variety of authorities to help Federal agencies and others protect national trails and the lands along national trails that give them enduring value. Section 7(d) and (e) of the National Trails System Act provide the foundation for methods to acquire lands for trail protection that are both within and outside federally administered areas. [Chapter 4](#) outlines these provisions of the National Trails System Act and addresses the important relationship between the national trail planning corridor and acquisition of lands (or interests in lands) for national trails. These authorities and tools and their anticipated utility for the PNT are discussed in detail in [appendix D](#).

The enabling language for the PNT includes a “willing seller” clause that prohibits acquisition of any land or interest in land outside the exterior boundary of a federally administered area “without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land” (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)(30)(D)).

Desired Conditions

1. The PNT is a continuous, connected nonmotorized trail on lands where public access for recreational use of the trail is permanently secured.
2. Lands along the PNT are sufficiently protected so that they may continue to provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values, including the preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values associated with the PNT (see chapter 3), for future generations.

Management Practices

1. The administering agency and managing agencies should prioritize actions to complete the PNT as a continuous, nonmotorized trail from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean with permanent public access through lands that are sufficiently protected to provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
 - a) Decision makers and staff for the administering agency, managing agencies, and partner organizations involved in acquiring and protecting land for the PNT should be familiar with the relevant National Trails System Act provisions and refer to [chapter 4](#) of this comprehensive plan for considerations of particular importance for the PNT. Lands and realty staff for the administering agency and managing agencies should have access to and be familiar with the land acquisition and protection report in [appendix D](#).
2. Ensure protection of non-Federal lands along the trail provides the greatest degree of permanence possible. In general, when possible, acquiring fee title of both the surface and subsurface estate is preferred over acquisition of the surface estate only, easements, or other interests in land.
3. In acquiring lands (or interests in lands) for the PNT, in addition to the relevant administering and managing agency policies:
 - a) Work with willing sellers.
 - b) Encourage, as appropriate, the involvement and collaboration of partner organization(s) and volunteers; the administering agency; adjacent managing agencies or landowners; tribes; and state, county, and municipal governments.
 - c) An optimal location review for the segment(s) and area(s) in question should be completed prior to acquisition (see [chapter 4](#)).
 - d) Relocating any segment(s) of the PNT should follow the process for relocation in [chapter 4](#).
 - e) Prioritize acquisitions within the foreground zone (the seen area within 0.5 miles of the trail travelway) of the PNT but also consider the valuable contributions of lands beyond the foreground zone to the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values, such as scenery. Strive to acquire lands (or interests in lands) of sufficient area or width to provide for and safeguard the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values. Consider any inventory of trail-related resources and values, if applicable, for the segment(s) and area(s) in question. Consider the need, value, and opportunity for acquisitions to sustain or enhance the primary uses and to allow for a seamless visitor experience and ease of manageability across the trail.

- f) Consider and incorporate any necessary provisions regarding public use of motor vehicles on or along the PNT to comply with 16 U.S.C. 1246(c), taking into account exceptions discussed in the Trail Uses section of [chapter 5](#).
- g) Seek synergies with and benefits for other resources in addition to the PNT.

Trail Alignment and Design

This section identifies desired conditions and management practices to help managers build and maintain the PNT and provide facilities to meet the needs of trail users, protect recreation settings, and maximize the trail's sustainability. The National Trails System Act requires that national scenic trail comprehensive plans contain "general and site-specific development plans including anticipated costs" (16 U.S.C. 1244). This section serves to provide general development plans, while site-specific development plans are addressed in [chapter 6](#). Managing agencies will follow their own agency standards for design, construction, and maintenance of the trail and associated elements (for example, drainage and retaining structures, trail bridges, puncheon). For segments of the PNT on private lands or where the managing agency does not have established standards, consider using Forest Service standards. The management practices in this section may be used to guide the selection of particular design and maintenance standards to apply to provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.

Much of the PNT is already in place on the ground (see [chapter 1](#) and [chapter 4](#)). However, trail construction or reconstruction may occur as segments of the PNT are relocated (as described in [chapter 4](#)) or as segments of the PNT travelway are realigned.

Realignment moves segments of the PNT travelway within⁴² the existing national trail planning corridor (see [chapter 4](#)). Realignment may be used to provide a better visitor experience, protect resources, address recurring maintenance issues, restore access following fire or flooding, resolve user conflict or trespass issues, or meet trail sustainability goals or standards at the site-specific level. In some cases, the previous alignment would be decommissioned (for example, moving the PNT travelway out of a wet meadow onto a side slope) and in other cases it would not (for example, constructing a new nonmotorized trail parallel to the PNT's former alignment on a road or motorized trail). In general, the managing agency will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other legal requirements, using its agency policies and processes. Determination and approval from the lead regional forester is not required as it would be for a non-substantial relocation of a segment of the trail outside the national trail planning corridor (see [chapter 4](#)).

Desired Conditions

1. The alignment and design of the PNT travelway provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
2. The PNT travelway is primarily a moderately developed or developed nonmotorized trail (equivalent to National Forest System trail class 2 or 3) with an unpaved surface.

⁴² In this way, realignment differs from relocation, which moves the PNT outside the existing national trail planning corridor, necessitating relocation of both the travelway and the national trail planning corridor for that segment.

3. The PNT route makes maximum use of trails and minimizes use of roads to the greatest extent possible.
4. The trail travelway exhibits high quality permanence and sustainability and is designed to create minimal disturbance to the environment while accommodating the volume and types of expected use.
5. The PNT is regularly maintained so that the trail and its structures are serviceable and in good repair. On-the-ground conditions meet the intended purpose and management (**trail management objectives**) for each trail segment.

Management Practices

1. The PNT travelway should generally be a moderately developed or developed trail (equivalent to Forest Service trail class 2⁴³ or 3⁴⁴ standard⁴⁵terra trail) with an unpaved surface that is designed for nonmotorized use.
 - a) Near gateway communities or in frontcountry settings, the PNT travelway may be more developed (equivalent to Forest Service trail class 4 standard terra trail). In general, avoid highly developed (equivalent to Forest Service trail class 5) and paved trails except where necessary to provide a continuous PNT route.
 - b) For short segments in limited locations, as appropriate to the setting and terrain, the PNT may be constructed and maintained to be a minimally developed trail (equivalent to Forest Service trail class 1 standard/terra trail).
 - c) Avoid constructing new trail for the PNT on coastal beaches. Retain the existing travelway for the PNT on coastal beaches as a cross-country route where cross-country travel is allowed by the managing agency.
2. On the whole, favor alignment and design options that appear more natural and less modified with limited constructed features. Protecting the predominantly natural-appearing settings along the PNT is paramount. The trail alignment and design should not detract from the setting.
 - a) Blend the trail into the surrounding landscape by taking full advantage of the natural topography and vegetation.
3. Align and design the PNT travelway to present the greatest variety of natural beauty and panoramic scenery.
 - a) Include access to the most favorable and impressive views of scenic features.
 - b) Avoid views, where possible, of heavily developed or industrialized areas. Incorporate topographical screening of such views when and where possible.
4. In general, avoid or protect cultural resources and sensitive natural resources.
 - a) Avoid archaeological sites and districts to the extent practicable. Incorporate sites that are appropriate for interpretation if they can be protected.

⁴³ Trail Class 2 is considered “moderately developed”

⁴⁴ Trail Class 3 is considered “developed”

⁴⁵ A standard terra trail is a trail that has a surface consisting predominantly of the ground and is designed and managed to accommodate use on that surface.

- b) Avoid alignments following stream channels to minimize impacts to banks and reduce damage from floods; align trail on side-slope in these cases.
 - c) When feasible, fall line sections that exceed grade standards or create erosion should be realigned.
 - d) Trail alignment and design should be compatible with management objectives for threatened, endangered or sensitive species habitat or populations.
5. Based on government-to-government consultation with affected tribes, trail alignment should avoid areas of critical tribal concern.
 6. Make road, railroad, or utility crossings as safe, quick, and aesthetically pleasing as practicable.
 - a) Give special consideration to safety concerns for pack and saddle stock.
 - b) Consider crossings using bridges or underpasses that provide greater safety and avoid breaking the continuity of travel on the PNT.
 - c) Consider right-angle crossings with constructed features, where practicable and safe, to minimize the visual effect.

Realignment of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Travelway within the National Trail Planning Corridor

7. Managing agencies should take a collaborative approach when planning, developing, and implementing realignments of the PNT travelway.
 - a) Notify and involve the PNT administrator as early as possible. The PNT administrator can verify that the proposed project is within the existing national trail planning corridor and coordinate with the managing agency to ensure the realignment will provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
 - b) Obtain the advice and assistance of any partner organization(s) as early as possible. Involve partner organization(s), as appropriate, in planning, developing, and implementing the realignment.
8. Ensure the new alignment is reflected in trail data, maps, and visitor information, and that it is appropriately marked with signage.
9. The managing agency should review the relevant land management plan(s) for the area to ensure management direction (particularly any management area, geographic area, or mapped portion of the national trail planning corridor) is sufficient to protect the PNT and its nature and purposes in the new alignment.

Trail Facilities and Signs

This section provides general guidance for facilities and signs located along the trail. This section identifies desired conditions and management practices to help managers provide and maintain facilities⁴⁶ and signs that meet the needs of trail users, protect recreation settings, and maximize sustainable practices.

⁴⁶ Examples of facilities include recreation features and structures such as bridges; toilets; fire rings or grates; hitch rails; and food storage lockers, poles, or wire.

National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).

Where the trail crosses Federal lands, the National Trails System Act directs Federal agencies to install markers at appropriate points (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)). Where the trail crosses non-federally managed lands, the National Trails System Act directs the administering agency to provide markers and for the managing agency or private landowner to install and maintain markers (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).

The Secretary of Agriculture established the yellow “thunderbird” marker as the distinctive symbol (service mark) for the PNT, based on use predating the PNT’s designation as a national scenic trail. Changes to the service mark may be made in consultation with appropriate government agencies, including tribal governments, and public and private organizations. The Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association propose to develop a new service mark for the PNT in response to the needs to: have a service mark that is eligible to be protected as a Federal mark, reflect the areas across the trail and not just coastal areas, and respect the tribal nations across the trail. The new service mark will be based on the collective aspirations of the community of trail stewards and users for the future of the PNT. The Forest Service invited consultation with tribes in 2022 and 2023, and it anticipates continued consultation, coordination, and collaboration with tribes in 2024 and beyond.

Desired Conditions

1. Facilities and signs provide for the PNT’s nature and purposes and other trail values.
2. Facilities comply with accessibility standards.
3. Trailheads are conveniently located and have suitable access. Where equestrian access is needed sufficient parking space and turning radius for vehicles pulling trailers is provided.
4. In wilderness and backcountry portions of the trail, facilities and signs are the minimum necessary for resource protection and visitor routing.
5. As appropriate to the setting, signs welcome visitors to the PNT, help them find their way, and provide information so people can enjoy and learn about the trail and the areas it goes through.
6. The PNT route is uniformly marked with the official service mark.

Management Practices

1. **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to the PNT (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).
 - a) Develop the minimum facilities necessary to provide an enjoyable visitor experience. Facilities should not interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail and other trail values.
 - b) Connect the PNT to parking areas, campgrounds, and public corral facilities via ancillary trails connecting them to the PNT when determined appropriate through analysis of resource capability and user demand.
2. Before facilities are installed, ensure that there will be long-term maintenance. Select materials that minimize operation and maintenance costs. Facilities that are no longer useful or desired should be removed and the sites naturalized.

3. The managing agencies should work toward a consistent look and feel for trail facilities in new construction.
 - c) In the future, the administering agency may collaborate with other managing agencies and partner organizations to develop facility design guidelines to supplement managing agency guidance to achieve a consistent look and feel across the PNT.
 - d) Facilities should conform to accepted design and construction standards. Refer to [Forest Service Built Environment Image Guide](#), [Bureau of Land Management Guidelines for a Quality Built Environment](#) and other appropriate guidance for the managing agency . For segments on private lands or where the managing agency has no relevant established standard, consider using Forest Service standards and best practices.
4. New facilities should comply with accessibility standards where practicable. As funding is available, existing facilities may be reconstructed to meet accessibility standards.
5. On segments where pack and saddle stock are allowed by local management, design facilities to accommodate that use.
6. Locate, design, and maintain facilities so they are compatible with the setting and protect natural and cultural resources.
 - a) Facilities should be appropriate to the setting. In more primitive settings, facilities should blend into the surrounding landscape. In more urban settings, they should fit into the valued landscape character of the place and the built environment. Follow the management practices in the [Scenery](#) section in this chapter and relevant management direction for scenery from the land management plan for the area.
 - b) Implement relevant standards and guidelines for the managing agency and best management practices to locate, design, and construct facilities (such as campsites and dispersed camping areas, toilets, water crossings, food storage poles or lockers, and garbage disposal) to protect natural and cultural resources, including water resources.
 - c) Develop and maintain facilities to be compatible with wildlife management and minimize incidental harm (such as bear-proof trash and dumpster receptacles, bird- and bat-proof vents on vault toilets).
 - d) Consider climate change and related impacts (such as vegetation change, drought, wildfires, storms, floods, and sea-level rise) in locating and designing facilities, and determining whether to build facilities.
7. Preferred measures to deter motorized access to the trail are to restore the tread to the appropriate width for the desired nonmotorized use or to use physical barriers consisting of natural materials such as boulders and ditches. Only when these measures are not effective should structures such as signs, fencing, or bollards be used.
8. Signs should be appropriate to the setting and comply with managing agency standards and guidelines. Frequency of sign placement will vary based on the setting and, therefore, there should be no trail-wide standard for placement of signs at fixed intervals. Signs should rarely be used in wilderness and backcountry settings, and they should be of the minimum size necessary.
 - a) For segments of the PNT on private lands or where the managing agency has no relevant established standards, consider using Forest Service sign standards.

- b) In the future, the administering agency may collaborate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to develop sign guidelines for the PNT.
9. When including the PNT's service mark within the design of a sign, coordinate with the Forest Service to ensure the official service mark is used appropriately. Where the PNT crosses or is in an interim location on a road or motorized trail, or where PNT users may encounter motorized users (such as at a motorized crossing), consider using advanced warning and regulatory signs to promote safety. Signs should be appropriate to the setting.
10. In general, avoid memorials or recognition (such as adopt-a-trail signs) that involve new signs along the trail. Consider other ways to memorialize or recognize people.

Visitor Information and Interpretation

Visitor Information

The Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association partner through a cooperative agreement to provide visitor information for the PNT (see [chapter 6](#)). At the time of this comprehensive plan, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association's website, <https://www.pnt.org/>, is the primary resource for visitor information about the PNT, particularly for information about planning thru-hikes or other long-distance journeys on the PNT. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association's website contains detailed trail information organized by geographic regions, annually updated map sets, trail alerts and conditions, current news, and information to promote visitors' use of responsible behaviors and practices (e.g., bear safety, food storage, Leave No Trace™ principles). The Pacific Northwest Trail Association has also partnered with some gateway communities to host kiosks with information about the PNT.

The Forest Service's website for the PNT is: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/pnt/>. The website includes information about the administration and management of the trail and provides links to the various Federal and state managing agencies for the PNT. It also provides an overview of the trail route, links to maps, and information about passes and permits.

Some managing agencies have offices, websites, and other resources that provide visitor information about segments of the PNT. Visitors starting their trip in Glacier National Park must view educational information about backcountry camping, including safety in habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife, prior to getting a wilderness permit.

Multiple third-party guidebooks, maps, and smartphone apps for the PNT are also available from various sources.

Interpretation

In 2016-19, the Forest Service worked in partnership with Western Washington University's Huxley College of Environmental Science and Pacific Northwest Trail Association to develop interpretive themes for the PNT. These themes may be updated in the future and additional themes may be identified and developed.

Desired Conditions

1. Information about the PNT is accurate, timely, and consistent across the administering agency, managing agencies, and partner organizations.

2. Information and interpretation of the PNT reflects the diversity of the public, is responsive to the needs of traditionally underserved groups, and is welcoming to all.
3. High-quality trip planning information is readily available and meets the public's needs.
4. A coordinated, consistent, and flexible interpretation program based on trail-wide themes is delivered by managing agencies and partners through interpretive sites, programs, and activities that connect the public with the PNT and its stories.
5. Information and interpretation for the PNT encourages responsible behaviors across the trail and promotes user ethics, knowledge, and skills related to backcountry travel and navigation, bear awareness and safety practices, protection of cultural and natural resources, and respect for private landowner rights.
6. Information and interpretative materials for the PNT foster public understanding and respect for tribal nations' traditional territories, treaty rights, cultural and natural resources, and ongoing connections to places along the PNT.
7. Information and interpretative materials for the PNT foster public appreciation and responsible behaviors that support preservation of the PNT's significant natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Management Practices

1. The administering agency, managing agencies, and partner organizations should coordinate regularly to review visitor information for the PNT and ensure it is accurate, timely, consistent, and reflected in key information sources (for example, websites, maps, and brochures). Collaborate to best utilize the information-sharing opportunities and strengths of each agency and of partners.
 - a) Strive to update information by spring of each year when many prospective visitors are planning trips for the thru-hiking season.
 - b) Coordinate as needed to provide timely and accurate information during emergencies, public health and safety concerns, and other emerging situations.
 - c) Coordinate as needed to provide timely and accurate information about trail conditions.
2. Involve affected tribes in the development of information and interpretation for the PNT.
 - a) Consult with tribes to determine appropriateness of interpreting Native American content and cultural sites (including development of meaningful Native American land acknowledgments.) Interpretive content about Native Americans and associated cultural sites should prioritize Native American perspectives and content generated by tribes and tribal organizations wherever possible.
 - b) Collaborate with tribal organizations (such as the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association) on heritage and cultural tourism opportunities.
3. Provide information and interpretation for the PNT and related services (such as trip planning assistance, volunteer programs, educational programs, and events) that are culturally responsive and inclusive, and that promote equity in the enjoyment of the PNT and its benefits.
 - a) The administering agency should complete an interpretive plan for the PNT that builds on the recommendations developed in partnership with Western Washington University.

- b) Update, refine, and develop new interpretive themes and content, as needed, to ensure they are responsive to evolving scientific and social understandings and relevant to changing public interests and expectations.
4. Be proactive in using information and interpretation to increase visitors' compliance with the rules and regulations for the PNT and the areas it goes through (for example, food storage orders), and visitors' use of responsible behaviors and practices.
 - a) Incorporate messaging into visitor information and interpretive materials about:
 - i. the need to be prepared for responsible travel in bear country, including the importance of proper food storage, carrying bear spray, and avoiding encounters with bears.
 - ii. the need to be prepared for travel through remote and relatively undeveloped areas, which may have limited telecommunications opportunities and present challenges for search and rescue response.
 - iii. the need to be prepared for dynamic conditions that may change rapidly, particularly when there are wildfires in the vicinity of the trail.
 - iv. the need to be prepared for dynamic conditions at stream crossings and that not all stream crossings have bridges.
 - v. the need to be prepared to carry sufficient water, locate water sources, and treat water to avoid illness.
 - vi. proper disposal of garbage and human waste and the infrequency of toilet and garbage facilities along the trail.
 - vii. segments of the PNT route in interim locations on open roads and motorized trails where users may encounter motor vehicles.
 - viii. where packing and riding stock and where bicycling are allowed, along with where they are prohibited.
 - ix. where permits are required for public recreational access or overnight use, or both.
 - x. the importance of respecting private lands and areas with restrictions on public access (as appropriate, identify private lands and/or areas where public access is restricted on maps and in other informational materials); and
 - xi. the need to be aware of dynamic regulations or closure orders such as areas closed due to wildfire, campfire and stove restrictions, or other orders that affect travel on the PNT.
 - b) Employ established outreach and user ethics programs such as Leave No Trace™, Tread Lightly!, and the International Mountain Biking Association's Rules of the Trail.
 5. Coordinate with partner organizations and with state, county, and municipal governments to make information about the PNT available to landowners along the trail to facilitate their understanding of the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values and the opportunities they may have to steward the trail and protect the scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the areas the trail goes through.

6. Coordinate with tourism destination marketing organizations, gateway communities, media, and other service providers as necessary to ensure any marketing of the PNT reflects the PNT's nature and purposes and is compatible with preserving the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values associated with the trail (see [chapter 3](#)).
7. Interpretive signs (see Trail Facilities and Signs) and interpretive activities should be appropriate to the setting. In general, favor presenting PNT interpretation off-site or at trailheads or other developed recreation sites.

Visitor Use Management and Carrying Capacity

Visitor use management is defined as the proactive and adaptive process of planning for and managing characteristics of visitor use and its physical and social setting, using a variety of strategies and tools to sustain desired resource conditions and visitor experiences (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2016a). Visitor use characteristics include the amount, type, timing, and distribution of visitor use, including visitor activities and behaviors. The primary goal of visitor use management is to maintain opportunities for high-quality visitor experiences while protecting natural and cultural resources. Visitor capacity strategies are encompassed in the broader principles of visitor use management.

The nature and purposes of the PNT (see [chapter 3](#)) define the desired conditions of the trail setting and experience and establish the context for appropriate activities and uses for the PNT and its corridor. The nature and purposes recognize the public's connection with the unique and diverse treasures of the Northwest's outdoors for purposes of recreation, spiritual renewal, improved health, and high-quality time spent with families and friends. There is a constant management challenge – not unique to the PNT – to strike an appropriate balance between these societal benefits and resource protection and conservation. Through specific visitor use management practices related to the trail-wide objectives and desired conditions for the PNT, the comprehensive plan provides general, but consistent, direction that maintains flexibility for implementation by different managing agencies in varied situations.

The National Trails System Act requires that comprehensive plans for national scenic trails include an identified **carrying capacity** of the trail and a plan for its implementation (16 U.S.C. 1244 (f)(1)). The contemporary term for carrying capacity is **visitor capacity**, defined as:

...the maximum amounts and types of visitor use that a public use area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2019⁴⁷).

In addition to meeting the requirements in the National Trails System Act, identifying visitor capacity and its subsequent monitoring and implementation helps in managing and protecting the resources and social values associated with the trail. Identifying visitor capacity is one of many tools available to managers for achieving and maintaining desired conditions.

⁴⁷ Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2019. Monitoring Guidebook: Evaluating Effectiveness of Visitor Use Management. Edition One. June 2019.

The National Trails System Act established national scenic trails as:

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 (16USC1242 (a)(2)).

National scenic trails are different from most other trails because they are specifically managed to provide opportunities for long-distance travel. In the case of the PNT, it is the opportunity to travel 1,200-plus miles through many different types of settings in one long trip. The opportunity the PNT provides to thru-hike from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean is the reason the PNT concept was conceived, and it is one of the values for which the PNT was designated as a national scenic trail in 2009. Thru-hiking is the primary experience the PNT is managed for because that opportunity is identified as the core experience, and central to the nature and purposes of the PNT.

Other trail uses – which currently represent the majority of use on the PNT – include day hiking, section hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and other nonmotorized trail uses. These uses have fewer constraints on timing and season of use than thru-hiking. Additionally, the thru-hiking experience is cumulative across all trail stages, whereas other trail use experiences are generally limited to one or several sections of the trail. Identifying the specific sustainable recreation opportunities along the PNT that provide the long-distance thru-hiking experience will frame management approaches to best meet the nature and purposes of the PNT.

Identifying the Carrying Capacity of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Interagency Visitor Use Management Council Framework

In 2019, the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (IVUMC) published the guidebook *Visitor Capacity Guidebook: Managing the Amounts and Types of Visitor Use to Achieve Desired Conditions* (2019), which includes four guidelines for determining visitor capacity:

1. Determine the analysis area(s).
2. Review existing direction and knowledge.
3. Identify the limiting attribute(s).
4. Identify capacity.

An Interagency Visitor Use Management Council position paper, *Visitor Capacity on Federally Managed Lands and Waters: A POSITION PAPER TO GUIDE POLICY* (2016b) includes recommendations for addressing visitor capacity in accordance with the visitor capacity (also known as user capacity, carrying capacity, and recreational capacity) requirements found in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, National Trails System Act, and National Parks and Recreation Act, respectively. The recommendations in the 2016 position paper specific to national scenic trails and national historic trails (collectively, national trails) are:

1. The comprehensive plan should include the general visitor capacity for a national trail (i.e., an approximation of the appropriate types and levels of use that can be accommodated generally by the national trail) and, if applicable, visitor capacities by site, segment, or area, without adversely affecting the nature and purposes of the trail.

2. The comprehensive plan should include an implementation plan for addressing the identified visitor capacities.

Where the administering agency, in consultation with the managing agency, determines that current visitor use levels are threatening resource values or desired conditions for a specific national trail site, segment, or area; the administering agency, in consultation with the managing agency, should encourage the managing agency to promptly adopt or adjust visitor capacities for that site, segment, or area or take other measures to reverse these conditions, and should provide assistance in that effort as needed, so that the activity or use will not be incompatible or substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2016b).

Carrying Capacity Worksheets (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council Guidelines 1-3)

Carrying capacity description and decision criteria worksheets were developed and used as a tool to address Interagency Visitor Use Management Council guidelines 1, 2, and 3 above. Information gathered through the worksheets and interviews with managing agency staff for each stage is summarized in [appendix E](#).

Guideline 1: Analysis area

The overview and strip maps in the Pacific Northwest Trail Association's 2019 PNT Map Set were used to illustrate the analysis area. Where the PNT primary route is different from the congressionally designated route (see [chapter 4](#)), the congressionally designated route is the focus for identification of carrying capacity. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association's maps break the PNT into 50 "stages" (indicated on the overview and strip maps) based on the main access points where visitors enter, leave, or detour from the PNT. These stages were used to divide the trail into sections for data gathering and analysis. Each stage was addressed through its own worksheet.

Guideline 2: Existing direction and knowledge

Carrying capacity description and decision criteria worksheets were used to document existing direction and managers' knowledge of trail and resource conditions and constraints for each trail stage. Interviews with managing agency staff were conducted to help identify the limiting factors, rate the capacity decision criteria, and identify conditions related to visitor use that are important to monitor.

Guideline 3: Limiting attributes

Limiting attributes, also called limiting factors, are those that most constrain the trail's ability to accommodate visitor use. Through the worksheets and interview process, we have identified limiting factors and conditions related to visitor use that will be important to monitor. Identifying the most limiting factor by trail stage helped prioritize locations where site-specific visitor use management planning may be needed in the future. The following categories of limiting factors were identified:

1. Backcountry campsite permits in national parks
2. Management in grizzly bear recovery zones
3. Preserving wilderness character, particularly opportunities for solitude, where the PNT is in wilderness areas.

4. Overlap of PNT with other national scenic trails
5. Segments of the PNT on open motorized roads
6. Segments of the PNT on or adjacent to private lands
7. Potential future conditions that could present limiting factors such as the availability campsites in areas where terrain is limiting, conflict between different types of uses, human waste impacts, future wilderness designation, and wildfire impacts on trail use.

Although all 50 trail stages were considered during the worksheet interview process, for some trail stages, specific limiting factors were not found. For these trail stages, there were no concerns or limitations related to visitor use based on current or foreseeable conditions. Monitoring is or will be put in place to identify constraints or limitations that may arise in the future (see [chapter 6](#) and [appendix F](#)).

Identifying Carrying Capacity (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council guideline 4)

In alignment with Interagency Visitor Use Management Council recommendations (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2016), this comprehensive plan expresses the carrying capacity of the trail as a general visitor capacity that is trail-wide and addresses the amounts and types of use the PNT can accommodate. The trail-wide capacity is expressed as (1) an estimated range of thru-hikers per high-use season (June 15th to Sept 15th) and also (2) the general amounts and types of use the trail can accommodate.

The carrying capacity determination is based on a variety of factors such as current known resource and management constraints, existing permit systems, and desired condition zones. The carrying capacity numbers and factors that may limit or change the trail's carrying capacity in the future are linked to the trail monitoring plan that will guide local monitoring and implementation of the trail carrying capacity. There may be other resource considerations or management direction that are more or less limiting than the identified trail carrying capacity. Local visitor use management decisions will consider all relevant resources and direction.

Trail-wide capacity: Thru-hiker capacity

The long-distance thru-hiking opportunity has been identified as the primary use for the PNT that allows for a trail-wide, end-to-end travel opportunity. Thru-hiking was the focus of the original PNT concept, one of the values for which the PNT was designated and is central to the nature and purposes of the trail. Thru-hiking was determined to be the trail activity with the most limitations (seasonality) and the greatest dependence on the trail resources (trail conditions, access and closures, availability of campsites and water, resupply opportunities, etc.; see [appendix A](#)), and therefore the trail activity with the most constraints.

Carrying capacity for thru-hiking was estimated based on assumptions about trail use, carrying capacity criteria rated by local managers, and a review of constraints or limiting factors along the trail. This provided a quantitative estimate of the range of thru-hiking opportunities that the PNT provides under current known physical, ecological, and social conditions. More information about how the estimate was derived is in [appendix E](#).

The estimated carrying capacity range for thru-hiking for the PNT is 552 to 1,748 thru-hikers per high use season (June 15th to September 15th). This is based on the most limiting passages of the

trail, Stages 10-18 in the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains grizzly bear recovery zones, and Stages 48-50 within Olympic National Park's Wilderness Coast. A numeric range is provided because there are several variables, such as the ability to make advanced campsite reservations in the national parks, the availability of walk-up camping opportunities that influence the ability of these areas to accommodate overnight use, and variable party sizes.

The estimates are presented as a range of visitor use that in most cases is much higher than current amounts of use. Thru-hiking use constitutes only a small fraction of overall use of the PNT relative to day-use and short multi-day trips. Currently, the Forest Service estimates that about 78 people attempt to thru-hike the PNT each year. It is important to note that this is an estimate based on triangulating various data sources. The number of thru-hiking attempts (versus completed thru-hikes) may be higher. There is currently no trail-wide permit system or other requirement for trail users to register. Use is likely to continue to increase as the attractiveness of this relatively little-used, long-distance trail becomes better known.

Trail-wide capacity: General amounts and types of use the trail can accommodate

The PNT provides opportunities for long-distance hiking, including end-to-end thru-hiking and section hiking, and for shorter trips on foot, ranging from day hiking to multi-day backpacking trips on sections of the PNT. Along with hiking, horseback riding and bicycling (particularly mountain biking) are popular uses in certain sections of the PNT. A trail that provides opportunities for long-distance hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling can accommodate many other forms of nonmotorized trail use that occur along the PNT such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and trail running. Day hiking, section hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and other nonmotorized trail uses have fewer constraints on timing and season of use than for thru-hiking and generally involve one or several sections of the trail rather than the entire trail. Use levels vary widely across the 1,200-mile trail depending on adjacent communities, access, terrain, etc.

Trail zones were developed to describe the desired conditions (focusing on the recreation settings and social experiences) for the PNT as it crosses a variety of landscapes and jurisdictions (see [appendix E](#)). The zone descriptions identify the appropriate types and levels of use that can be accommodated by the PNT without adversely affecting the nature and purposes of the trail. A qualitative description of the range of visitor use that can be accommodated in different zones along the trail is included (see [appendix E](#)).

Site-, segment-, and area-specific capacities

If necessary, specific visitor capacities for a site, trail segment, or area would be identified and implemented by the managing agency. [Appendix E](#) lists sites, segments, and areas that may need to be prioritized for additional visitor use management planning, which could include identification of site-, segment-, or area-specific capacities.

Implementing and Monitoring the Carrying Capacity for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix E](#) includes a plan for implementation of the carrying capacity of the trail. It is based on prioritization of limiting factors and the relative need to address carrying capacity by trail stage. The monitoring plan ([appendix F](#)) outlines potential indicators and thresholds to guide monitoring efforts. An adaptive management toolbox of management approaches is also included. The identified carrying capacity numbers and desired experience zones will inform implementation of

site-, segment-, or area-specific monitoring and management actions to manage visitor use along the trail.

Permits and Fees

There is currently no trail-wide permit⁴⁸ or coordinated long-distance permit option⁴⁹ for the PNT. There are locations along the trail where the managing agency or landowner requires permits for overnight camping or fees such as entrance, parking or recreational amenity fees. Some areas along the trail, such as some Forest Service-managed wilderness areas, require entry permits that are free of charge and may be self-issued at the trailhead or wilderness boundary. These permits and fees are not specific to use of the PNT. Individuals planning a trip on the PNT need to contact the relevant managing agencies and/or landowners for the segments they will be visiting to inquire about current permit or fee requirements and obtain any relevant permits directly from the managing agency or landowner. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association website maintains updated contact information and links for the various permit and fee requirements.

In general, PNT thru-hikers and other overnight users rely on backcountry campsites rather than developed campgrounds (also referred to as car campgrounds or drive-up campgrounds), rental cabins, or other accommodations. Therefore, the type of permits with the greatest potential impact on the long-distance recreation opportunities provided by the PNT are permits required for backcountry or wilderness campsites, such as in national parks, when there is a limited number of available permits and/or designated campsites. Thru-hikers may have difficulty making advanced reservations for permits limited to specific dates and locations due to the uncertain rate of travel and timing when travelers would arrive at a particular location along the trail. Additional challenges include limited access to internet or cellular telephone service along the PNT to make reservations and the distance of the PNT from permit-issuing offices for any in-person tasks such as making reservations, completing educational requirements⁵⁰, paying fees, or picking up permits. Some offices have helped alleviate these challenges by offering special services for PNT long-distance travelers such as issuing permits by telephone one or two days prior to arrival. Some campgrounds have established walk-up hiker/biker campsites that do not require advanced reservations.

Permits and fees associated with motor vehicle use, such as motor vehicle entrance fees or permits required to be displayed on motor vehicles parked at trailheads, are less impactful for thru-hikers and section hikers. Day hikers and overnight backpackers making short trips on the PNT are more likely to visit by vehicle.

Desired Conditions

1. The types and amounts of visitor use support and realize the nature and purposes of the PNT.
2. The types and amounts of visitor use allow for preservation of the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources and values associated with the PNT (see [chapter 3](#)).

⁴⁸ There are currently no national scenic trails or national historic trails with a trail-wide permit required for thru-hikers or other visitors.

⁴⁹ There is currently a long-distance permit option for the Pacific Crest Trail that allows visitors traveling 500 miles or more to get one coordinated permit that satisfies managing agencies' permit requirements for multiple national parks, wilderness areas, and other special areas across the Pacific Crest Trail.

⁵⁰ Certain permits require the applicant to complete educational training on bear safety, trail user ethics and other relevant topics prior to obtaining a permit.

3. The PNT provides premier, nationally significant opportunities for long-distance nonmotorized travel that is continuous, connected, and as seamless as practicable across land ownerships, managing agency jurisdictions, and management units or areas without unreasonable or inequitable barriers to access.

Management Practices

1. The administering agency, managing agencies, landowners, and partner organizations collaborate to implement the carrying capacity of the PNT in a manner that supports and complements broader visitor use management strategies for the PNT and specific sites, segments, or areas (see [appendix E](#)).
 - a) The trail-wide carrying capacity for thru-hiking on the PNT (552 to 1,748 thru-hikers per high-use season) is understood to be an estimated range, based on current conditions, of the amount of thru-hiking use the PNT could accommodate without adversely impacting the PNT's nature and purposes.
 - b) The carrying capacity of the PNT is one resource consideration among many that informs visitor use management and, where applicable, visitor capacities for sites, segments, or areas along the PNT. Other resource considerations and management direction (including compliance with other laws) may be more limiting than the PNT carrying capacity.
 - c) The carrying capacity of the PNT is not a target for the expected or desired amount of visitor use.
2. The administering agency, managing agencies, landowners, and partner organizations collaborate to monitor visitor use and related resource conditions along the PNT (see [appendix E](#) and [appendix F](#)) and use monitoring results to adaptively manage visitor use.
3. The administering agency, managing agencies, landowners, and partner organizations coordinate to share relevant information regarding the amounts and patterns of visitor use on the PNT and any concerns regarding resource impacts from visitor use of the PNT.
4. In general, favor less direct management strategies and actions to address negative impacts of visitor use before moving to strategies and actions that require more active management and/or are more impactful to visitors' experience.
5. Where permit systems are in place or being considered:
 - a) Managing agencies and/or landowners should coordinate annually with the administering agency and partner organizations to share information regarding number of permit applications and availability for PNT itineraries.
 - b) Managing agencies and/or landowners should provide advance notice to the PNT administrator and partner organizations of changes in permit implementation that would impact PNT users, particularly PNT thru-hikers. Coordinate to identify options to avoid negative impacts and improve the permitting process for PNT users.
 - c) Implementation of additional permit requirements along the PNT should be coordinated between the managing agency and/or landowner, the administering agency, and partner organizations. Consider potential impacts to the PNT's nature and purposes and other values, particularly long-distance recreation opportunities. Coordinate to identify options to avoid negative impacts and improve the permitting process for PNT visitors.

- d) Seek ways to simplify permitting to provide a seamless PNT thru-travel experience across jurisdictions. Consider establishing a coordinated long-distance permit option.
6. Use an equity lens to identify and address barriers to access to and enjoyment of the PNT and its benefits under current and proposed visitor use management strategies and actions.

Trail Closures and Temporary Detours

A **temporary detour** is a route that can provide for continuous travel when a segment of the PNT has been temporarily closed to the public by the managing agency through closure of a trail, road, or area. Closures may be due to emergency situations such as wildfires, landslides, or flooding, or they may be due to management activities such as prescribed fire, timber harvest, restoration, or construction. A temporary detour enables uninterrupted long-distance travel by providing a way for PNT visitors to bypass a closed area, trail, or road. In contrast to relocation and realignment, a temporary detour does not change the location of the official PNT route, the national trail planning corridor, or the national trail management corridor (where applicable).

Desired Conditions

1. Trail closures have minimal disruption to recreation opportunities for the primary uses, especially long-distance recreation opportunities for the primary uses including end-to-end hiking (thru-hiking).
2. Temporary detours follow routes that are consistent with the PNT's nature and purposes, to the greatest extent practicable while avoiding motorized routes, especially highways or other routes with high-speed vehicles.
3. Trail closures and temporary detours are limited and occur only if necessary (1) in emergency situations or (2) for management activities when the primary uses of the PNT cannot be feasibly accommodated.
4. Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail visitors are informed of trail closures and temporary detours with as much advance notice as possible.

Management Practices

1. When a closure is necessary, strive to minimize the extent of the PNT affected, the duration of the closure, and the impact on recreation opportunities.⁵¹
 - a) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to the PNT. (16 U.S.C. 1246(c))
 - b) Strive to avoid closures that would disrupt or prevent end-to-end hiking (thru-hiking).
2. When a closure is necessary, identify a temporary detour. Temporary detours should follow routes that best provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
 - a) Provide for continuous travel, connecting to adjacent segments of the PNT.
 - b) Strive to minimize the extent of the temporary detour and its divergence from the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values. Nonmotorized trails are preferred to motorized

⁵¹ As described in the [Special Use Authorizations](#) section of this chapter, certain special uses by tribes may necessitate temporary closures of lands or facilities along the PNT from public access (subject to certain limitations).

- trails. Trails are preferred to roads. Avoid paved roads if possible, especially highways or other roads with high-speed vehicles.
- c) The administering agency, managing agencies, affected tribes, and partner organizations may coordinate and collaborate to plan in advance which temporary detour routes for a given area would best provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values while limiting impacts to other resources and areas of concern.
3. Provide timely notice of closures that affect the PNT to the PNT administrator, other adjacent managing agencies, affected tribes, and partner organizations and involve them, as circumstances allow, in selecting the temporary detour and providing information to PNT visitors. The managing agency will use appropriate managing agency policies and processes to establish the closure and notify the public.
 - a) When closures are due to emergency conditions, provide notice to the PNT administrator and partner organizations as soon as practicable. In some cases, this may be after a closure has been put in place and a temporary detour has been identified.
 - b) When closures that affect the PNT are planned in advance (for example, for resource protection, forest management activities, or construction), provide notice to the PNT administrator, other adjacent managing agencies, affected tribes, and partner organizations as early as possible prior to the closure. The PNT administrator and partner organizations should be consulted in the identification of a temporary detour and assist in communication to PNT visitors.
 - c) Identify one centralized location for all PNT closure and detour information.
 4. Strive to minimize the length of the time the temporary detour will be in use and its impact on visitors, particularly long-distance opportunities for the primary uses including end-to-end hiking (thru-hiking).
 - a) If possible, avoid scheduling management activities that necessitate closing the trail when PNT long-distance hikers or pack and saddle stock users would be in the area or when trail crews would perform trail maintenance. Coordinate with partner organizations.
 - b) If a closure is anticipated to be of long or indefinite duration, the managing agency should consult with the administering agency, affected tribes, and partner organizations to identify any other options (for example, project design criteria, trail realignment, or trail relocation) that may be appropriate to consider.
 - c) While a temporary detour is in use, consult with the administering agency, affected tribes, and partner organizations on an ongoing basis to identify opportunities to reduce the duration and extent of the detour and its divergence from the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.

Scenery

Preservation of scenery is one of the most important management challenges on a national scenic trail. This section is intended to guide the management of scenery resources and the mitigation of land uses that diminish scenic quality. Although scenery management is focused on landscapes seen during the day, dark skies provide inspirational nighttime viewing opportunities. Guidance for dark skies resources and natural sounds are also provided below.

The PNT provides a nationally significant opportunity to experience scenic landscapes and natural-appearing settings that predominate across much of the trail. Cultural sites are often valued by trail users, including historic buildings (e.g., fire lookout towers, historic cabins and ranger stations, and lighthouses). Relatively small, isolated, well-designed facilities such as trailheads and campgrounds often have little impact on scenic quality, and some may help protect scenery. Rustic, aesthetically pleasing trailhead signs and kiosks can become valued features of the PNT. In addition to aiding navigation by demarcating the beginning and end points of trail sections, signs can both instill excitement at the beginning of a journey and a sense of accomplishment upon its conclusion.

Land uses and facilities that contrast with natural settings, however, may diminish scenic quality. Development such as high-voltage transmission lines, energy developments, communications towers, and associated access roads are often visible from long distances, especially in western landscapes, and can detract from the naturalness of the trail setting and the experience of trail users, especially when these types of developments are located near the trail (see related discussions in [Trail Setting](#), [Trail Facilities and Signs](#), and [Special Use Authorizations](#), also in this chapter).

