Ten-Year Trail Shared Stewardship Challenge

Phase 1: *Launch and Learn*, Fiscal Year 2022

Guidebook

Contents

Introduction

With 160,000 miles of trails, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service manages the Nation's largest trail system, including thousands of miles of nationally designated scenic, historic, and recreation trails.[1] National Forest System trails bring physical, spiritual, and mental benefits to communities and individuals nationwide. These trails are also used as tools to protect natural and cultural resources and support the Forest Service's core values of service, conservation, interdependence, diversity, and safety.

Trails are powerful economic generators, contributing billions of dollars each year to the economy and supporting thousands of jobs in outdoor recreation and tourism. Continued maintenance of these resources is dependent on the shared stewardship of agency employees, Indian Tribes, partners, volunteers, contractors, permittees, and communities—collectively known as the "trail community." We are reliant on one another—people from all walks of life and diverse perspectives—to steward trails for the benefit of all people.

Why Do We Need a Trail Challenge?

Despite the great work happening in support of trails, workload demands continue to outpace the capacity of agency staff, partners, and volunteers. For example, many National Forest System trails were historically not well designed or well located. These unsustainable trails—and the proliferation of unauthorized or user-created routes—drain agency resources.

There are further barriers to efficient trail management, including increasing use levels, changing technology and use patterns, damage from natural disasters, and out-of-date data collection methods and reporting processes. Gaps in skills, training, and staffing exacerbate the situation. Employees also recognize staff and user groups often don't reflect an area's demographic composition. Many districts and partners struggling with these issues are developing their own solutions, resulting in duplication of effort or inconsistencies.

To address these shortcomings, the Forest Service has issued a 10-year Trail Challenge. It focuses the collective energy and resources of the trail community on actions resulting in greater collective capacity to manage and maintain trails, as well as more miles of trails that are well designed, well maintained, and well suited to support recreation use today and into the future.

About the Guidebook

This is a guidebook for fiscal year 2022[2] and Phase 1 *(Launch and Learn)* of the 10-Year Trail Shared Stewardship Challenge. This document also can be found online at https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-

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[1] Information about the National Trails System can be found at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/index.htm.

[2] The Forest Service fiscal year is October 1 to September 30

land/trails/10YTC. The guidebook was developed by the Forest Service's national trail teams, including the National Trail