The National Trails System Act provides for the establishment of national scenic trails as “extended trails so located as to provide for ... conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic ... qualities of the areas through which the trails pass” (16 U.S.C. 1242). Section 3 (16 U.S.C. 1242) and Section 7 (16 U.S.C. 1245) of the National Trails System Act charge the managing agencies, to the extent practicable, to make efforts to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which the national scenic trails were established. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the managing agencies to preserve and protect the scenery resources that support the nature and purposes of the PNT.

The Forest Service Scenery Management System is the agency’s latest science in fulfilling its legal requirements for managing scenic resources. It considers the uniqueness of landscapes, user concerns, and viewsheds, and establishes objectives for managing scenery. The system is described in [Agricultural Handbook 701, Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management \(SMS Handbook\)](#) (USDA Forest Service 1995). In addition to the SMS Handbook, FSM 2380 contains information on the Scenery Management System.

The Bureau of Land Management uses the visual resource management system to address visual management on Bureau of Land Management lands (BLM Manual 8400). The visual resource management system is used to evaluate the existing quality of the visual environment, identify areas that warrant protection through special management attention, establish objectives for managing scenery, and reduce the visual impact of existing and proposed projects while maintaining the effectiveness in agency resource programs.

The National Park Service Visual Resource Program is a comprehensive inventory, planning and park assistance program covering visual resource management. The National Park Service has historically had less need for formal policy for management of visual resources, due to its mission focus on the conservation of natural, historic, and cultural resources and limitations on developments with the potential to impact scenery. Increasing large-scale developments, such as renewable energy projects, and community growth near Park Service-administered areas, has prompted the development of the National Park Service Visual Resource Program to address scenery-related issues.

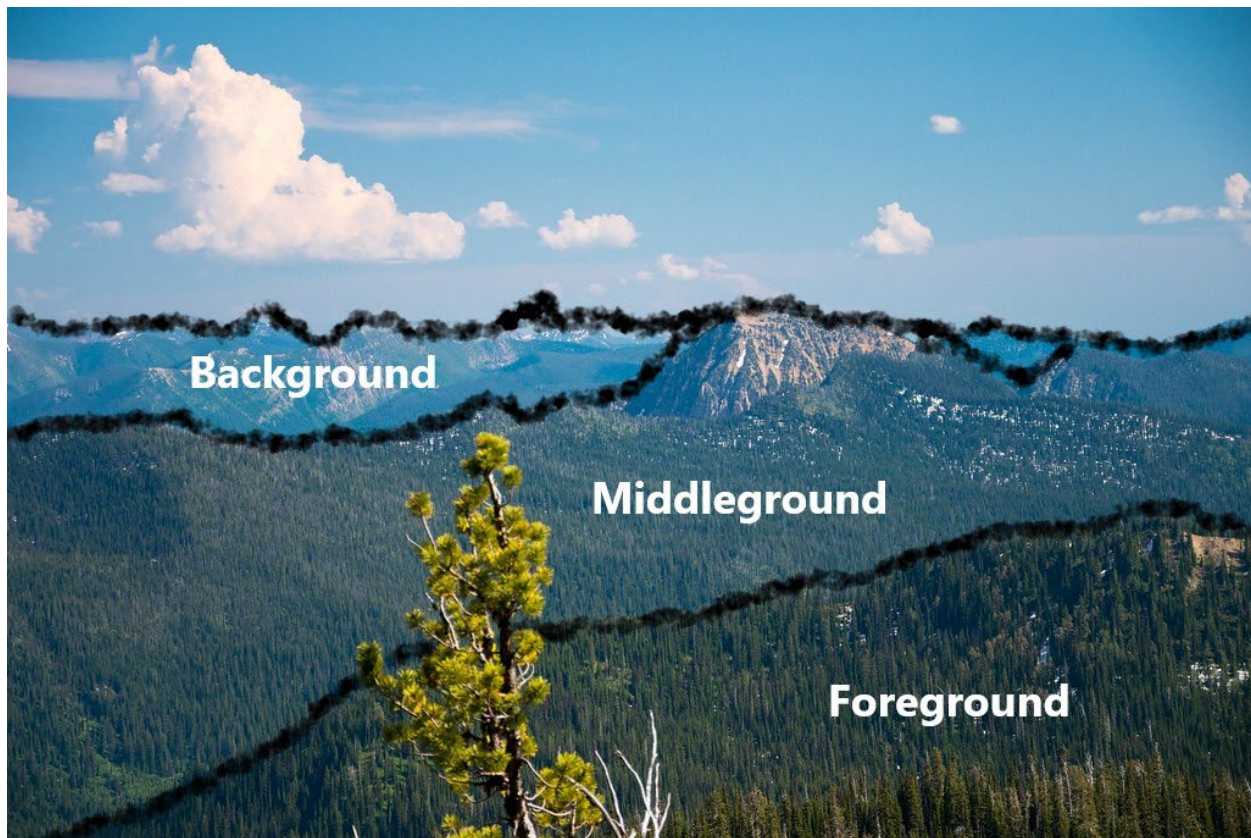


Figure 19. scenery management distance zones: foreground (0 - .5 miles, middleground (.5 – 4 miles, and background (4 miles to the horizon)

Desired Conditions

1. The PNT showcases the exceptional scenic beauty and variety of the Northwest and provides for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic qualities of the areas through which the trail passes.
2. Scenic integrity of the PNT is managed for the equivalent of the Forest Service Scenic Integrity Objectives of High and Very High through land management or, as appropriate, realignment of the trail travelway (see the [Trail Alignment and Design](#) section in this chapter) or relocation of the trail (see [chapter 4](#)).
3. As appropriate to the setting, views along the PNT highlight ecological processes, cultural practices, and/or their interplay in shaping the landscape.
 - a) Across most of the PNT in federally administered areas, ecological processes appear to be the dominant forces shaping the foreground viewing zone. Development or modifications to the natural environment are subordinate to the natural landscape.
 - b) Cultural features such as historic structures add elements that support scenic character and contribute to scenic quality.
 - c) In those segments of the PNT where a more primitive experience is not possible, and land uses such as forestry, farming, ranching, working waterfronts, and commercial areas occur, they are in the appropriate locations and complement the trail’s visual variety and sense of place.

4. PNT management protects and enhances opportunities to experience dark skies free from artificial light pollution and experience natural sounds free from anthropogenic noise.

Management Practices

1. Manage the entire PNT corridor with related features such as privy sites, designated overnight sites, water sources, vistas, and spur trails as one seamless viewing platform.
2. Identify important viewpoints along the PNT. Develop and implement strategies to protect scenery resources in the viewshed across the entire trail and related features (foreground, middleground, and background zones; see figure 19).
3. Address threats to scenery and restore areas near the trail that do not meet scenic integrity objectives. A visual prioritization process or similar process to map areas where scenery is impacted or threatened may help managers identify and address the highest priority areas.
4. In developed areas and locations where preservation (SIO of Very High) or retention (SIO of High) is not possible, minimize visual impacts to foreground views.
5. Considerations of cultural landscapes and traditional cultural properties (TCPs) should be integrated and fully considered in PNT scenery management. Follow managing agency policies regarding the consideration and protection of cultural landscapes and traditional cultural properties. Coordinate with managing agency heritage and cultural resources staff and consult with affected tribes, and Tribal and State Historic Preservation Officers as appropriate. (See the [cultural resources](#) section of this chapter.)
6. Seek opportunities to protect scenery resources on non-federally managed lands through agreements with state, county, and municipal governments, and private landowners. Consider scenic easements or acquisition of lands in the national trail planning corridor from willing sellers, as appropriate, to protect scenery resources in the foreground zone. (See [chapter 6](#) and [appendix D](#).)
7. Seek opportunities to protect dark skies in areas along the PNT, such as through participation in local, regional, or international dark skies initiatives.
8. Seek opportunities to protect natural sounds along the PNT, such as during the optimal location review process or design of the built environment.
9. To protect the PNT's scenic values, special-use authorizations for new communication sites, utility corridors, and renewable energy sites should not be visible within foreground and should not be visually dominant within the middleground viewshed.

Scenery in Land Management Planning

1. Utilize the trail values identified in this plan (see [chapter 3](#)) and also the trail-wide scenic inventory (Stringham et al. 2016 or any subsequent updates) to identify scenery resources in the planning area that support the nature and purposes of the PNT, and ensure appropriate protection.

2. Scenic integrity objectives (SIO) for the foreground zone (the seen area within 0.5 miles of either side of the trail) of the PNT should be equal to Forest Service scenic integrity objectives of high or very high.⁵²
 - a) Where a segment of the PNT is in an interim location on an open road or motorized trail and where existing land uses preclude a higher scenic integrity objective, a scenic integrity objective equal to moderate may be appropriate. However, managers should prioritize relocating the segment of the PNT to a location where the scenic integrity objective will be equal to high or very high.
3. The PNT is a concern level one travelway for the development of scenic classes.

Scenery in Project Planning and Consideration of Facilities and Structures

1. When projects are proposed, planning teams should identify whether there may be scenic impacts visible from the trail. If so, a thorough analysis of possible scenic impacts should be part of the project level decision.
2. During project planning, incorporate appropriate design features and mitigation to minimize negative impacts to the trail corridor. Projects and activities should strive to result in a visual degree of contrast that is either none or weak.
3. Forest health improvement projects that promote resilient and natural-appearing forests and plant communities can provide important long-term scenery benefits. Avoid siting landings, skid trails, temporary roads, and other project activities with the potential for long-term scenic impacts in the foreground distance zones. Mitigate short-term scenic impacts, such as by prioritizing removal of log decks and naturalizing disturbed areas in the foreground zone.
 - b) In the future, the administering agency may collaborate with managing agencies and partner organizations to develop more specific best management practices for protecting the PNT nature and purposes and other trail values in forest health improvement projects, similar to those that have been developed for other national scenic trails.
4. Follow managing agency policies and best practices for mitigating the impact of artificial lighting upon dark skies and the natural-appearing settings along the PNT when planning and implementing projects visible from the PNT travelway.
5. Consider visible areas outside the foreground zone (middleground and background zones). These lands should be valued for their contribution to the PNTs settings and protected accordingly through mitigation measures and project design criteria.
6. Consider the potential cumulative effects of projects across the PNT on scenery resources (particularly those identified in this plan as significant resources to be preserved) and the nature and purposes of the trail.
7. Allow for the maintenance of existing recreation, range, and other facilities and the occasional addition of new facilities that are subordinate to the natural setting and not visually intrusive. Whenever possible, these facilities should be hidden from view by terrain.

⁵² Scenic integrity objectives are defined in the Forest Service Scenery Management System

8. In siting new facilities and structures, favor locations outside of the viewshed of the trail. If this is not possible, select materials, and colors that minimize visual impacts and blend into the landscape, especially within foreground views.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are a unique resource category encompassing anthropogenic, biotic, and abiotic features at a variety of scales. A **cultural resource** is defined as an object or definite location of human activity, occupation, or use identifiable through field survey, historical documentation, or oral evidence. Cultural resources⁵³ are prehistoric (pre-contact era), historic (proto- and post-contact era), archaeological, architectural, structures, places, objects, and traditional cultural properties (FSM 2360.5). Cultural resources are diverse and range from prehistoric lithic scatters to historic fire lookouts to natural features with ongoing religious and cultural significance to present-day indigenous peoples.

Areas surrounding the PNT contain hundreds of archaeological sites representing millennia of indigenous use and other more recent sites tied to numerous other groups and historic time periods including a continued indigenous presence, Chinese sojourners, explorers, fur traders, miners, loggers, homesteaders, among others. Discrete and ever-disappearing archaeological sites represent only a very small sample of the complex, rich, and dynamic past lifeways associated with each group and time period.

The areas now known as the states of Montana, Idaho, and Washington were home to many distinct indigenous nations preceding and following the arrival of Euro Americans and other ethnic groups in the region. Indigenous oral histories and traditional stories speak of these homelands from time immemorial. The archaeological record shows evidence of at least 15,000 years of indigenous presence in the areas around the PNT, including networks of travel routes connecting western Montana to the Columbia Plateau and further west to the Pacific Coast. The PNT follows pre-contact and post-contact trail systems, some of which have their origination with the indigenous communities who resided in the area prior to the arrival of non-natives settlers.

Historically, the areas around the PNT were the ancestral homelands and travelways for indigenous nations now organized into the following federally recognized Tribes: Blackfoot Tribe of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation of Montana, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Hoh Indian Tribe, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Kalispel Indian Community of the Kalispel Reservation, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Lummi Tribe of the Lummi Reservation, Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Quileute Tribe of the Quileute Reservation, Quinault Indian Nation, Samish Indian Nation, Sauk-Suiattle Tribe, Spokane Tribe of the Spokane Reservation, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians of Washington, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Tulalip Tribes of Washington, and Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. A number of distinct cultures and communities were subsumed within Federally recognized Tribes through the historic relocation of distinct communities to communal reservations. These indigenous communities have maintained their

⁵³The National Trails System Act directs national scenic trail comprehensive plans to include significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved (16 U.S.C. 1244). In this comprehensive plan, historical resources are treated as a subset of cultural resources, following the definition of the term in FSM 2360.5.

traditional cultures and the ties to their lands which the PNT bisects, including traditional cultural properties (TCPs); areas of critical tribal concern; sacred sites; and traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering areas. Areas of reserved treaty rights also crisscross the extent of the PNT.

The Lewis and Clark expedition, Hudson's Bay Company, Jesuit missionaries, David Thompson, and others arrived in the 1800s to survey the people, resources, and travel routes within the Northwest, marking the beginning of the "historic period" across much of the area. A succession of events followed their arrival that dramatically changed the indigenous way of life, including the introduction of deadly diseases, forced relocation, removal of children to "residential schools", and the end of mobile lifeways with the establishment of a reservation system.

This period was also characterized by the arrival of missionaries, steamboat travel, the fur trade, the establishment of ranching and homesteading, and mining discoveries. Mining and the construction of the railroad brought other ethnic groups into the area. Chinese immigrants played a significant role in the construction of the railroads and were also involved in placer mining throughout the west. The first farming of the area began in the fertile river valleys adjacent to the mining camps and town sites. Early producers of agricultural products sold their crops to mining communities and nearby military forts, which were in place by the late 1860's. The cattle industry began in the region during the mid-1800s.

In the eastern-most extent of the PNT location, Federal land management agencies began mapping public lands in the 1880s. With the mega-fires of 1910, Federal agencies began establishing communication lines, fire lookouts, and administrative sites in earnest. The late 1920s brought severe drought and economic depression to much of the United States. Under the New Deal emergency work plan, people were put to work, Federal aid was provided, and major infrastructure projects were completed. National forests and national parks were home to many Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, the achievements of which camps can still be seen today in administrative sites and infrastructure (roads and bridges) along the PNT.

Desired Conditions

1. All cultural and historic resources that are listed as eligible or potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places will be managed in accordance to law, policy, and regulation (36 CFR 800). Any planned activities for the PNT will be designed to protect and preserve cultural and historic sites through avoidance. When avoidance is not possible, and an adverse effect is likely; appropriate mitigation discussions and consultation will occur with associated tribes and State Historic Preservation Office. Relocations and realignments of the PNT avoid disturbance to traditional cultural properties, areas of critical tribal concern, and areas of reserved tribal treaty rights.
2. Traditional cultural properties, areas of critical tribal concern, and other areas identified through tribal consultation that are within the area of potential adverse effect from the PNT or the planned activities for the PNT are managed and protected in a manner that protects the site's location(s) and purpose(s) unless directly requested to be released by the tribe of interest or, in the instance of multiple tribes, the agreement of all tribes of interest.
3. Tribal members' effective exercise of treaty reserved hunting, fishing, and gathering rights, as well as cultural and religious practices, will not be hampered, excluded, or denied access due to

administration and management of the PNT. These activities would instead continue to be managed by the appropriate land management agency and would not be modified due to the PNT.

4. Cultural resources provide interpretive opportunities to enhance the trail experience where appropriate and are avoided and not publicized, where inappropriate.
5. Identification and potential measures of protection of cultural resources and cultural landscapes are achieved through appropriate consultation or collaboration (or both) between Federal land management agencies, tribes, preservation partners, and communities.

Management Practices

1. Potentially adverse effects to traditional cultural properties from Federal land management activities are mitigated through best management practices, design criteria, and project-level mitigation measures in consultation with tribes.
2. Managing agencies should consult and collaborate with affected tribes and collaborate with communities, and preservation partners to promote protection of cultural resources and to identify cultural landscapes and cultural resources suitable for education, interpretation, and public use.
3. Affected tribes should be consulted and collaborated with early and regularly during site-specific projects and regular maintenance, regarding cultural resources—including sacred sites, areas of critical tribal concern, traditional gathering areas, culturally important natural resources, and treaty reserved rights—on and along the PNT.
4. National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 site identification inventories should be conducted to identify cultural resources in areas where there have been no previous inventories or inventories are incomplete.
5. Cultural resources should be evaluated for their eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.
6. Eligible cultural resources should be preserved and protected in situ wherever practical.
7. Trail realignments, relocations, and optimal location review processes should avoid disturbance to eligible cultural resources, sacred sites, traditional cultural properties, areas of critical tribal concern, traditional gathering areas, and areas of reserved treaty rights.
8. Proposed ground disturbing activities conducted along the trail should be subject to review by a professional archaeologist associated with the land management agencies in consultation with a Tribal or State Historic Preservation Officer and affected tribe(s), if appropriate (National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR 800) to ensure that they do not adversely affect a cultural site.
9. If previously undiscovered cultural resources are discovered during trail maintenance or construction, work should cease in the area of discovery and the land managing agency should consult with affected tribes, the Tribal and State Historic Preservation Officers, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, as necessary (National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR 800.13).

10. In the unlikely event that human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 U.S.C. 3001) should be followed.
11. All archaeological inventories should be conducted by archaeologists who meet the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR 800).
12. Do not publish location information about cultural resources that have not been vetted for use as education purposes in consultation with the Tribal and State Historic Preservation Officers. If information about cultural resources not following this vetting process is included in websites, printed materials, or other publications, remove it promptly.
13. Encourage research to enhance knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of significant historical and cultural resources of the PNT and their connections to contemporary communities and groups. All work concerning this research and dissemination of information concerning indigenous communities will be in coordination with those affected tribes.
14. Cultural resource data should be managed by the land manager or managing agency using current standards (National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR 800).
15. Known cultural resources that are listed, eligible, or of undetermined eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places adjacent to the PNT will be monitored on a schedule defined by the managing agency. (See [chapter 6](#).)
16. Traditional cultural properties, areas of critical tribal concern, and other areas of concern will be identified for monitoring and a schedule of monitoring will be created between the associated agency and the appropriate tribe(s). (See [chapter 6](#).)

Water Resources

The PNT crosses the upper tier of the contiguous United States, through lands that are mostly undeveloped and in relatively good hydrologic condition. Along the way the PNT crosses a variety of moisture gradients, as it passes through alpine landscapes, high deserts, temperate rain forests, and coastal areas. The PNT travels through lands that serve vital functions in protecting water as a critical ecosystem service. Healthy streams, wetlands, and coastal areas provide habitat for myriad species, including iconic anadromous salmon and steelhead. The health of aquatic and wetland areas is dependent upon the health of the surrounding watersheds. Improvement of watershed conditions through sustainable land management practices contributes to the quantity and quality of water available.

The PNT travels through six primary watershed units. These include the Upper South Saskatchewan; Pend Oreille and Clark Fork; Kootenai; Upper Columbia; Puget Sound; and Washington Coastal basins.

Numerous lakes lie along the PNT. These include glacier-formed cirque lakes such as Bowman Lake, Montana; chain lakes such as Glens Lake and Cosley Lake, Montana; and Priest Lake, Idaho—one of the largest and purest lakes in the United States. Additionally, the PNT crosses or comes in close proximity to the following reservoirs: Lake Koocanusa (formed by the Libby Dam), Boundary Dam on the Pend Oreille River, Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River, Ross Lake

(formed by Ross Dam), and the recently removed Elwha Dam on the Elwha River, Olympic Peninsula.

Northwest wetland ecosystems are dynamic habitats emanating from streams, seeps, springs, ponds, lakes, meadows, fens, and bogs. They occur within all terrestrial vegetation communities and are the interface between the terrestrial uplands and open water. Riparian and wetland ecosystems provide water, forage, shelter, and habitat for nesting, roosting, and bedding for many species, some of which can live nowhere else. Other freshwater features along the PNT include waterfalls, and a natural rock waterslide.

The PNT passes along multiple biodiverse brackish and saltwater wetland and aquatic environments along the Salish Sea and Olympic Coast, including estuaries, bays, intertidal areas including tidepools and beaches, and the Pacific Ocean. The rocky intertidal areas within Olympic National Park are considered to be one of the most complex and diverse shoreline communities in the United States.

Desired Conditions

1. Management and use of the PNT is hydrologically sustainable with adequate water drainage and minimal soil erosion, resulting in no adverse impacts to soil, water quality, or riparian conditions due to the use and management of the trail and corridor.
2. Wetland and riparian areas are intact, properly functioning, and resilient to disturbances. Vegetation conditions contribute to maintaining downstream water quality and quantity.
3. Natural shoreline physical and biological processes along coastal portions of the PNT are unimpeded by the trail and its management and use.
4. Human waste is properly disposed of in toilet facilities or, where toilets are not available, in catholes properly sited an adequate distance from water resources.
5. Water sources are suitable for human use when properly filtered and treated, are sufficient to meet the needs of all trail users and are not a limiting factor in the use and enjoyment of the PNT.

Management Practices

1. Identify and prioritize segments of the PNT that are on unstable soils or in sensitive wetland, riparian, or shoreline areas and take appropriate management actions (such as modifying visitor use or redesigning, realigning, or relocating the trail) to protect water resources.
2. Identify and prioritize segments of the PNT where extensive and/or recurring erosion or drainage problems are degrading the trail and take appropriate management actions (such as redesigning, realigning, or relocating the trail or modifying visitor use) to protect the trail and water resources.
3. Locate, design, and maintain water crossings (such as fords and trail bridges) to protect water resources.
4. Implement best management practices to protect water resources when constructing and maintaining the trail and trail-related facilities (including campsites and toilets).

5. Use education and enforcement, as appropriate, to promote trail users' utilization of responsible practices and compliance with managing agency rules regarding trail uses, campsite locations, closed areas and access to water or shorelines, and human waste disposal.
6. If necessary, develop and maintain water sources in key locations to support the primary uses (see chapter 3).
 - a) Where practicable, agencies may partner with grazing permittees or lessees to provide water facilities for the benefit of both the trail and grazing operations.
7. Monitor trail condition at regular intervals to identify drainage and trail surface maintenance needs to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources. (See [chapter 6](#).)
8. Close and rehabilitate unauthorized trails that are causing adverse effects on soil, water, quality, and riparian resources.

Biotic Resources

The animal, plant, fungus, lichen, and algae lifeforms found in the Northwest are as varied as the region's scenery and climate. Areas along the PNT are home to many species that are emblematic of, or even unique to, the Northwest, including some species listed as threatened or endangered under Federal⁵⁴ or state law. Many species hold cultural and religious significance to tribal nations, who continue to hunt, fish, and harvest many species for food, medicine, and other uses.

National scenic trails are to provide for "...the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass" (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)). Administration and management of the PNT should be guided by these dual objectives of conservation and public enjoyment of – and appreciation for – the lifeforms across the trail and the scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the trail to which they contribute.

The PNT passes through areas identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as grizzly bear recovery zones (in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem, Selkirk Ecosystem, and North Cascades Ecosystem) and critical habitat for other federally listed threatened or endangered (for example, Canada lynx, woodland caribou, marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, killer whale, bull trout, white sturgeon, chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, steelhead trout) and proposed species (such as White tailed Ptarmigan). Managing agencies' land management plans should include management direction relevant to the PNT and/or and trail-related activities and operations and nonmotorized trail-based recreational use, generally, in these areas.

In addition, several international bird and biodiversity areas are located along the PNT. Important bird and biodiversity areas (also called important bird areas) are areas that are identified by the National Audubon Society (Audubon), in partnership with BirdLife International, representing places of international conservation significance for birds and other biodiversity. Audubon ranks each important bird and biodiversity area as having either global, continental, or state levels of priority. The PNT passes through three important bird and biodiversity areas of global-level priority (Glacier National Park in Montana and Padilla Bay and Olympic Coastal Shelf in Washington) and

⁵⁴ Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.)

three important bird and biodiversity areas of state-level priority (Upper Priest Lake in Idaho, and Deception Pass and Crockett Lake in Washington).

Hunting, fishing, nontimber forest product⁵⁵ harvesting, and wildlife-viewing are generally incidental components of the PNT's primary uses. Most long-distance hikers prefer to carry as little weight as possible and so typically do not travel with the equipment needed for hunting (rifles, bows) or nontimber forest product harvesting (such as coolers or buckets). Angling may be more common, as fishing rods are lightweight and collapsible. Valuable fishing destinations in diverse waters occur throughout much of the trail length. Although securing angling licenses has been facilitated by state fisheries department websites, obtaining hunting licenses and permits presents a logistical and financial challenge for long-distance travelers, as the PNT passes through three states and multiple jurisdictions. nontimber forest product harvesting⁵⁶ and wildlife viewing requires little to no equipment, and long-distance hikers may enjoy an assortment of berries and appreciate sightings of the Northwest's diverse animal life along the trail.

Although these are occasional uses for PNT long-distance travelers, they are of great social, cultural, and economic importance to many local communities across the trail and to local and regional economies. The PNT, in addition to other trails and roads in the area, provides hunters, fishers, nontimber forest product harvesters, and wildlife viewers with access to a diversity of habitats. Fish in lake, stream, and marine environments; marine shellfish; big game (such as deer and elk); and waterfowl; are harvested recreationally, commercially, and as a tribal treaty resources. The Northwest has one of the largest nontimber forest product economies in the United States. nontimber forest products are gathered as tribal treaty resources and for personal and commercial use in areas surrounding the PNT, and include plant products (such as berries, particularly huckleberries, and floral greens), fungi (edible mushrooms such as chanterelles and morels), and marine algae (seaweed⁵⁷). Collectively, these activities, experienced individually, or shared by families and friends over generations, contribute to the PNT experience.

Desired Conditions

1. Biotic resources and their habitats that contribute to the biodiversity of the PNT are sustained.
2. The PNT provides opportunities for the enjoyment and conservation of biotic resources.
3. Construction, maintenance, and recreational uses of the PNT are compatible with the protection of resident aquatic, wildlife, and plant species and their habitats and the recovery of federally listed species.
4. Tribal treaty resources are maintained at healthy levels to support tribal hunting, fishing, and gathering of food, medicine, and ceremonial materials.
5. Introduction or spread of invasive species due to trail use is rare and does not contribute to the loss of native species or impairment of ecosystem function.

⁵⁵ The Forest Service refers to these items as special forest products.

⁵⁶ Non-timber forest product harvesting in small, personal use quantities, requires a permit in some jurisdictions.

⁵⁷ Seaweed harvesting is prohibited in Olympic National Park and all Washington State Park beaches along the PNT, except for Fort Ebey.

Management Practices

1. Implement best management practices to protect biotic resources when constructing and maintaining trails and trail-related facilities.
2. Follow managing agency direction and implement best practices to ensure trail management activities and recreational use, realignments, and relocations are compatible with land management plans and managing agency objectives for threatened, endangered or sensitive species habitat.
3. Identify locations where providing campsites, food storage (such as food hanging poles, bear-resistant food containers⁵⁸, or storage lockers), garbage disposal, facilities for safe cooking practices, or toilets could avoid or reduce potential impacts of recreational use on wildlife or other biotic resources. Locate and develop facilities at key locations as appropriate to conserve biotic resources.
4. Use education and enforcement, as appropriate, to promote trail users' compliance with managing agency rules regarding trail uses, closed areas, campsite locations, food storage, garbage disposal, and human waste disposal.
5. Use education to promote responsible practices to avoid human-wildlife encounters such as being prepared with knowledge of bear identification and behaviors, carrying bear spray, and maintaining distance from wildlife.
6. Monitor the condition of tribal treaty resources along the PNT in consultation and coordination with affected tribes. (See [chapter 6](#).) Impacts from the PNT and its use and management should be avoided.
7. Educate trail users about practices for preventing the spread of invasive species and pathogens and, where necessary, provide boot brush stations or other facilities. Encourage use of weed-free feed for pack and saddle stock.
8. Conduct invasive species inventories and apply treatments as appropriate in accordance with managing agency guidance.

Wildland Fire and Prescribed Fire

Wildland fires are non-structure fires occurring in vegetation or natural fuels. Wildland fires are a natural and important factor influencing plant communities along the PNT. They have occurred for millennia and are one of the primary environmental forces shaping the landscape that PNT users see and experience. Wildland fires are caused by unplanned ignitions, such as lightning, or human-caused ignitions. **Prescribed fires** are planned fires used to meet management objectives.

Prescribed fires are conducted by land management agencies and cooperators. Native American use of prescribed fires, or **cultural fires**, to manage many Northwest plant communities predates the arrival of non-native settlers and for some tribes continues today.

Many plant communities along the PNT, especially dry pine forests, evolved to frequent, low-intensity fire regimes. Fires stimulate germination and growth of fire-dependent plant species, create wildlife habitat, and cycle nutrients, among other functions.

⁵⁸ also referred to as animal resistant food containers

Wildland fires are an accepted impact to the PNT, that should be managed for the long-term benefit of the natural resources along the trail. Decades of fire suppression exacerbated by climate change have, however, resulted in extreme fire conditions caused by unnatural fuels buildup and hot and dry conditions, among other factors. Areas around the PNT have experienced fire events that are much larger and greater in intensity than what was historically normal. These types of fires impact trail users and nearby communities and have the potential to damage the trail and associated natural, historical, and cultural resources. The following desired conditions and suggested management practices address -fire and fuels management along the trail and would be coordinated with respective agency representatives. Trail closures and temporary detours related to wildland fires are discussed in this chapter [here](#).

Desired Conditions

1. Forest health initiatives may include managed fire to improve ecological resiliency and reintroduce fire into fire adapted ecosystems.
2. Fire managers develop burn prescriptions that complement the PNT's trail values to the greatest degree possible.

Management Practices

Wildfire Prevention

1. Avoid closing the PNT as a wildfire prevention measure. Pursue other management actions first. (See also [Trail Closures and Temporary Detours](#) in this chapter.)
2. Implement best management practices to prevent wildfires when constructing and maintaining the trail and trail-related facilities.
3. Use education and enforcement, as appropriate, to promote visitors' compliance with managing agency rules (such as restrictions on campfires and open-flame stoves) and responsible practices regarding wildfire prevention.

Fire Management

1. Notify the PNT administrator as early as practicable during emergency wildfire operations in the vicinity of the PNT to coordinate and disseminate information to partner organizations and trail users. (See also [Trail Closures and Temporary Detours](#) in this chapter.)
 2. For prescribed fires in the vicinity of the PNT, provide notice to the PNT administrator as early as possible during the planning process. Consult the PNT administrator to identify resource concerns and avoid or minimize impacts to the PNT. (See also [Trail Closures and Temporary Detours](#) in this chapter.)
 3. Whenever possible, incident coordination and support should include a resource advisor (READ or REAF) or similar position with knowledge of and responsibilities related to national scenic trails or the PNT, or both.
 - a) The administering agency and managing agencies should coordinate to ensure resource advisors are provided with information relevant to the PNT, such as maps and geospatial data and the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)).
- In general:

- b) Avoid motor vehicle use on the PNT (except where the PNT is located on roads or motorized trails) and in off-trail areas along the PNT.
- c) As appropriate, use minimum impact suppression tactics or other tactics to minimize effects of fire suppression operations on the PNT and associated resources.
- d) Avoid the use of fire retardant unless necessary to protect life, property, or other resource concerns.
- e) Avoid heavy equipment line construction unless necessary to protect life, property, or other resource concerns.
- f) Protect trail-related facilities and signage.
- g) Protect the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)).

Post-Fire Rehabilitation

Consult with agency representatives, fire managers and resource specialists on post fire rehabilitation along the trail.

1. Complete a post-fire assessment of the affected segments of the PNT:
 - a) Inventory and provide locations of all trail tread, trail-related facilities, trail signs and route reassurance markers, and drainage features that were damaged by fire suppression activities that need to be repaired or replaced.
 - b) Inventory down trees across the trail and burned trees in danger of falling across the trail.
 - c) Evaluate areas above the trail that burned in the moderate to high level for implementing flood prevention measures.
2. Rehabilitation of tread and trail related facilities will occur as determined by resource specialists. Avoid motor vehicle use on the PNT (except where the PNT is located on roads or motorized trails) and in off-trail areas along the PNT.
3. In addition to managing agency guidance or any interagency entity guidance, consider the following best practices for the PNT:
 - a) Remove hazardous trees that pose a safety concern.
 - b) Install drainage features on the trail to prevent channeling and resource damage due to post-fire rains. (See, for example, specifications in Forest Service Handbook 2309.18 Trails Management Handbook.)
 - c) Shape, blend, and orient vegetation treatment units in a manner that is natural-appearing, following contours and desired/existing vegetation patterns to blend with landscape characteristics. Do not introduce geometric shapes or high contrast changes in vegetation.
 - i. In the foreground zone (the seen area 0.5 miles from either side of the trail travelway), cut stump heights flush or low (generally less than 6 inches, or as low as possible on larger diameter trees).
 - ii. Beyond the foreground zone, stumps may be cut to 8 inches or as low as possible.
 - iii. For fire lines that intercept or are tied to the within 100 feet up the fire line, cut stumps flush or as close to the ground as possible.

- d) If the PNT travelway was used as a fire line:
 - i. Ensure all activity slash is lopped and scattered to a depth of less than 12 inches and remove slash in the first 100 feet in the foreground of the PNT or the visible foreground based on topography (whichever is less). This applies to both sides of the trail.
 - ii. Repair all or construct drainage features (water bars, rolling grade dips) in the trail tread width to move water off the trail. This will help prevent soil erosion and gullies.
- e) For control or containment lines in the vicinity of the PNT:
 - i. To hasten recovery and help prevent unauthorized use(s) of lines, restore lines that are within the first 300 feet of or within sight of the PNT (whichever is greater) to a near undisturbed condition. Use measures such as recontouring, pulling slash and rocks across the line, and disguising entrances.
 - ii. Rehabilitate lines by rolling back the soil berm formed during line construction and constructing drainage features, as necessary, to prevent concentration of runoff near the trail.
- f) If motor vehicles were used on or along the PNT:
 - i. Apply the appropriate trail management objectives for the segment(s) to restore the trail to pre-fire width and trail class.
 - ii. To avoid future motor vehicle trespass, remove or conceal motor vehicle tracks at trail and road junctions so they will not draw visitors' attention. Recontour berms, pulling material and rocks across the line and disguising entrances, to eliminate vehicle access.
- g) Remove flagging and/or other signage when activities are completed.

Special Use Authorizations

There is demand for a variety of uses of the federally administered lands that the PNT travels through. Federal land management agencies authorize certain **special uses** of federally administered lands that provide a benefit to the general public. For example, for National Forest System lands (managed by the Forest Service) a definition of special uses is provided in 36 CFR § 251.50:

All uses of National Forest System lands, improvements, and resources, except those authorized by the regulations governing sharing use of roads (§ 212.9); grazing and livestock use (part 222); the sale and disposal of timber and special forest products, such as greens, mushrooms, and medicinal plants (part 223); and minerals (part 228) are designated "special uses." (36 CFR § 251.50)

A special-use authorization is a legal document such as a permit, lease, or easement, which allows occupancy, use, rights, or privileges of or on federally managed lands.

Not all uses and activities on federally administered lands are considered special uses. For example, for National Forest System lands, some recreational uses, such as camping, hiking, fishing, boating, hunting, and collecting of minor (nontimber) forest products for personal use, do not require a

special use authorization, nor does travel on open roads, or noncommercial activities such as expression of views, unless certain criteria are met.

Any special uses that occur along national scenic trails may not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail:

Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted by the Secretary charged with the administration of the trail.
(16 U.S.C. 1246(c))

Recreation special use authorizations

Providing recreation services and facilities to the public is a key component of the missions of the Forest Service and other Federal land management agencies. Special uses include commercial recreational uses, for example, outfitting and guiding services, resorts, recreation activities and events, photography and video productions, and concession campgrounds, as well as non-commercial organized group activities and events. The Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management all have regulations that require permits for commercial, organized, and competitive activities. By permitting these activities, operators can provide needed goods and services subject to permit conditions or stipulations. Careful review of recreation special use proposals can ensure that key services are provided to the public that support enjoyment of the PNT, while avoiding impacts to the nature and purposes of the trail.

Although many visitors possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and equipment to be self-sufficient in remote and challenging environments, others may not have the capability to participate in such activities on their own or may prefer to participate in guided activities provided through an organization or business. Commercial⁵⁹ goods or services provided by outfitters and guides help to meet these needs. **Outfitters** rent and/or deliver equipment, supplies, pack and saddle stock, vehicles, and other items on or to public lands; while **guides** provide education, training, transportation, interpretation and other services to individuals and groups. Currently, Federal land management agencies have authorized outfitter-guide services to provide guided hiking, mountain bike riding, horseback riding, and shuttle services along various sections of the PNT. **Recreation events** include organized events of a temporary nature. On the PNT, examples include foot- and bicycle races, fishing contests, and adventure games.

Other special use authorizations

There are many other diverse types of special uses of federally managed lands. Energy uses include wind, solar, fossil fuel, hydroelectric, geothermal, biomass, oil, and gas. Agriculture uses include cultivation, irrigation, ditches, and diversion dams. Industry uses include construction camps and residences, storage, and manufacturing. Water uses include drinking water, energy generation, irrigation, and recreation use. Research uses includes experimental stations, research studies, and weather stations. Transportation uses include road and highway systems, airports, heliports, and canals. Community uses include meetings, religious facilities, and sanitary systems.

⁵⁹ The Forest Service defines commercial use or activities as any use or activity on National Forest System lands (1) where an entry or participation fee is charged or (2) where the primary purpose is the sale of a good or service and, in either case, regardless of whether the use or activity is intended to produce a profit. (36 CFR 251.52; FSH 2709.14, 53.1) Other managing agencies, such as Bureau of Land Management or National Park Service, may have their own agency definitions that apply for the sections of the PNT on the lands they manage.

Communication uses includes transmission of data, sound, and signals by wire, fiber, radio, light, or other means. Not all these uses are allowable or appropriate on all lands. Management direction regarding these uses may be found in managing agency policies, local land management plans, or both. As part of the screening and review processes for special use authorizations, managing agencies should also ensure that the proposed use will not substantially interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes.

Desired Conditions:

1. Special uses are compatible with and do not substantially interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes.
2. Special uses offer opportunities to safeguard and promote the nature and purposes of the PNT such as through providing education and information about the PNT, the unique environments through which it passes, and trail user ethics; connecting people to nature; and helping to facilitate access to and the use and enjoyment of the PNT by diverse trail users.
3. Events, activities, and services associated with the PNT are appropriate to the lands and settings where they occur. Other values of the lands and settings, such as wilderness values, are protected.
4. Impacts from new permitted uses, such as utility corridors and communications sites, are avoided or sufficiently mitigated so as to preserve and protect the nature and purposes of the PNT and the cumulative long-distance trail experience.

Management Practices:

1. Do not authorize special uses that would substantially interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes.
 - a) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Uses along the PNT shall not substantially interfere with the PNT's nature and purposes. (16 U.S.C. 1246(c))
2. Consider locating special uses that are not dependent on the PNT in other locations where they would not impact the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
3. The managing agency with jurisdiction for the segment(s) of the PNT concerned is responsible for receiving, reviewing, and, as appropriate, authorizing special-use applications using its policies and processes, including ensuring that any requirements for National Environmental Policy Act review and other legal compliance are met and that there has been consultation with affected tribes.
 - a) For consistency, coordinate across jurisdictions when permitted uses cross land management units.
 - b) Notify and coordinate with the PNT administrator as early as possible.
 - c) Ensure that trail organizations are notified of opportunities for public involvement, such as during public scoping and comment periods.
4. Screening criteria and review processes for special use proposals and applications that occur on or along the PNT or that have the potential to affect the PNT should consider the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values. Consider:

- a) Time of year and duration of the activity, if it would occur during the PNT thru-hiking season (June – September), and if it would occur or persist when PNT thru-hikers are typically in the area.
- b) Potential effects on the PNT’s primary uses (see [chapter 3](#)) including opportunities to access the PNT and associated facilities, utilize campsites or dispersed camping areas and water sources, and travel to and from resupply points such as gateway communities.
- c) Potential effects on other trail users.
- d) Potential effects on the PNT settings.
- e) The cumulative impact of other recurring or ongoing special uses in that region of the PNT. Carefully consider how one permit may affect the long-distance trail experience in light of other special uses occurring along the trail.
- f) Potential benefits the proposed use may provide the PNT and trail users.

For special uses that may potentially interfere with the PNT’s nature and purposes or be incompatible with the PNT’s primary uses, objectives, and desired conditions, consider, for example, whether shifting the location away from the PNT; changing the dates; or limiting the duration, number of participants, or modes of travel may mitigate impacts on the PNT.

5. Do not authorize motorized events and activities on the PNT.⁶⁰ Avoid authorizing motorized events and activities crossing the PNT and do not authorize if the use would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the PNT.
 - a) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** General public use of motorized vehicles along the PNT shall be prohibited. (16 U.S.C. 1246(c))⁶¹
 - b) **National Trails System Act Requirement:** Limited motorized use on and along the PNT (for purposes other than general public use) may only be authorized where such use is consistent with the applicable land management plan and meets one of the following criteria:
 - i. It is necessary to meet emergencies;
 - ii. It is necessary to enable adjacent landowners or land users with valid existing rights to have reasonable access to their lands or rights; or
 - iii. It is for the purpose of allowing private landowners who have agreed, by cooperative agreement, to include their lands in the PNT to use or cross those lands or adjacent lands from time to time. (16 U.S.C. 1246(c))
6. Avoid authorizing competitive events on the PNT. Competitive events such as racing encourage faster speeds of travel that may conflict with the primary uses and general public enjoyment of the PNT. Do not authorize if the use would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the PNT.
7. For special uses that would involve facilities, structures, or installations, follow management practices described in the [Trail Facilities and Signs](#) section and the [Scenery](#) section in this chapter.

⁶⁰ Other than where the PNT is located on open roads and motorized trails.

⁶¹ Except for where the PNT is in an interim location on an open road or motorized trail.

8. For new recreation special uses, consider issuing only temporary permits and monitor the effects of the permitted activity on the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values.
9. Monitor special uses to determine their impacts on the PNT, including the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values. As one component of monitoring, query the PNT administrator and partner organizations to identify potential impacts.
10. Administration and management of the PNT should support special uses of the PNT by tribes that would:
 - a) ensure and facilitate access to treaty resources, usual and accustomed hunting, fishing, and gathering places for members of Federally recognized affected Indian Tribes (25.U.S.C. 3054, FSM 1563, FSH 1509.13, and other agency policy);
 - b) accommodate access to and ceremonial use of sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners; and
 - c) protect the privacy of tribal activities for traditional and cultural purposes (25 U.S. C. 3054) and maintain the confidentiality of sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).
 - i. At times, such special uses may necessitate temporary closures of lands or facilities along the PNT from public access (subject to certain limitations) for these purposes.

Connecting and Side Trails

In addition to national scenic, national historic, and national recreation trails, the National Trails System Act established a fourth category, connecting and side trails (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(4)). The purposes of such trails are to provide additional points of public access to the above-mentioned trails, or to provide connections between such trails.

Connecting trails complement designated national recreation, scenic, or historic trails by providing additional points of public access between or connecting to such trails.

Side trails complement designated national recreation, scenic, or historic trails by providing additional single points of public access to special features along such trails.

While there are already many trails that provide public access to the PNT or special features along it, connecting and side trails differ in that they are designated as components of the National Trails System. The National Trails System Act clarifies the process by which connecting or side trails are established, designated, and marked:

Connecting or side trails within park, forest, and other recreation areas administered by the Secretary of the Interior or Secretary of Agriculture may be established, designated, and marked by the appropriate Secretary as components of a national recreation, national scenic or national historic trail. When no Federal land acquisition is involved, connecting or side trails may be located across lands administered by interstate, State, or local governmental agencies with their consent, or, where the appropriate Secretary deems necessary or desirable, on privately owned lands with the consent of the landowners. (16 U.S.C 1245)

However, this authority to designate connecting or side trails has rarely been used. At the time of this plan, there are only eight connecting or side trails in the National Trails System (for comparison, the National Trails System includes 11 national scenic trails, 20 national historic trails,

and nearly 1,300 national recreation trails.) The only national scenic trails with complementing connecting or side trails are the Florida National Scenic Trail and Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

Connecting or side trails are not required to have their own national trail planning corridor. In land management plans, managing agencies may include the connecting or side trail in a management area or corridor for the national scenic trail or national historic trail they complement. Managing agencies may have policies that provide direction for the management of connecting or side trails on the lands they manage (for example, the Forest Service's FSM 2353 and the Bureau of Land Management's BLM Manual 8353.)

Desired Conditions

1. The designation of connecting or side trails is used judiciously and with full consideration for future administration and management needs.
2. Connecting or side trails, if any, complement the PNT's nature and purposes, provide for the PNT's primary uses, enhance the PNT trail experience, and help to realize the PNT's maximum outdoor recreation potential.
3. Connecting trails, if any, are high-quality routes for PNT visitors to connect to and from gateway communities; other national scenic, national historic, or national recreation trails; and other areas, to provide opportunities for day and multi-day trips that include the PNT. Connecting trails are of such caliber as to be regionally significant recreation destinations in their own right.
4. Side trails, if any, are high-quality routes for PNT visitors to access special features along the PNT that support its nature and purposes such as locations associated with significant natural, cultural, or historic resources. Side trails provide for both conservation and enjoyment of these significant resources.
5. Any connecting or side trails are managed in a manner to complement the PNT and its settings, and do not introduce incompatible types or levels of use.

Management Practices

1. Reserve the terms "connecting trail" and "side trail" for only those trails designated as components of the National Trails System under 16 U.S.C 1245.
 - a) Use other terms for trails that have not been designated as components of the National Trails System that provide access to the PNT or features along the PNT (for example, access trail, feeder trail, connector trail, bypass trail, spur trail, local trail, ancillary trail)

Planning and designation for connecting or side trails

1. The lead regional forester has unique trail-wide responsibility for administratively designating any proposed connecting or side trail for the PNT, including those on lands managed by agencies or entities other than the Forest Service. The concurrence of the relevant managing agency or landowner is required.
 - a) Managing agencies should notify and coordinate with the PNT administrator as early as possible in the development of a proposal to develop and/or designate a new connecting trail or side trail for the PNT.

- b) Together, the administering agency and managing agency should determine, based on the specific proposal, the necessary National Environmental Policy Act documentation, if applicable, and other legal compliance required. In general, the managing agency will be responsible for ensuring relevant National Environmental Policy Act and other legal compliance requirements are met, using its agency policies and processes, and for consulting with affected tribes.
2. In general, potential connecting trails or side trails should be identified or approved in relevant managing agency plans or have documented support from relevant tribal, state, county, and municipal governments and partner organizations. (Prior to designation as a connecting or side trail, these trails may wholly or largely exist on the ground and may be in use by the public.)
 3. In addition to relevant agency policies and plans, the following should be considered in planning for a connecting trail or side trail:
 - a) the National Trails System Act and its requirements;
 - b) complementarity with the PNT based upon the nature and purposes and other trail values (see [chapter 3](#)) and the trail-wide objectives, desired conditions, and management practices in this comprehensive plan;
 - c) the results of any optimal location review for the area;
 - d) tribal consultation and involvement of partner organizations, volunteers, and the public as part of the identification, evaluation, and recommendation process;
 - e) coordination with adjacent landowners and land users;
 - f) current data and any future projections related to amounts and types of visitor use;
 - g) short- and long-term needs for development and maintenance of the connecting trail or side trail (including any land acquisition needs) and the responsibilities and capacities of the administering agency, managing agency or agencies, and partners to provide for these needs (including budgetary and staffing considerations); and
 - h) the cumulative impact and value of connecting trails or side trails across the PNT and for the National Trails System.

Managing connecting or side trails

1. Identify the trail in visitor information (such as websites and trailhead signs) as a connecting trail or side trail and provide information about its relationship to the PNT and its unique features and significance.
2. Mark the connecting trail or side trail on maps and on the ground in such a way that it would not be confused with the PNT.
3. Monitor relevant aspects of the connecting trail or side trail (for example, visitor use and resource conditions) and take appropriate management actions to ensure the connecting trail or side trail is compatible with the PNT's nature and purposes, significant resources, primary uses, and desired conditions.

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Chapter 6. Implementation

General and Site-Specific Development Plans

Section 5(e) of the National Trails System Act requires that comprehensive plans for national scenic trails include general and site-specific development plans and anticipated costs (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)).

General Development Plans

The management practices in [chapter 5](#) provide the general development plans for the PNT.

Site-specific Development Plans

In general, managing agencies are responsible for developing and implementing site-specific development plans for the segment(s) of the PNT under their jurisdiction. Site-specific development plans should be informed by the trail-wide objectives, desired conditions, and management practices in [chapter 5](#) of this comprehensive plan. Managing agencies are strongly encouraged to coordinate with and involve the administering agency and, as appropriate, the partner organization(s) as early as possible in the discussion of site-specific plans. The PNT administrator may advise on relevant provisions from the National Trails System Act, this comprehensive plan, and other direction for national scenic trails, as well as potential funding sources, existing cooperative agreements, and other resources to support project development and implementation.

Priority Actions

Recommended priority actions have been provided in [appendix G](#) to comply with the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)(3)) and also to identify and prioritize proposed projects for partner organizations and volunteers, the administering agency, and the managing agencies to focus on in the future in order to develop the PNT. This list reflects only what can be identified now and is not meant to exclude other projects not shown here. Inclusion of a proposed project on this list does not indicate a decision by the Forest Service and/or other managing agencies. The proposed projects would be subject to compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies, including but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Endangered Species Act. For proposed projects that would involve relocation of a segment of the PNT, an optimal location review and other steps and approvals outlined in [chapter 4](#) would be needed. For proposed projects that would involve acquisition of lands (or interests in lands), an optimal location review would first be needed. Consultation with affected tribes would also need to occur as part of the development of any of these proposed projects (see [chapter 1](#) and [chapter 2](#)). Estimates of anticipated costs are provided as directed by the National Trails System Act and are intended to be only rough estimates. It is expected proposed projects from this list would be implemented through collaboration between partner organizations and volunteers, the managing agency or agencies, and the Forest Service.

Estimates of anticipated costs

A unique cornerstone of the National Trails System Act is the opportunity for collaborative trail management across various land ownerships. The costs estimated below identify known costs for Forest Service administration of the PNT to comply with the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)(3)). Various Forest Service administrative units and other land management agencies also

contribute to trail operation and management costs for portions of the PNT that lie within their jurisdiction.

These costs will be incurred for the PNT regardless of the status of the comprehensive plan due to its existing status as a national scenic trail.

Table 4. Estimated start-up costs

Administrative start-up need	Estimated cost
Develop a new trail service mark with input from tribes and register it as a federal service mark for the national scenic trail.	\$100,000
National scenic trail markers and materials (no labor)	\$75,000
Archive and preserve historic trail-related administrative records	\$25,000

Table 5. Estimated annual Forest Service administration costs

Administrative need	Estimated annual cost
Pacific Northwest Trail Administrator – permanent full-time employee in the Pacific Northwest Region	GS-13 salary
Pacific Northwest Trail Assistant Planning and Partnership Specialist - permanent full-time employee	GS-11 salary
Visitor use monitoring	\$20,000-65,000

The total planning cost(s) for conducting meetings with the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Advisory Council depends on the type and quantity of meetings. Meetings may occur up to two times annually, or as often as is necessary to complete its business.

Table 6. Estimated costs for advisory council meetings

Estimated needs per meeting	Estimated cost per meeting
Additional staffing support	\$2,000
Online meetings	\$5,000
In-person, multi-day meeting includes venue, facilitation, travel costs, and per diem for 32 council members	\$40,000 to \$45,000

Travel costs for Forest Service support staff not included in these figures.

Table 7. Estimated costs to consider across all federal, state, or local government land management entities

Administrative need	Estimated cost
Maintenance cost estimate per mile of Forest Service Class 2 trail	\$4,000 to \$30,000
Construction cost estimate per mile of new Forest Service Class 2 trail	\$15,000 to \$100,000
Future signage maintenance reposting due to damage or relocation of the trail	Variable cost
Future kiosk and interpretive sign development at trailheads	Variable cost
Continuous realty, land acquisition, and right-of-way costs – unable to project. Opportunities for acquiring lands or rights-of-way are dependent on voluntary landowners and could occur at any time through any of the federal, state, or local governments that manage portions of the trail.	Variable cost; unable to project

Cooperative Agreements

Whenever possible, the comprehensive plan shall be implemented through partnerships in a collaborative management model (see [chapter 2](#)). Tribal, state, and municipal governments; private landowners and land users; private organizations and other entities; and volunteers will be encouraged to participate, as appropriate, in the planning, development, maintenance, and management of the PNT. Partnerships provide opportunities to strengthen people’s connections to the PNT and the lands and communities along the trail.

Agreements should feature commonly agreed to standards, trail-wide consistency, and reasonable uniformity of operations. Federal land management agencies should strive towards providing a seamless visitor experience and efficiency of management (including partner organization operations and volunteer involvement) across jurisdictional boundaries to the greatest extent practicable.

Existing Cooperative Agreements

As the administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service has put in place the following trail-wide or multi-unit cooperative agreements for administration and management of the PNT across managing agency unit boundaries:

- Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the Pacific Northwest Trail Association and the Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region, and Northern Region, “Pacific Northwest Trail Association Multi-Region Master Agreement,” Forest Service agreement number 22-CS-11062759-012, expires March 10, 2027.
- Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the Pacific Northwest Trail Association and the Forest Service, for Trail Management and Administration between the Pacific Northwest Trail Association and the Forest Service, “Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Stewardship,” Forest Service agreement number 20-CS-11062759-052, expires May 30, 2025.
- Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the University of Montana, College of Forestry and Conservation, and the Forest Service, Northern Region, “Pacific Northwest Trail Visitor Use Monitoring and Forecasting,” Forest Service agreement number 17-CS-11015600-043, expired December 31, 2022. While this agreement has now expired, the Forest Service and the University of Montana are developing a new Challenge Cost Share agreement to replace it; that agreement will have a five-year period, from 2023 to 2028.

In 2019, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Forest Service (R6 and R1) established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a framework and process to foster coordination and consultation regarding the administration and management of National Forest System land and the PNT.

Anticipated Cooperative Agreements

As the administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service anticipates continuing the current approach of establishing trail-wide or multi-unit cooperative agreements with partner organizations and entities for use across managing agency units for shared work such as trail maintenance and stewardship of the PNT (and associated trails and other facilities that serve and access the PNT), volunteer programs, visitor information and education, mapping and geospatial data, resource inventories and resource condition monitoring, visitor use monitoring and visitor use monitoring projects, gateway community coordination, and engagement of youth and underserved communities.

The Forest Service pursue new cooperative agreements with managing agencies to coordinate and collaborate for management of the PNT and ensure the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values are provided for. Where it provides for consistency and efficiency, agreements such MOUs should involve multiple management agencies and, as appropriate, partner organizations. This approach has been successful for other national scenic trails such as the Pacific Crest Trail.

The Forest Service will also pursue voluntary cooperative agreements with private landowners or land users who allow the PNT to cross their lands. This would be a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Other, longer established national scenic trails that include a relatively higher proportion of private lands, such as the Florida National Scenic Trail, may offer a good model for landowner agreements. Use of cooperative agreements as a tool for coordination between the Forest Service and other managing agencies or private landowners along the trail is discussed in detail in appendix D.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

An adaptive management approach helps managers ensure that desired objectives are achieved, and the intent of this comprehensive plan continues to be realized as future conditions change. This adaptive management and monitoring plan in [appendix F](#) recommends the indicators, thresholds, and resulting adaptive management actions that should govern long-term management of the PNT as well as identifying potential management actions to be considered as needed to ensure desired conditions are being met.

The PNT crosses multiple jurisdictions and passes through a variety of ecosystems. Monitoring and adaptive management approaches will range from site-specific issues to regional or trail-wide conditions and trends. In most cases, selection of appropriate indicators and thresholds, monitoring, and implementation of adaptive management actions will be done at the managing agency unit level (with the involvement of partner organizations and volunteers, as appropriate) and overall monitoring trends will be reported to the PNT administrator. Monitoring of visitor use and resource conditions along the PNT should complement and support other monitoring that may be carried out by the managing agency for the lands and other resources along the trail.

Provisions related to monitoring and adaptive management, guided by the adaptive management and monitoring plan in [appendix F](#), should be included in cooperative agreements between the administering agency and managing agencies or landowners.

The Forest Service should encourage sharing of monitoring protocols, data, trends, and reports among managing agencies, affected tribes, and partner organizations to support a coordinated and collaborative management effort for the PNT. Monitoring trends and reports should be shared with the public.

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

ABA	Architectural Barriers Act
ACTC	area of critical tribal concern
AIANTA	American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CDT	Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DOD	Department of Defense
DOI	Department of Interior
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FACA	Federal Advisory Committee Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FSH	Forest Service Handbook
FSM	Forest Service Manual
GSA	General Services Administration
IBA	Important Bird and Biodiversity Area
IDT	interdisciplinary team
IVUMC	Interagency Visitor Use Management Council
MHHWL	mean higher high water line
MIST	minimum impact suppression techniques
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NERR	national estuarine research reserve
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NPS	National Park Service
NRA	national recreation area
NTSA	National Trails System Act
NMS	national marine sanctuary
ODT	Olympic Discovery Trail
OLR	optimal location review
ORV	outstandingly remarkable values
OSV	over-snow vehicle
Pub.L.	Public Law
PCT	Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
PNT	Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail
PNTA	Pacific Northwest Trail Association
R1	Forest Service, Northern Region (Region 1)
R6	Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6)
READ	resource advisor
REAF	resource advisor, fireline
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SCA	Student Conservation Association
SCORP	State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
Sec.	Section
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SIO	scenic integrity objective
SWITMO	Skagit-Whatcom-Island Trail Maintaining Organization
TCP	traditional cultural property
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
TMO	trail management objective
U.S.C.	United States Code

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VUM	visitor use management
WSRA	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
WTA	Washington Trails Association

Glossary

adaptive management	For the Forest Service, a structured, iterative process for decision-making to reduce uncertainty through structured hypothesis testing and monitoring of outcomes. Key features include explicit characterizing of uncertainty and assumptions, testing assumptions and collecting data, analyzing new information obtained through monitoring and project experience, learning from feedback between monitoring and decisions, adapting assumptions and strategies to design better plans and management direction, making iterative and responsive decisions and adjusting actions on the basis of what has been learned, and creating an open and transparent process that shares learning (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 40, 41).
administering agency	The Federal agency delegated by the Secretary of Agriculture or Secretary of Interior (per the National Trails System Act) for national scenic trail or national historic trail coordination, guidance, technical assistance, and consultation with managers that have physical site management responsibility.
background	Distant part of a landscape. The landscape area located from 4 miles to infinity from the viewer (Agriculture Handbook 701).
bicycle	See managing agency definition. For the Forest Service, a pedal-driven, human-powered device with two wheels attached to a frame, one behind the other.
carrying capacity	Visitor capacity in the context of a national scenic trail or national historic trail, pursuant to Sec. 5(e) or (f) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(e) or (f)).
collaboration	In general, people working together to share knowledge, ideas, and resources toward common goals and objectives (such as seeking agreements or undertaking collective action) that they could not successfully achieve on their own.
comprehensive plan	A plan for a national scenic trail or national historic trail that satisfies the requirements of Sec. 5(e) or (f), as applicable, of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(e) or (f)). The comprehensive plan addresses administration and management of an entire national scenic trail or national historic trail across jurisdictions.
congressionally designated route	Location of the national scenic trail according to the establishing language (and any maps referenced) in the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244).

congressionally designated area	A designated area, as defined at 36 CFR 219.19, that is designated by Congressional act; may also be referred to as a statutorily designated area. Examples include, but are not limited to, national scenic trails, national historic trails, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, and national recreation areas.
connecting trail	A component of the National Trails System pursuant to Sec. 6 of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1245) that complements designated national recreation, scenic, or historic trails by providing additional points of public access between or connecting to such trails.
cultural landscape	Human-altered landscapes, especially those slowly evolving landscapes with scenic vegetation patterns or scenic structures. Addition of these elements creates a visually pleasing complement to the natural character of a landscape (Agriculture Handbook 701).
cultural resource	See managing agency definition. For the Forest Service, an object or definite location of human activity, occupation, or use identifiable through field survey, historical documentation, or oral evidence that may be prehistoric (pre-contact era), historic (proto- and post-contact era), archaeological, architectural, structures, places, objects, and traditional cultural properties (FSM 2360.5).
feasibility study	A study conducted for a proposed national scenic trail or national historic trail, as identified by Congress, pursuant to Sec. 5(b and c) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(b and c)).
foreground	Detailed landscape generally found from the observer to ½ mile away, inclusive of the immediate foreground (the detailed feature landscape found within the first few hundred feet of the observer, generally, from the observer to 300 feet away) (Agriculture Handbook 701).
gateway community	For the PNT, a geographic community (such as a city, town, or Census Designated Place) along or proximate to the PNT where visitors can access goods and services to provision them for their trip. Common examples of goods and services include food, lodging, mail, laundry, internet access, and outdoor gear or supplies.

hiker/pedestrian use	See managing agency definition. For the Federal trail data standards, hiker/pedestrian use is foot travel, including wheelchairs or mobility devices.
interim location	A segment of the PNT that is in a location that will likely be changed through relocation or other tools due to its divergence from the PNT's nature and purposes (such as locations on open roads or motorized trails) and/or restrictions on public access.
land management plan	See managing agency definition. In general, a land management plan sets overall management direction and guidance for a planning area such as a specific national forest or national park.
lead regional forester	The regional forester delegated specific responsibilities by the Chief of the Forest Service for administration of a national scenic trail or national historic trail (FSM 2353.04g).
managing agency	The Federal, Tribal, state, or local agency with the authority and/or responsibility for decision making for a national scenic trail or national historic trail on the lands under its jurisdiction. The managing agency retains responsibility for planning, maintenance, and management unless transferred in a joint memorandum of agreement as outlined in National Trails System Act Sec. 7(a)(1)(A, B) (16 U.S.C. 1246).
Middleground	The zone between the foreground and the background in a landscape. The area located from ½ mile to 4 miles from the observer (Agriculture Handbook 701).
motor vehicle	See managing agency definition. For the Forest Service: Any vehicle which is self-propelled, other than: (a) a vehicle operated on rails; and (b) any wheelchair or mobility device, including one that is battery-powered, that is designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion and that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area (36 CFR 212.1).
motorized trail	A trail that is designated for motor vehicle use and, for the Forest Service, identified on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM).
national historic trail	A trail as established by Act of Congress pursuant to National Trails System Act Sec. 5(a) (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)) as described in National Trails System Act Sec. 3(a)(3) (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(3)).

national recreation trail	A trail as established pursuant to National Trails System Act Sec. 4 (16 U.S.C. 1243) as described in National Trails System Act Sec. 3(a)(1) (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(1)).
national scenic trail	A trail as established by Act of Congress pursuant to National Trails System Act Sec. 5(a) (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)) as described in National Trails System Act Sec. 3(a)(2) (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)).
national trail management corridor	A land area identified within the managing agency unit's planning area that has the same set of applicable plan components to protect the trail's nature and purposes and, for the Forest Service, meets the intent of FSH 1909.12 Chapter 20 for designated areas. These may also be called management areas or geographic areas.
national trail planning corridor	For the PNT, this is the term used for the area selected to satisfy the requirements in Sec. 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act, which is referred to in the National Trails System Act as the national trail "right-of-way".
national trail right-of-way	The area selected for the general national scenic trail or national historic trail location by the administering agency and published in the Federal Register (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)); for the PNT, this is referred to as the national trail planning corridor to avoid confusion with other ways the term "right-of-way" is used outside the context of the National Trails System Act
natural-appearing	Landscape character that has resulted from human activities, yet appears natural, such as historic conversion of native forests into farmlands, pastures, and hedgerows that have reverted back to forests through reforestation activities or natural regeneration (Agriculture Handbook 701).
nonmotorized trail	See managing agency definition. In general, a trail that has not been designated for motor vehicle use through the relevant managing agency process and/or where public use of motor vehicles is prohibited.
non-substantial relocation	For the PNT, a relocation of a segment of the PNT outside of the existing national trail planning corridor that is within the authority of the administering agency to approve, with concurrence of the managing agency or agencies for the lands involved, through administrative action, pursuant to Sec. 7(b) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)).

optimal location review	For the PNT, an administrative process to identify the location within a given area that would best provide for the PNT's nature and purposes and other trail values for the long-term.
pack and saddle stock	See managing agency definition. For the Federal trail data standards, pack and saddle stock are livestock used for riding or packing including horses or mules, llamas, or other packing animals, including goats.
partner organization	In general, for Federal agencies, collaborative working relationships between Federal government and non-federal actors, including non-governmental actors, in which the goals, structure, and roles and responsibilities of each partner are mutually determined. For the PNT, a private or public organization that cooperates with the administering agency and/or managing agency on aspects of administration or management of the PNT. Cooperation is usually documented through an agreement, which may be a monetary or non-monetary agreement. Some common types of work performed by partner organizations include but are not limited to trail maintenance, trail construction, volunteer management, visitor information, and monitoring.
primary use or uses	The mode or modes of travel on the trail that primarily guide trail-wide administration and management. For the PNT, the primary uses are: (1) hiking (i.e., pedestrian or foot travel) with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking and (2) where feasible and allowed by local management, pack and saddle stock use.
project plan	See managing agency definition. In general, a project plan addresses a specific project or activity that supports and/or implements the direction contained in the comprehensive plan and/or the land management plan for an area.
realignment	For the PNT, a change in the location of the travelway (i.e., trail tread) for a segment of the PNT within the existing national trail planning corridor.
relocation	For the PNT, an administrative decision by the administering agency or, for substantial locations, an Act of Congress that moves the location of a segment of the PNT outside the existing national trail planning corridor, pursuant to Sec. 7(b) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)).
road	A motor vehicle route over 50 inches wide, unless identified and managed as a trail (36 CFR 212.1) (FSM 7705).

scenic	Of or relating to landscape scenery; pertaining to natural or natural-appearing scenery; constituting or affording pleasant views of natural landscape attributes or positive cultural elements (Agriculture Handbook 701).
section hiking	Travel by foot (including by wheelchair or mobility device) to complete the entirety of a long-distance trail over multiple discrete trips or visits.
side trail	A component of the National Trails System pursuant to Sec. 6 of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1245) that complements designated national recreation, scenic, or historic trails by providing additional single points of public access to special features along such trails.
special uses	See managing agency definition (terms may differ across managing agencies). For the Forest Service, all uses of National Forest System lands, improvements, and resources, except those authorized by the regulations governing shared use of roads (§ 212.9); grazing and livestock use (part 222); the sale and disposal of timber and special forest products, such as greens, mushrooms, and medicinal plants (part 223); and minerals (part 228) are designated “special uses” (36 CFR § 251.50).
substantial relocation	For the PNT, a relocation of a segment of the PNT outside of the existing national trail planning corridor that is outside the authority of the administering agency and requires an Act of Congress (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)) due to its extent, divergence from the PNT’s congressionally designated route or trail values, or other factors.
temporary detour	For the PNT, a route that can provide for continuous long-distance travel by allowing visitors to bypass segments of the PNT and/or areas along the PNT that have been closed to the public by the managing agency. In contrast to relocation and realignment, a temporary detour does not change the location of the PNT travelway, national trail planning corridor, or national trail management corridor.
thru-hiking	Travel by foot (including by wheelchair or mobility device) to complete the entirety of a long-distance trail in a single trip or visit.
trail	The Federal interagency definition of a trail is a linear route managed for human-powered, stock, or off-highway vehicle forms of transportation or for historic or heritage values. See also managing agency definitions. For the Forest Service, a

	<p>route 50 inches or less in width or a route over 50 inches wide that is identified and managed by the managing agency or landowner as a trail (36 CFR 212.1).</p>
trail angel	<p>An individual that voluntarily offers gifts, services, assistance, or other support to visitors on long-distance trails. Common examples include offers of food, beverages, transportation, or lodging.</p>
trail class	<p>The prescribed scale of development for a trail, representing its intended design and management standards. Each trail class is defined in terms of applicable tread and traffic flow, obstacles, constructed feature and trail elements, signs, typical recreation environment, and experience. The trail classes are:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail class 1 – Minimally Developed: Primitive trail, minimum to nonexistent constructed features.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail class 2 – Moderately Developed: Simple trail, minor development, constructed features for trail resource protection.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail class 3 – Developed: Trail appears constructed, structures common, designed for user convenience.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail class 4 – Highly Developed: High standard trail, significant structures, may be fully accessible.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail class 5– Fully Developed: Highest standard trail, significant structures, tread hardening common, typically fully accessible.</p> <p>(Federal Geographic Data Committee 2011)</p>
Trail Management Objectives	<p>Documentation of the intended purpose and management of a trail based on management direction, including access objectives.</p>
trail stage	<p>A segment of the PNT as identified by the Pacific Northwest Trail Association on its map sets, based on the primary points at which visitors have choices (i.e., trailheads, other trails, roads, etc.) to enter, exit, bypass, or depart from the PNT.</p>
trail values	<p>The values for which the PNT was designated, including its nature and purposes; primary uses; and significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved. Trail values are fundamental attributes of the PNT. They are unique to the PNT, based on its legislation and history, but also reflect its status as a component of the National Trails System.</p>

trailhead	See managing agency definition. For the Forest Service, the transfer point between a trail and a road, water body, or airfield, which may have developments that facilitate transfer from one mode of transportation to another. For purposes of the Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG) (FSM 2353.27), a trailhead is a site designed and developed to provide for staging for trail use and does not include: (a) Junctions between trails where there is no other access. (b) Intersections where a trail crosses a road or users have developed an access point, but no improvements have been provided beyond minimal signage for public safety.
travelway	For the PNT, the location and portion of the PNT upon which PNT visitor traffic moves, similar to the concept of the railway or trail tread.
treaty rights	Those rights or interests reserved in treaties for the use and benefit of Tribes. The nature and extent of treaty rights are defined in each treaty. Only Congress may abolish or modify treaties or treaty rights.
trust responsibility	Trust responsibility arises from the United States' unique legal and political relationship with Indian tribes. It derives from the Federal Government's consistent promise, in the treaties that it signed, to protect the safety and well-being of the Indian tribes and tribal members. The federal trust responsibility is a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to all federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages. (See also FSM 1563.9b).
user-created trail	A trail that was not created by an authorized action.
visitor capacity	The maximum amounts and types of visitor use that a public use area can accommodate while achieving and maintain the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2019).
visitor use management	The proactive and adaptive process of planning for and managing characteristics of visitor use and its physical and social setting, using a variety of strategies and tools, to sustain desired resource conditions and visitor experiences (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2016a).

volunteer	See managing agency definition. In general for the PNT, an individual or group who freely donates time, talent, and resources to work with the administering agency or other managing agencies, or with partner organizations. Individual volunteers may be youth or adults.
wilderness character	“Wilderness character is a holistic concept based on the interaction of (1) biophysical environments primarily free from modern human manipulation and impact, (2) personal experiences in natural environments relatively free from the encumbrances and signs of modern society, and (3) symbolic meanings of humility, restraint, and interdependence that inspire human connection with nature. Taken together, these tangible and intangible values define wilderness character and distinguish wilderness from all other lands” (Landres et al. 2015).
wilderness characteristics	See managing agency definition. For the Forest Service, see FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, 72.1.

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Appendices

[Appendix A](#): Thru-hiking Opportunity Narrative for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix B](#): Legislative Map for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix C](#): Detail Maps the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix D](#): Land Acquisition and Protection Report for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix E](#): Carrying Capacity Report for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix F](#): Adaptive Management and Monitoring of Visitor Use and Trail Conditions on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

[Appendix G](#): Proposed Priority Actions for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

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Appendix A. Thru-hiking Opportunity Narrative – Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

This section describes components of the opportunity for one of the PNT’s primary uses, hiking, focusing on the components most relevant to thru-hiking. Many of these components are also relevant to the opportunities for section hiking and other long-distance recreation by foot on segments, but not the entirety, of the PNT. This section describes current conditions and provides a snapshot at the time of this plan. Current conditions do not necessarily meet the objectives or desired conditions for the trail, which are described in [chapter 5](#) of this plan. This section therefore highlights some components that need to be addressed to implement this plan.

Opportunity and Setting

For most aspiring PNT thru-hikers, embarking on a 1,200-mile journey across the entire PNT is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It involves a significant investment in planning and logistics. In 2019, approximately 65 people attempted to thru hike the PNT. Not all attempts result in a completed thru hike. The thru-hiking opportunity draws visitors from beyond the Pacific Northwest, including some from outside the United States. In addition to the thru-hiking opportunity (completing the entire PNT in one trip in a single year), the PNT may be completed through section hiking, traversing the entire trail in a series of sections completed over multiple trips and more than one year. Many aspiring PNT thru-hikers have previously completed thru-hikes of other long-distance trails such as the “Triple Crown” national scenic trails (the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT), Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT), and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT)).

The PNT offers a challenge and a sense of accomplishment to those who travel this multi-faceted path. It offers a sense of belonging to an ever-growing trail community, with each individual carrying their personal memories and experiences but also a shared understanding of the significance of this 1200-mile connection across the vast landscapes of the Northwestern United States. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association recognizes individuals who have completed the entire PNT, whether as a thru-hike or section hike, by maintaining a list of “1,200 milers” on its website.

The trail experience for the PNT is unique to the Northwest region (inclusive of the Inland Northwest and Pacific Northwest) and cannot be replicated on other long-distance trails. The PNT spans from the Crown of the Continent to the Pacific coast, linking iconic landmarks of the US-Canada border, three national parks, seven national forests, six Congressionally designated wilderness areas, working landscapes, and small-town Main Streets.

In contrast to north-south-oriented long-distance trails such as the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail, the east-west-oriented PNT lies within a narrow range of latitudes (between 47.74 and 49 degrees north), generally near the international boundary at the 49th parallel. Much of this border region is relatively undeveloped, with few north-south roads and entry points between the U.S. and Canada. The PNT goes through areas that have retained or reintroduced charismatic wildlife species such as grizzly bears and gray wolves. Along the trail route visitors experience

the rich variety of natural resources found across the Northwest: dramatic scenery, starry night skies, awe-inspiring mountains and other geologic features, large rivers and river valleys, temperate rainforests, Puget Sound and the Salish Sea, and the Pacific coast, among others. These lands are the ancestral homelands and travelways of indigenous nations. Cultural and historic landmarks along the trail allow thru-hikers and other visitors to learn about and experience cultural landscapes and both prehistoric and historic-era cultural sites. Interpretive sites associated with national parks, national forests, state parks, and communities the PNT goes through provide educational information to those who wish to enhance their understanding of these places.

Crossing numerous land management jurisdictions, the trail experience varies from rugged wilderness and backcountry with outstanding opportunities for solitude, self-reliance, and challenge to opportunities for social interaction and amenities in a variety of gateway communities. The heaviest use occurs on sections proximal to population centers (especially in the Puget Sound region) and near popular recreation areas, including national parks and state parks. Although the goal is to maintain the majority of the PNT as a primitive, nonmotorized route that generally avoids infrastructure and developments, in some sections of the trail, visitors may encounter signs of the multiple uses of adjacent lands. This may include, for example, actively managing forestlands such as through timber harvest, fuels reduction projects, or prescribed burning; grazing; off-road vehicle recreation; energy-related developments such as hydropower projects; and resorts and developed recreation sites.

Timing

Much of the PNT traverses high latitudes and high elevations that receive substantial snowfall from fall through spring. There is only a short season in which to complete a thru-hike – approximately mid-June to mid-September, which is considered the thru-hiking season for the PNT – though some sections of the trail, particularly at low-elevation, may remain snow-free and allow for hiking year-round. At a pace averaging 20 miles per day, a hiker can complete the 1,200-mile trail in 60 days.

The specific timing of a thru-hike depends on factors such as the year's weather and snowpack; availability of permits for overnight backcountry travel in the national parks; trail conditions such as temporary closures or the timing of when seasonal bridges are installed; and the individual thru-hiker's availability, preferences, skills, and speed of travel. Along the Pacific coast, the tides dictate a hikers' pace, in turns opening and closing passage around rocks, bluffs, and headlands.

Access

The PNT is accessed by numerous trailheads which range from fully developed interpretive sites to simple vehicle access points. Due to the length of a PNT thru-hike (approximately 60 days) it is not practical to leave a personal vehicle at the trailhead while hiking. Currently, there are limited private commercial shuttle options to and from some trailheads, including the eastern terminus at the Belly River Trailhead and, on the other side of the trail, to and from Ozette near the PNT's western terminus at Cape Alava. On Whidbey Island and the Olympic Peninsula,

public transit serves points near the PNT, and there is limited public transit in other areas, such as Oroville, Washington. Many thru-hikers rely on friends and family or on “trail angels” (individuals who voluntarily assist PNT hikers) for transportation at the beginning and end of a hike or to and from gateway communities or resorts along the trail for resupply or lodging opportunities. There is a long stretch of the PNT from the east side of the Pasayten Wilderness to Ross Lake that is remote from roads and trailheads, where access is limited, and visitors must be self-reliant for the traverse.

Route and Navigation

As described in [chapter 4](#), and elsewhere in this plan, the PNT is mostly located on existing trails and, currently, on existing roads for about 400 miles. There are short sections of cross-country travel, including much of the coastal section in Olympic National Park. At the time of this plan, conditions along the PNT are characterized by the diversity of trail types and conditions that thru-hikers encounter. There has not been a uniform trail-wide standard for trail width, surface, facilities, etcetera. Remote sections of the trail are rugged and often challenging, more so if trails are infrequently maintained or impacted by wildfires, windstorms, or other events. Near some gateway communities, the PNT is located on highly developed trails, including paved shared-use paths with heavy use by bicyclists. Unlike some other long-distance trails, such as the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (which uses trail number 2000 across its length) and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (which has a standard system of blazes used across its length), the trails that comprise the PNT route are primarily named, numbered, and marked as part of local managing agencies’ trail networks using local names and numbers established prior to the PNT’s designation. Managing agencies and partners have worked together to install PNT markers at many trailheads and locations along the trail and to identify the PNT route on maps, but some trailheads and sections of the trail are not marked as being part of the PNT. (There is no trail-wide blaze.) This, along with the range of on-the-ground conditions and gaps in the trail route where the PNT uses roads and cross-country connections to allow for continuous travel, makes the PNT relatively difficult to navigate at this time in comparison to other, longer established national scenic trails.

Water

Water is abundant along the majority of the PNT, although certain portions of the trail in eastern Washington and other locations, such as high ridges and coastal areas, may not have dependable water sources year-round. In seasonally dry areas, hikers must carry adequate water to reach the next available water source. However, scarcity of water is not an important factor in the trail experience for the PNT compared to long-distance trails in drier regions, such as the southern sections of the Pacific Crest Trail. Along most of the PNT, there are few sources of potable water other than in gateway communities and at developed campgrounds with treated water systems. Water gathered from lakes, streams, and springs must be treated to kill or remove illness-causing microorganisms such as *Giardia lamblia* and *Cryptosporidium*.

Overnight Camping and Accommodations

Backcountry camping is the primary mode of overnight accommodations along the PNT. There is no hut-to-hut system or network of shelters as there is on some other long-distance trails. In national parks, permits are required for overnight camping in backcountry and wilderness areas, and visitors must camp within a specified established campsite or area. Permits may be difficult to obtain because of growing popularity of these parks, particularly Glacier National Park. Due to the distance of permit-issuing offices from the PNT, westbound thru-hikers who are already on the trail must phone-in their permit requests for North Cascades National Park Service Complex or Olympic National Park just prior to arrival, hoping permits will be available for campsites along the PNT for the dates they arrive. Backcountry dispersed camping is allowed on most National Forest System lands, which make up 51 percent of the length of the PNT, and Bureau of Land Management lands. Advance permits are not required. However, localized closures due to public safety issues such as wildfires, or to allow for management activities such as forest health projects, could affect the availability of dispersed camping opportunities.

In some places, developed campgrounds are proximate to the trail, though the need for advance reservations makes it difficult for thru-hikers to obtain campsites since they may not know the timing of their arrival. Some, such as at Deception Pass State Park, offer walk-in campsites or hiker-biker camping areas that can serve thru-hikers. Similarly, while there are some cabins and lookouts on National Forest System lands along the PNT that are available for overnight rental through the National Recreation Reservation System, they are not typically used by thru-hikers.

Motels, hostels, and other overnight accommodations are available in gateway communities and resort areas. This may be cost-prohibitive for some hikers, especially in high-cost locations like summer vacation destinations and the Puget Sound region. Some trail angels invite thru-hikers to stay overnight at their homes or camp on their property, generally free of cost.

Safety Considerations

Much of the PNT goes through remote locations, including backcountry and wilderness areas, with limited access to roads, services, and communications. Across the trail, thru-hikers must be prepared for dynamic conditions and the possibility of sudden weather changes, extreme temperatures, storms, wildfires, smoke, and flood events. In some cases, these may force hikers to detour or evacuate from the PNT. Hikers should use extreme caution on snowfields, near water, and in off-trail sections of the PNT. Hikers should take into consideration their own experience and skill level, and also on-the-ground conditions (such as snow depth, stream flows at water crossings, and tide charts) both in planning their PNT hike (for example, start and end dates, direction and pace of travel, party size and composition, and gear) and undertaking each section of the hike. Hikers are advised to seek information on conditions and safety considerations from the managing agencies across the trail and the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, and to record their planned route, timing, and destination(s) at trail registers or with the managing agency, as applicable. Search and rescue operations are organized by managing agencies, municipalities, and volunteer organizations that are often limited in their resources and capacity. Additionally, in some locations along the trail, due to terrain and the location of cellular communication towers, emergency calls made from cellular telephones may go to dispatch

offices in distant locations, even Canada. Hikers should take responsibility to be prepared for the range of conditions they may encounter along the PNT and should never expect to rely on timely search and rescue.

Other important safety-related considerations are roads, wildlife (particularly grizzly bears and black bears), and proximity to the U.S.-Canada border.

Approximately 400 miles of the 1,200-mile PNT route are located on roads. This amount of road walking deters some hikers from attempting the PNT and is generally a negative aspect of the trail experience for those who do thru-hike the PNT. Being on or near roads, hikers may be at risk of collisions or other incidents involving vehicles, or even bicycles. This is a particular concern where there is heavy traffic, where speed limits are high (as is the case for approximately 135 miles of roads used by the PNT route), where there is low visibility (due to the road slope, curves, weather conditions, or light conditions), where there is no road shoulder or the shoulder is narrow or steep, and where roads are frequented by logging trucks or other large vehicles.

Where the PNT goes through habitat for bears (both grizzly bears and black bears are present along sections of the trail) and other wildlife, there are additional safety considerations for hikers and preparations they should take. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC), individual managing agencies, and the Pacific Northwest Trail Association provide information about bear safety. Glacier National Park requires wilderness permit holders to view an educational video about bear safety before beginning a trip in the park's backcountry areas. Westbound PNT thru-hikers view the video at the start of their thru-hike. However, grizzly bears and black bears may be present in many areas along the PNT, which goes through four grizzly bear recovery zones (the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem in Montana, Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem in Montana and Idaho, Selkirk Ecosystem in Idaho and Washington, and North Cascades Ecosystem in Washington). Managing agencies may temporarily close trails and areas for bear management, and hikers should be prepared to detour or adjust their trip as necessary. Even where it is not required, hikers should consider carrying bear spray (and have it easily accessible and knowledgeable of use) and storing food and attractants in IGBC-approved bear-resistant containers⁶². Most important, hikers should seek information about how to recreate responsibly in bear country and be prepared with the right knowledge and skills to do so, such as the ability to differentiate black bears and grizzly bears and interpret their respective behaviors, and to avoid encounters – for the safety of the hikers and the bears.

Several sections of the PNT go through areas where the managing agency has put in place food storage orders that require visitors to store food and other items considered attractants (such as, for example, personal hygiene products) in bear-resistant containers or through other methods specified in the order when items are not in use. Food storage orders vary by jurisdiction, and it is important for thru-hikers to familiarize themselves with the orders and where they apply, and be prepared with the knowledge, skills, and gear to follow them. For example, some backcountry campsites in Glacier National Park provide bear-resistant food lockers but most campsites across the PNT do not. PNT thru-hikers therefore must be able to use an approved bear-resistant

⁶² See list of IGBC-approved containers at [ax2239ad.aw\(igbconline.org\)](http://ax2239ad.aw(igbconline.org))

container or properly hang food and attractants according to the managing agency's guidance so it is inaccessible to bears.

Similar safety precautions – being aware of wildlife safety considerations, observing wildlife from an appropriate distance, avoiding encounters, and properly storing food and other attractants – apply for other types of wildlife along the PNT such as mountain lions, moose, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats (which are attracted to the salts in human sweat and urine, and may sometimes behave aggressively toward humans.) Hikers should also be aware that mosquitos, ticks, and rodents may spread disease, including some serious illnesses such as Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Hantavirus. Hikers should know what symptoms should lead them to seek medical care and take precautions, such as wearing clothing that covers their skin, using insect repellent, and avoiding areas with tall brush or woodpiles where they may encounter rodents and ticks.

In some locations the PNT comes close to the U.S.-Canada border. It is unlikely but possible that hikers may encounter illegal border activity or related law enforcement activities. Near the border, it is especially important that hikers know where they are at all times, travel on official trails, avoid unknown persons and camps, and use common-sense safety procedures. Outside of official ports of entry, attempting to cross into Canada is a strictly prohibited and serious violation of Canadian Federal Law.

Food, Supplies, and Services

PNT thru-hikers must be largely self-reliant throughout their journey, carrying their own food and other supplies. Gateway communities along the PNT provide opportunities for thru-hikers to “resupply” by purchasing food and other items and by accessing pre-arranged “bounce boxes” of food and supplies sent to the hiker through general delivery to the post office or in care of a business or trail angel. In some regions of the PNT, such as western Washington, there are many communities of varying sizes on or near the PNT where hikers can access grocery stores and other businesses. In other regions of the trail, such as Montana and Idaho, communities tend to be smaller, with fewer stores and businesses, and a greater distance from the PNT. Hikers must carefully plan to ensure they have sufficient food and supplies for their traverse of the Pasayten Wilderness, an approximately 100-mile journey with the nearest communities about 20 miles to the south.

In gateway communities, thru-hikers may also access services such as computers and internet connections, electric outlets for recharging phones and other devices, showers, laundry, restaurants, and other amenities. In some gateway communities, kiosks or bulletin boards have been installed by the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, local organizations, businesses, or community members to welcome and orient PNT thru-hikers. Trail angels sometimes invite thru-hikers for meals at their homes or offer to deliver groceries or cook for hikers at their campsites. Gateway communities provide opportunities for thru-hikers to meet up to share meals, exchange stories and information from their hikes, and build camaraderie. From 2014-16, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association collected voluntary information from PNT thru-hikers via web-based surveys that included information about which gateway communities thru-hikers visited and what kinds of businesses and services they used. In 2016, a Stanford University student

completing an internship through the university's Bill Lane Center for the American West worked with the Tri-County Economic Development District, Pacific Northwest Trail Association, and the Forest Service to identify opportunities for the PNT to support economic and community development in gateway communities in northeast Washington. In the future, the Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association and/or other partner organizations may develop a more formal program for gateway communities, similar to gateway community programs on other national scenic trails.

Appendix B. Legislative Map – Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

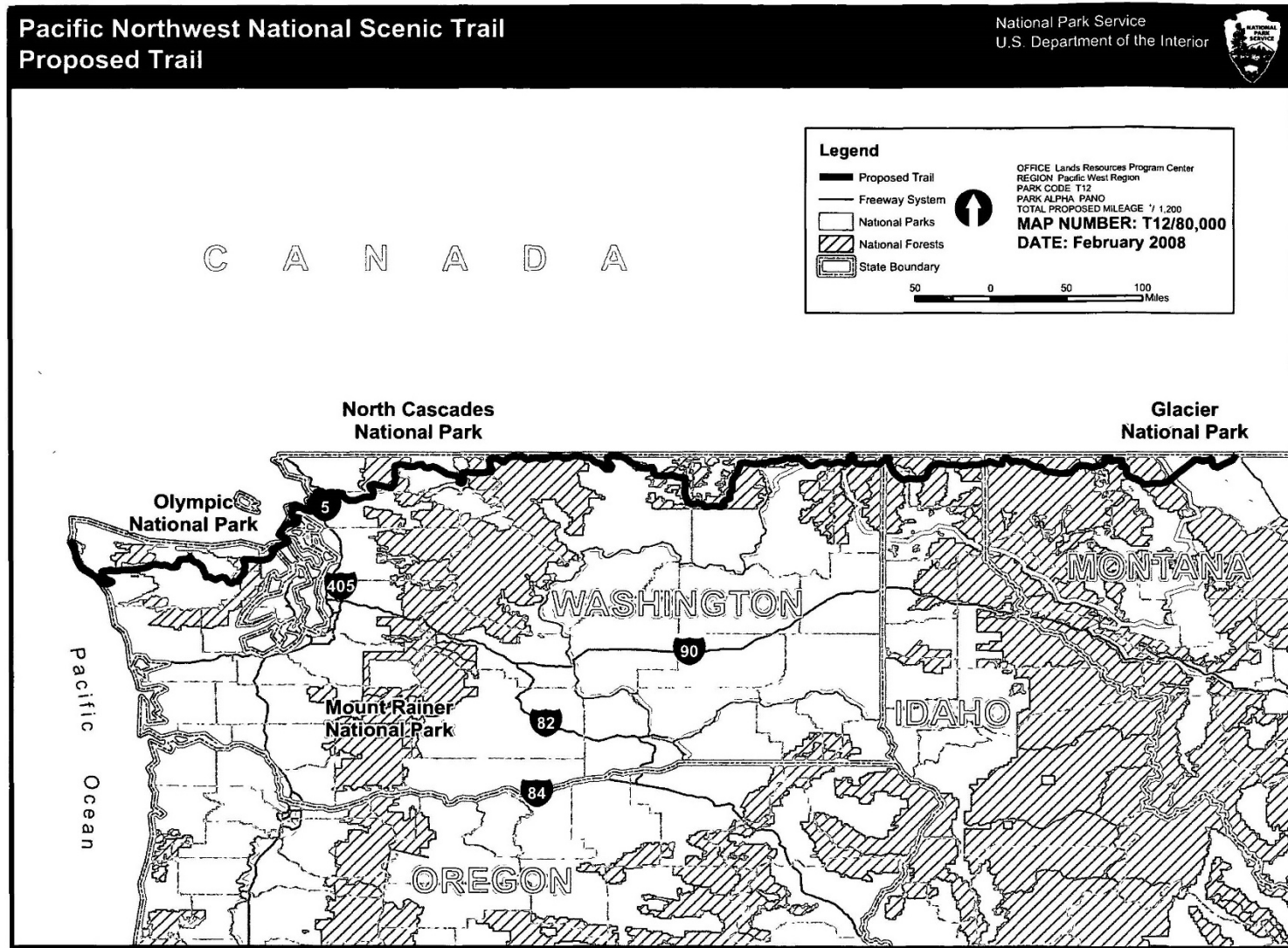


Figure 20 Legislative Map for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Appendix C. Detail Maps – Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

The map packet for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail is located here:

<https://usfs.box.com/s/vsdcp81wb1i620a8vbl8rsv16nf2kpe4>

Appendix D. Acquisition and Protection Plan – Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Introduction

The National Trails System Act (P.L. 90-543 as amended) (NTSA) requires that comprehensive plans include an acquisition of protection plan that addresses lands to be acquired by fee title or lesser interest, and also addresses anticipated cooperative agreements needed for any lands not to be acquired (16 U.S.C. 1244(e)). The acquisition and protection plan supports implementation of Section 7 of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246) and will help achieve two important goals for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (Pacific Northwest Trail or PNT):

1. Provide for a continuous, connected non-motorized trail on lands where public access for recreational use of the trail is permanently secured.
2. Ensure that lands along the PNT are sufficiently protected to provide for the PNTs nature and purposes and other trail values, including the preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources.

This acquisition and protection plan addresses these primary topics:

- Key provisions of the National Trails System Act
- Current landownership and special considerations related to PNT route on roads
- Desired conditions
- Guiding principles and prioritization criteria
- Methods and tools
- Strategies for Implementation

Key Provisions of the National Trails System Act

The National Trails System Act established the National Trails System “...to provide for addressing the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and 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” (16 U.S.C. 1241(a)). The Act states that national scenic trails will be located to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential as well as the conservation and enjoyment of the scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources in the areas through which these trails pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)).

As described in [chapter 1](#), the PNT was first proposed in the early 1970’s. It was designated by Congress as one of America’s national scenic trails through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), which amended Section 5(a) of the National Trails System Act to add the following:

(30) PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

IN GENERAL. – *The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, a trail of approximately 1,200 miles, extending from the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park, Montana, to the Pacific Ocean Coast in Olympic National Park, Washington, following the route depicted on the map entitled ‘Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail: Proposed Trail’ ...dated February 2008”.*

ADMINISTRATION. – *The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture.*

LAND ACQUISITION. – *The United States shall not acquire for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail any land or interest in land outside the exterior boundary of any federally-managed area without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land.*

[Chapter 1](#) provides additional information about the National Trails System Act and other authorities that apply to PNT. The following sections summarize key provisions relevant to land acquisition and protection along national scenic trails.

Cooperation with States, Counties, Municipalities, Private Landowners, and Private Organizations for Trail Management

The National Trails System Act encourages cooperation with non-federal entities, including states, counties, municipalities, private landowners, private organizations, and individuals in many aspects of trail management. Federal agencies may enter into cooperative agreements with these entities to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of the trail, within or outside a federally administered area (16 U.S.C. 1246(h)(1)).

Transfer of Management Responsibilities to Another Federal Agency

The National Trails System Act allows the Secretary responsible for administration of the trail to transfer management responsibilities for a segment of the trail to another Federal agency with those lands then managed under the rules and regulations of the accepting agency. (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(1)(B)).

Acquisition of Lands (or Interests) Within Federally Administered Areas

The National Trails System Act allows federal agencies to acquire lands or interests in lands within the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas through written cooperative agreements with landowners, donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange. (16 U.S.C. 1246(d)) Federally administered areas are those lands contained within the Congressionally designated boundaries of the national forests, national parks, national recreation areas, and national historical reserves. Federal lands administered by the DOI Bureau of Land Management do not have Congressionally designated boundaries.

Acquisition of Lands (or Interests) Outside Federally Administered Areas

For lands outside the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas, the National Trails System Act encourages states and local governments to enter into written cooperative agreements

with landowners or to acquire such lands or interests in lands to be used as segments of the trail. If states or local governments fail to obtain lands or interests or enter into cooperative agreements with landowners, federal agencies can acquire such lands or interests, or enter into cooperative agreements:

...the appropriate Secretary may (i) enter into such agreements with landowners, States, local governments, private organizations, and individuals for the use of lands for trail purposes, or (ii) acquire private lands or interests therein by donation purchase with donated or appropriated funds or exchange.... the appropriate Secretary may acquire lands or interests therein from local governments or governmental corporations with the consent of such entities. The lands involved in such rights-of-way should be acquired in fee if other methods of public control are not sufficient to assure their use for the purpose for which they are acquired.... (16 U.S.C. 1246 (e)).

Use of Condemnation

In a special provision specific to the PNT, the National Trails System Act states:

“The United States shall not acquire for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail any land or interest in land outside the exterior boundary of any federally-managed area without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land.”

This is an important special provision for the PNT that differs from what may be allowed for other national scenic trails or for National Trails System Act purposes in general.

Section 7(g) of the National Trails System Act addresses use of condemnation for National Trails System Act purposes in general. It allows the responsible Secretary to use condemnation without consent of the landowner to acquire lands or interests therein, only in cases where, in the Secretary’s judgment, all reasonable efforts to acquire such lands or interests by negotiation have failed; provided further, that condemnation proceedings may not be used to acquire fee title or lesser interests to more than an average of 125 acres per mile of trail. (16 U.S.C. 1246(g))

Use of Land and Water Conservation Fund

The National Trails System Act allows appropriated funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to be used to acquire lands of interest for the purposes of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1246(g)).

Current Status of Land Ownership and Administration of the PNT

The location of the PNT is addressed in [chapter 4](#), which describes in detail the congressionally designated route of the PNT through several geographic regions and various special management areas. In addition, [chapter 2](#) highlights the federal agencies, tribes, state agencies, counties, and municipalities that manage segments of the trail, and the role of private lands and private landowners in trail management.

Figure 1 in chapter 1 shows the entire length of the Pacific Northwest Trail, from east to west, from where it begins in northern Montana, and crosses northern Idaho, then eastern, central, and western Washington, where the trail comes to its end at the Pacific Ocean.

On the following pages, four maps display the approximate route of the PNT that cross Montana, Idaho, and Washington. The maps show, in greater detail, where the trail crosses each state, and includes land ownership and management.

Additional maps were produced to inform the development of this report and are located in the project record. As recommended in the [Management Toolbox](#) section, the Forest Service should coordinate with other land managing agencies and governments to update and refine these maps as needed for inclusion in the management toolbox that should be developed to implement this plan.

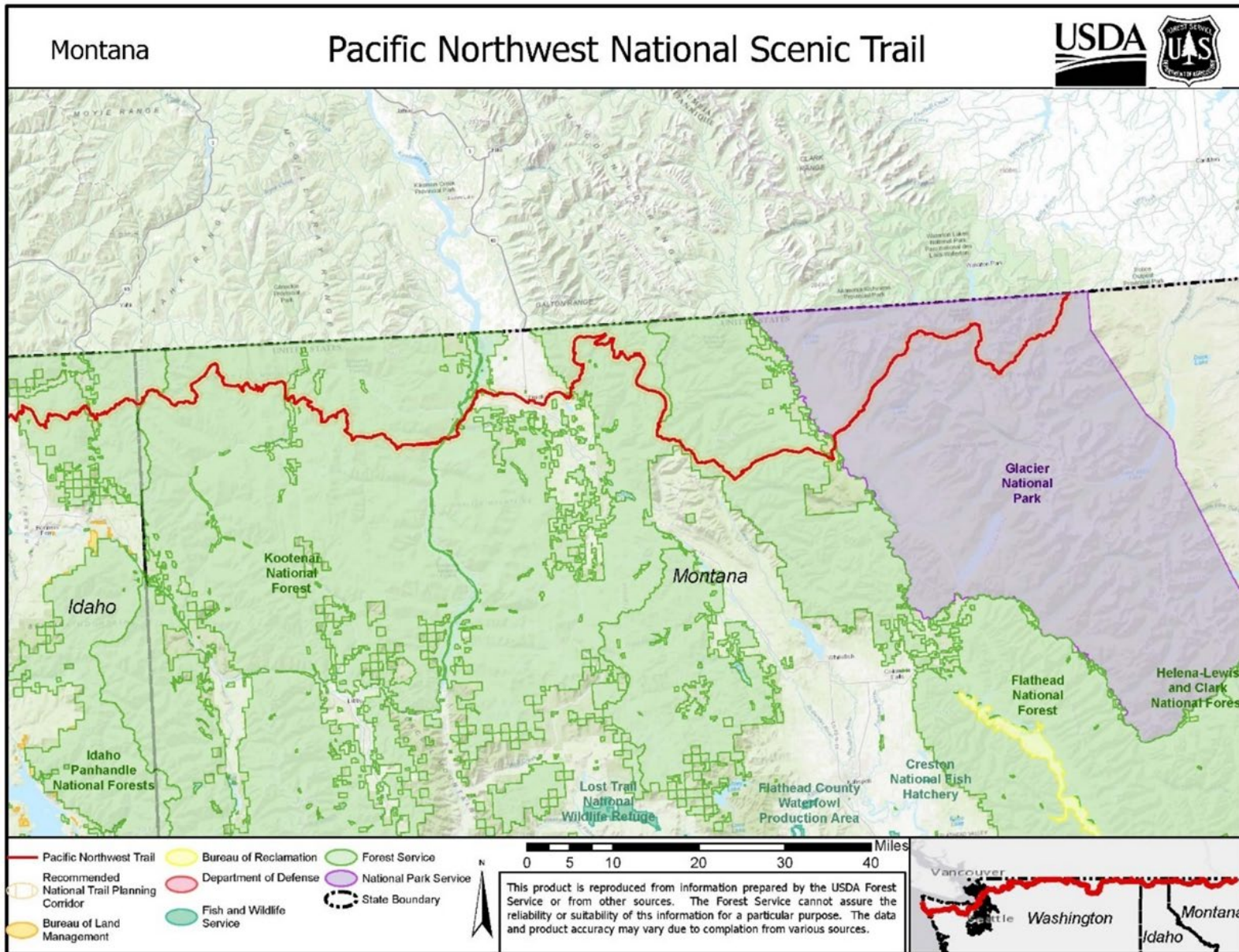


Figure 21. Map of the Montana portion of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.



Figure 22. Map of the Idaho portion of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

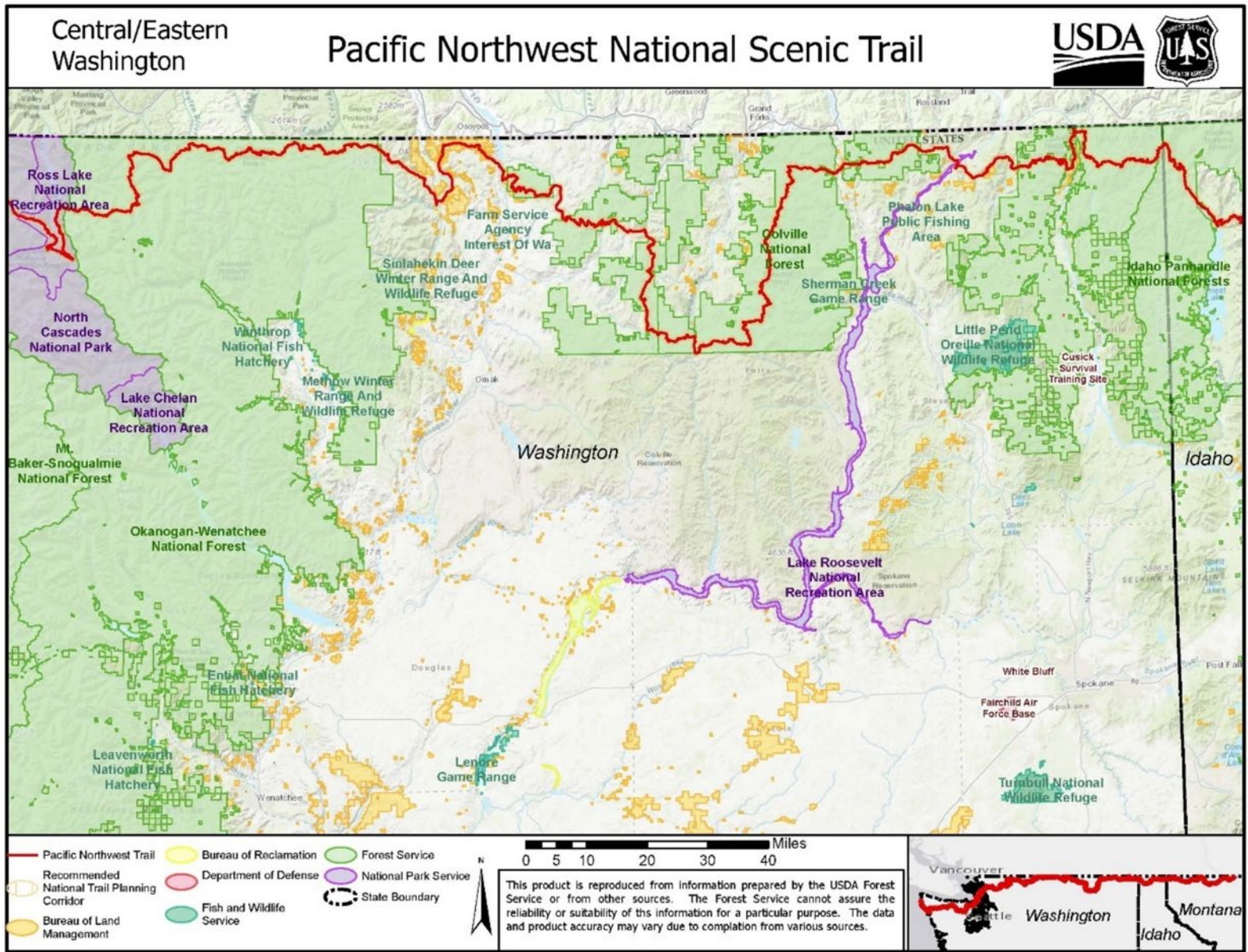


Figure 23. Map of the central- and eastern-Washington portions of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

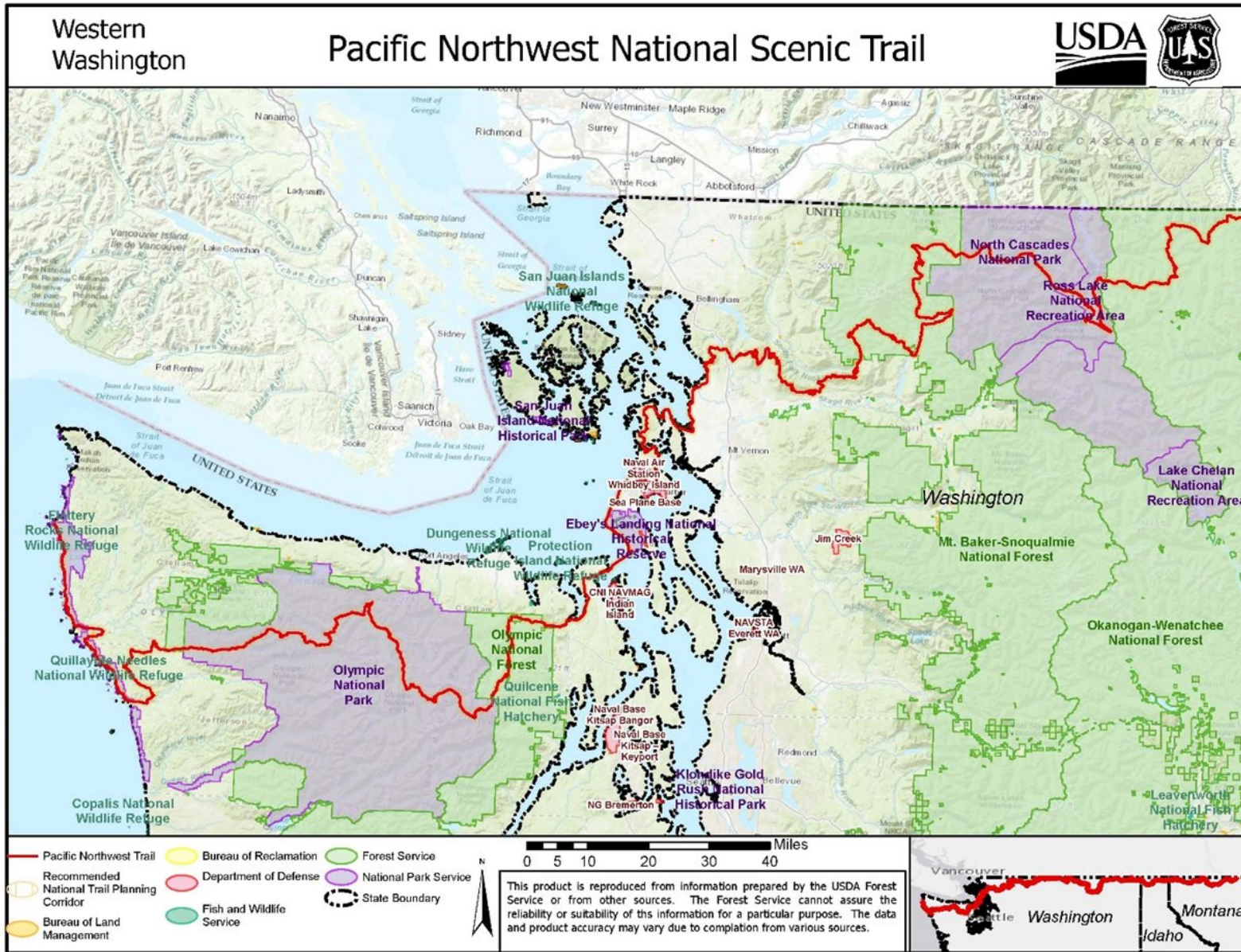


Figure 24. Map of the western Washington portion of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

This acquisition and protection plan summarizes available data on land ownership and land administration for lands along the PNT national trail planning corridor.

The PNT crosses through different land ownership types and jurisdictions. More than 80 percent of the PNT is located on public lands (federal, state, county, or municipal), about 17 percent is on private lands or on public roads through areas of private land, and less than 1 percent is within the Colville Reservation and Swinomish Reservation.

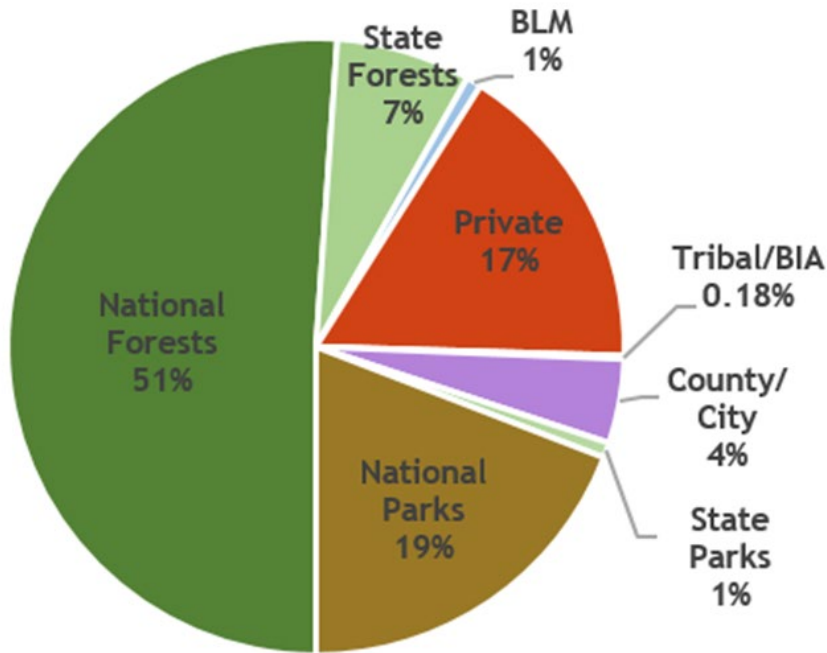


Figure 25. Land ownership and administration along the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

Federally Administered Lands

Approximately 70 percent (roughly 800 miles) of the PNT is located on federal lands administered by the Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management (see table 8). Each of these federal agencies is responsible for developing and managing the segments of the PNT, in a cooperative manner, on its lands.

Based on available data, the PNT is not located on lands managed by other Federal agencies (such as the DOI Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Defense, or DOI Bureau of Reclamation. The PNT is located on some federal highways that are administered by the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, in cooperation with the respective state highway departments; these are discussed in the PNT Route on Roads section.

Table 8. Federal agencies that manage segments of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Federal Agency	Miles of PNT (approximate)	Units with Segments of the PNT (State)
Forest Service	576	Flathead National Forest (Montana) Kootenai National Forest (Montana) Idaho Panhandle National Forests (Idaho and Washington State) Colville National Forest (Washington State) Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (Washington State) Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (Washington State) Olympic National Forest (Washington State)
National Park Service	217	Glacier National Park (Montana) Ross Lake National Recreation Area (Washington State) North Cascades National Park (Washington State) Olympic National Park (Washington State)
Bureau of Land Management	9	Spokane District (WA)

National Forest System

The PNT crosses about 576 miles of National Forest System lands on seven national forests in three states:

- Flathead National Forest and Kootenai National Forest in Montana
- Kaniksu National Forest⁶³ in northern Idaho and northeast Washington
- Colville National Forest⁶⁴, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest⁶⁵, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, and Olympic National Forest in Washington.

National Forest System lands are administered by the USDA Forest Service. Each national forest is managed by a forest supervisor and consists of ranger districts, each led by a district ranger.

The national forests in Montana and in northern Idaho are administered by the Forest Service, Northern Region (R1), headquartered in Missoula, Montana, and overseen by the Region 1 regional forester. The lands and realty functions for areas along the PNT are handled mainly by staff in the R1 Westside Lands Zone. The national forests in Washington are administered by the Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region (R6), headquartered in Portland, Oregon, and overseen by the R6 regional forester. The lands and realty functions for areas along the PNT are handled mainly by staff in the Northern Washington and the Columbia Lands Zones.

National Park System

The PNT crosses about 217 miles of lands administered by the National Park Service on 5 units in two states:

⁶³ The Kaniksu National Forest is administered as part of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

⁶⁴ The Colville National Forest now administers the Tonasket Ranger District, formerly part of the Okanogan National Forest.

⁶⁵ The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest combines the former Okanogan National Forest and Wenatchee National Forest. The PNT is located on the Okanogan National Forest portion.

- Glacier National Park in Montana
- Ross Lake National Recreation Area in Washington
- North Cascades National Park in Washington
- Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve in Washington
- Olympic National Park in Washington.

Glacier National Park is within the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service. The four units in Washington are within the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service. Each National Park unit is managed by a superintendent. Lands and realty functions are handled mainly by staff in National Park Service regional offices.

Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management

The PNT crosses about 9 miles of Federal public lands in the state of Washington administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM state office for Washington and Oregon is headquartered in Portland, Oregon, and is overseen by a state director. The BLM administering district office for the PNT is in Spokane, Washington, and is overseen by a district manager. Agency realty functions are handled mainly by staff in the state office and the district office.

Tribal Reservations

Two short segments (less than one mile) of the PNT are located along public roads within two tribal reservations in the state of Washington:

- Colville Reservation and
- Swinomish Reservation.

The affected tribal lands on the Swinomish Reservation and Colville Reservation are referred to as “trust lands”. Trust lands are held and administered by the DOI Bureau of Indian Affairs for the benefit of the tribes.

State, County, Municipal, and Private Lands

Approximately 30 percent (roughly 327 miles)⁶⁶ of the PNT is located on lands not within federally administered areas or tribal reservations. Those lands, listed in table 9, are managed by state agencies, counties, or municipal governments; by private landowners; or by transportation agencies or roads departments.

- State lands comprise about 89 miles, or 8 percent of total trail length
- County and municipal lands, approximately 48 miles, or 4 percent of total trail length
- Private lands (including public roads through private lands), approximately 237 miles, or 17 percent of total trail length

⁶⁶ This figure includes segments of the PNT that are located on federal highways outside the boundaries of federally administered areas.

Table 9. Segments of the PNT on state, county, municipal and private lands

Type / Entity	Units with Segments of the PNT
Idaho Department of Lands	State endowment lands in the vicinity of Priest Lake
Washington Department of Natural Resources	Loomis State Forest, Harry Osborne State Forest, and Blanchard State Forest
Washington State Parks	Bay View State Park, Deception Pass State Park, Joseph Whidbey State Park, Fort Ebey State Park, Fort Casey State Park and Ebey's Landing, Bogachiel State Park
Whatcom County (example)	Squires Lake Park
City of Anacortes (example)	Anacortes Community Forest Lands, Tommy Thompson Trestle
Jefferson County (example)	Larry Scott Trail (part of the Olympic Discovery Trail)
Private lands	The PNT is located on private lands or on public roads through areas of private land in the following counties (listed generally east to west): Flathead County MT, Lincoln County MT, Bonner County ID, Boundary County ID, Pend Oreille County WA, Stevens County WA, Ferry County WA, Okanogan County WA, Skagit County WA, Whatcom County WA, Island County WA, Jefferson County WA, and Clallam County WA.

It is important to note that lands administered by different agencies – or even within the same agency – may be managed for different purposes. State trust lands have associated legal responsibility to generate revenue for designated beneficiaries. Conservation areas and parks may have resource preservation and public enjoyment purposes.

Where the PNT is located on private lands and roads, it is typically on private timberlands. Through other types of private lands (such as other types of agricultural lands, commercial areas, or residential areas) the Trail is typically on public roads, sidewalks, trails, or easements. Further discussion of roads is in the PNT Route on Roads section.

In table 10, landownership within the PNT national trail planning area is broken down by county and state, with counties and states presented in order generally from east to west.

Table 10. Landownership⁶⁷ within the PNT national trail planning corridor⁶⁸

County and State	Total number of land parcels (estimated)	Federal parcels (estimated)	Tribal parcels (estimated)	State parcels (estimated)	Private, county, municipal and other parcels (estimated)	Total acres within national trail planning corridor (estimated)
Glacier County MT	77	77	0	0	0	18,661
Flathead County MT	380	210	0	12	158	27,254
Lincoln County MT	2,105	253	0	5	1,847	73,574
TOTALS – MONTANA	2,562	540	0	17	2,005	119,489
Bonner County ID	48	11	0	23	14	7,408
Boundary County ID	309	69	0	9	231	41,588
TOTALS – IDAHO	357	80	0	32	245	48,996
Pend Oreille County WA	177	91	0	0	86	24,422
Stevens County WA	1,000	30	0	11	959	29,928
Ferry County WA	204	128	6	0	70	46,639
Okanagan County WA	2,636	308	0	66	2,262	106,636
Skagit County WA	7,295	9	34	349	6,903	50,767
Whatcom County WA69	No Data	35 (Partial Data)	No data	12 (Partial Data)	343 (Partial Data)	No data
Island County WA	3, 515	0	0	103	3,412	12,088
Jefferson County WA	4,263	422	2	63	3,776	51,124
Clallam County WA	673	242	3	18	410	65,342

⁶⁷ Information in this table is from geospatial analysis of publicly available data maintained by states and counties, accessed between December 2022 – February 2023. Landownership is dynamic, and these totals should be treated as estimates.

⁶⁸ The recommended national trail planning corridor for the PNT is one mile in width (one-half mile on either side of the centerline of the trail.) Landownership was analyzed for this area because the Act identifies certain methods and tools for land acquisition and protection that could be used within it, as appropriate. Areas of the national trail planning corridor in water bodies (for example, Lake Kococanusa, the Pacific Ocean) were excluded from analysis.

⁶⁹ Data is not available for some parts of Whatcom County in Washington State; parcels reported in this table for Whatcom County are partial and based on the available data. Therefore, the totals for Whatcom County, and combined totals for Washington State, have not been listed.

PNT Route on Roads

As described in [chapter 4](#), about one-third of the PNT route (roughly 431 miles) is currently located on roads or motorized trails. Based on available geospatial data, segments of the PNT are located on or along the following types of roads:

- low-standard dirt or gravel roads (approximately 264 miles)
- municipal streets (approximately 3 miles)
- paved moderate speed roads (approximately 29 miles), and
- higher speed highways (approximately 135 miles).

These roads are managed by several different entities, including federal highway and federal land management agencies, state highway departments and state land management agencies, county governments (road departments), municipal governments, and private landowners.

National scenic trails are intended to provide extended opportunities for non-motorized recreation, with public use of motor vehicles along the trail prohibited. (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)) Additionally, the proximity of trail users (pedestrians, and in some segments equestrians and bicyclists) to motor vehicle traffic may also create public safety concerns. Segments of the PNT route that are on open roads and motorized trails will need to be moved onto non-motorized trails or, in limited circumstances as may be determined by the local land managing agency through its decision process, roads may be converted to trails. This acquisition and protection plan provides recommended methods and tools to accomplish this goal for the PNT.

Guiding Principles and Prioritization Criteria

When acquiring lands or interests in lands, or entering into cooperative agreements, the aim should be to provide for the PNTs nature and purposes and other trail values, improve public access, improve visitor experience, address public health and safety concerns, and improve the trail's manageability. [Chapter 3](#) articulates the nature and purposes of the PNT and other trail values (primary uses and significant resources to be preserved) that are integral to the PNT and foundational considerations in all aspects of its administration and management. [Chapter 5](#) includes trail-wide objectives for the PNT as well as desired conditions and related management practices relevant to land acquisition and protection. The following are the desired conditions for land acquisition and protection:

- Provide for a continuous, connected non-motorized trail on lands where public access for recreational use of the trail is permanently secured.
- Lands along the PNT are sufficiently protected so that they may continue to provide for the PNTs nature and purposes and other trail values, including the preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources associated with the PNT, for future generations.

The aim for acquisition of lands, or interests in land, safeguard the nature and purposes for which the national scenic trail was designated, improve public access, address public health and safety concerns, improve visitor experience, and improve trail manageability.

To achieve these desired conditions, the following twelve "guiding principles" will guide this land acquisition and protection plan for the PNT:

1. **Complete the trail.** All land acquisition and protection actions should contribute to the overall goal of completing the PNT as a continuous non-motorized trail. Completing the trail also means providing for the trail's nature and purposes and safeguarding trail values, including securing permanent public access wherever possible.
2. **Roads.** At present, about one-third of the PNT route is located on roads. To meet the intent of the National Trails System Act - - that national scenic trails are non-motorized trails - - segments of the PNT currently located on roads are considered temporary locations. Segments of the PNT presently located on roads should be moved onto non-motorized trails. In limited cases, conversion of roads to trails could be an appropriate resolution based on the local managing agency or private landowner's preferred approach based on their travel management planning.
3. **Optimal Location Review** will be used as a guide to assist with acquisition and protection efforts for the PNT. The purpose of the optimal location review is to identify the trail location that will best provide for the nature and purposes of the PNT into the future; in many places the optimal location is the Congressionally designated route but in others the optimal location may be elsewhere and would require moving the trail (refer to point number 2, above). [Chapter 4](#) describes the optimal location review process as it pertains to the PNT. Utilizing the optimal location review helps the administering agency, managing agencies, and partner organizations coordinate effectively to plan, develop, and protect the PNT in the best long-term location and avoid misdirecting resources to transitory locations. The optimal location review process will generally be completed before acquiring lands or easements along the PNT.
4. **Prioritization Criteria.** To be effective with limited resources, a set of criteria will be developed and used to identify priorities for acquiring or otherwise protecting lands along the PNT. The criteria are a tool (not agency policy) and may be updated as needed to remain relevant and responsive to dynamic conditions. In general, prioritize acquisition and protection actions that would:
 - a) Resolve public access or trespass issues. One example is Boundary Dam, where public access is prohibited and PNT visitors must detour using other roads and trails.
 - b) Resolve significant public health and safety concerns. Take action to address segments of the PNT that are currently located on roads or motorized trails, with greatest attention to segments where non-motorized users may face safety hazards due to traffic, speed, or road conditions.
 - c) Respond to offers from willing landowners (see guiding principle number 5, below).
 - d) Avoid permanent development along the trail that would not be compatible with the nature and purposes of a national scenic trail.
 - e) Contribute to the preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources for the PNT, as identified in [chapter 3](#): the trail itself; exceptional scenic beauty and variety; wilderness and backcountry settings; diverse ecological communities and valued plant

species; iconic fish and wildlife species; places of importance to Tribes; traces of the past; and rivers, streams, and shorelines.

- f) Acquire or otherwise protect lands outside the boundaries of federally administered areas, in situations where state and local governments, and cooperating private entities are unwilling or unable to do so.
5. **Willing landowners.** This is a fundamental principle. It is critical to work with private landowners to cultivate relationships and be responsive to good opportunities to acquire lands or interests in lands along the PNT from willing landowners, especially by voluntary land donation and land purchase.
6. **Fee title acquisitions.** Within National Forests and other Federally administered areas, emphasize use of fee title acquisitions (land purchases and land donations) to ensure long-term protection of land areas along the PNT. Outside of Federally administered areas, encourage state and local governments, and cooperating private entities, to acquire such lands or interests on lands, or enter into cooperative agreements as needed to assure protection of the PNT.
7. **Land exchanges.** Land exchanges are a valuable tool for fee title acquisitions. But Forest Service land exchanges are relatively costly, time consuming, and subject to environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and public and political consent. Land exchanges should be considered only in situations where there will be clear and substantial benefits for the PNT.
8. **Perpetual easements.** Use all available acquisition and protection tools (see Methods and Tools section), including the acquisition of perpetual trail easements and conservation easements along the PNT. When fee title acquisitions are not feasible, the next priority should be to acquire trail easements to secure a legal right of access and public use of the PNT. Once a legal right of access and public use is secured for the PNT, conservation easements should be considered to help protect the entire width of the PNT corridor, including scenic areas and significant natural, historic, and cultural resource values.
9. **Cooperative Agreements.** Cooperative agreements should be used to document cooperation in managing the PNT where the trail crosses lands administered by other federal agencies, tribal lands, state lands, county or municipal government lands, and private lands⁷⁰. Although the Forest Service prefers to use the conventional acquisition tools to ensure permanent protection of the PNT, cooperative agreements are an appropriate tool in some situations. The Forest Service will strive to make the term of the agreements as long lasting as possible.
10. **Geospatial Data.** GIS mapping and geospatial data provide will important information for implementing this land acquisition and protection plan. For effective administration and management of the PNT, we need to understand and display land ownership information along the trail (while respecting landowners' reasonable privacy concerns and protecting

⁷⁰ In cases where acquisition of lands or interests is not desired by the private landowner, would not be appropriate based on other principles and considerations, or has not yet been completed.

personally identifiable information.) Geospatial data also plays an important role in the optimal location review process.

11. **Land Management Plans.** Currently, not all the relevant land management plans contain direction and guidance for the PNT. As opportunities arise and in accordance with the relevant agencies' planning regulations and policies, include appropriate management direction and guidance for PNT land acquisition and protection into federal managing agencies' land management plans (such as forest plans for national forests, general management plans and associated planning documents for national park units, and resource management plans for lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management). These plans can provide valuable vision and guidance for land acquisition and protection activities within federally administered areas.
12. **Tribal, State, and Local Government Plans.** As invited and as opportunities arise, participate in, and contribute to planning efforts by tribal, state, and local governments. Examples include state comprehensive outdoor recreation plans (SCORPs) and local trails plans. Provide information about the PNT and assist other governments to develop management direction and guidance for land acquisition and protection for the PNT, as appropriate.

Methods and Tools

The primary methods and tools available to the Forest Service, and to other federal and state agencies, to use for implementing an Acquisition and Protection Plan are:

- Land purchase (acquire land in fee title)
- Land donation (acquire land in fee title)
- Land exchange (acquire land in fee or partial interest)
- Acquire trail easements (by purchase, donation, or exchange)
- Acquire conservation or scenic easements (by purchase, donation, or exchange)
- Enter into cooperative agreements (with agencies, landowners, other entities)

Each of these tools will be used by the Forest Service and cooperating agencies, where appropriate, to implement the acquisition and protection plan for the PNT.

This section describes:

- Each method and tool,
- The primary authorities (laws and regulations),
- The applicable Forest Service direction and policy,
- The primary steps in the process (Forest Service),
- The pros and cons of each method,
- The anticipated effectiveness of each method, and

- The potential role of partners in using each method.

The Forest Service's use of each method listed above is described within this section. Other agencies and conservation partners also acquire lands and easements. Their specific authorities, policies and procedures will often vary from Forest Service authorities, policies, and procedures.

Land Purchase

Summary

Purchase of private lands in fee title is the most effective tool available to the Forest Service in acquiring and protecting lands along the National Trails System. Within and adjacent to the western national forests, private land inholdings are the result of the Homestead Acts, Railroad Grants, State School Grants, and the US mining laws.

For any Forest Service land purchase to be successful, the key elements are:

- a) a willing seller (landowner),
- b) acceptable title to the property,
- c) an appraisal that is accepted by the landowner and Forest Service,
- d) public and political support, and
- e) funding to complete the purchase.

A typical Forest Service land purchase will take from 1 to 2 years to complete after the purchase funding is obtained.

Primary Authorities

The Forest Service has considerable authority to purchase land within and outside the proclaimed National Forest boundaries.

The **National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968** ("NTSA", P.L. 90-543, as amended) grants specific and broad authorities to the Federal agencies to acquire lands and interests in lands by written cooperative agreement, donation, purchase, or exchange. The National Trails System Act should be considered the primary authority for the PNT. Acquisition documents should cite this authority and other authorities as appropriate.

The PNT was designated by Congress as a national scenic trail through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), which amended the National Trails System Act.

In addition to the National Trails System Act, the following Forest Service purchase authorities are available:

- The Department of Agriculture Organic Act of 1956 (the '56 Act) authorizes purchase for almost any purpose.
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 is a second primary authority for BLM and the Forest Service to acquire lands.

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act is another authority to purchase lands. The Act states: “Land outside but adjacent to an existing national forest boundary, not to exceed 3,000 acres in the case of any one forest, that would comprise an integral part of a forest recreational management area may also be acquired with amounts appropriated from the Fund.

Annual Congressional appropriations acts, specifically appropriated dollars from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, provide the primary funding to purchase lands.

Forest Service Direction and Policy

Direction and guidance for land purchases can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5420
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 5409.13

Base purchases on approved land and resource management, landownership, and composite plans. At the time of preparing this plan, the existing land management plans (forest plans) for the national forests which host the PNT do not provide land acquisition direction and guidance specific to the PNT. Until such time as these forest plans are revised or amended, look to the comprehensive plan for the PNT to inform the acquisition of lands and interests in lands along the PNT.

Purchase lands on a willing seller basis at a price established by the approved appraisal of market value. Lands may be purchased for less than appraised value if the landowner so requests after being offered just compensation.

Nominate and evaluate proposed land acquisitions using the criteria established each year in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act project nomination process.

Pros and Cons

Pros of Land Purchase

- Fee title land acquisitions, whether by donation, purchase, or exchange, are the most effective tool in ensuring long-term protection of National Scenic Trails.
- In fee title land acquisitions, the United States acquires the permanent rights to manage the land consistent with the goals and objectives of the PNT and the forest plans.
- Landowners (sellers) do not typically retain rights on the land.
- Conservation organizations are often willing to partner with the Forest Service in land purchases, especially where there are significant public values and resources.
- Funding for land purchases is currently at a relatively high level, due in part to strong public support, passage of the Great American Outdoors Act and a Congressional commitment for full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Program.
- Forest Service land purchases are categorically excluded from NEPA documentation and are not subject to public appeal or protest.

- The process of completing Forest Service land purchases is typically less complex, less costly, and less time-consuming in contrast to land exchanges.
- The National Trails System Act (Section 7(f)) includes specific authorities that allow for larger (“whole tract”) land purchases and for disposal of lands located outside of the area of trail acquisition with proceeds from such disposal credited to the land acquisition account. (16 U.S.C. 1246(f))

Cons of Land Purchase

- Some landowners may not be willing to sell their land in fee title. However, they may be willing to grant an easement, or they may be open to a land exchange.
- Land purchases require obtaining an appraisal that meets federal standards.
- Some landowners may not accept the results of the appraisal, which means the entire purchase proposal could be lost in some cases.
- Despite the increase in funding for land purchases, Land and Water Conservation Fund Act funding is limited, and each project is evaluated on its merits. Competition for this funding is strong.
- Land purchases need to be designed to protect the PNT corridor. There may not be a perfect fit. In many cases, the Forest Service may need to purchase more lands than are needed to protect the PNT. Or in some cases, the landowner may not be willing to sell the lands that are needed to protect the PNT. The National Trails System Act (Section 7(f)) includes specific authorities that allow for larger (“whole tract”) land purchases and for disposal of lands located outside of the area of trail acquisition with the proceeds for such disposal credited to the land acquisition account. (16 U.S.C. 1246(f))
- There is always an element of risk and uncertainty with securing funding and obtaining an appraisal that is acceptable to the landowner and the Forest Service.
- When acquiring land outside of existing federally managed areas, the agency could be left with difficult-to-manage fee-owned parcels. There may be times when the agency doesn’t want to own the fee estate, but an agreement or easement may be more appropriate.

Anticipated Effectiveness for the PNT

It is anticipated that fee title land purchases will be a high priority and widely used tool for the PNT.

Potential Role for Partners

More than any other option, third-party partners often have a strong interest in working with landowners and the Forest Service to complete land purchases. Conservation partners can add flexibility, they can move quickly, and they can build public support and lobby Congress. Non-government partners can sometimes work more effectively with landowners than a federal agency, and they can help tackle difficult title issues working with the landowners and title companies. Conservation partners can share costs with the Forest Service, such as contracting for appraisal and hazmat reports.

Land Donation

Summary

Acquiring private lands in fee title by voluntary donation from willing private landowners is a viable tool that is available to the Forest Service for acquiring and protecting lands along the National Trails System. **When a landowner voluntarily offers to donate land, if title to the property is acceptable, and the land is free of hazardous substances, the Forest Service should make it high priority to follow through and complete the donation in a timely manner.**

Two main differences between a land purchase and land donation are:

- donations do not require an appraisal and
- donations do not require purchase funding.

A landowner may be motivated to donate land to help establish and protect the national scenic trail to receive an IRS tax credit for a land donation, or to help permanently conserve their land for its wildlife, scenic and other resource values. Note: The Forest Service does not provide an appraisal for tax donation purposes.

For any Forest Service land donation to be successful, the key elements are:

1. The landowner is willing to voluntarily donate the land to the United States.
2. The property has acceptable title and is free of hazardous substances.
3. Acquiring the property is compatible with Forest Service management goals and objectives for the adjacent or nearby National Forest System lands.
4. The Forest Service is not allowed to accept donated lands from a list of prohibited sources.

A typical Forest Service land donation will take from 1 to 1½ years to complete after the trail and corridor are designed.

Primary Authorities

The **National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968** (“NTSA”, P.L. 90-543, as amended) grants specific and broad authorities to the Federal agencies to acquire lands and interests in lands by written cooperative agreement, donation, purchase, or exchange. The National Trails System Act should be considered the primary authority for the PNT. Acquisition documents should cite this authority and other authorities as appropriate.

In addition to the National Trails System Act, the Forest Service has other authorities to acquire lands by voluntary donation. The Forest Service often relies on these two acts:

- The Act of October 10, 1978 (92 Stat. 1065; 7 U.S.C. 2269), and the Act of June 7, 1924 (43 Stat. 653; 16 U.S.C. 569).
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

Forest Service Direction and Policy

Direction and guidance for land purchases and land donations can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5420
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 5409.13

Base land donations on approved land and resource management, landownership, and composite plans. At the time of preparing this plan, the existing land management plans (forest plans) for the national forests which host the PNT do not provide land acquisition direction and guidance specific to the PNT. Until such time as these forest plans are revised or amended, look to the comprehensive plan for the PNT to inform the acquisition of lands and interests in lands along the PNT.

Pros and Cons

Pros of Land Donation

- Fee title land acquisitions, whether by donation, purchase, or exchange, are the most effective tool in ensuring long-term protection of national scenic trails.
- In fee title land acquisitions, the United States acquires the permanent rights to manage the land consistent with the goals and objectives of the PNT and the forest plans.
- Landowners (donors) do not typically retain rights on the land.
- Conservation organizations may be willing to partner with the Forest Service in land donations, especially where there are significant public values and resources.
- Forest Service land donations (like purchases) are categorically excluded from NEPA and not subject to public appeal or protest.
- The process of completing Forest Service land donations is relatively simple.
- Donations are typically the fastest and easiest method to acquire lands.
- Donations do not require purchase funds and do not require an appraisal. However, donations still require funds for case processing, such as title and closing expenses.

Cons of Land Donation

- Most landowners expect to be compensated by the government for their land, either by selling their land at appraised value or by exchanging their land for other federal lands.
- Relatively few landowners are willing to donate their lands.
- In comparison to land purchases, conservation partners are often less inclined to partner with the Forest Service in land donations.
- The Federal government cannot solicit donations so any landowners must voluntarily bring forward a proposal to donate.

Anticipated Effectiveness for the PNT

Acquisition of private lands by voluntary donation should be very high priority for the Forest Service, whenever that opportunity presents itself, provided title is acceptable and the acquisition is consistent with management goals and objectives. However, it is anticipated that land donations will not be widely used for the PNT, simply because most private landowners expect to be compensated, either by purchase or exchange for other lands.

Potential Role for Partners

Third-party partners often have less interest in working with landowners and the Forest Service to complete land donations versus land purchases, but there are important exceptions. For example, if a land donation is part of a larger conservation project, such as a land purchase with a donation component, conservation partners will often have a stronger interest. If the donation is large scale and there are significant resource and public values, then potential partners may have more interest.

Conservation partners sometimes acquire private lands and then transfer title to the United States (Forest Service) through a combination of land purchase (appraised value) and land donation. The land donation may be considered very good public relations for the partner, and it may be important for their membership and donors.

Landowners sometimes contact a conservation group, such as The Nature Conservancy or the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, to express an interest in donating their land for conservation purposes and tax purposes. In those cases, the conservation group may contact the Forest Service about the donation, and they may be willing to cooperate and assist in completing the project, such as sharing the costs with the Forest Service.

Partners may be able to provide tax incentives/assurances to landowners that the Forest Service cannot guarantee.

Land Exchange

Summary

A land exchange is a voluntary real estate transaction between the Federal government and a non-Federal party and may be initiated by either party. A non-Federal party may be a person, State, or local governmental entity.

A land exchange involves the acquisition of non-Federal land, or interests in land (such as trail easements or conservation easements), by the United States in exchange for equal value National Forest System lands or interests in land. Land exchanges adjust ownership patterns to support direction in forest management plans and to create more efficient and effective ownership patterns.

Land exchange is an effective tool to acquire private lands or interests in private lands. Land exchanges should be carefully considered and evaluated as a tool available to use in acquiring and protecting lands along the PNT.

Forest Service land exchanges are relatively complex, time consuming and costly to complete, in comparison to land purchases and land donations. A typical Forest Service land exchange will often take 5 to 10 years or more to complete. Land exchanges may involve preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision or an Environmental Assessment (EA), Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Land exchanges require full public participation and agency decisions are subject to appeal/protest and litigation.

Land exchanges typically require completion of appraisals to federal standards, both for the Federal lands and the non-Federal lands. The Federal and non-Federal lands must be equal in value based on the approved appraisals or made equal in value with a cash equalization payment.

Partial interests in land may be acquired when it is in the public interest to do so. For the PNT, the Forest Service could consider an exchange of National Forest System lands to acquire private lands, or trail easements, or conservation or scenic easements.

Primary Authorities

The **National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968** (“NTSA”, P.L. 90-543, as amended) grants specific and broad authorities to the Federal agencies to acquire lands and interests in lands by written cooperative agreement, donation, purchase, or exchange. The National Trails System Act should be considered the primary authority for the PNT. Acquisition documents should cite this authority and other authorities as appropriate.

In addition to the National Trails System Act, the Forest Service normally uses the following authorities for considering land exchanges:

- General Exchange Act of March 20, 1922 (P.L. 67-173; 42 Stat. 465 as amended). The General Exchange Act authorizes the exchange of land or timber that was reserved from the public domain for National Forest System purposes. The non-Federal land must be within the same State and within the exterior boundary of a national forest or within an area covered by the provisions of the act. The Bureau of Land Management must concur in the valuation and conveyance of minerals. Either party may make reservations when in the public interest as provided in 36 CFR part 254, FSM 5403.1, and FSM 5430.3.
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (“FLPMA”, P.L. 94-579; 90 Stat. 2743). FLPMA amended the General Exchange Act. FLPMA requires that land exchanges must be conducted with US citizens, must be within the same State, must be of equal value, and may be equalized with cash. Section 205 authorizes the exchange of land and interests in lands **for the purpose of acquiring access across non-Federal lands** to units of the National Forest System. Section 206(d) requires use of an Agreement to Initiate (ATI) for land exchanges.
- Federal Land Exchange Facilitation Act of 1988 (“FLEFA”), Stat. 1086 as amended 43 U.S.C. 1716 (note), 751 (note)). FLEFA also amended the General Exchange Act.
- Weeks Act of March 1, 1911 (36 Stat. 961 as amended; 16 U.S.C. 516). This act authorizes the exchange of National Forest System land that has Weeks Law (acquired land) status.

Regulations governing the exchange of National Forest System lands are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, part 254, subpart A (36 CFR part 254, subpart A).

Forest Service Direction and Policy

Direction and guidance for land exchanges can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5430 – Land Exchanges
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 5409.13 – Chapter 30 - Exchanges

Objective: The objective of the Forest Service land exchange program is to utilize land exchanges as a tool, in concert with the purchase program, to implement forest land management planning and direction; to optimize National Forest System landownership patterns; to further resource protection and use; and to meet the present and future needs of the American people. (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5430 – Land Exchanges)

Policy: Consider only those land exchange proposals that are consistent with forest land management plans (36 CFR part 219).

Consider a land exchange only if it is in the public interest and is consistent with the forest land management plan. Identify potential concerns or issues involving cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, floodplains, wetlands, hazardous materials, mineral estates, and other outstanding rights early in the process.

Unless otherwise provided by law, all land exchange cases shall be processed in accordance with Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR, part 254, subpart A.

Pros and Cons

Pros of Land Exchange

- Fee title land acquisitions, whether by exchange, purchase, or donation, are the most effective tool to ensure long-term protection of National Scenic Trails.
- In fee title land acquisitions, the United States acquires the permanent rights to manage the land consistent with the goals and objectives of the PNT and the forest plans. Landowners do not typically retain rights on the land exchanged to the United States.
- Land exchanges can be an effective tool to acquire private lands or interests in lands, such as easements. Land exchanges should be carefully considered and evaluated as a tool available to use in acquiring and protecting lands along the PNT.
- Limited Land and Water Conservation Fund Act or other purchase funding is needed for an exchange of lands. Land exchanges are based on equal value. On rare occasions, the Forest Service may need to pay cash equalization funds.

Cons of Land Exchange

- In comparison to land purchases, conservation partners are often less inclined to partner with the Forest Service in land exchanges.

- A typical Forest Service land exchange will often take 5 to 10 years or more to complete.
- Forest Service land exchanges are relatively complex, time consuming and costly to complete, in comparison to land purchases and land donations.
- Land exchanges may involve preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision or an Environmental Assessment (EA), Decision Notice and FONSI.
- Land exchanges require full public participation and agency decisions are subject to appeal/protest and litigation. Therefore, land exchanges are subject to more risk, and there is no assurance that a land exchange proposal will be completed.
- Land exchanges typically require completion of appraisals for the Federal and the non-Federal lands. The Federal and non-Federal lands must be equal in value based on approved appraisals or made equal in value with a cash equalization payment.
- The cost of processing a land exchange can often be significant which makes small land exchanges less viable.

Anticipated Effectiveness for the PNT

Although land exchanges are an effective tool to acquire lands and access rights, it is anticipated that exchanges will not be widely used for the PNT. The main reason is that Forest Service land exchanges are often complex, time consuming and costly to complete, in comparison to land purchases, donations and easement acquisitions. Land exchanges involve full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Land exchanges require full public participation and agency decisions are subject to objection and litigation. A Forest Service land exchange may take 5 to 10 years or more to complete, and there is no assurance the exchange proposal will be completed. Despite these drawbacks, land exchanges should be carefully considered and evaluated as a tool available to use in acquiring and protecting lands along the PNT.

Potential Role for Partners

Most often, the Forest Service works directly with landowners in developing and completing land exchanges. Third party partners are typically not directly involved in land exchanges. However, conservation partners often serve an important indirect role in building public and political support for a proposed land exchange.

There are some notable exceptions. For example, if a land exchange is part of a larger conservation project, such as a land purchase with an exchange component, conservation partners may have a stronger interest. If the proposed exchange has significant resource and public values, then potential partners may have more interest.

Landowners sometimes contact a conservation group to express interest in conserving their land for conservation purposes, through a purchase, a donation or land exchange. In those cases, the conservation group may contact the Forest Service. The Forest Service and the landowner may reach an agreement to pursue a land exchange. The conservation group may be willing to cooperate and assist in completing the exchange.

Trail Easements

Summary

An easement is a partial interest in land that entitles the holder (in this case the United States) the right to use land owned by another party for a particular purpose.

In the Forest Service “Rights-of-Way Acquisition program”, the agency acquires linear (road and trail) easements from willing landowners. Easements are often acquired by purchase, or voluntary donation, or by a reciprocal exchange of easements of similar value. In some cases, easements can also be acquired by the United States in land exchanges.

Easements acquired by the Forest Service are normally perpetual, “assignable” to other entities, and “exclusive”. An exclusive easement grants jurisdiction to the holder (United States). An “assignable” easement contains language that allows for potential transfer of the easement from the Forest Service to a cooperating agency or entity, such as a state or county.

Primary Authorities

The **National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968** (“NTSA”, P.L. 90-543, as amended) grants specific and broad authorities to the Federal agencies to acquire lands and interests in lands by written cooperative agreement, donation, purchase, or exchange. The National Trails System Act should be considered the primary authority for the PNT. Acquisition documents should cite this authority and other authorities as appropriate. The PNT was designated by Congress as a National Scenic Trail through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), which amended the National Trails System Act.

In addition to the National Trails System Act, the Forest Service normally uses the following authority to acquire access over non-Federal lands:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (FLPMA), Sec. 205
 - Notwithstanding any other provisions of law...the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to the acquisition of access over non-Federal lands to units of the National Forest System, are authorized to acquire pursuant to this Act by purchase, exchange, donation, or eminent domain, lands, or interests therein.
 - The Federal Regulations for Section 205 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act are in 36 CFR 212.

Forest Service Direction and Guidance

Direction and guidance for acquiring road and trail easements can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5460 – Rights of Way Acquisition
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 5409.17 – Rights of Way Acquisition

Pros and Cons

Pros of Trail Easements

- Landowners may not want to sell their land or any portion of it, but they may be willing to grant an easement for a trail. Acquiring an easement may be the best option in that situation.
- Easements can often be acquired at minimal cost by voluntary donation or by a reciprocal exchange of easements. Purchasing easements is usually less costly than purchasing land in fee title. The Forest Service (regional forester and forest supervisors) has authority to negotiate and pay above appraised value for access easements.

Cons of Trail Easements

- Easements are partial interests. Landowners retain the rights to manage their private lands as they see fit, provided they do not interfere with the easement.
- Some private land uses, such as residential development or timber harvest, may not be compatible with the goals of the PNT.
- Future owners of the private lands might not recognize or want an easement encumbering their property. Future owners might want the easement moved off their property, or they might try to close the trail.
- Purchased easements require obtaining an appraisal (or in some cases an “appraisal waiver”) that is acceptable to both parties.

Anticipated Effectiveness for the PNT

It is anticipated that acquisition of trail easements will be a widely used tool for the PNT. The Forest Service can acquire permanent trail easements from willing landowners, and from other entities such as state agencies, by four methods: purchase, donation, a reciprocal exchange of easements, or as part of a land exchange. All four methods are available for the PNT. Most trail easements will likely be purchased or donated.

Potential Role for Partners

Typically, the Forest Service works directly with private landowners and other agencies to secure trail easements and to resolve mutual access needs. Conservation partners are normally not directly involved in acquiring trail easements, but there are some exceptions. The PNT may be one of those important exceptions.

Conservation partners and cooperators may be willing to contribute funding for purchase of trail easements, or to contribute funding to assist the Forest Service in processing the cases, such as paying for a survey, appraisal, or title insurance. These entities may also play an important part in formulating trail and corridor design with landowners.

Cooperating entities that own and manage lands crossed by the PNT, such as state, county, municipal, and Tribal governments, may be willing to grant and donate permanent trail easements to the Forest Service for the PNT.

Private landowners, including timber industry owners, that own and manage lands crossed by the PNT, may be willing to sell or donate permanent trail easements to the Forest Service for the PNT. Some landowners, including timber industry, may want to exchange access easements with the Forest Service. For example, a timber industry landowner may want to acquire road easements across National Forest System lands and in turn, grant trail easements for segments of the PNT to the United States. Some landowners may be interested in a land exchange, in which the United States conveys National Forest System lands, and, in exchange, the United States acquires trail easement(s) for the PNT.

Conservation Easements

Summary

A conservation (or scenic) easement is a tool designed to permanently protect and conserve private lands without acquiring those lands in fee title. The landowner retains title to the property and continues to use the property subject to the provisions of the conservation easement. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a public agency, such as the Forest Service, a state, or a qualified (under IRS 501(c)3) non-profit conservation organization such as The Nature Conservancy or Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Conservation easements may be acquired by purchase, bargain sale or donation.

Under the National Trails System Act, national scenic trails are established to conserve significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the area through which such trails may pass.

Conservation easements permanently prohibit (or restrict) residential or commercial development, and land uses or practices that would be harmful to the agricultural, wildlife, scenic, or other important land values. A conservation easement is negotiated on a case-by-case basis and recorded in the public records. A conservation easement remains in effect regardless of future changes in land ownership.

The Forest Service and other Federal and state agencies, such as National Park Service and the State of Washington have acquired numerous conservation easements from willing landowners.

Some landowners want to be compensated for limiting future development of their property. A conservation easement extinguishes development rights.

Some landowners choose to negotiate a “bargain sale”. In a bargain sale, landowners are compensated for a portion of the value of their development rights, and they may take tax deductions for donating the remaining value. Note: A “bargain sale” is not unique to conservation easements. Some landowners may also choose to negotiate a bargain sale in a fee title purchase and donate the remaining land value.

When the Forest Service purchases a conservation easement, the value of the easement must be determined by a qualified appraiser, and the appraisal must meet federal standards. The appraised value of purchased conservation easements can be as high as 80 percent to 90 percent of the fee value of the property.

Under federal law, the value of a donated conservation easement can generally be treated as a charitable donation. When the Forest Service acquires a conservation easement by donation from a willing landowner, the agency does NOT participate in the appraisal process for IRS charitable donations.

Important notes:

- A conservation easement does not necessarily provide for public recreational access, although many conservation easements do allow limited public access.
- A conservation easement does not need to cover the entire property, it can be designed to protect only a portion of the property.
- A conservation easement does not need to preclude all development. A landowner may reserve certain rights, such as the right to build a road or a cabin.

Primary Authorities

The **National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968** (“NTSA”, P.L. 90-543, as amended) grants specific and broad authorities to the Federal agencies to acquire lands and interests in lands by written cooperative agreement, donation, purchase, or exchange. The National Trails System Act should be considered the primary authority for the PNT. Acquisition documents should cite this authority and other authorities as appropriate.

In addition to the National Trails System Act, the Forest Service uses the following authorities to acquire conservation and scenic easements:

Department of Agriculture Organic Act, August 3, 1956. (70 Stat. 1034; 7 U.S.C. 428a). This Act provides authority for the acquisition of partial interests outside areas containing specific legislative authority. Partial interests can be acquired whenever necessary to carry out the authorized work of the Forest Service, provided provision is made in the applicable appropriations act or other law.

Weeks Law, Act of March 1, 1911, as Amended. (36 Stat. 961, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 480, 500, 513-517, 517a, 518, 519, 521, 552, 563, as amended). The Weeks Law provides authority to purchase partial interests to protect the watersheds of navigable streams or promote the production of timber. Prior approval by the Secretary of Agriculture must be obtained for all Weeks Act acquisitions. Congressional oversight is required for interests valued at more than \$25,000.

Endangered Species Act of December 28, 1973 (87 Stat. 884 as Amended).

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-579) allows the Secretary of Agriculture to acquire interests in land (including CEs) by exchange.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act is the primary funding authority available to the Forest Service and the States to purchase lands and conservation easements. Each fiscal year, Congress appropriates Land and Water Conservation Fund Act funds to the federal and state agencies for land conservation projects.

The Forest Legacy Program was established in 1990 through an amendment to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFFA) of 1978 (16 USC 2101 et seq.). The Forest Legacy Program is an effective conservation program administered by the Forest Service (State and Private Forestry) in partnership with State agencies to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands. The Forest Legacy Program uses both fee simple land purchases and conservation easements to protect forest areas from development and fragmentation to ensure conservation of important public benefits that forests provide. The Forest Legacy Program is implemented by the Forest Service as a grant program with State agencies, and those State agencies hold the interest in the land acquired with Forest Legacy Program funds. The program operates on a willing buyer-willing seller basis. Projects are selected through a competitive process – first at the state level and then at the national level. By providing economic incentives to private landowners, the program encourages “working forests” and sustainable forest management. Under the Forest Legacy Program, conservation easements restrict development, limit uses that impact the conservation values, and require adherence to a Multi-Resource Management Plan to protect resource values. The Forest Legacy Program was established in 1990 through an amendment to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 USC 2101 et seq.). Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines (FS-1088, May 2017) are available. The Forest Legacy Program is funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund. A portion of the annual funding is set aside for the Forest Legacy Program and made available to the States. Since its creation in 1990, the Forest Legacy Program has conserved more than 2.8 million acres of forest land. The Forest Legacy Program has been particularly effective in Montana, Idaho, and Washington. Each state has a Forest Legacy program manager.

Forest Service Direction and Policy

Direction and guidance for acquiring conservation easements can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5440 – Partial Interests (except Right-of-Way Acquisition)
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 5409.13 – Land Acquisition Handbook
- Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines – FS 1088, May 2017.

The **objectives** of partial interest acquisitions (Forest Service Manual 5440) are to:

1. Provide for acquisition of only those interests in land necessary to meet planned program objectives.
2. Provide for continuance of private land uses, which are consistent with planned program objectives.

The national policies for partial interest acquisition (Forest Service Manual 5440) are to:

1. Acquire only those interests in land necessary to provide for planned management needs, as jointly agreed by Federal Agencies in "Policy for Use of the Federal Portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund" published in the Federal Register, Volume 47, No. 89, Friday, May 7, 1982.

2. Base decisions to acquire partial interests on approved forest land management plans or, in the interim, landownership adjustment plans. At the time of preparing this plan, the existing land management plans (forest plans) for the national forests which host the PNT do not provide land acquisition direction and guidance specific to the PNT. Until such time as these forest plans are revised or amended, the PNT comprehensive plan should inform consideration of partial interest acquisitions.
3. Consider less-than-fee interests, as well as reservations for life or term of years, when a property contains substantial improvement value, and the continued use of the property will not adversely affect the management objectives for the area.
4. The regional forester shall approve acquisition of conservation easements and other partial interests. The regional attorney (Office of General Counsel) assists in the preparation of the conveyance document.

Pacific Northwest Region – Policy Letter on Acquiring Conservation Easements

In 2003, the Director of Lands, Recreation and Mineral Resources for the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service (R6) issued a policy letter to forest supervisors and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area manager regarding the acquisition of conservation easements, requiring advance clearance from the regional office before considering any negotiations for conservation easements due to concerns about both upfront costs (conservation easements often cost 80 percent to 90 percent of the fee value) and long-term costs (due to the need for perpetual monitoring for easement compliance.) The letter states that while there may be instances where a conservation easement is the only tool available to address a pressing resource concern, in almost every instance it would be better for the agency to pursue fee ownership. This 2003 policy letter remains in effect in region 6.

Pros and Cons

Pros of Conservation Easements

- For private lands located outside the boundaries of the National Forests or other Federal land areas, a conservation easement may be the preferred method to protect the PNT, as opposed to fee title land acquisition.
- Acquiring a conservation easement (or other partial interest such as a trail easement) may be the only opportunity available to protect the PNT, if the landowner is unwilling to convey private lands in fee title.
- In some situations, conservation easements (or other partial interests) may be more politically supportable vs. fee title land acquisition.
- When conservation easements are acquired, the property stays in private ownership, and it remains on the property tax rolls.
- Conservation easements are flexible tools, that can and should be tailored to fit each situation.
- Even though conservation easements are not a favored tool for the Forest Service, they may be a useful tool for trail segments on private lands outside the boundaries of Federally

administered areas. Such conservation easements could be held by land trusts, states, or other qualified entities, rather than by the Forest Service. The Forest Legacy Program may be a useful tool for the States to consider for conservation of private forest lands along the PNT.

Cons of Conservation Easements

- Easements are partial interests. Landowners retain the rights to manage their private lands as they see fit, provided they do not interfere with the easement.
- Some “reserved” private land uses, such as timber harvest or grazing, may not be compatible with the goals of the PNT.
- Future owners of the private lands may not want the conservation easement to encumber their property, even though the easement is permanent. Future owners may want the easement to be extinguished or amended to fit their desires for use of the property even though such changes are unlikely. This situation may set up conflict on “jointly owned” lands making administration difficult for the easement holder.
- Monitoring and administering a conservation easement require funding and staffing. It is a permanent responsibility and commitment for the agency. There is no assurance that future funding will be available for this purpose.
- Administration can be costly, contentious, and litigious, particularly with future owners or heirs who may not be familiar with the terms of the easement.
- The Forest Service often does not have staff who are trained and experienced working with conservation easements.
- Forest Service case files and records of conservation easements may be difficult to locate and access, making it very difficult for new staff to administer the easement. (Easements are recorded in the public records of the county.)
- Purchased conservation easements require obtaining an appraisal that meets federal standards and is acceptable to both parties. Purchasing a conservation easement can be expensive, often as high as 80 percent to 90 percent of the fee value.
- Federal funding for purchasing a conservation easement is not assured.
- Conservation easements may or may not allow for public access. For the PNT, this is a significant concern. Public use of the actual trail tread and sufficient land to provide for reasonable public use may need to be protected through a trail easement or fee title acquisition that ensures public access. Using a “layered” approach, the land area surrounding the trail right of way could then be protected with a conservation easement.
- Forest Service R6 policy (February 2003 policy letter) strongly discourages use of conservation easements, and it requires advance approval by the Regional Office before initiating landowner negotiations.
- Conservation easements held by third parties may preclude the Forest Service’s ability to later acquire fee interest in the property.

Anticipated Effectiveness for the PNT

It is difficult to predict the effectiveness of conservation easements for the PNT. It is anticipated that conservation easements will be **much less widely used** for protecting the PNT, in comparison to fee title land acquisitions (purchases, donations and land exchanges). The Forest Legacy Program may be an exception.

There will be some cases, especially outside of National Forests and other Federal land areas, where acquiring conservation easements may be an effective tool for the PNT. There will likely be other situations, including cases within the boundaries of Federal land areas, where a private landowner is not willing to convey land in fee title, but that landowner may be willing to grant a conservation easement.

To some extent, the effectiveness depends on the specific negotiations with individual private landowners. Are the landowners willing to convey lands in fee? Are the landowners willing to grant public access rights?

Timber industry landowners may be willing to sell or donate conservation easements for the PNT. In western Montana, large areas of industrial timber lands have been protected for some resources in recent decades through the purchase (often bargain sale) of conservation easements. Conservation partners, including The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy, have been instrumental in securing these conservation easements. Funding has often come from the Forest Legacy Program. It should be noted that continued timber management may not meet the resource protection or experiential goals for the PNT.

An important consideration is the Forest Service policy for conservation easements. In the Pacific Northwest Region (R6), the current policy (2003 letter) strongly discourages the acquisition of conservation easements. The policy recognizes that acquiring conservation easements means a permanent commitment of staff and funding to monitor and administer the easement on private lands. The Northern Region (R1) tends to adhere to the same approach in effect for R6. As a result of this policy, it appears likely that very few conservation easements will be acquired by the Forest Service to protect the PNT.

Even though conservation easements are not a favored tool for the Forest Service, conservation easements still may be a very useful tool for trail segments on private lands located outside the national forest boundaries. These conservation easements could be held by land trusts, states, or other qualified entities other than the Forest Service. In that respect, the Forest Legacy program may be a useful tool and funding source for the states to consider in protecting segments of the PNT.

Potential Role for Partners

Conservation partners often have a strong interest in working with landowners to complete conservation easements. In fact, in some cases, the conservation partner may be willing to acquire and administer the easement. This is particularly the case for national conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, as well as for local land trusts who focus on acquiring conservation easements in a certain geographic area.

Conservation partners can add flexibility, they can move quickly, and they can build public support and lobby for funding. Partners can sometimes work more effectively with landowners than a federal agency. They can help with negotiations regarding specific provisions in a conservation easement. They can also help resolve title issues working with the landowners and title companies. Conservation partners can share costs with the Forest Service, such as contracting for appraisal and hazmat reports. In some cases, the conservation partner can administer the easement.

The Pacific Northwest Trail Association may serve an important role in acquiring conservation easements along the PNT. In the future, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association may be willing to assist the Forest Service and other agencies in monitoring and administering the conservation easements.

(Note: conservation easements held by third parties may preclude the Forest Service's ability to later acquire fee interest in the property.)

Cooperative Agreements

Summary

The term “cooperative agreements” includes the full spectrum of written agreements used by the Forest Service to document a framework for cooperation between the agency and other parties (public agencies, private entities, institutions, and individuals) that are mutually beneficial to the cooperating parties and that enhance Forest Service programs and activities.

This section focuses on the use of cooperative agreements to provide for land protection along the Pacific Northwest Trail.⁷¹ Cooperative agreements are well established as a tool for National Scenic Trails across the country.

However, cooperative agreements are fundamentally different from the other methods and tools described herein. Cooperative agreements do not involve the acquisition of real property (lands or easements). Cooperative agreements are voluntary in nature, they are not contractual or binding on either party. Most types of cooperative agreements have a fixed term after which they expire, and they may be terminated earlier by either party. They are not permanent solutions.

Although the Forest Service prefers to use the land and easement acquisition tools to ensure full and permanent protection of National Scenic Trails, cooperative agreements do serve a useful purpose, and they are an appropriate tool in some situations. In total, more than 80 percent of the PNT crosses Federal, State, county, municipal and tribal lands. This landownership pattern lends itself well to use of cooperative agreements. Cooperative agreements are likely to be used extensively to document cooperation for management of the PNT where the PNT crosses lands managed by other Federal, State, and local government entities.

⁷¹ Other purposes and types of cooperative agreements anticipated to be used along the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (such as the use of Challenge Cost Share agreements for trail maintenance and monitoring, for example) are described elsewhere in the comprehensive plan.

There are two primary categories of cooperative agreements the Forest Service anticipates using to facilitate land acquisition and protection for the PNT: (1) memoranda of understanding, which cannot have funding involved and (2) other types of agreements, which may have funding involved.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is used to document a framework for cooperation between the Forest Service and other parties for carrying out their separate activities in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner where nothing of value transfers between parties. This is often viewed as a "handshake agreement." Each party directs its own activities and uses its own resources and funding.

An MOU may not be used to exchange funds, property, services, or anything of value. Each party directs its own activities and uses its own resources. If funding for specific projects is contemplated in an MOU, that funding must be authorized under a separate funding instrument utilizing a specific authority. Care should be taken to avoid language in an MOU that may be construed as committing the Forest Service to a future obligation or an enforceable contract.

Some MOUs contain an expiration date, which limits their effectiveness in long term management of the PNT. Many MOUs don't have an expiration date, which is more effective for long term management of the PNT. MOUs should be reviewed periodically to validate their continued need.

In the National Trails System, MOUs are commonly used to document cooperation between the trail's administering agency (for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, this is the Forest Service) and the other federal agencies, governments, and private landowners that host and manage sections of the trail on their lands.

The primary purpose of these MOUs is to document:

1. the parties' mutual acknowledgment that one or more sections of the trail is located on lands owned or managed by an entity other than the trail administering agency, and
2. a framework for coordination and cooperation in management of those sections of the trail.

The Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management, together with several other Federal agencies, signed a MOU in 2017 to facilitate interagency cooperation to implement the National Trails System Act. The MOU identifies roles and responsibilities of the agencies and reaffirms the responsibility of the agencies to administer and manage the trail across jurisdictional boundaries.

A trail administering agency will also commonly use MOUs (or, in some situations, Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs)) to document cooperation with other federal land management agencies to facilitate location and management of the trail on lands managed by those other federal agencies. For example, the Forest Service and National Park Service have a Memoranda of Agreement documenting their cooperation for management of the National Park Service-administered Appalachian National Scenic Trail on National Forest System lands.

In some cases, a MOU may also include a non-governmental trail association as a party. For example, the Forest Service, which administers the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, has MOUs with the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management for the sections of the trail they manage, respectively. Those MOUs also include the Pacific Crest Trail Association, and California State Parks.

The Florida National Scenic Trail offers good examples of MOUs the Forest Service holds with a range of non-federal government parties, including state agencies (such as Florida Forest Service and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services), local governments (like Osceola County), and private landowners (for example, Putnam Land Conservancy) to facilitate location and management of the trail on those parties' lands.

Agreements with Funding Involved such as Interagency Agreements, Challenge Cost-Share Agreements, and Participating Agreements

There are several different agreement types that may be used when funding is involved, such as if money, property, services, or anything of value would be exchanged, transferred, or leveraged (for example, Federal money matched with non-Federal funds, materials, labor, equipment, or land and water). The appropriate agreement type depends on the parties, authorities, and funding involved and the nature of the work (such as where work occurs) and the types of benefits expected.

For the Forest Service, some agreement types commonly used in administration and management of national scenic trails include:

- Challenge Cost-Share Agreements are available for a term of up to five years and require recipients to match Federal money with non-Federal cash, real or personal property, services, or in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labor.
- Interagency and Intra-agency Agreements are used when one agency is providing payments, goods, or services to another agency or when internal Forest Service programs collaborate.
- Participating Agreements are used when the Forest Service and its partners wish to perform work from which they will accrue non-monetary mutual benefit. Activities in these agreements are generally limited to forestry protection activities, manpower, job training, Resource Advisory Council support, and work with interpretive associations. Forestry protection activities, which are described in the Forest Service's grants and agreements handbook, do not include trail construction or the operation and maintenance of trails, recreation sites, and recreation facilities, which are prohibited activities for projects under Participating Agreements.

While they could not be used to directly acquire lands or interests in lands, these types of agreements may be appropriate tools to facilitate land acquisition and protection for the PNT. For example, cooperative agreements could be used to facilitate information gathering, mapping, and analyses that might inform land acquisition and protection efforts. Interagency agreements may allow the Forest Service to tap into specialized expertise or staff capacity from other agencies for lands and realty work relevant to the National Trails System, for example, from the National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management.

Primary Authorities

The authorities described in **Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1580.11 - 1580.16** are the commonly used statutory authorities for Government-wide and service-wide use. The specific authority to use in each case is determined by several considerations, including the type of work to be completed, the cooperating parties, which party is performing the work, the location of the work to be completed, and (if appropriate) the type(s) of funding involved.⁷²

The National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968 (“NTSA”, P.L. 90-543, as amended) grants specific and broad authorities to the Federal agencies to acquire lands and interests in lands by written cooperative agreement, donation, purchase, or exchange. The PNT was designated by Congress as a National Scenic Trail through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), which amended the National Trails System Act. If the National Trails System Act is unable to be used as the sole or primary authority for the agreement and a different authority is cited as the primary authority, consider also citing the National Trails System Act as appropriate.

Forest Service Direction and Policy

Direction and guidance for cooperative agreements can be found in:

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1580
- Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1509.11

Pros and Cons

Pros of Cooperative Agreements

- Cooperative agreements are a useful tool to document a framework for cooperation between the agency and other parties that are mutually beneficial and that enhance Forest Service programs and activities.
- Cooperative agreements do not involve the acquisition of real property. There is no long-term obligation by the agency to manage any acquired lands and easements.
- Cooperative agreements do not require funds for land or easement acquisition.
- Although the Forest Service prefers to use the conventional acquisition tools to ensure permanent protection of the PNT, cooperative agreements are an appropriate tool in some situations.
- The Forest Service and other cooperating agencies frequently enter into cooperative agreements with non-profit trail associations to facilitate the development and maintenance of the National Scenic Trails.
- The Forest Service can enter into voluntary cooperative agreements with other Federal agencies and with State, county, and municipal governments, in cases where those government entities may NOT want to convey lands or easements.

⁷² For more information, see: https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/prc-agreement-instruments_0.pdf

- A private landowner may be interested in protecting the PNT but may not be willing to convey private lands or easements. In some cases, the same landowner may be willing to enter into a cooperative agreement.
- More than 80 percent of the PNT crosses Federal, State, county, municipal and tribal lands. This landownership pattern lends itself well to use of cooperative agreements.
- A broad spectrum of authorities is available to the Forest Service to develop and implement cooperative agreements.
- The Forest Service has a cadre of trained Grants and Agreement Specialists to assist in developing cooperative agreements.

Cons of Cooperative Agreements

- A cooperative agreement is not a real property acquisition such as a land purchase or easement, so it does not ensure any lasting protection for the trail.
- A cooperative agreement is not binding, not a contract, and not permanent in nature. Either party can elect to terminate the agreement at any time.
- A cooperative agreement is only valid for a specified time, normally 5 years or less, and then it terminates unless the parties take steps to extend or renew it.
- Cooperative agreement must be developed following a rigid set of policies and procedures. Depending on their workload, agency priorities, and timing in relation to cut-off deadlines, grants and agreements specialists may not always be available to assist with a cooperative agreement for the PNT.
- Most Forest Service land and realty staff have only limited expertise and experience with cooperative agreements. There is a steep learning curve.
- There tends to be reluctance by some Forest Service lands and realty staff to use cooperative agreements, especially when other tools such as land and easement acquisition are available.
- Some potential cooperators and partners may not want to adhere to the rigid Forest Service policies and procedures for cooperative agreements.
- Developing a cooperative agreement takes time and effort, both for the Forest Service (program manager and grants and agreements specialist) and the cooperator. Despite this time and effort, the agreement will only remain in effect for 5 years or less.
- Specific agency policies and procedures for cooperative agreements vary by region and they are subject to change and revision on a regular basis.

Anticipated Effectiveness for the PNT

Although Forest Service preference is to use land and easement acquisition to ensure permanent protection of the PNT, cooperative agreements do serve a useful purpose, and they are an appropriate tool in some situations. It is anticipated that cooperative agreements will be used extensively for the PNT in upcoming years, particularly where the PNT crosses lands managed by other Federal, State, and local government entities. In total, more than 80 percent of the PNT

crosses Federal, tribal state, county, municipal and lands. This landownership pattern lends itself well to use of cooperative agreements.

Potential Role for Partners

Non-government partners can sometimes work more effectively with landowners than a federal agency, and they can help tackle difficult issues working directly with landowners. Partner organizations can also share costs with the Forest Service.

Trail organizations, including the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, have a strong interest in partnering with the Forest Service to assist in locating, developing, and maintaining the National Scenic Trails. Trail organizations have staff and volunteers who can effectively assist the Forest Service in managing and protecting the NSTs. Through an existing Challenge Cost Share Agreement, the Forest Service (R1 and R6) are cooperating with the Pacific Northwest Trail Association in the management and maintenance of the PNT in the states of Montana, Idaho, and Washington. The provisions of this agreement include technical assistance, inventory and monitoring, and other involvement with planning and development for the trail.

Table 11. Summary of anticipated effectiveness of the methods and tools

Method or Tool	Anticipated Effectiveness for Acquiring and Protecting Lands along the PNT
Land Purchase	It is anticipated that fee title land purchases will be a high priority and widely used tool to acquire lands and access rights for the PNT.
Land Donation	It is anticipated that land donations will not be widely used for the PNT, simply because most private landowners expect to be compensated, either by purchase or exchange for other lands. Acquisition of lands by voluntary donation should be very high priority, provided title is acceptable and the acquisition is consistent with management goals and objectives.
Land Exchange	It is anticipated that exchanges will not be widely used to acquire lands and access rights for the PNT. The main reason is that Forest Service land exchanges are often complex, time consuming and costly to complete, in comparison to other methods. Despite these drawbacks, land exchanges should be carefully considered as a tool to use for the PNT.
Trail Easements	Acquisition of trail easements will likely be a widely used tool to acquire perpetual access rights for the PNT. The Forest Service and other agencies can acquire trail easements from willing landowners, and from other entities, by purchase, donation, reciprocity, or as part of a land exchange.
Conservation Easements	Conservation easements will likely be much less widely used for protecting the PNT, in comparison to fee title land acquisitions. Outside of Federal land areas, conservation easements may be an effective tool for the PNT. Within Federal land areas, there will be cases where a private landowner is not willing to convey land in fee title, but that landowner may be willing to grant a conservation easement. These conservation easements could be held by land trusts, states, or other qualified entities. The Forest Legacy program may be a useful tool and funding source for the states to consider in protecting segments of the PNT.
Cooperative Agreements	Although Forest Service preference is to use methods and tools that will ensure permanent protection of the PNT, cooperative agreements do serve a useful purpose, and are an appropriate tool in some situations. It is anticipated that cooperative agreements will be used extensively for the PNT in upcoming years, particularly where the PNT crosses lands managed by other Federal, State, and local government entities.

Strategies for Implementation

Drawing from the previous sections of this document, this section identifies and describes the recommended approach and strategies for the Forest Service to apply to best protect the PNT and

provide for its nature and purposes and other trail values in each specific landownership situation. Based on the National Trails System Act and other guidance for the PNT, the approach and strategies for acquiring and conserving lands along the route of the PNT will be different, depending on whether the lands are located within or outside the boundaries of Federal land management areas.

Federal lands

Approximately 70 percent (roughly 800 miles) of the PNT is located on Federal lands.

National Forests

The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT within the exterior boundaries of the national forests:

1. **Guiding Principles.** Follow the guiding principles described in this plan.
2. Emphasize fee title acquisitions of private inholdings. Within the National Forests, emphasize use of fee title acquisitions (land purchases, land donations and to a lesser extent, land exchanges) to ensure long-term protection of land areas along the PNT.
3. **Acquire trail easements.** When it is not feasible to acquire private lands or other non-Federal lands within the National Forests in fee title, the next priority for the Forest Service should be to acquire trail easements to secure a legal right of access on the PNT. It is essential that such easements provide for public recreational use of the trail. Once a legal right of access and public use is secured for the PNT, conservation easements should be considered where appropriate to provide for the PNTs nature and purposes and other trail values, such as the significant natural, historical, and cultural values (see [chapter 3](#)).
4. **Criteria to set priorities.** Apply the prioritization criteria described in this plan (or the most recent criteria, if updated) to set priorities for land acquisition and protection.
5. **Forest plans.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with current planning regulations and policies, include appropriate management direction and guidance for PNT land acquisition and protection into the forest plans for the national forests.

National Park Service Units

The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT within the exterior boundaries of National Park Service units:

1. **Cooperative agreements.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate and facilitate collaboration with the National Park Service to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT within Glacier National Park, North Cascades National Park, Olympic National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve.
2. **Fee title acquisitions.** The Forest Service should actively support and assist the National Park Service in efforts to acquire private land inholdings along the PNT within the

designated boundaries of the five National Park Service units (three National Parks, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve).

3. **Acquire trail easements.** When it is not feasible for the National Park Service to acquire private lands in fee title within the five national park units, the Forest Service should encourage and support the acquisition of trail easements to secure a legal right of public use of the PNT across these National Park Service units.
4. **Park planning documents.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with NPS planning regulations and policies, the Forest Service should encourage the NPS to include appropriate management direction and guidance for PNT land acquisition and protection into the general management plans or other planning documents for the five national park units.

Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Spokane District
The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT across the public lands administered by the BLM:

1. **Cooperative Agreement.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate and facilitate collaboration with the BLM to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT across the public lands managed by the BLM.
2. **Coordinate with the BLM the state, and local governments regarding private lands in the vicinity of lands administered by the BLM.** Because the public lands administered by the BLM do not have a Congressionally designated boundary, direction in the National Trails System Act for private lands within the exterior boundary of federally administered areas (such as private inholdings) do not apply to private lands in the vicinity of BLM lands; instead, apply National Trails System Act direction for lands outside the exterior boundaries of federally administered areas. (16 U.S.C. 1246 (e)) The Forest Service should coordinate with BLM to encourage state and local governments to enter into written cooperative agreements with willing landowners or acquire such lands or interest from willing landowners along the PNT. If the state or local governments are unwilling or unable to do so, the Forest Service or BLM could pursue such cooperative agreements or acquisitions with willing landowners.
 - **Fee title acquisition of private lands in the vicinity of lands administered by the BLM.** The Forest Service should actively support and assist the BLM and state and local government partners in efforts to work with willing landowners to acquire private lands along the PNT that are in the vicinity of the public lands administered by the BLM.
 - **Acquire trail easements across private lands adjacent to lands administered by the BLM.** When it is not feasible for the BLM, the state, or local government partners to acquire private lands in fee title, the Forest Service should encourage and support them in the acquisition of trail easements from willing landowners along the PNT to secure a legal right of public use along the PNT in the vicinity of the public lands administered by the BLM.

3. **BLM management plans.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with BLM planning regulations and policies, the Forest Service will encourage the BLM to include appropriate management direction and guidance for PNT land acquisition and protection into the and resource management plans for lands managed by the BLM.

Tribal Reservation Lands

Less than one percent of the PNT crosses tribal reservation lands. The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT across the lands on the Swinomish Reservation and the Colville Reservation:

1. **Cooperative agreements.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with the with the respective Tribal governments and Bureau of Indian Affairs to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT across the Colville Reservation and Swinomish Reservation lands.
2. **Relocation off roadways.** Within both tribal reservations, the PNT is presently located along an improved public road or highway. On the Swinomish Reservation, a short segment of the PNT currently extends along Washington State Route 20 and S. March's Point Road. On the Colville Reservation, a short segment of the PNT currently extends along Washington State Route 21. To meet the intent of the National Trails System Act that national scenic trails are non-motorized trails, both segments of the PNT currently located on roads are considered a temporary location. The Forest Service should work with the respective Tribal governments, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the appropriate highway departments, and adjacent landowners or land managing agencies, as appropriate, to identify opportunities to realign or relocate these segments of the PNT onto non-motorized trails (see [chapter 4](#) on relocation, and [chapter 5](#) on realignment.)
 - **Consider other potential alignments on nearby federally administered lands.** For the short segment of PNT along Washington State Route 21 within the Colville Reservation, the Forest Service should work with the Confederate Tribes of the Colville Reservation and relevant partners to explore the feasibility of potentially realigning or relocating this segment of the PNT onto adjacent National Forest System lands on the Colville National Forest. (This does not appear to be an option for the short segment of PNT within the Swinomish Reservation due to the PNT route's reliance on the Washington State Route 20 bridge to cross Telegraph Slough and the Swinomish Channel.)
3. **Consider the need to acquire trail easements.** In conjunction with efforts to move the PNT route off roads (Washington State Route 20 and S. March's Point Road on the Swinomish Reservation and Washington State Route 21 on the Colville Reservation) and onto non-motorized trails, the Forest Service should consider acquiring trail easements to secure a legal right of access and public use of the PNT for the new alignment or new location.
4. **Information for planning and management.** As opportunities arise, and in accordance with each Tribal government's planning regulations and policies, the Forest Service should assist Tribal governments to include appropriate direction, guidance, or information for the PNT in their respective planning documents and maps.

State of Idaho Endowment Lands

The PNT extends across state endowment lands, lands owned by the State of Idaho and administered by Idaho Department of Lands. The state manages these lands to secure maximum long-term financial return for the beneficiaries to which the land was granted, which for these lands are public schools⁷³. The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT on and in the vicinity of State of Idaho endowment lands:

1. **Cooperative agreement.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the with the Idaho Department of Lands to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT on State of Idaho endowment lands.
2. **Consider the need to acquire trail easements across Idaho state endowment lands.** In addition to cooperative agreements, the Forest Service should also approach the Idaho Department of Lands about acquiring trail easements to ensure a perpetual legal right of public non-motorized access on all segments of the PNT across state endowment lands.
3. **Coordinate with the state regarding protection of the PNT on private land.** According to available GIS data, the PNT crosses one parcel of private land (estimated to be 160 acres in size) that is surrounded by State of Idaho endowment lands.
 - **Fee title acquisition of private land.** If the Idaho Department of Lands is interested in pursuing acquisition of the private land parcel from a willing landowner, the Forest Service should actively support and assist it in its efforts.
 - **Acquire trail easement across private land.** If it is not feasible or desirable for the Idaho Department of Lands to acquire the private land parcel, the Forest Service should encourage and support the state's efforts to work acquire a perpetual trail easement across the private land from a willing landowner, to secure a legal right of public use along the PNT.
 - **Identify potential opportunities to move the trail off private lands.** If it is not feasible or desirable for the Idaho Department of Lands to acquire the private parcel in fee or to acquire a permanent trail easement, the Forest Service should work closely with the Idaho Department of Lands and relevant partners to explore the feasibility of realigning or relocating this short segment of the PNT from private lands onto state lands.
4. **Information for planning and management.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with the state's planning regulations and policies, the Forest Service should assist the Idaho Department of Lands to include appropriate direction, guidance, or information for the PNT in its planning documents and maps.

State of Washington Lands

The PNT extends across several distinct units of lands owned by the State of Washington. It is important to note that Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks,

⁷³ According to Idaho Department of Lands GIS Data Hub: <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/home/idl-gis-program-idaho-maps-and-land-records/>

and Washington Department of Ecology are separate state agencies, each with different missions, policies, and management objectives.

Washington Department of Natural Resources

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages aquatic lands, natural areas, and state trust lands including state forests. The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT on and in the vicinity of Washington DNR lands:

1. **Cooperative agreement.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOAs) with the Washington DNR to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT on Washington DNR lands. It may be preferable to develop a single MOU/MOA between the Forest Service and all State of Washington agencies that manage segments of the PNT (Washington DNR, State Parks, Department of Ecology).
2. **Consider the need to acquire trail easements across Washington DNR lands.** In addition to a cooperative agreement, the Forest Service should also approach Washington DNR about acquiring trail easements to ensure a perpetual legal right of public non-motorized access on all segments of the PNT across Washington DNR lands.
3. **Coordinate with the state regarding protection of the PNT on private lands within state forests.** According to available GIS data, within the Loomis State Forest the PNT crosses one parcel of private land for less than one mile in distance and within the Blanchard State Forest one parcel of private land, for less than one mile in distance. The PNT does not appear to cross any private land within the Harry Osborne State Forest.
 - **Fee title acquisition of private lands.** If Washington DNR is interested in pursuing acquisition of these private land parcels from a willing landowner, the Forest Service should actively support and assist it in its efforts.
 - **Acquire trail easement across private lands.** If it is not feasible or desirable for Washington DNR to acquire the private land parcels within the Loomis and Blanchard State Forests, the Forest Service should encourage and support the state's efforts to acquire perpetual trail easements across the private lands, to secure a legal right of public use along the PNT.
- **Identify potential opportunities to move the trail off private lands.** If it is not feasible or desirable for Washington DNR to acquire the private land parcels in fee or to acquire permanent trail easements across those lands, the Forest Service should work closely with Washington DNR and other relevant partners to explore the feasibility of realigning or relocating this short segment of the PNT from private lands onto state lands.
4. **Information for planning and management.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with planning regulations and policies for the State of Washington, the Forest Service will should assist the Washington DNR to include appropriate direction, guidance, or information for the PNT in planning documents and maps for the involved Washington DNR lands.

Washington State Parks

The PNT crosses six Washington state parks: Bay View, Deception Pass, Joseph Whidbey, Fort Ebey, Fort Casey and Ebey's Landing, and Bogachiel. The following strategies are recommended to protect the PNT on lands managed by Washington State Parks ("State Parks"):

1. **Cooperative Agreement.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOAs) with State Parks to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT on State Parks lands. It may be preferable to develop a single MOU/MOA between the Forest Service and all State of Washington agencies that manage segments of the PNT (Washington DNR, State Parks, Department of Ecology).
2. **Consider the need to acquire trail easements across state parks lands.** In addition to a cooperative agreement, the Forest Service should also approach State Parks about acquiring trail easements or using some other tool, if preferred by the state, to ensure a perpetual legal right of public non-motorized access on all segments of the PNT across State Parks lands.
3. **Coordinate with state parks regarding its land acquisition plans and priorities.** According to available GIS data, the PNT does not cross any private lands within the six Washington State Parks (Bay View, Deception Pass, Joseph Whidbey, Fort Ebey, Fort Casey and Ebey's Landing, and Bogachiel) though in Deception Pass State Park one segment of the PNT runs along the park boundary and adjoining private lands. It appears that State Parks would not need to acquire any private lands or easements to protect the route of the PNT across the six state parks. The Forest Service should coordinate with State Parks to be apprised of the state's land acquisition plans and priorities to identify and assist with efforts that would also benefit the PNT.
4. **Information for planning and management.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with planning regulations and policies for the State of Washington, the Forest Service should assist State Parks to include appropriate direction, guidance, or information for the PNT in the management plans and maps for the involved state parks.

Washington Department of Ecology

Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

The PNT follows the Padilla Bay Shore Trail within the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve). The Reserve is managed by the Washington Department of Ecology, though in addition to lands administered by the Department of Ecology the Reserve includes state lands administered by other agencies (State Parks for Bayview State Park, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) and privately owned lands. Skagit County has a role in managing the Padilla Bay Shore Trail. Following are the recommended strategies to protect and conserve the PNT across state lands in the Reserve.

1. **Verify landownership and management.** Because of the complexity of land ownership and management within the Reserve, the Forest Service should coordinate with the Department

of Ecology to verify land ownership for the parcels where the PNT is located and the management roles for the Padilla Bay Shore Trail and surrounding lands.

2. **Cooperative Agreement.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOAs) with Department of Ecology to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT on Department of Ecology lands. It may be preferable to develop a single MOU/MOA between the Forest Service and all State of Washington agencies that manage segments of the PNT (Washington DNR, State Parks, Department of Ecology) or a single MOU/MOA between the Forest Service, Department of Ecology, and other relevant land managing agencies for the Padilla Bay Shore Trail and the lands along it.
3. **Consider the need to acquire trail easements across the Reserve.** In addition to a cooperative agreement, the Forest Service should also approach Department of Ecology (and other relevant land managers; see preceding point number 1, above) about acquiring trail easements or using some other tool, if preferred by the parties, to ensure a perpetual legal right of public non-motorized access on all segments of the PNT across lands in the Reserve.
4. **Coordinate with Department of Ecology regarding its land acquisition plans and priorities.** The Forest Service should coordinate with Department of Ecology to be apprised of the state's land acquisition plans and priorities for the Reserve to identify and assist with efforts that would also benefit the PNT.
5. **Information for planning and management.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with planning regulations and policies for the State of Washington, the Forest Service should assist the Department of Ecology to include appropriate direction, guidance, or information for the PNT in the management plans and maps for the Reserve.

County and Municipal Lands

In total, approximately 4 percent of the PNT is located on county and municipal lands and public trails. While the nature of these lands and trails and the management goals and policies of each county and municipality will differ, the following general strategies are recommended to protect the PNT across the lands and trails managed counties and municipalities:

1. **Cooperative Agreements.** As the trail administering agency for the PNT, the Forest Service should initiate Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with each of the involved counties and municipalities to document coordination and communication regarding management of the PNT on county and municipal lands and trails.
2. **Consider the need to acquire trail easements.** In addition to cooperative agreements, the Forest Service should also approach each of the counties and municipalities about acquiring trail easements from each of these respective counties and municipalities or using some other tool, if preferred by the parties, to ensure a perpetual legal right of public non-motorized access on all segments of the PNT on county and municipal lands and trails.
3. **Coordinate with the counties and municipalities regarding their land acquisition plans and priorities.** The Forest Service should coordinate with each of the respective counties and

municipalities to be apprised of their respective land acquisition plans and priorities to identify and assist with efforts that would also benefit the PNT.

4. **Information for planning and management.** As opportunities arise and in accordance with planning regulations and policies for each respective county and municipality, the Forest Service should assist each county and municipality to include appropriate direction, guidance, or information for the PNT in management plans and maps.

Private Lands Within Federal Land Management Areas

The National Trails System Act provides specific direction regarding the acquisition and protection of non-Federal lands within the designated boundaries of Federally administered areas. The strategies for protecting and conserving the PNT across private lands within the proclaimed boundaries of the Federal Land Management Areas are described in prior pages of this report. In summary, these strategies are:

1. Fee title acquisitions:

- The Forest Service should actively pursue fee title acquisition of private land inholdings along the PNT within the designated boundaries of the seven national forests.
- The Forest Service should actively support and assist the National Park Service in efforts to acquire private land inholdings along the PNT within the designated boundaries of the five national park units.

2. Acquire trail easements:

- When it is not feasible for the Forest Service to acquire private lands in fee title within the national forests, the Forest Service should actively pursue the acquisition of perpetual trail easements across the private lands needed to secure a legal right of public use of the PNT across the national forests.
- When it is not feasible for the National Park Service to acquire private lands in fee title within the national park units, the Forest Service should encourage and support the acquisition of trail easements to secure a legal right of public use of the PNT across the national park units.

3. **Identify potential opportunities to move the trail off private lands.** In situations where it is not feasible for the Federal agencies to acquire a private land parcel in fee, or to acquire a permanent trail easement, the Forest Service should work closely with other relevant partners to explore the feasibility of realigning or relocating the involved segment of the PNT from private lands onto Federal lands or, if that is not feasible, onto state, county, or municipal lands.

Private Lands Outside of Federal Land Management Areas

The National Trails System Act also provides direction regarding acquisition and protection of National Scenic Trails outside the exterior boundaries of Federally administered areas. Prior to Federal agencies acquiring lands or interests in lands outside of federally administered areas, state and local agencies are encouraged to obtain lands, interests, or cooperative agreements from

willing landowners for the protection of the PNT. If state or local agencies are unwilling or unable to obtain lands, interests, or agreement from willing landowners, the Forest Service and other Federal agencies can acquire such lands, interests, or agreements. For lands or partial interests acquired by the Forest Service along the PNT that are outside of national forest boundaries, the Act allows the Forest Service to transfer management responsibilities to another Federal agency, with those lands then managed under the rules and regulations of the accepting agency.

Following are the primary strategies for protecting and conserving the PNT across private lands outside the proclaimed boundaries of the Federal Land Management Areas:

1. **Encourage state and local governments to acquire lands or interests.** The Forest Service should actively encourage state and local governments, and cooperating private entities, to acquire such private lands or interests on private lands (such as easements) from willing landowners, as needed to assure long-term protection of the PNT.
2. **Encourage state and local governments to develop cooperative agreements.** In situations where state and local governments, and cooperating private entities are not able to acquire lands or interests needed to assure long-term protection of the PNT, the Forest Service will encourage state and local governments to develop and enter into cooperative agreements with the private landowners hosting the PNT.
3. **Evaluate feasibility of forest service acquisition or cooperative agreements.** In situations where state and local governments, and cooperating private entities are unable to acquire lands or interests to assure long-term protection of the PNT, and where state and local governments are unable to develop and enter into cooperative agreements with the landowners along the PNT, the Forest Service should, on a case-by-case basis, evaluate the feasibility of acquiring such lands or interests from willing private landowners or developing and entering into cooperative agreements with willing landowners.
4. **Transfer.** The Forest Service should also consider, on a case-by-case basis, potential transfer of acquired lands or partial interests outside of national forest boundaries to another Federal agency, with those lands then managed under the rules and regulations of the accepting agency.
5. **Identify potential opportunities to move the trail off private lands.** In certain specific situations, for example where the PNT crosses private lands and the landowner(s) are: (a) not willing to convey lands or interests along the PNT, and (b) not willing to enter into a cooperative agreement regarding the PNT, the Forest Service and cooperating entities should explore the feasibility of potentially realigning or relocating the segment of the PNT onto other nearby lands.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ If a landowner is unwilling to allow use of the PNT, the Forest Service should work closely with cooperating entities to let visitors and the public know that use of the involved segment is not allowed and to identify and disseminate a temporary detour (see [chapter 5](#)) until a realignment (see [chapter 5](#)) or relocation (see [chapter 4](#)) of the PNT can be implemented to avoid the involved land.

Strategies for Roads

As described in the PNT Route on Roads section, about one-third of the PNT route (roughly 431 miles) is located on roads. This diverges from National Trails System Act direction for national scenic trails as non-motorized trails and the proximity of pedestrians to motor vehicle traffic is a potential public safety concern. The guiding principles and prioritization criteria address the need to move segments of the PNT that are currently located on roads onto non-motorized trails.

Following are the primary strategies the Forest Service and cooperating agencies and other entities should use for the segments of the PNT located on roads:

1. **Roads are temporary locations.** To meet the intent of the National Trails System Act that national scenic trails are non-motorized trails, the Forest Service and cooperating entities should consider all segments of the PNT currently located on roads as temporary locations for which long-term solutions will need to be purposefully sought and implemented.
2. **Relocate or re-align segments of the PNT.** The Forest Service should actively work with the responsible federal agencies, tribes, states, counties, and municipal governments, and with the private trail organization(s), in cooperative efforts to realign (see [chapter 5](#)) or relocate (see [chapter 4](#)) all segments of the PNT onto non-motorized trails.
3. **Consider conversion of roads to trails.** In some limited cases, conversion of roads to trails, and similar approaches, may be used by the relevant managing agency, in accordance with its policies and applicable plans, to meet the goal that all segments of the PNT are on non-motorized trails.

Management Toolbox

To assist in implementing this Land Acquisition and Protection Plan for the PNT, the Forest Service will develop a “management toolbox” for use by the federal agencies, tribes, states, counties, and municipalities along the PNT, as well as other cooperating entities such as private trail organizations. The management toolbox will likely include the following information:

- agency policies and guidelines,
- contact information for agencies and cooperators,
- maps of the federal, tribal, state, county, municipal and private lands and roads and trails affected by the PNT,
- land and easement acquisition reference documents, and
- cooperative agreement reference documents.

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Appendix E. Carrying Capacity Report – Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Introduction

The National Trails System Act requires that comprehensive plans include an identified carrying capacity of the trail, and a plan for its implementation, (16 U.S.C. 1244 (f) (1)). The contemporary term for carrying capacity is, visitor capacity, which is defined as:

the maximum amounts and types of visitor use that a public use area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2019).

In addition to meeting the requirements in the National Trails System Act, identification of a visitor capacity and its subsequent monitoring and implementation aids in the management and protection of the resources and social values associated with the trail. Identification of visitor capacity is one of many tools available to managers to achieve and maintain desired conditions.

The nature and purposes of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail define the desired conditions of the trail setting and experience and establish the context for appropriate activities and uses for the PNT and its corridor. The nature and purposes statement recognizes the public's connection with the unique and diverse treasures of Pacific Northwest's outdoors for purposes of recreation, spiritual renewal, improved health, and high-quality time spent with families and friends. There is a constant management challenge to strike an appropriate balance between these societal benefits and resource protection and conservation. Through specific visitor use management practices that are related to the desired conditions for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, the comprehensive plan provides general, but consistent, direction that maintains flexibility for implementation by different agencies in varied situations.

Nature of the Trail

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail is an east-west-oriented long-distance trail that traverses the extreme northern reaches of Montana, Idaho, and Washington from the Rocky Mountains, through the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges, to the Pacific Coast.

The trail invites travelers into the backcountry and wilderness areas, to seek the grandeur of glaciated peaks, tranquil lakes, boundless horizons of majestic mountains, deep canyons, broad river valleys, storm-carved coastlines, and the splendor of wild places. The lands along the trail are the homelands of many distinct indigenous nations. Since time immemorial, natural processes and tribal traditional uses, including tribal treaty rights and reserved rights, have shaped these places and continue to shape them, through exercising their tribal treaty and reserved rights. The trail sometimes passes near communities that are able to share with travelers their histories and connections to the land, evident in the legacy of working forests, farms, ranches, and maritime areas as well as in beloved local parks and pathways.

Whether they experience one mile or 1,200 miles, the travelers and stewards of the PNT find year-round opportunities for inspiration and lifelong memories, challenge and personal transformation, the solitude of quiet places and kinship in being part of a larger legacy.

Purposes of the Trail

National scenic trails are extended trails through iconic landscapes that 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 they go through. These premier trails provide visitors with profound experiences that not only create lasting memories but instill a stewardship ethic for generations to come.

Specifically, the purposes of the PNT are to provide for:

- conservation and enjoyment of scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources and values along the trail that exemplify qualities of the Northwest (inclusive of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest regions).
- maximum outdoor recreation potential as a premier, nationally significant opportunity for (1) hiking, with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking including end-to-end thru-hiking, as a primary use; (2) pack and saddle stock use as a primary use; and (3) other complementary non-motorized recreation, including bicycling, where appropriate to the setting and allowed by local management.
- opportunities for self-discovery, self-reliance, and the satisfaction of making your own way.
- opportunities for community and for service to the trail, its surrounding landscapes, and others through environmental education, interpretation, partnerships, volunteerism, and stewardship that encourage inclusion of all people, cultures, and abilities.

National scenic trails are designated as *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* (SEC. 3. [16USC1242] (a)(2)). National scenic trails are different from most other trails in that they provide opportunities for long-distance travel. In the case of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, it is the opportunity to travel 1,200 plus miles through many different types of settings in one long trip. The opportunity the PNT provides to thru-hike from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean is the reason the PNT concept was originated and developed, and it was one of the values for which the PNT was designated as a national scenic trail in 2009. The thru-hiking opportunity is central to the nature and purposes of the PNT. As the core experience of a long-distance trail, the thru-hiker experience has been identified as the most critical to manage for. Other trail uses, which currently represent most of the use on the PNT, include day hiking, section hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and other nonmotorized trail uses. These uses have fewer constraints on timing and season of use than thru-hiking. Additionally, the thru-hiking experience is cumulative across all trail stages, whereas other trail use experiences are generally limited to one or several sections of the trail. Determining the supply of specific sustainable recreation opportunities along the PNT that provide the long-distance thru-hiking experience will frame management approaches to best meet the nature and purposes of the PNT.

Approach to Identifying Carrying Capacity

Interagency Visitor Use Management Council Framework

Visitor use management is defined as the proactive and adaptive process of planning for and managing characteristics of visitor use and its physical and social setting, using a variety of strategies and tools, to sustain desired resource conditions and visitor experiences (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2013). Visitor use characteristics include the amount, type, timing, and distribution of visitor use, including visitor activities and behaviors. The primary goal of visitor use management is to maintain opportunities for high-quality visitor experiences while protecting natural and cultural resources. Visitor capacity strategies are encompassed in the broader principles of visitor use management.

The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council's *Visitor Capacity Guidebook: Managing the Amounts and Types of Visitor Use to Achieve Desired Conditions* includes four guidelines for determining visitor capacity (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2019):

1. Determine the analysis area(s).
2. Review existing direction and knowledge.
3. Identify the limiting attribute(s).
4. Identify capacity.

The 2016 Position Paper: *Visitor Capacity on Federally Managed Lands and Waters: A POSITION PAPER TO GUIDE POLICY* includes recommendations for addressing visitor capacity in accordance with the visitor capacity (also known as carrying capacity, user capacity, and recreational capacity) requirements found in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, National Trails System Act, and National Parks and Recreation Act.

The recommendations in the 2016 position paper specific to National Trails are:

- The comprehensive plan should include the general visitor capacity for a national trail (i.e., an approximation of the appropriate types and levels of use that can be accommodated generally by the national trail) and, if applicable, visitor capacities by site, segment, or area, without adversely affecting the nature and purposes of the trail.
- The comprehensive plan should include an implementation plan for addressing the identified visitor capacities.

Where the national trail administering agency, in consultation with the local agency manager, determines that current visitor use levels are threatening resource values or desired conditions for a specific national trail site, segment, or area, the national trail administering agency, in consultation with the local agency manager, should encourage the local agency manager to promptly adopt or adjust visitor capacities for that site, segment, or area or take other measures to reverse these conditions, and should provide assistance in that effort as needed, so that the activity or use will not be incompatible or substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council 2016).

Visitor Capacity Terminology

The term “capacity” in the recreation context has been confusing due to the tendency to use this term to represent the entire concept of visitor use management. Thus, a few key points must be noted.

- Visitor capacity is not the same as use limits. Limiting use is a specific management tool, whereas visitor capacity is an overall estimate of how much use an area can sustain while achieving desired conditions. Limiting use is only one of many tools available to managers to ensure visitor use does not cause adverse impact to desired conditions. Other tools available to managers include providing visitor education, offering information about alternative opportunities, changing where or when use occurs, re-designing sites, re-distributing use, limiting the type(s) of use, limiting group size, and many others.
- Visitor capacity is about the maximum amount of use that can be sustained, not how much use is desired.

The term carrying capacity as used in this document is synonymous with “visitor capacity,” “user capacity,” and similar terms.

Worksheets

Following the visitor use management capacity guidelines one through three, each of the 50 stages of the PNT identified in the 2019 Pacific Northwest Trail Association Map Set were considered (<https://www.pnt.org/product/2019-pnta-mapset/>). The focus of the data collection effort and identification of a trail carrying capacity is along the congressionally designated trail route. Carrying capacity description and decision criteria worksheets were used to document existing direction and managers’ knowledge of trail and resource conditions and constraints for each trail stage. Interviews with local trail managers were conducted to help identify the limiting factors, rate the capacity decision criteria, and identify conditions related to visitor use that are important to monitor. Limiting factors are those that most constrain the trail’s ability to accommodate visitor use. Although all 50 trail stages were considered during the worksheet interview process, for some trail stages, specific limiting factors were not found. For these trail stages, there were no concerns or limitations related to visitor use based on current or foreseeable conditions. Monitoring will be in place to identify constraints or limitations that may arise in the future.

For each trail stage, the capacity decision criteria listed below were rated as high, moderate, or low concerns based on the professional judgement of local trail managers.

1. To what extent does the current trail experience differ from the **desired experience for a National Scenic Trail**?
2. To what extent does the **social experience** differ from desired conditions in the local management plan(s)?
3. How frequently are there **conflicts** between current trail uses or trail users (hiking, biking, horseback riding, etc.)?

4. To **what extent is use concentrated** within this trail stage due to terrain, popular destinations, number of access points, campsites (high: use is highly concentrated vs. low: use can easily disperse along the trail).
5. To what extent is current trail use and behavior negatively affecting the **desired conditions of natural and cultural resources**? (Fisheries and Aquatics, Hydrology, Wildlife, Botany and Plants, Cultural and Archaeology, Range, Fire).
6. How great is the **need for additional infrastructure capacity** (for example trail design features, trailheads, parking areas, campsites, toilets, water sources, food storage structures) to accommodate current or potential future visitor use?
7. What is the **level of difficulty for managing visitor** use relative to other PNT trail stages you manage?
8. What is the level of **interest of stakeholders** regarding this trail stage?
9. What is the **level of controversy** associated with this trail stage?
10. Based upon sound professional judgment, the **need to address issues or constraints related to the carrying capacity** of this trail stage is (high, moderate, low).

Management Direction and Existing Conditions

Management direction relevant to visitor use along the PNT is included in Forest Service Land Management Plans, National Park General Management Plans, Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plans, Wilderness Management Plans, and other relevant plans. Through the worksheet data collection process, local managers identified key management constraints such as group size, group encounter rates, permit requirements, etc. This management direction was used where applicable to help identify the trail carrying capacity.

Where available, additional visitor use data was considered, including trail register data, wilderness permit data, National Visitor Use Monitoring reports, University of Montana trail monitoring reports, and National Park Service Unit visitor use data.

In contrast to north-south-oriented long-distance trails such as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, the east-west-oriented PNT lies within a narrow range of latitudes (between 47.74 and 49 degrees north). With much of the trail traversing elevations that receive substantial snowfall from fall through spring, there is only a short season in which to complete a thru-hike, approximately mid-June to mid-September, which is considered the thru-hiking season for the PNT (though some sections of the trail, particularly at low-elevation, may remain snow-free and allow for hiking year-round).

Limiting Factors

Through the worksheets and interview process, we have identified the following limiting factors and conditions related to visitor use that are important to monitor. Identifying the most limiting factor by trail stage helped prioritize locations where site-specific carrying capacity considerations may be needed in the future. There are two main types of limiting factors that may be relevant to manage the PNT:

- Limiting factors related to carrying capacity of the trail (such as number of campsites, campsite permit requirements, availability of water, trail conditions, seasonal limitations)
- Factors external to the trail that may lead to limits on use (such as grizzly bear recovery area management requirements, wilderness encounter or group size limits or management of private lands)

Backcountry Campsite Permits

The PNT passes through three National Park Service Units where backcountry camping permits are required, and a limited number of designated campsites are available along the trail. In these trail stages, carrying capacity is expressed as a maximum number of people per night. This capacity is based on existing park management plans and may need to be adjusted if those plans are updated or revised.

Glacier National Park (trail stages 1-3): A backcountry permit is required, and backcountry camping is limited to designated backcountry campgrounds: The maximum party size allowed is 12 persons. Each backcountry campground has 2-7 campsites. Each campsite is limited to four (4) people. Within trail stage 1, there are 8 designated camping areas and Goat Haunt shelters with a maximum overnight capacity of 156 people. Within trail stage 2, there are 5 designated camping areas with a maximum overnight capacity of 36 people. Within trail stage 3, there is one designated camping area and one campground with a maximum overnight capacity of 408 people.

North Cascades National Park Service Complex (trail stages 30-31): All overnight camping within North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake National Recreation Area requires a backcountry permit issued by the park. The permit system is designed to disperse visitors along the national trail planning corridors to meet the management goal of protecting wilderness character in the 94 percent of the National Park Complex that is designated wilderness. Camping is only allowed at designated sites (no dispersed camping), and permits are limited to the number of sites and site capacity of each backcountry camp. Although the PNT corridor is among the busiest in the park, the permit system helps distribute people throughout the corridor, to designated sites that are set off the main trail and away from each other, so that the experience for all hikers is one of solitude, with minimal impact to the corridor's wilderness resources. Along the PNT there are 43 designated campsites with a maximum overnight capacity of 512 people.

Olympic National Park (trail stages 43-46, 48-50): All overnight camping within Olympic National Park requires a wilderness camping permit issued by the park. The PNT passes through two areas, the Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin (portions of trail stage 45 and 46) and the Ozette Coast (portion of trail stage 50) where permits are limited; permits are not limited elsewhere along the Pacific Northwest Trail. In non-quota areas, camping in established sites is always encouraged, but dispersed camping is permitted on durable surfaces with a wilderness camping permit. Camping is not permitted at trailheads; visitors must camp at least one mile beyond trailheads. If campsites are full and visitors can't avoid camping on fragile vegetation, they need to move on until they find somewhere suitable to camp.

Visitor use numbers in Olympic National Park are high, especially along the wilderness coast. The Park is developing a Wilderness Stewardship Plan that will address visitor use and visitor capacity and may lead to additional wilderness camping limitations in the future.

Existing wilderness campsite quota areas are:

Trail stages 45 and 46 pass through the Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin quota area (figure 26). There are five camp sites and seven camp areas adjacent to the PNT within the quota area. There is a combined group quota of 40 groups per day and a combined people per night quota of 172. Each individual camp area is considered full if either the group quota or total camper quota is met.



Figure 26. Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin quota area from [Olympic National Park Wilderness Trip Planner](#)

Trail stage 50 passes through the Ozette Coast quota area (figure 27). There are five camp areas adjacent to the PNT. There is “a combined people per night” quota of 225.



Figure 27. Ozette Coast quota area from [Olympic National Park Wilderness Trip Planner](#)

Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones

Grizzly bears in the lower 48 states are currently protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Grizzly bear populations and habitat are monitored and managed according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and in coordination with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC). The Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan outlines six recovery areas; the PNT passes through four of them, including the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (CYE), Selkirk Ecosystem (SE), and North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE) (figure 28). Principle recovery efforts focus on conflict reduction, information, and education, establishing habitat protections, and other efforts to prevent and reduce human-caused mortality (USFWS 2020 Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan Annual Report).

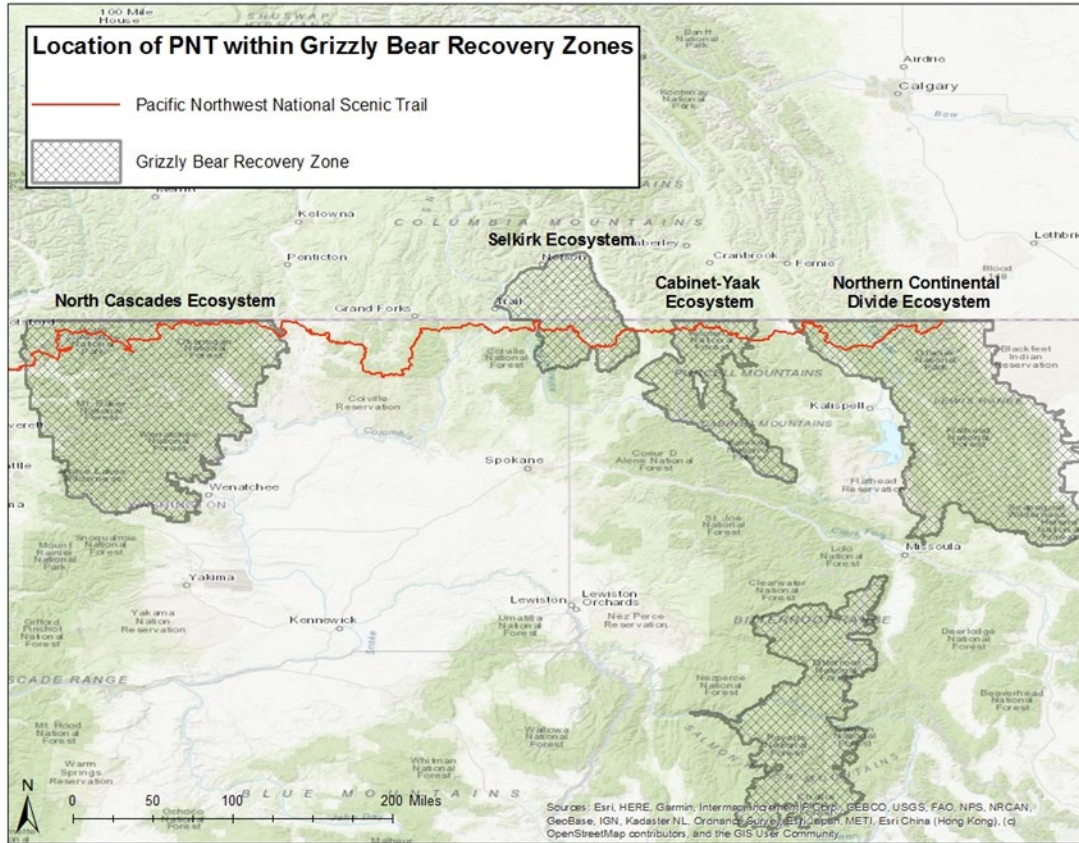


Figure 28. Location of Pacific Northwest Trail within grizzly bear recovery zones

The **Northern Continental Divide Recovery Zone** is in northwest Montana. Pacific Northwest Trail stages 1-9 pass through this recovery zone in Glacier National Park and the Flathead and Kootenai National Forests. Nonmotorized trail use does not influence calculation of grizzly bear core habitat in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.

Glacier National Park has been mapped according to the "guidelines" set forth by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. The guidelines identified five different management situations that apply to National Forest, National Park, and Bureau of Land Management lands where unique grizzly populations and habitat conditions exist, and management direction applies (Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines 1986). Within the Park, the PNT is in backcountry areas where Management Situation 1 applies:

Management Situation 1, which states, in part, that management decisions will favor the needs of the grizzly bear when grizzly habitat and other land-use values compete and grizzly-human conflicts will be resolved in favor of grizzlies, unless the bear is determined to be a nuisance (USDI National Park Service Glacier Bear Management Plan 2010).

With a high density of grizzly bears in northern portion of Glacier National Park where the PNT is located, there is a potential for trail or backcountry camping closures to be in place periodically due to bear activity.

Management direction for the Flathead and Kootenai National Forests is in the Forest Plans.

Per the Biological Assessment for Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Species, Revised Forest Plan, Flathead National Forest (2017 p. 18):

Within the primary conservation area, developed recreation sites designed and managed for overnight use would be limited to one new site or one increase in capacity in a bear management unit in a 10-year period.

Within the primary conservation area, open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core would be maintained at baseline levels (see the glossary in the revised forest plan) in each grizzly bear subunit. High-use nonmotorized trails would no longer be counted in calculations of secure core, but the baseline would be updated to reflect this change. Temporary increases in open and total motorized route densities and temporary decreases in secure core would be allowed for projects (as defined in the glossary), as long as they comply with standards.

This direction is in the Flathead Forest Plan: Standards FW-STD-WL 03 (p. 50) and Standards FW-STD-REC 01 (p. 60). However, this direction does not directly influence management of the PNT because high-use nonmotorized trails do not influence calculations of secure core habitat and overnight use along the trail is primarily dispersed use, not developed recreation sites.

Per the Kootenai National Forest Plan amendment (2018)–Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy NCDE-STD-AR-05:

Within the NCDE primary conservation areas, the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on National Forest System lands that are designed and managed for overnight use by the public during the non-denning season (i.e., campgrounds, cabins rentals, huts, guest lodges, recreation residences) shall be limited to one increase above the baseline in the number or capacity per decade per bear management unit.

The **Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone** is in northwest Montana and northeast Idaho. PNT trail stages 10-13 pass through this area in the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The **Selkirk Mountains Recovery Zone** is in northwest Idaho, northeast Washington, and southeast British Columbia. PNT trail stages 13-18 pass through this area in the Idaho Panhandle and Colville National Forests.

In the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk recovery zones, nonmotorized trail use does influence calculation of grizzly bear core habitat. The criteria for a high use trail with an average of 20 parties per week has been identified as a limiting factor for trail carrying capacity on the trail stages passing through the two recovery zones.

FW-STD-WL-02. The Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone Management direction and ROD is included in Appendix B and shall be applied (Kootenai Forest Plan p.30 and IPNF⁷⁵ Forest Plan p. 31). (Design Element I.B. Parameters for establishing and managing core habitat in all BMU's: 1.a) Core areas include high quality habitat within a BMU⁷⁶ that contains no

⁷⁵ Idaho Panhandle National Forest

⁷⁶ Bear management unit

motorized travel routes or high use trails (average of 20 parties per week during the non-denning season).

Since there is no clear definition of party size associated with the “average of 20 parties per week” criteria, several party sizes will be considered in the carrying capacity identification. The most restrictive being a party size of 1, an average group size of 2, and a larger group size of 12 (consistent with the maximum group size for wilderness areas and National Park Service units across the PNT). This will provide a range of potential visitor use levels that will be incorporated into the monitoring plan as trigger points and thresholds.

The **North Cascades Recovery Zone** is in north central Washington. PNT trail stages 27-33 pass through this area in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, North Cascades National Park, and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

Management direction is based on interim guidance for no net loss of core habitat, information and education efforts regarding grizzly bears and their habitat, and enhanced sanitation for proper garbage and food storage in bear habitat (USFWS 2022). The National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife have jointly initiated (2014) an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) planning process to evaluate a range of alternatives for recovering the North Cascades grizzly bear population (USFWS 2022).

Where the PNT is currently located on roads, the use is not influencing the calculation of core habitat, however if the trail were to be moved off the roads, impacts of trail use on core acres would need to be considered. In other areas, portions of the PNT are already considered to be high use with greater than 20 parties per week. High use trails and roads are buffered by one-third mile of non-core habitat. Stage 31 – Hannegan Pass is a high use trail. Any new PNT proposed route off Hwy 542, from Hannegan Pass Road Number 32 to the Mt. Baker Ski Area would include assessing impacts to core acres.

Monitoring of trail use and potential future trail relocations will need to consider the influence on calculation of core acres. However due to the location of the PNT on roads, or on trails that have already been identified as high use, the limiting factors for carrying capacity in the trail stages through the North Cascades Recovery Zone are based on established wilderness encounter rates for the Pasayten and Mt. Baker Wilderness areas, described below.

Overlap of the Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail with other National Scenic Trails

The PNT overlaps with two other designated National Scenic Trails and several National Recreation Trails. Due to the popularity of the designated trails, the areas of overlap have a potential for higher use levels that may need to be monitored and managed to ensure a quality National Trail visitor experience is maintained.

Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

The PNT overlaps with the Continental Divide Trail for 26 miles in Trail Stage 1 between Chief Mountain and Waterton Lake in Glacier National Park (figure 29). Backcountry camping permits are required and have been identified as a limiting factor for trail carrying capacity in this trail

stage. Glacier National Park is seeing increased use of the Continental Divide Trail, and areas are near or potentially above overnight capacity in September. Use levels where the Continental Divide Trail and PNT overlap should be monitored.

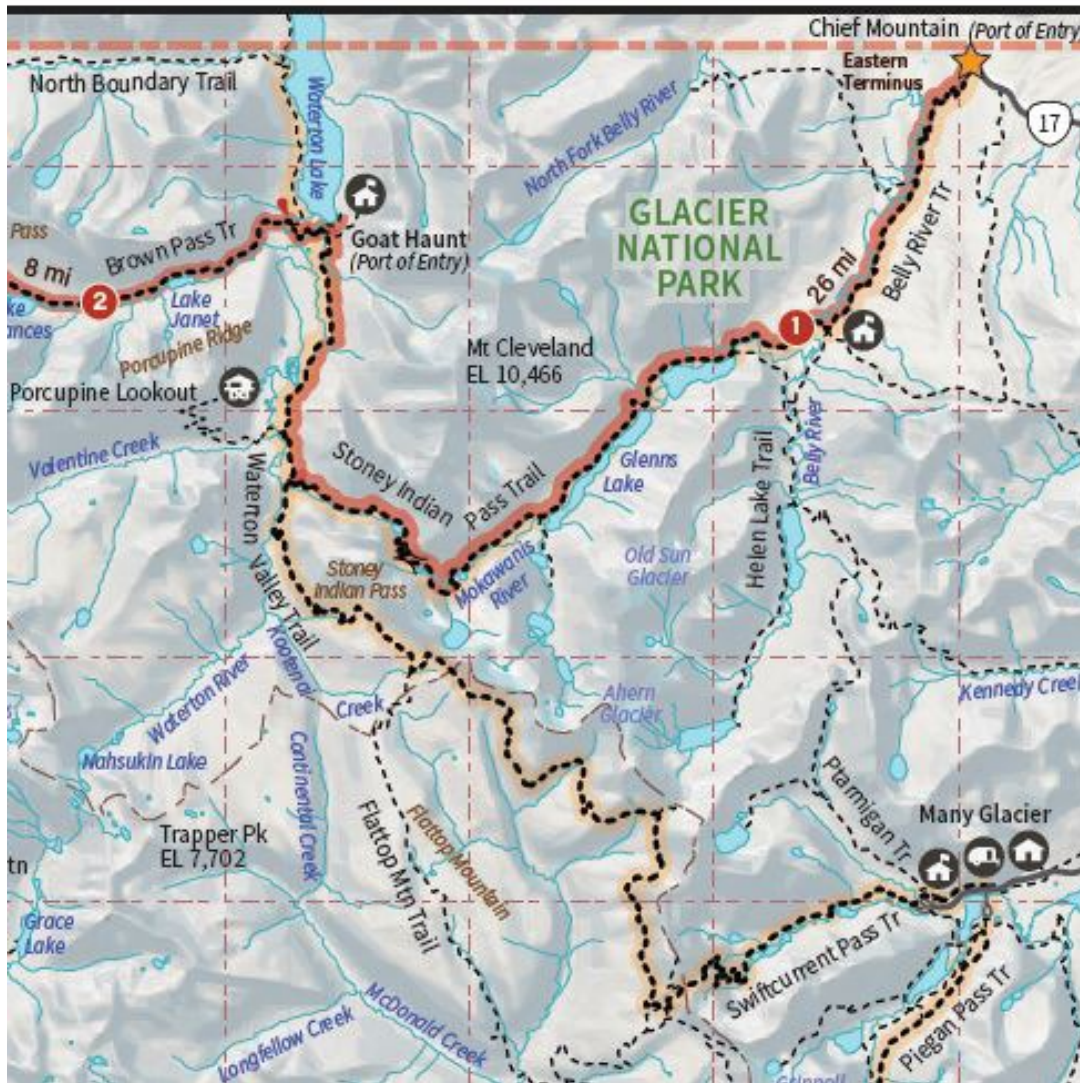


Figure 29. Pacific Northwest Trail overlap with the Continental Divide Trail

Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail

The PNT overlaps with the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) for 13.8 miles in Trail Stage 30 between Castle Pass and Holman Pass within the Pasayten Wilderness on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (figure 30). This is a very high use area near the northern terminus of the Pacific Crest Trail and visitor use has increased dramatically over the past several years. Southbound Pacific Crest Trail hikers depart from Hart's Pass, reach the Border, then return the same way thus traveling this section of the Pacific Crest Trail twice. Entering the U.S. from Canada on the Pacific Crest Trail is not allowed. Travel into Canada via the Pacific Crest Trail requires a Canada Pacific Crest Trail entry permit. The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) suspended all Canada Pacific Crest Trail entry permit processing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restrictions will remain in place until all travel restrictions have been lifted for all travelers (Pacific Crest Trail Association 2022). This area of overlap is also within the Pasayten Wilderness where the Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan standard is: *80 percent probability of not more than seven encounters per day between groups while traveling on trails during all use periods* (MA1 56-210 Okanogan Forest Plan 1989, p. 4-92). This is the only trail within the Pasayten Wilderness where the standards for opportunities for solitude are not being met. Monitoring has shown that the Pacific Crest Trail has a 44 percent probability of not more than seven encounters between groups per day. The Pacific Crest Trail has implemented a limit on long-distance permits in this area. Continued monitoring is needed to determine if additional management actions are needed.



Figure 30. Pacific Northwest Trail overlap with the Pacific Crest Trail

Pacific Crest Trail Long-distance Permits (<https://www.pcta.org/discover-the-trail/permits/pct-long-distance-permit/>):

15 permits per day for southbound thru- and section hikes starting between Canada through Stehekin between June 15 and July 31. Then, 15 permits per day starting in the Northern Terminus area for section hikers between Aug. 1 and Sept. 15. 825 total Northern Terminus area permits.

Wilderness – Solitude

The PNT passes through six designated wilderness areas (figure 31) and several other recommended or proposed wilderness areas that are managed for their wilderness characteristics, including outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. If use along the PNT is found to be approaching or exceeding monitoring thresholds for solitude or encounters that are set in wilderness plans or forest plans, there may be a need to address the site-specific carrying capacity of the PNT through these areas.

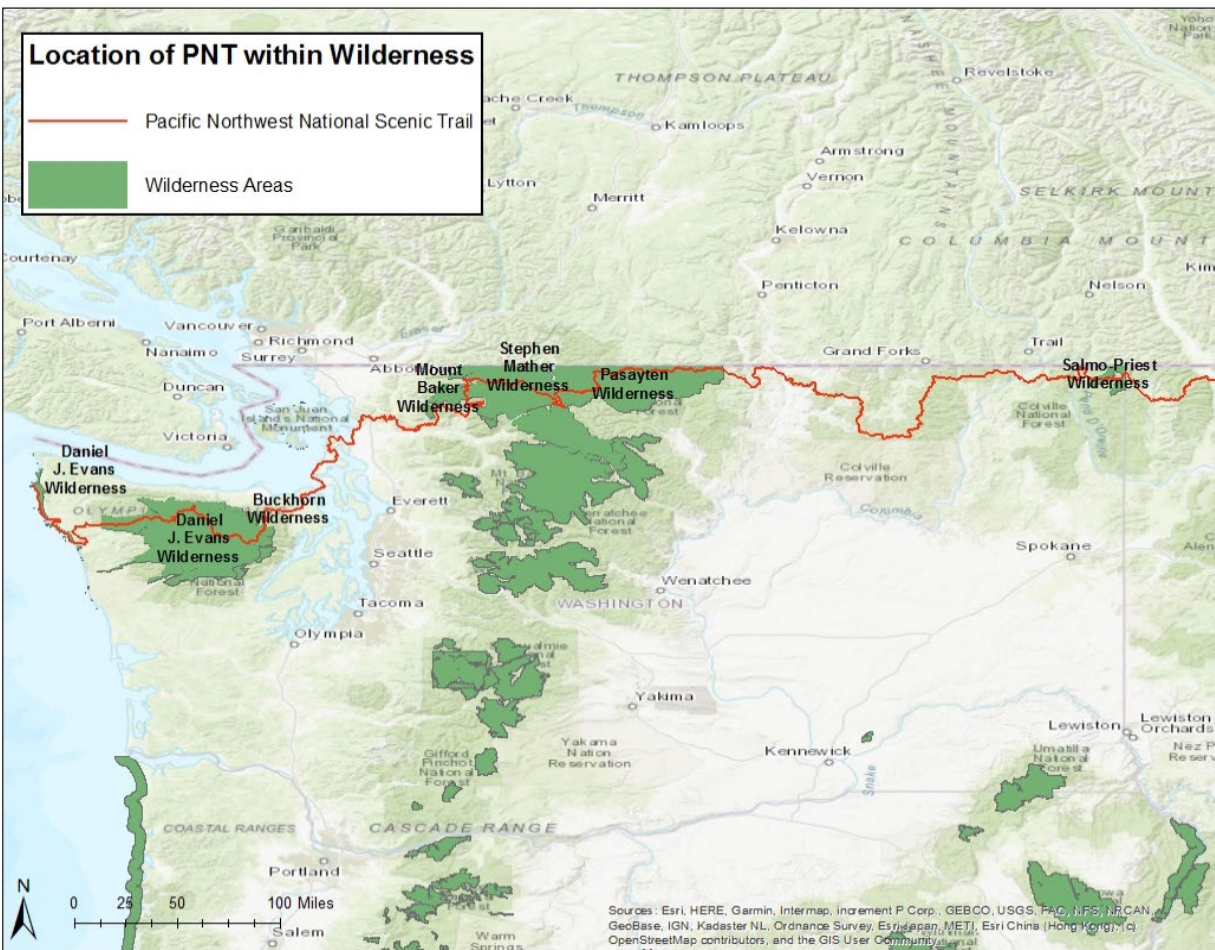


Figure 31. Location of the Pacific Northwest Trail within wilderness

Salmo-Priest Wilderness

The Salmo-Priest Wilderness is managed by the Idaho Panhandle National Forests and Colville National Forest. PNT stage 17 passes through this wilderness. The 2019 Colville Forest Plan provides direction on the desired conditions for the wilderness.

MA-DC-WCD-01. Wilderness Character (p 140)

Visitor use does not negatively affect the five qualities of wilderness character (untrammled, undeveloped, natural, opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation) or other features of value.

Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and isolation. Encounters with small groups or individuals are infrequent.

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests Plan provides direction on the desired conditions for the wilderness.

MA1a-DC-AR-02. Access and Recreation (p 45)

Summer and winter recreation opportunities and experiences are consistent with the ROS classification of primitive.

MA1a-DC-AR-03. Access and Recreation (p 45)

Opportunities for solitude are moderate to high on the existing trail system with few human encounters expected. Opportunities for solitude are high when traveling cross-country with almost no human encounters expected.

MA1a-DC-AR-04. Access and Recreation (p 45)

Campsites may be visible at popular destinations and at major trail junctions. These sites accommodate moderate use and have minimal impacts to wilderness characteristics.

MA1a-STD-AR-01. Access and Recreation (p 45)

Party size shall not exceed 12 people and stock combined (12 total heartbeats).

Pasayten Wilderness

The Pasayten Wilderness is managed by the Colville National Forest and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. PNT stages 28-30 pass through this wilderness. Wilderness permits are required, the self-issuing permits are free and available at trailheads. Forest Plan Standards set encounter rates on trails within the Wilderness:

MA1 56-210: 80 percent probability of not more than seven encounters per day between groups while traveling on trails during all use periods (Okanogan Forest Plan 1989, p. 4-92).

Stephen Mather Wilderness

The Stephen Mather Wilderness is managed by North Cascades National Park. PNT stages 30-31 pass through this wilderness. As noted above, backcountry camping permits are required within North Cascades National Park and are limited to designated campsites.

Mt. Baker Wilderness

The Mt. Baker Wilderness is managed by the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. PNT stages 32-33 pass through this wilderness. Forest Plan Standards set encounter rates on trails within the Wilderness:

The 1990 Forest Plan established the following capacity standards for the management areas of Mt. Baker (figure 31).

Management Area 10A: Transition - This class introduces users to the Wilderness setting. Opportunities for exploring and experiencing isolation contrast with adjacent, more developed areas outside the wilderness, though the visitor can expect the greatest number of people compared to other wilderness classes. This area normally provides relatively low challenge or risk compared to other classes (4-209).

- 1) Average number of parties encountered/day/snow free season shall not exceed 8
- 2) Maximum encounters* with other groups on any day shall not exceed 30.
- 3) Average number of occupied campsites visible shall not exceed 4.

Management Area 10B: Trailed - A moderate to high degree of opportunity exists for exploring and experiencing isolation (from the sights and sounds of civilization), independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of no trace skills in a natural environment that offers a moderate to high degree of challenge and risk as one travels farther from trailheads (4-210).

- 1) Average number of parties encountered/day/snow free season shall not exceed 5.
- 2) Maximum encounters with other groups on any day shall not exceed 10.
- F3) Average number of occupied campsites visible shall not exceed 3. MA 10B Trailed: Maximum encounters with other groups on any day shall not exceed 10.

Buckhorn Wilderness

The Buckhorn Wilderness is managed by the Olympic National Forest. Pacific Northwest Trail stage 43 passes through this wilderness. Current use within Buckhorn Wilderness is exceeding solitude thresholds identified in wilderness management plans (90 percent chance of seeing no more than 24 people per day; 90 percent chance of seeing no more than 2 camping parties per day) (USDA Forest Service 2015). This is an extremely popular area for day hiking and short overnight trips. The Forest is considering conducting a needs assessment to determine if a permit system for overnight use is needed. Future permit requirements may result in additional limitations along the PNT in the future.

Daniel J. Evans Wilderness

The Daniel J. Evans Wilderness is managed by Olympic National Park. Pacific Northwest Trail stages 44-46 and 48-50 pass through this wilderness. As noted above, wilderness camping permits are required within Olympic National Park and are limited in two quota areas. The Park is preparing a wilderness stewardship plan that may result in additional limitations along the PNT in the future.

Segments of the Pacific Northwest Trail on Open Motorized Roads

Several trail stages of the PNT are co-located on open motorized roads. In some cases, this is posing a safety concern with hikers traveling along busy roads and highways with narrow shoulders. These sections are not meeting the desired National Scenic Trail experience and may

result in trail users avoiding sections of the trail. As opportunities arise to move the PNT off motorized routes to enhance the visitor experience, there may be a need to review and adjust the carrying capacity within these trail stages.

Concern and potential conflict with road segments were noted for trail stages: 32 (concern for hiker safety on Mt. Baker Hwy), 18 (moderate to high use road with no shoulders and some very tight turns), 42 (Hwy 101 extremely high use). Road walk segments were also noted for the following trail stages, with the main concern noted as the trail experience: 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 37, 41.

Private Lands

Concerns regarding portions of the trail across private property were noted for the following trail stages: 26, 34, 35, 36, 42, 47. Some of the concerns are with limited opportunities for camping and off-trail trail needs, potential for loss of access where public access easements are not secured, safety concerns with logging truck traffic, unmaintained routes, and lack of clear property boundary and route markers. As opportunities arise to move the PNT off private lands, or to secure and clarify public access, there may be a need to review and adjust the carrying capacity within these trail stages.

Potential Future Limiting Factors

Several other potential future limiting factors⁷⁷ for trail carrying capacity were identified that will need to be monitored over time. Some of these could become a concern as use levels increase such as the number of available campsites in areas where terrain is limiting, conflict between different types of uses such as stock use or popular mountain biking trails (especially downhill mountain biking), and human waste impacts where use levels are high. The potential for future wilderness designation that could lead to a change in management requirements was also noted. Trail stages with potential future limiting factors are 5, 6, 7, 19, 21, 22, and 23. Wildfires were also noted as a key factor that could limit visitor use of the PNT (due to active wildfire events and post-wildfire trail conditions).

Identifying Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity is an estimate and not always a definitive number. This is particularly true in situations where the amount of use is low and does not threaten desired conditions or trail values. In these situations, capacity estimates yield visitor use numbers that are far higher than current amounts of use, thus decisions about capacity do not result in near-term management actions to regulate use levels. The amount of investment devoted to determining carrying capacity needs to be commensurate with the consequence of the potential decisions to be made about managing visitor use.

⁷⁷ The limiting factors carried forward in the Comprehensive Plan were identified through the carrying capacity worksheet interviews with managing agencies. The capacity decision criteria addressed resource, social, and administrative considerations as described under the heading Worksheets in Appendix E. Monitoring will be in place to identify constraints or limitations that may arise in the future.

Carrying capacity for the PNT in the context of the National Scenic Trail comprehensive plan is being expressed in a variety of ways. First, the thru-hiker capacity expressed as a range of thru-hikers per high-use season (June 15 to Sept 15) and second, the general amounts and types of use the trail can accommodate. The carrying capacity determination is based on a variety of factors such as current known resource and management constraints, existing permit systems, and desired condition zones. The carrying capacity numbers and factors that may limit or change the trail's carrying capacity in the future are linked to the trail monitoring plan that will guide local monitoring and implementation of the trail carrying capacity. There may be other resource considerations or management direction that are more or less limiting than the identified trail carrying capacity. Local visitor use management decisions will consider all relevant resources and direction.

Thru-hiker Capacity

The long-distance thru-hiking opportunity has been identified as one of two primary uses for the PNT, and the only primary use that allow for a trail-wide, end-to-end travel opportunity. Thru-hiking was the focus of the original PNT concept, one of the values for which the PNT was designated and is central to the nature and purposes of the trail.

Thru-hiking was determined to be the trail activity with the most limitations (seasonality) and the greatest dependence on the trail resources (availability of campsites and water, resupply opportunities, access and closures, trail conditions, etcetera), and therefore the trail activity with the most constraints.

Carrying capacity for thru-hiking was determined using the Sustainable Affordance-Level of Service model that is based on assumptions about trail use, carrying capacity criteria rated by local managers, and a review of constraints or limiting factors along the trail. This model provides a quantitative estimate of the range of thru-hiking opportunities that the PNT provides under current known physical, ecological, and social conditions.

Thru hiker capacity based on Sustainable Affordance (Valenzuela 2020) and Level of Service Model (USDOT Federal Highway Administration 2006):

Calculation based on:

- Average group size (2) from trail visitor registers or National Visitor Use Monitoring data.
- Average number of groups entering the trail per hour (4) based on the Shared Use Path Level of Service Calculator for a rating of excellent. Six levels of service are defined by this calculator ranging from excellent to failing (U.S. Department of Transportation 2006). The excellent rating was selected for this analysis because we want to manage the trail for high quality experiences.
- Group entry hours per day (6) based on trail registers and observation of use.
- Season of use (June 15 through Sept 15; a total of 92 days) based on knowledge of local trail managers.

- Numeric ratings assigned to capacity decision criteria (High=1, Med=2, Low 3). The criteria were rated by trail stage, based on professional judgement of local trail managers. An adjustment factor was calculated based on total rating for the 10 criteria.

The un-constrained sustainable recreation affordance for one day within a trail stage based on "excellent" level of service (LOS) calculation and capacity criteria ratings is calculated using:

$$((\text{Groups per hour}) (\text{Hiking Entry Hours}) (\text{Average Party Size}) (\text{Capacity criteria adjustment factor}))$$

Each trail stage is then reviewed for limiting factors that would be lower than the base calculation that would constrain the flow of hikers through that point. Examples of some of the potential limiting factors for the PNT are limited backcountry campsite permits, wilderness encounter rates, grizzly bear management constraints for number of parties per week, etc., as discussed above. Each trail stage has a “throughput” or number of people that can “flow” through the trail section identified per-day and per-use season (figure 32 and figure 33). The total thru-hiker capacity for the entire trail can be expressed as a range of numbers. People at one time per trail stage can also be displayed.

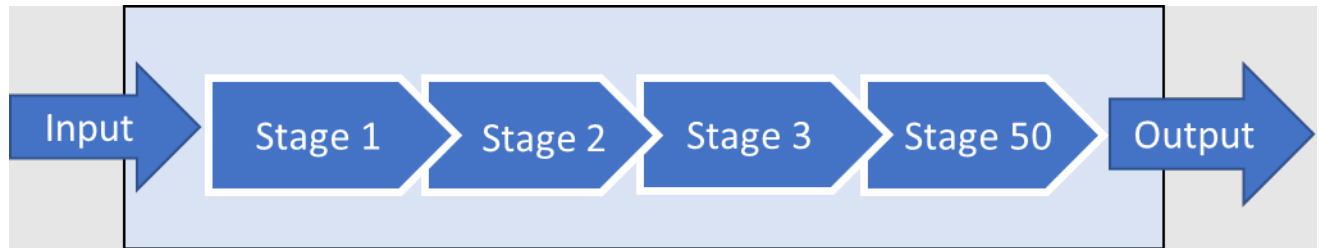


Figure 32. Trail stages and throughput flowchart

Long distance trails are made up of logical experience segments, shown here as trail stages along the PNT that are unique to the trail, and each contribute to the eventual traveler outcome. The production process can be thought of as a sequence of processes that as a whole produce a throughput.

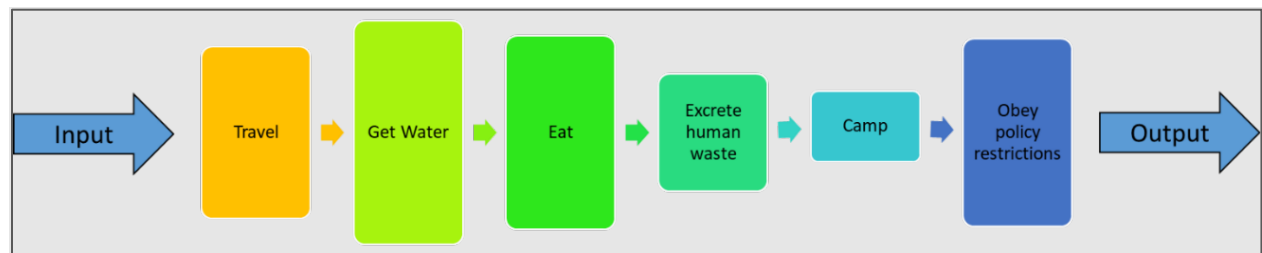


Figure 33. Traveler activities and limiting factors flowchart

Travelers have certain necessary activities in each trail stage, and some opportunities may be more limiting than others. The focus of the sustainable affordance methodology is to identify the most limiting factors, constraints, or bottlenecks that may impact the flow of travelers along the trail. One of the processes is a constraint on the system when flow rate exceeds throughput rate. In this example camp sites would be the constraint.

The resulting **carrying capacity range for thru-hiking for the PNT is 552 to 1,748 thru-hikers per high use season** (mid-June through mid-September). This is based on the most limiting passages of the trail, Stages 10-18 in the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains grizzly bear recovery zones, and stages 48-50 within Olympic National Park's Wilderness Coast. A numeric range is provided because there are several variables, such as the ability to make advanced campsite reservations in the National Parks, the availability of walk-up camping opportunities that influence the ability of these areas to accommodate overnight use, and variable party sizes.

The estimates are presented as a range of visitor use that in most cases is much higher than current amounts of use. Thru-hiking use constitutes only a small fraction of overall use of the PNT relative to day-use and short multi-day trips. Currently, the Forest Service estimates that about 78 people attempt to thru-hike the PNT each year. It is important to note that this is an estimate based on triangulating various data sources. The number of thru hiking attempts (vs. thru hike completions) may be higher. There is currently no permit system or other requirement for trail users to register. Use is likely to continue to increase as the attractiveness of this relatively little-used, long-distance trail becomes increasingly better known.

General Amounts and Types of Use the Trail can Accommodate

The Trail also provides opportunities for shorter trips on foot, ranging from day hiking to multi-day backpacking trips on sections of the PNT. Along with hiking, horseback riding and bicycling (particularly mountain biking) are popular uses in certain sections of the PNT. A trail that provides opportunities for long-distance hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling can accommodate many other forms of nonmotorized trail use that occur along the PNT such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and trail running.

Day hiking, section hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and other nonmotorized trail uses have fewer constraints on timing and season of use than for thru-hiking and generally involve one or several sections of the trail rather than the entire trail. Use levels vary widely across the 1,200-mile trail depending on adjacent communities, access, terrain, etc.

Carrying capacity for all trail uses is being expressed as the types and levels of use that can generally be accommodated by the PNT. Trail zones were developed to describe the desired conditions (focusing on the recreation settings and social experiences) for the trail as it crosses a variety of landscapes and jurisdictions. The zone descriptions identify the appropriate types and levels of use that can be accommodated by the PNT, without adversely affecting the nature and purposes of the trail.

A qualitative description of the range of visitor use that can be accommodated in different zones along the trail is included. If necessary, specific visitor capacities for a site, trail segment, or area would be identified and implemented by the local trail managing unit.

Desired Conditions Zones

Desired condition zones (table 12) were developed to describe the desired conditions (focusing on the trail settings and social experiences) for the trail as it crosses a variety of landscapes and

jurisdictions. The zone descriptions were developed based on input provided by local trail managers in the data collection worksheets, existing management direction from land management plans, and trail descriptions on the Pacific Northwest Trail Association website. The zone descriptions identify the appropriate types and levels of use that can be accommodated by the PNT, without adversely affecting the nature and purposes of the trail.

Each trail stage was initially assigned to the zone that best represents the visitor experience and existing management direction for most of the trail stage (table 13). If necessary, a more detailed mapping of trail zones could be done at a local level to facilitate local management needs. A range for the number of groups encountered on the trail per day by zone was identified based on Recreation Opportunity Spectrum setting characteristics table (USDA Forest Service 2022), visitor register information, and professional judgement of local and regional trail managers.

The trail zones will guide monitoring and subsequent management actions that will either maintain the existing visitor experience as described for each zone, or where appropriate, move the trail stage into a less-developed zone. Monitoring indicators and thresholds would be established at the local trail managing units to ensure that trail use, or management actions generally do not result in a trail stage moving from a less developed zone into a more developed one.

If a numerical visitor capacity calculation is desired, a carrying capacity range could be expressed based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Average group size from trail registers or NVUM data per forest OR Max group size from management plans} \times \text{Typical encounters for the zone} \times \text{Days to complete}}{\text{Per Day Maximum Theoretical Capacity}} = \text{People}$$

However, at the comprehensive planning level, it is preferable to express capacity by zone as the general types and amounts of use that the trail can accommodate. Site specific carrying capacity calculations by trail stage at the local management unit will be most useful.

Table 12. Desired condition zones

Zone	Description	Typical recreation opportunity spectrum Class	Typical # of Groups Encountered /Day
Gateway Community/Trailhead – Urban Zone	High use, day-use, generally no overnight use unless in developed campgrounds or lodging. Primarily on roads or well-developed paths through higher population communities (10,000+ population). Representative trail stages: 37 through Anacortes and 41 through Port Townsend	Urban	75-125
Gateway Community/Trailhead Rural Zone	High to moderate use, high proportion of day use along with overnight visitors primarily staying in developed campgrounds or lodging. Close to motorized roads and access points. More developed than other subsequent zones. Poor opportunities for solitude throughout the season. Trail passes through or adjacent to smaller communities (generally <5,000 population). Representative trail stages: 4 through Polebridge and 25 through Oroville	Rural	50-75
Working Landscapes Zone	Trail generally on dirt roads, single track, or trails, nonmotorized use typically lower than in other zones. Encounters with vehicles frequent in some areas. Trail users experience working landscapes including active logging operations, visible forest vegetation treatments or agricultural areas. This zone often provides important connections between less developed portions of the trail. Representative trail stages: 26-27 and 34-36 Washington DNR and Private timber company lands	Roaded Natural	30-50
Backcountry Zone	Use levels low to high. Mostly overnight use with some day use. Roads only occasionally nearby. Moderately developed. Moderate opportunity for solitude throughout the season. Representative trail stages: 5 – Flathead NF, 21 – Colville NF	Semi-Primitive Motorized	15-30
Primitive Zone	Use level very low to moderate. Within designated Wilderness and areas that are managed to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. Primarily overnight use, often by long distance hikers. Remote, minimal development. Little to no vehicle access to trailheads. Good opportunity for solitude throughout the season. Representative Trail Stages: 1 and 2 Glacier National Park, 28-31 Pasayten and Mt Baker Wilderness. ¹	Semi-Primitive Nonmotorized/Primitive	6-15

1 - Note: There are trail stages through popular, high use wilderness areas such as the Pasayten, Mt Baker, and the Olympic National Park where although the areas are designated wilderness and are managed for wilderness characteristics, they are also high-use areas that are accounted for through local management direction.

Table 13. PNT stages summary information for carrying capacity

Trail Stage	Jurisdiction	Miles	Desired Condition Zone	Maximum Group / Party Size (where applicable)	Identified Capacity or Threshold (where applicable)	Overall Need to Address Carrying Capacity¹
1	Glacier NP	26	Primitive	12	Overnight capacity (people per night): 156	Moderate
2	Glacier NP	8	Primitive	12	Overnight capacity (people per night): 36	Moderate
3	Glacier NP	19	Backcountry	12	Overnight capacity (people per night): 408	Moderate
4	Flathead NF	2	Gateway - Rural (Polebridge)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
5	Flathead and Kootenai NF	46	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
6	Kootenai NF	3	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
7	Kootenai NF	10	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
8	Kootenai NF	19	Gateway - Rural (Eureka)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
9	Kootenai NF	16	Gateway - Rural (Eureka)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
10	Kootenai NF	35	Backcountry	Not applicable	Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average of 20 parties per week	Moderate
11	Kootenai NF	20	Gateway - Rural (Yaak)	Not applicable	Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average of 20 parties per week	Moderate
12	Kootenai NF	11	Backcountry	Not applicable	Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average of 20 parties per week	Moderate
13	Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle NF	33	Backcountry	Not applicable	Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average of 20 parties per week	Low
14	Idaho Panhandle National Forest	28	Backcountry	Not applicable	Selkirk Mountains Recovery Zone: average of 20 parties per week	Moderate
15	Idaho Panhandle National Forest and Idaho Dept. of Lands	14	Backcountry	Not applicable	Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average of 20 parties per week	Low

Trail Stage	Jurisdiction	Miles	Desired Condition Zone	Maximum Group / Party Size (where applicable)	Identified Capacity or Threshold (where applicable)	Overall Need to Address Carrying Capacity¹
16	Idaho Panhandle National Forest and Idaho Dept. of Lands	17	Backcountry	Not applicable	Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average 20 parties per week	Low
17	Idaho Panhandle and Colville National Forests	40	Primitive	12	Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average 20 parties per week	Low
18	Colville National Forest	6	Gateway - rural (Metaline Falls)	Not applicable	Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone: average 20 parties per week	Moderate
19	Colville National Forest	46	Gateway - rural (Metaline Falls/Northport)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
20	Colville National Forest	27	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
21	Colville National Forest	44	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
22	Colville National Forest/ Colville Indian Reservation	27	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
23	Colville and Okanogan Wenatchee National Forests	24	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
24	Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest and Washington DNR	69	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
25	BLM and Okanogan County	16	Gateway - rural (Oroville)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
26	Washington DNR and BLM	15	Working Landscape	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
27	Washington DNR	5	Working Landscape	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
28	Washington DNR and Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest	32	Primitive	12	Pasayten Wilderness 7 encounters with groups per day on trails: 84 people per day	Moderate

Trail Stage	Jurisdiction	Miles	Desired Condition Zone	Maximum Group / Party Size (where applicable)	Identified Capacity or Threshold (where applicable)	Overall Need to Address Carrying Capacity ¹
29	Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest	41	Primitive	12	Pasayten Wilderness 7 encounters with groups per day on trails: 84 people per day	Moderate
30	Okanogan-Wenatchee NF/North Cascades NP	43	Primitive	12	Overlap with Pacific Crest Trail Pasayten Wilderness 7 encounters with groups per day on trails: 84 people per day	High
31	North Cascades NP/Mt Baker Snoqualmie NF	57	Primitive	12	Overnight capacity – North Cascades National Park (people per night): 512	Moderate
32	Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF	43	Primitive	12	Mt. Baker Wilderness – encounters 30 (in MA 10A – Transition): 360 people/day; 10 (in MA 10B -Trailed): 120 people/day	High
33	Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF	32	Backcountry	12	Mt. Baker Wilderness – encounters 30 (in MA 10A – Transition): 360 people/day; 10 (in MA 10B -Trailed): 120 people/day	Moderate
34	Washington DNR and Private	36	Working Landscape	Not applicable	Not applicable	High
35	Washington DNR and Whatcom County	19	Working Landscape	Not applicable	Not applicable	High
36	Washington DNR	11	Working Landscape	Not applicable	Not applicable	High
37	Skagit County	25	Gateway - urban (Edison/Anacortes)	Not applicable	Not applicable	High
38	City of Anacortes	12	Gateway - Urban (Anacortes)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
39	Washington State Parks/Ebey's Landing NP	32	Gateway – Urban (Oak Harbor, Coupeville)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate

Trail Stage	Jurisdiction	Miles	Desired Condition Zone	Maximum Group / Party Size (where applicable)	Identified Capacity or Threshold (where applicable)	Overall Need to Address Carrying Capacity ¹
40	Coupeville – Port Townsend Ferry	6	Gateway – Urban (Coupeville-Port Townsend)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Low
41	Jefferson County Parks and Recreation	17	Gateway – Urban (Port Townsend)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
42	Olympic National Forest	25	Backcountry	Not applicable	Not applicable	Moderate
43	Olympic NF/Olympic NP	32	Primitive	12	Buckhorn Wilderness – encounters (90 percent chance of seeing no more than 24 people per day; 90 percent chance of seeing no more than 2 camping parties per day)	Moderate
44	Olympic NP	29	Primitive	12	Wilderness camping permits required – no quota	Low
45	Olympic NP	20	Primitive	12	Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin quota area 92 people/night	High
46	Olympic NF/Olympic NP/WA State Parks	36	Primitive	12	Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin quota area: 80 people/night	High
47	State/Private	22	Working Landscape	Not applicable	Not applicable	High
48	Olympic NP	16	Primitive	12	Wilderness camping permits required – no quota	High
49	Olympic NP/Quileute Indian Reservation	3	Gateway - Rural (La Push)	Not applicable	Wilderness camping permits required – no quota	High
50	Olympic NP	20	Primitive	12	Ozette Coast quota area: 225 people/night	High

1 - Overall need to address carrying capacity:

Low: the urgency to address carrying capacity is low, action may need to be considered in 10-20 years, or 20+ years out;

Moderate: the urgency to address carrying capacity is moderate, action should be considered in 5-10 years;

High: the urgency to address carrying capacity is high and should be addressed as soon as possible.

Implementation Plan

Implementation of the identified carrying capacity will be through adaptive management approaches that will range from addressing site-specific issues to regional or trail-wide conditions and trends. In most cases, selection of appropriate indicators and thresholds, monitoring, and implementation of adaptive management actions will be conducted at the local level by local land managers and overall monitoring trends will be reported to the trail administrator.

The existing constraints to visitor use and known management issues identified through the carrying capacity worksheet interviews are noted to help prioritize management across the trail.

Prioritize management actions for trail stages with a high need to address carrying capacity

Based on the responses and rating of the capacity decision criteria in the PNT carrying capacity worksheets, the urgency to address carrying capacity is high and should be addressed as soon as possible in the following trail stages:

Table 14. Trail stages with a high need to address carrying capacity

Trail Stage	Limiting Factor
30	Overlap of the Pacific Northwest Trail with the Pacific Crest Trail and wilderness encounter standards that are currently being exceeded in the Pasayten Wilderness
32	High use and a potential need for management strategies to address overnight use in the Mount Baker Wilderness
34-37	Need to secure public access or consider opportunities to re-locate the trail to improve visitor experience
45-50	High use in Olympic National Park and coordination with development of the wilderness stewardship plan

Implementation actions associated with camping and permit limitations:

- Continue coordination between the National Park Service Units, adjacent land management agencies, and the PNT administrator to incorporate the PNT thru-hiking opportunity into management considerations and future permit requirements.
- Consider opportunities to designate campsites that would consistently be available to PNT thru-hikers to avoid congestion or bottlenecks with long-distance hikers waiting for permits. Thru-hiker drop in camp sites would provide opportunity for long-distance hikers while minimizing the impact to other popular camping areas.

Table 15. Trail stages with known camping or permit limitations

Trail Stage	Limiting Factor
1-3	Glacier National Park backcountry camping permit and overlap of the Pacific Northwest Trail with the Continental Divide Trail
30-31	North Cascades National Park Service Complex backcountry camping permit
45-46	Olympic National Park wilderness camping permit and quota areas Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin
50	Olympic National Park wilderness camping permits and quota area Ozette Coast

Implementation actions associated with the Pacific Northwest Trail through Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones

- Continue to provide consistent public education and information about safely recreating in grizzly bear areas, including hiking safety, camping safety, and food storage requirements.
- In all grizzly bear recovery zones monitor human/bear interactions, if monitoring shows a trend with increasing interactions or negative events, coordinate with local wildlife specialist to determine recommended management actions.
- Continue monitoring visitor use levels within the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains grizzly bear recovery zones to determine if any of the trail stages are approaching the 20 parties per week threshold. Establish trigger points and associated management actions.

Table 16. Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains grizzly bear recovery zone thresholds

Trigger Point and Thresholds	Parties Per Week	Group Size	People per week	People per day	People per high use season (June 15-Sept 15)
Trigger Point 1	20	1	20	3	276
Trigger Point 2	20	2	40	6	552
Maximum Threshold	20	12	240	34	3,128

- Potential management action if trigger point 1 is reached:
 - Increase education regarding grizzly behavior and potential human/bear interactions.
 - Increase enforcement of the food storage orders.
 - Provide additional facilities or equipment (e.g., bear-proof food canisters) to increase compliance with food storage order.
 - Require hikers to carry bear spray.
 - Actively encourage hikers to pass through the area in larger groups to reduce the potential opportunities to disturb grizzly bears.
- Potential management action if a trigger point 2 is reached:

- Establish a permit system to limit parties per week during the high use season
- Require hikers to pass through the area in larger groups to reduce the potential opportunities to disturb grizzly bears.
- Consider limiting or prohibiting overnight use in the area (possibly in combination with providing overnight camping areas outside core habitat)

Table 17. Trail stages within grizzly bear recovery zones

Trail Stage	Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone
1-9	Northern Continental Divide Recovery Zone
10-13	Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone
13-18	Selkirk Mountains Recovery Zone
27-33	North Cascades Recovery Zone

Monitoring

The monitoring plan ([appendix F](#)) outlines potential indicators and thresholds to guide monitoring efforts. An adaptive management toolbox of management approaches is also included. The identified carrying capacity numbers and desired experience zones will inform implementation of site-specific monitoring and management actions to manage visitor use along the trail.

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Appendix F. Adaptive Management and Monitoring Visitor Use and Trail Conditions – Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

Introduction

The nature and purposes of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail define the desired key characteristics of the trail setting and experience and establish the context for appropriate activities and uses for the trail and its corridor. The nature and purposes statement recognizes the public's connection with the unique and diverse treasures of Pacific Northwest's outdoors for purposes of recreation, spiritual renewal, improved health, and high-quality time spent with families and friends. There is a constant management challenge to strike a balance between these societal benefits and resource protection and conservation within the framework of applicable law and policy. As noted in the National Trail System Act:

SEC. 3. [16USC1242] (a) (2) National scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be 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.

Through specific visitor use management practices that are related to the desired conditions for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, the comprehensive plan provides general, but consistent, direction that maintains flexibility for implementation by different agencies in varied situations.

Nature

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail is an east-west-oriented long-distance trail that traverses the extreme northern reaches of Montana, Idaho, and Washington from the Rocky Mountains, through the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges, to the Pacific Coast.

The trail invites travelers into the backcountry and wilderness areas, to seek the grandeur of glaciated peaks, tranquil lakes, boundless horizons of majestic mountains, deep canyons, broad river valleys, storm-carved coastlines and the splendor of wild places. The lands along the trail are the homelands of many distinct indigenous nations. Since time immemorial, natural processes and tribal traditional uses, including tribal treaty rights and reserved rights, have shaped these places and continue to shape them, through exercising their tribal treaty and reserved rights. The trail sometimes passes near communities that are able to share with travelers their histories and connections to the land, evident in the legacy of working forests, farms, ranches, and maritime areas as well as in beloved local parks and pathways.

Whether they experience one mile or 1,200 miles, the travelers and stewards of the PNT find year-round opportunities for inspiration and lifelong memories, challenge and personal transformation, the solitude of quiet places and kinship in being part of a larger legacy.

Purposes

National scenic trails are extended trails through iconic landscapes that 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 they go through. These premier trails provide visitors with profound experiences that not only create lasting memories but instill a stewardship ethic for generations to come.

Specifically, the purposes of the PNT are to provide for:

- conservation and enjoyment of scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources and values along the trail that exemplify qualities of the Northwest (inclusive of the West, Inland Northwest, and Pacific Northwest regions).
- maximum outdoor recreation potential as a premier, nationally significant opportunity for (1) hiking, with an emphasis on long-distance backpacking including end-to-end thru-hiking, as a primary use; (2) pack and saddle stock use as a primary use; and (3) other complementary non-motorized recreation, including bicycling, where appropriate to the setting and allowed by local management.
- opportunities for self-discovery, self-reliance, and the satisfaction of making your own way.
- opportunities for community and for service to the trail, its surrounding landscapes, and others through environmental education, interpretation, partnerships, volunteerism, and stewardship that encourage inclusion of all people, cultures, and abilities.

Adaptive Management and Monitoring Approach

An adaptive management approach helps managers ensure that desired conditions and objectives for the trail are achieved, and the intent of the comprehensive plan continues to be realized as future conditions change. This adaptive management and monitoring plan defines the indicators, thresholds, and potential adaptive management actions that will govern long-term management and potential adjustments needed to ensure desired conditions are being met. An adaptive management strategy allows for the monitoring of physical, social, and managerial resource objectives.

The PNT crosses multiple jurisdictions and passes through a variety of ecosystems. Monitoring and adaptive management approaches will range from site-specific issues to regional or trail-wide conditions and trends. In most cases, selection of appropriate indicators and thresholds, monitoring, and implementation of adaptive management actions will be done at the local level by local land managers. Overall monitoring trends will be reported to the Trail Administrator.

Monitoring is accomplished by selecting indicators that are used to track trends in resource and experiential conditions. Established thresholds clearly define when conditions are becoming unacceptable for the selected indicators, thus alerting managers that a change in management action(s) is required ([IVUMC Monitoring Guidebook](#)). The national scenic trail [adaptive management toolbox](#) focuses on visitor experience, recreation opportunities and facilities, and scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources to be preserved, and includes examples of several potential management actions that could be taken, as determined appropriate by local managers.

For example, the following paragraph describes potential management actions that could be taken related to indicators and thresholds for visitor carrying capacity.

Identifying the limiting factors or constraints related to carrying capacity within trail stages will guide management decisions to either manage visitor use within the constraint, or to take actions to remove the constraint. For example, if the number of campsites is the limiting factor, management actions to increase capacity of the area could include adding additional campsites, expanding the size of existing campsites to fit more people per site, or providing visitors with information about other overnight lodging options in the area. Managing within the constraint could be accomplished by requiring campsite permits to ensure that the campsite capacity is not exceeded. In some cases, more than one management action may be taken. This provides an adaptive approach to maintain the sustainable recreation opportunities along the trail over time.

Adaptive Management Process for Visitor Use Management

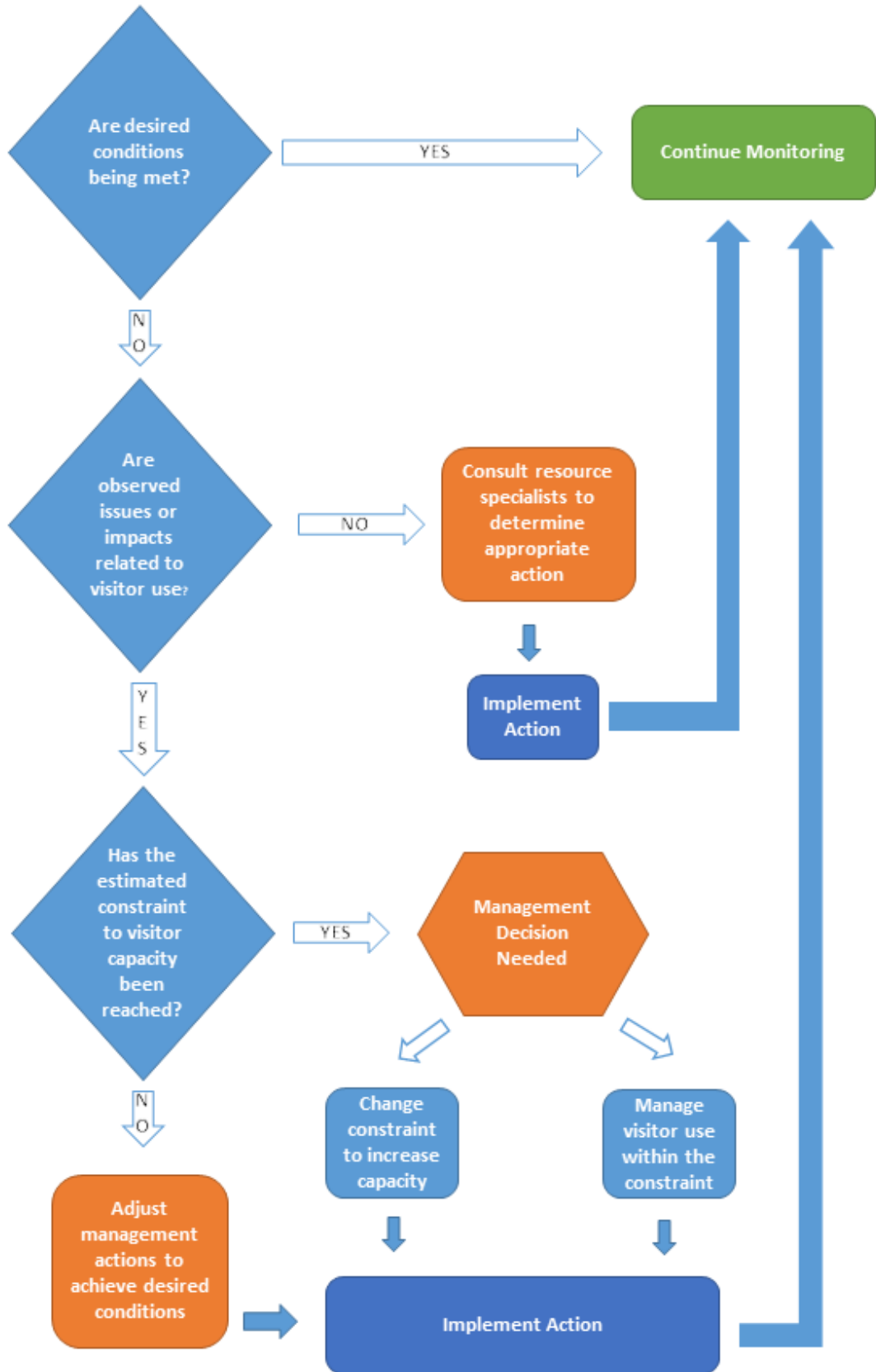


Figure 34. Flow chart depicting the adaptive management and monitoring approach

Table 18. Focus areas for monitoring

	Trail experience/desired conditions	Scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources
Visitor Use Driving Change	<p>Changes to visitor experiences that result from visitor use (such as crowding, goal conflict, conflict between different types of uses)</p> <p>Conflict between hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians</p> <p>Crowding at key destinations</p>	<p>Impacts to scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources that result from visitor use (such as human waste causing water quality concerns, damage to cultural sites, user created informal trails or campsites, habituation of wildlife)</p>
Other Factors Driving Change	<p>Changes to visitor experiences or desired trail conditions that result from factors other than visitor use (such as residential or commercial development adjacent to the trail, changes to scenic viewpoints, motorized use adjacent to or across the trail, availability of campsites)</p>	<p>Changes in the overall condition of scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources within the national trail planning corridor (such as air quality, invasive species, trail conditions, vegetation, wildlife)</p>

Identified Constraints

The following trail stages have identified limiting factors or constraints that may limit visitor use. Monitoring of the identified constraints will allow informed management decisions regarding sustainable use of the trail stage.

Table 19. Trail stages with a high need to address carrying capacity

Trail Stage	Limiting Factor
30	Overlap of PNT with Pacific Crest Trail and wilderness encounter standards that are currently being exceeded in the Pasayten Wilderness
32	High use and a potential need for management actions to address overnight use in the Mount Baker Wilderness
34-37	Need to secure public access or consider opportunities to re-locate the trail to improve visitor experience
45-50	High use in Olympic National Park and coordination with development of the wilderness stewardship plan

Table 20. Trail Stages with known camping or permit limitations

Trail Stage	Limiting Factor
1-3	Glacier National Park backcountry camping permit and overlap of the Pacific Northwest Trail with the Continental Divide Trail
30-31	North Cascades National Park Service Complex backcountry camping permit
45-46	Olympic National Park wilderness camping permit and quota areas Sol Duc-Seven Lakes Basin
50	Olympic National Park wilderness camping permits and quota area Ozette Coast

Table 21. Trail stages within grizzly bear recovery zones

Trail Stage	Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone*
1-9	Northern Continental Divide Recovery Zone
10-13	Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone
13-18	Selkirk Mountains Recovery Zone
27-33	North Cascades Recovery Zone

*Each grizzly bear recovery zone has its own management direction, High-use nonmotorized trails are not counted in the calculation of secure core habitat in the Northern Continental Divide recovery zone, but high-use nonmotorized trail (with an average of 20 parties per week during the non-denning season) are considered in calculations of secure core habitat for the Cabinet-Yaak, Selkirk and North Cascades recovery zones.

Desired Condition Zones

Recognizing that the PNT passes through a variety of natural and social settings, and that particular indicators and thresholds may not be applicable to the entire trail stage, local trail managers may also want to consider monitoring based on unique management zones. The typical recreation opportunity spectrum class and encounters are a general reference point for differing zones that can be further refined for local conditions as needed.

Table 22. Desired condition zones

Zone	Description	Typical recreation opportunity spectrum Class	Typical Max # of Groups Encountered/Day
Gateway Community / Trailhead – Urban Zone	High use, day-use, generally no overnight use unless in developed campgrounds or lodging. Primarily on roads or well-developed paths through higher population communities (10,000+ population). Representative trail stages: 37 through Anacortes and 41 through Port Townsend	Urban	75-125
Gateway Community / Trailhead Rural Zone	High to moderate use, high proportion of day use along with overnight visitors primarily staying in developed campgrounds or lodging. Close to motorized roads and access points. More developed than other subsequent zones. Poor opportunities for solitude throughout the season. Trail passes through or adjacent to smaller communities (generally <5,000 population). Representative trail stages: 4 through Polebridge and 25 through Oroville	Rural	50-75
Working Landscapes Zone	Trail generally on dirt roads, single track, or trails, nonmotorized use typically lower than in other zones. Encounters with vehicles frequent in some areas. Trail users experience working landscapes including active logging operations, visible forest vegetation treatments or agricultural areas. This zone often provides important connections between less developed portions of the trail. Representative trail stages: 26-27 and 34-36 Washington Department of Natural Resources and private timber company lands	Roaded Natural	30-50
Backcountry Zone	Use levels low to high. Mostly overnight use with some day use. Roads only occasionally nearby. Moderately developed. Moderate opportunity for solitude throughout the season. Representative trail stages: 5 – Flathead National Forest, 21 – Colville National Forest	Semi-Primitive Motorized	15-30
Primitive Zone	Use level very low to moderate. Within designated wilderness and areas that are managed to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. Primarily overnight use, often by long distance hikers. Remote, minimal development. Little to no vehicle access to	Primitive Semi-Primitive Nonmotorized	6-15

Zone	Description	Typical recreation opportunity spectrum Class	Typical Max # of Groups Encountered/Day
	trailheads. Good opportunity for solitude throughout the season. Representative Trail Stages: 1 and 2 Glacier National Park, 28-31 Pasayten and Mt Baker Wilderness ¹		

¹ Note: There are trail stages through popular, high use wilderness areas such as the Pasayten, Mt Baker, and the Olympic National Park where although the areas are designated wilderness and are managed for wilderness character, they are also high-use areas that are accounted for through local management direction.

Monitoring Process

The sections below ([Visitor Experience, Recreation Opportunities and Facilities](#)), and ([Scenic, Historic, Natural and Cultural Resources](#)), include potential indicators and thresholds to guide monitoring efforts, some indicators are relevant trail-wide, and others will apply only to certain trail stages, or to certain desired condition zones. The thresholds will need to be modified for site specific conditions. Local trail managers will select the relevant indicators and associated thresholds, or develop additional indicators to monitor, as needed. In some cases, existing monitoring plans may suffice in identifying indicators and thresholds, and local trail managers will implement monitoring, depending on existing plans and staff capabilities.

Items under the adaptive management toolbox headings for Visitor Experience, Recreation Opportunities and Facilities, and Scenic, Historic, Natural, and Cultural Resources, include both indirect and direct management approaches. Indirect management approaches attempt to influence user behavior indirectly rather than through regulations or restrictions, examples are information, education, or physical changes to encourage responsible behavior. Direct management approaches directly affect what users can and cannot do, examples are rules, area closures, permits, etc. (Driver and Moore 2005⁷⁸) The toolbox is meant to serve as a starting point in considering appropriate management actions, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all potential management actions. In general, the least intensive actions, or actions that are the least restrictive to visitor opportunities and experiences, that can achieve desired conditions should be used first.

The following management practices are included in the comprehensive plan:

- Consider visitor use management strategies such as increased education, information, and improved infrastructure to resolve use conflicts prior to implementing visitor use restrictions or limitations.
- Monitor visitor use on the Pacific Northwest Trail using such indicators as the condition of the natural and cultural resources and measures of visitor conflict and preference.

⁷⁸ Driver, B.L., Roger L. Moore. 2005. Introduction to Outdoor Recreation. Providing and Managing Natural Resource Based Opportunities. P. 237.

- Complete site-specific studies in high visitor use areas to determine proper use levels, management actions, and public outreach efforts needed to prevent degradation of the visitors' trail experience and prevent impacts to natural and cultural resources.
- National Park Service managers will use capacity estimates developed for General Park or Resource Management Plans (identification and implementation of visitor carrying capacities for units of the National Park System are required by the National Parks and Recreation Act, Section 604(b)(3)). Managers should consider national scenic trail resources, qualities, values and uses when developing these plans.

The flow chart, Figure 34. , illustrates three key questions to ask during the monitoring process to help determine the type of management actions that may be needed.

1. Are desired conditions being met?
2. Are observed issues or impacts related to visitor use?
3. Has the estimated constraint of carrying capacity been reached?

National Scenic Trail Adaptive Management Toolbox

For each scenic trail value, there is at least one objective, indicator, threshold, and associated adaptive management action.

Visitor Experience, Recreation Opportunities and Facilities

Carrying capacity, through travelers

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 23. Carrying capacity, through travelers – adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and Purposes	Implement carrying capacity (trail-wide capacity for through-travelers)	Number of through travelers	Trail wide capacity for through travel is from 552 to 1,748 people per high-use season (mid-June through mid-September) based on identified limiting factors.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

Continue monitoring trail register data and trail completion reports to determine if thru hiker numbers are approaching the trail wide capacity numbers.

If thru hiker capacity is reached, consider a long-distance trail hiking permit to manage use within capacity.

Monitoring Responsibility:

- USDA Forest Service
 - Collect trail register data (Kootenai National Forest)
 - Monitor trail use (Colville National Forest)
- USDA Forest Service and University of Montana
 - Monitor trail use in Idaho and Montana
- National Park Service
 - Identify and monitor backcountry permits for PNT long-distance travelers.
- Bureau of Land Management
 - Monitor trail use (Okanogan vicinity)
- Washington State Parks
 - Collect PNT hiker register data.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association

- Collect thru-hiker completion data (voluntary)
- Monitor social media (PNT Hikers Facebook group)

Carrying capacity, Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk grizzly bear recovery zones

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 24. Carrying capacity - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and Purposes, Significant resources to be preserved	Implement carrying capacity (site-specific capacity in trail stages 10-18 based on existing management direction for Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk grizzly bear recovery zones from Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests land management plans). Conserve scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preserve significant natural, historical, and cultural resources.	Number of parties per week (all trail users).	Average of less than 20 parties per week during the non-denning season to retain current status and avoid new high-use trails. Maximum capacity of individual trail users depends on the number of users per party. Using a party size of 12 people, the estimated capacity for all trail users on the PNT in this area (inclusive of through users) between June 15-Sept 15 would be 3,128 people. Trigger points have been identified based on smaller party sizes.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Trigger points and thresholds for visitor use in Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains grizzly bear recovery zones (trail stages 10-18) based on the definition of a high-use nonmotorized trail (with an average of 20 parties per week during the non-denning season).

Table 25. Trigger points and thresholds for visitor use, Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains grizzly bear recovery zones

Trigger Point and Thresholds	Parties Per Week	Group Size	People per week	People per day	People per high use season (June 15-Sept 15)
Trigger Point 1	20	1	20	3	276
Trigger Point 2	20	2	40	6	552
Maximum Capacity	20	12	240	34	3,128

Actions

Continue site-specific monitoring, see management actions in visitor capacity implementation plan if triggers are reached.

If the maximum capacity is reached, take action to manage use within the capacity, such as issuing a limited number of trail permits.

If trail use exceeds an average of 20 parties per week during the high-use season, the trail would be considered a high-use trail and would require compensation for the loss of core habitat per the access amendment to the Kootenai Forest Plan. Compensation could be through closure of an open motorized route.

Monitoring Responsibility:

- USDA Forest Service
 - Collect trail register data (Kootenai National Forest)
- USDA Forest Service and University of Montana
 - Monitor trail use in Idaho and Montana

Carrying capacity, number of trail users

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 26. Number of trail users - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and Purposes	Implement carrying capacity (site-specific capacity or threshold where applicable)	Number of trail users, potentially by type of use	Existing site-specific capacity or appropriate desired conditions zone (see “Desired Condition Zones” and “PNT Stages Summary Information for Carrying Capacity” in this section) OR To be determined by local managing unit where needed to facilitate visitor use management.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

If monitoring demonstrates issues related to resource damage, congestion, safety, or visitor experiences are on a downward trend over several years, implement management actions to manage use within the defined trail capacity. Capacity could also be adjusted upwards if trends demonstrate that all objectives are improved and sustainable into the future.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing unit.

Trail experience, visitor satisfaction

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 27. Visitor satisfaction - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and Purposes, Trail Experience	Maximum outdoor recreation potential. Public enjoyment of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the areas the trail goes through.	Visitor satisfaction	To be determined by local land managers

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

Address underlying issue that is decreasing visitor satisfaction, as appropriate.

Monitoring Responsibility

- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor the Pacific Northwest Trail Association trail completion surveys and social media for visitor satisfaction trends.
 - Monitor social media and trail information mobile applications for potential issues, events, visitor use trends.
- USDA Forest Service
 - Include the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail in visitor use studies such as the Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey and explore other opportunities to collect visitor satisfaction information.

Primary uses, trailhead capacity

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 28. Trailhead capacity issues - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Primary uses	Maximum outdoor recreation potential. Provide opportunities for primary uses.	Trailhead capacity issues, especially for trucks with trailers, or overflow parking along the roads; number of vehicles at trailheads per day	Number of days trailhead capacity exceeded per season

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Enforce parking within established trailhead.
- Construct additional trailhead facilities, include accommodations for trucks and horse trailers where equestrian use is popular.
- Provide information about other opportunities/locations for a spectrum of uses and abilities.
- Provide information and promote the use of shuttle services and public transit where feasible.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing unit.

Primary uses, trail experience

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 29. Special events - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Primary uses, Trail experience	Provide opportunities for primary uses	Increase in requests for special events, or events that would impact the through hiking season.	Maximum number of special events per stage, per year.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- See criteria for consideration of special events in the comprehensive plan.

- Consider the number and type of competitive events or large-group events trail-wide and their effect on the through hiker experience when evaluating new events.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing unit.

Primary uses - accidents, conflicts, or other safety issues

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 30. Accidents, conflicts, or other safety issues - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes Primary uses Trail experience	Maximum outdoor recreation potential Provide opportunities for primary uses	Number or increase in incidence of documented accidents, conflicts, or other safety issues where the trail is on a road.	Maximum number of reported incidents per stage, per season

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase information and signing to warn both motorized vehicles and trail users of potential safety hazards.
- Work with road manager to identify and implement pedestrian safety features.
- Re-route trail off of road.

Monitoring Responsibility

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association, local managing units, and transportation departments to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Primary uses – conflict between use types

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 31. Conflict between use types - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Primary uses, Trail experience	Maximum outdoor recreation potential Provide opportunities for primary uses	Documented conflict between use types, such as between day use and through travel, or between modes of travel such as hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Potential documentation through surveys.	Maximum number of documented conflicts per stage, per season

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase information, education, and interpretation about multiple use trails and trail ethics.
- Consider trail use restrictions such as by type of use, direction of travel, or days of use.
- Increase education regarding appropriate trail uses and/or incorporate trail design features to slow the rate of travel or widen trail to reduce conflict.
- Consider alternate routes for mountain bikes or equestrians, as appropriate.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association, local managing units, and organizations representing equestrians, bicyclists, and other users to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, number of nights campsites at full capacity

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 32. Campsite capacity - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes,	Maximum outdoor recreation potential.	Number of nights that campsites are	To be determined by local land managers

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Primary uses, Trail experience	Provide opportunities for primary uses.	at full capacity per season	

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Add more designated campsites.
- Expand size of existing sites to accommodate more people / site.
- Create hiker-biker sites and/or equestrian group sites for PNT use.
- Provide connecting or side trails to access campgrounds off the PNT.
- Issue camping permits.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- National Park Service
 - Identify and monitor backcountry permits for PNT long-distance travelers (as well as PNT permit requests that can't be fulfilled or require travel off PNT to be fulfilled).
- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units, and organizations to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, significant resources to be preserved

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 33. Camping outside designated areas - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources.	Incidence of people camping outside of the designated camping areas	Maximum number of incidents per stage, per season. Maximum amount of campsite proliferation or expansion per season.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase information and education regarding campsite limitations and other nearby camping options.
- Increase the number and/or size of campsites available.
- Consider adding sidehill campsite creation (See work by Jeff Marion).
- Implement techniques to disguise or prevent access to closed areas to rehabilitate them.
- Increase enforcement.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- USDA Forest Service
 - Conduct campsite inventories in key areas such as wilderness, wildlife habitat, and/or cultural resource areas and monitor for campsite proliferation or expansion.

Trail experience, conflict between trail users and recreational shooters

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 34. Conflict between trail users and recreational shooters - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Primary uses, Trail experience	Maximum outdoor recreation potential. Provide opportunities for primary uses.	Incidence of conflict between trail users and recreational shooters.	Maximum number of conflicts per stage, per season.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase signage and visitor information regarding the proximity of the trail to popular shooting areas.
- Increase patrol and enforcement.
- Manage target shooting activity and plinking within a certain distance of the trail, where allowed by the managing agency.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units, and organizations to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, equestrian use, animal waste

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 35. Horse manure - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Primary uses, Trail experience	Maximum outdoor recreation potential. Provide opportunities for primary use.	Presence of accumulated horse manure on trails (typically within the first couple miles from	Presence or absence

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
		equestrian trailheads)	

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Educate equestrians regarding options to reduce horse manure on the trail.
- Provide a separate equestrian trail for the first 0.5 to 0.75 miles from a trailhead, where manure tends to accumulate, as horses first set out on the trail and become active.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- USDA Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Gather data when surveying trail conditions.
- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association, local managing units, and organizations representing equestrian users to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, crowding at popular viewpoints or campsites

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 36. Crowding at popular viewpoints - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes Trail experience	Maximum outdoor recreation potential. Public enjoyment of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through.	Crowding at popular viewpoints or campsites.	People at one time, people per view shed (people within view/people visible at one time).

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase information and education regarding popular viewpoints or campsite limitations and other nearby camping options.
- Provide education about options to visit popular areas during less busy seasons.

- Realign the trail and/or redesign the viewpoint or campsite.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.

Trail experience, availability of water

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 37. Availability of water - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Primary uses, Trail experience	Provide opportunities for primary uses.	Availability of Water.	Average miles between dependable water sources.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Provide visitor education regarding the scarcity of water along the trail and the need to be prepared to carry water.
- Work with partners to develop additional water sources.

Monitoring Responsibility

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- USDA Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Gather data when surveying trail conditions.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, noise levels

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 38. Noise levels- adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience	Public enjoyment of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through.	Survey data regarding noise in key locations (decibel levels and amount of motorized use), especially related to motorized use adjacent to, or crossing the trail.	Maximum number of complaints per passage, per season or survey data in excess of a set threshold.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Provide information to trail users to enhance their understanding and expectations regarding adjacent motorized use and opportunities for solitude along the trail.
- Address noise concerns in the travel management planning process, consider options to reduce noise in proximity to popular nonmotorized areas.
- Consider criteria developed by the National Park Service Natural Sounds program and tools such as: SPreAD-GIS: an ArcGIS toolbox for modeling the propagation of engine noise in a wildland setting, to assist in quantifying noise, mapping locations of potential impact, and developing mitigations as appropriate to the local conditions.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units as necessary.

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, adjacent activities or development

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 39. Adjacent activities or development - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Public enjoyment of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources.	Adjacent activities or development affecting trail experience such as impacts to scenic views, impacts to dark night skies, or increased noise adjacent to the trail.	Presence or absence

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Encourage use of design standards and best management practices to maintain scenic integrity, dark skies, etc.
- Purchase right-of way or acquire land, develop agreements, encourage conservation easements in corridor, or consider relocation of trail segment.

Monitoring Responsibility

- Local managing agency
 - Collect and maintain data on projects and permitted activities along the trail
- USDA Forest Service
 - Collect and maintain data on projects and permitted activities adjacent to the trail that may affect trail experience.
 - Update trail-wide scenic inventory as needed.
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Scenic, Historic, Natural, and Cultural Resources

Significant resources to be preserved, water quality

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 40. Water quality standards - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Significant resources to be preserved	Conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Stream segments meet state water quality standards. Water quality (unhealthful levels of E. coli).	Requirements set by state Department(s) of Environmental Quality

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Identify possible sources of pollutants.
- Implement corrective actions to reduce pollutants to levels consistent with water quality standards.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing agency.

Trail experience - human waste

Adaptive Management Metrics**Table 41. Human waste - adaptive management metrics**

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Public enjoyment and conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Incidence/amount of human waste along trail or at campsites	Maximum number of incidents per stage, per season

Adaptive Management ToolboxActions

- Provide guidance on Leave No Trace methods for handling human waste.
- Install vault toilet or other type of toilet appropriate for wilderness area and/or jurisdictional management objectives.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing agency.

- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- USDA Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Gather data when surveying trail conditions.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Trail experience, trail standards

Adaptive Management Metrics**Table 42. Trail standards - adaptive management metrics**

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes,	Maximum outdoor recreation potential.	Trail maintained to standard	Minimum miles of trail maintained to standard per season

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Primary uses, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Provide opportunities for primary uses. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources		

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase seasonal workforce, volunteers, and partners for trail maintenance efforts.

Monitoring Responsibility

- Local managing agency
 - Collect and maintain data on trail conditions and maintenance activities.
- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- USDA Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Collect and maintain data on trail conditions and maintenance activities.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Maintain data on trail maintenance activities performed by Pacific Northwest Trail Association crews and volunteers.

Trail experience, user created trails

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 43. User-created or modified trails - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Public enjoyment and conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Presence of user-created trails; trail widening, impacts to vegetation along trail	Number of user-created trails or trail impacts per mile or per stage

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Address drainage or other issues that may encourage trail widening.
- Close and restore user-created trails.
- Use trail design methods such as trail hardening, signage, barriers, etc. to physically contain hikers to the trail.
- Establish access trails in sustainable locations to features such as viewpoints, water sources, campsites, etc.
- Realign or relocate the PNT to an alignment that discourages creation of user-created trails.

Monitoring Responsibility

- Local land managers
 - Gather data when surveying trail conditions.
- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- USDA Forest Service and Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Gather data when surveying trail conditions.

Significant resources to be preserved, proximity to springs

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 44. Campsites; number, concentration, size, disturbance near water - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Public enjoyment and conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Number of campsites, size of campsite disturbed area, especially where use is concentrated near springs	Number or percent increase over time

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase and enhance visitor information including but not limited to environmental education, interpretation, Leave No Trace Ethics.

- Develop more campsites and/or expand the size of existing campsites to fit more people per site.
- Issue campsite permits.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing units.

- USDA Forest Service and local managing units
 - Conduct campsite inventory.
- USDA Forest Service
 - Talk with Pacific Northwest Trail Association and local managing units to identify potential issues.
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association
 - Monitor trail completion surveys, social media, and trail information mobile apps for potential issues.

Significant resources to be preserved, wildlife behavior

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 45. Disturbance to wildlife - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Significant resources to be preserved	Conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Wildlife behavior: potential disturbance due to use levels	To be determined by local land managers, dependent on wildlife species

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Encourage trail users to carry bear spray and be prepared with knowledge to use it if needed.
- Promote compliance with food storage orders. Increase enforcement of food storage orders, as necessary.
- Discourage off-trail use or camping, as necessary.
- Apply seasonal closures, as necessary.
- Realign or relocate the trail, as necessary.

- See specific recommendations in the visitor capacity implementation plan for trail stages within grizzly bear recovery zones.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing unit.

Significant resources to be preserved, invasive species

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 46. Invasive species - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Significant resources to be preserved	Conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through. Preservation of significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Invasive species	To be determined by local land managers, dependent on weed species.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase education and information regarding invasive species.
- Install and encourage use of boot cleaning stations.
- Require use of weed free feed for horses.

Monitoring Responsibility

To be determined by local managing unit.

Significant resources to be preserved, wilderness character

Adaptive Management Metrics

Table 47. Changes to wilderness character - adaptive management metrics

Trail Values	Trail Objectives	Indicator	Threshold
Nature and purposes, Trail experience, Significant resources to be preserved	Public enjoyment and conservation of the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the area the trail goes through.	Changes to wilderness character	See wilderness plans for group size, and other site-specific thresholds.

Adaptive Management Toolbox

Actions

- Increase and enhance visitor information including but not limited to environmental education, interpretation, Leave No Trace Ethics.
- Implement wilderness permit requirements.

Monitoring Responsibility

- Local managing agency
 - Monitor wilderness character

Monitoring Schedule

The annual monitoring report containing input from local land managers and partners, will be compiled by the trail administrator. This report should:

- Provide a snapshot of the status and trend in the condition of the selected indicators for the trail's resources and values.
- Document how the trail conditions compare with the established thresholds.
- Highlight trail projects and accomplishments to maintain or improve trail conditions.
- Identify key issues and challenges to inform adaptive management approaches.
- Provide a visual documentation using a simple condition and trend status.

Table 48. Visual condition and trend status

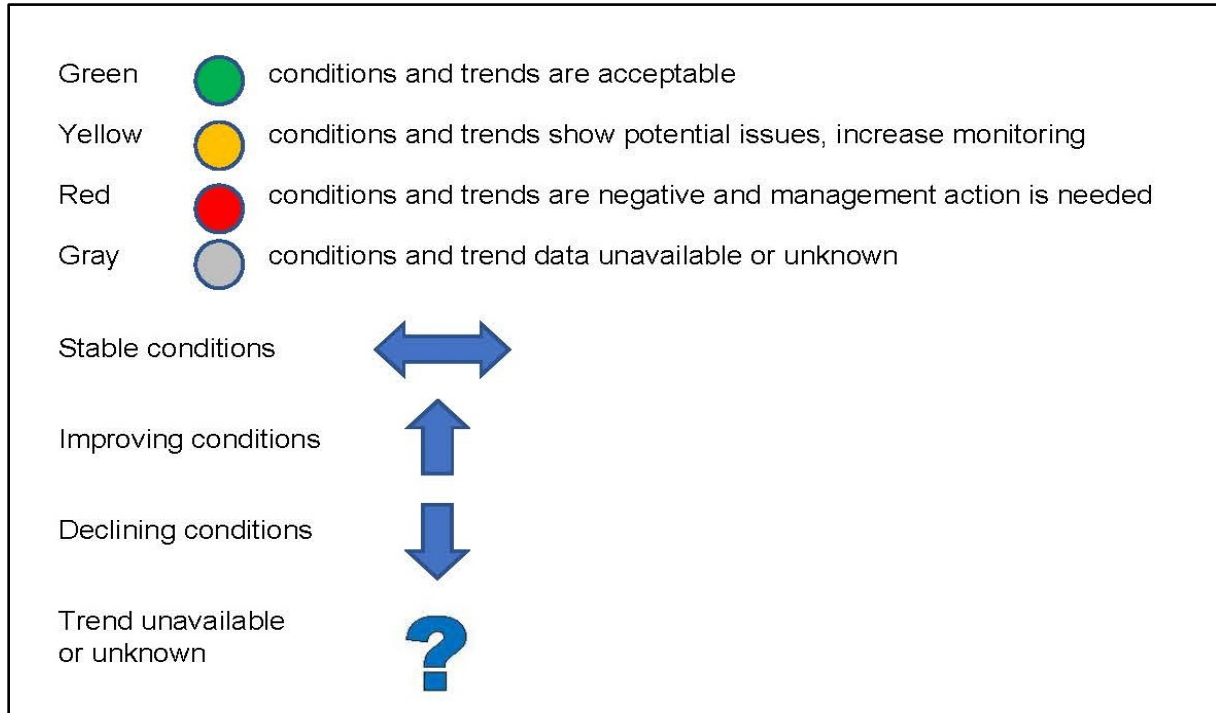


Table 49. Monitoring schedule

Indicator	Data Source	Monitoring Schedule
Carrying Capacity	Trail register, trail counter, or other relevant visitor use data sources	Annual or every 1-3 years. Frequency to be determined by the local unit.
Visitor Experience	Visitor surveys or other relevant visitor experience data	Annual or every 2 to 5 years. Frequency to be determined by the local unit.
Resource Conditions	Local management unit condition surveys	Percentage of trail annually. Scope and frequency to be determined by the local unit.
Trail Infrastructure Conditions	Local management unit maintenance data	Annual or to be determined by local unit.

Appendix G. Recommended Priority Actions

The following are priority actions recommended to be undertaken within the first five years of the comprehensive plan's adoption. The specific timing for implementation of these actions will depend on subsequent coordination between the Forest Service, the managing agencies, and relevant partner organizations. This is not an exhaustive list of the actions that may be undertaken within the first five years to implement the comprehensive plan. For all these actions, the Forest Service and the managing agencies should undertake consultation and collaboration with the affected tribes and seek to incorporate tribal expertise and indigenous knowledge (see [chapter 1](#) and [chapter 2](#)).

Collaborative Management

- As recommended by the PNT Advisory Council at its June 15-16, 2023, meeting, explore options to extend the timeframe of the advisory council, or for a similarly collaborative group of diverse interests focused on the PNT.
- Meet with managing agencies and partner organizations to discuss capacity and funding needs related to PNT management and implementation of this comprehensive plan, and to identify opportunities to strategically align and leverage resources.

Monitoring

- Implement the monitoring plan in coordination with the managing agencies and partner organizations and utilize the adaptive management toolbox (see [appendix F](#)).
- Develop documents, website pages, story maps, dashboards, or other tools and use them to share monitoring reports and trends with the public (see [chapter 6](#)).
- Develop a monitoring question (with tribal input) specific to the impact of trail use on treaty reserved rights and resources such as wildlife, cultural resources and harvesting areas of affected Tribes (including the Tulalip Tribes of Washington), to determine if tribal treaty rights and treaty resource protection are a future limiting factor for carrying capacity.

Trail Location

- Update the Forest Service's Infra Trails database to include complete information for the PNT on National Forest System lands.
- Coordinate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to update and refine the geospatial data for the PNT and to identify the PNT on maps and other visitor information.
- Coordinate with the managing agencies, private landowners, and partner organizations to identify priority areas for Optimal Location Review (OLR). Likely priority areas would include, but not be limited to, segments in the vicinity of Boundary Dam in northeast

Washington, Mt. Baker in western Washington, and Discovery Bay on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. Convene Optimal Location Review teams and begin undertaking Optimal Location Review for priority areas. (See [chapter 5](#).)

Visitor Use Management

- Coordinate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to collect data to measure use patterns and visitor impacts along the PNT.
- Coordinate with the relevant managing agencies regarding trail stages identified as having a high need to address carrying capacity (trail stages 30, 32, 34-37, and 45-50) (see [chapter 5](#) and [appendix F](#)) In addition, coordinate with Glacier National Park regarding trail stage 1 to determine if more recent information regarding use of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail warrants its consideration as having high need to address carrying capacity.
- Coordinate with the North Cascades National Park Service Complex and Olympic National Park on their development of draft wilderness stewardship plans for those units.
- Gather information from the national parks along the PNT regarding current approaches and challenges related to issuing permits for PNT long-distance hikers under the parks' existing permit systems, as well as the nexus with the Recreation.gov website.
- Coordinate with the National Park Service and the other managing agencies and partner organizations regarding potential development of a coordinated long-distance permit for the PNT (see [chapter 5](#)).

Visitor Information and Interpretation

- Coordinate with the managing agencies to identify segments of the trail that provide opportunities for pack and saddle stock use and bicycles (see [chapter 3](#)) and update visitor information to reflect this. Coordinate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to provide visitor information targeted to pack and saddle stock users and bicyclists. As part of this effort, gather information about the status of electric bicycle use ("e-bikes") across jurisdictions and relevant visitor information needs to help prevent accidental use of electronic bicycles in areas where it is not permitted.
- Develop videos, story maps, website features, or other tools for effective messaging to trail visitors around health and safety, natural and cultural resource protection, and other topics highlighted in [chapter 5](#).
- Develop a new service mark for the trail. Submit the design to the Forest Service, Washington Office to be registered as a federal mark.

Facilities and Signs

- Update the inventory of PNT signs or other marks across the trail. Coordinate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to install signs where they are needed and in

accordance with guidance in this comprehensive plan and the managing agency's sign standards and guidelines (see [chapter 5](#)). Until a new service mark for the trail has been selected, prioritize installing signs that would not include the service mark.

- Coordinate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to determine whether there is a need for a document or other management tool that brings together the relevant guidance related to signs and facilities across the PNT. If needed, develop this and make it available to the managing agencies and partner organizations.

Trail Closures and Temporary Detours

- Coordinate with the managing agencies and partner organizations to identify preferred temporary detour routes to be used in the event of future emergencies that necessitate closure of the trails, roads, or areas along the PNT (see [chapter 5 Chapter 5. Objectives](#)).

Land Acquisition and Protection

- Develop a management toolbox for land acquisition and protection along the trail (see management toolbox in [appendix D](#)).
- Review land ownership information for parcels along the trail (see [State, County, Municipal, and Private Lands](#) in appendix D). Coordinate as needed with states and counties to obtain up-to-date information. In particular, prioritize coordination with Island County on land ownership information due to the extent of private lands along the trail.
- Contact private landowners along the trail to provide information about the trail and opportunities for donation, purchase, or exchange of lands or interests in lands; voluntary cooperative agreements; or other approaches for management of the trail (see [Methods and Tools](#) in appendix D).
- Coordinate with the tribal, state, and local governments that manage segments of the PNT regarding opportunities for donation, purchase, or exchange of lands or interests in lands; voluntary cooperative agreements; or other approaches for management of the PNT (see [Cooperation with States, Counties, Municipalities, Private Landowners, and Private Organizations for Trail Management](#) in appendix D.)
- Establish voluntary cooperative agreements between the Forest Service and the other federal managing agencies (National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management) documenting cooperation for management of the PNT within federally administered areas. Coordinate to identify opportunities and roles related to land acquisition and protection for the PNT on non-federal lands. (See [Cooperative Agreements](#) in appendix D.)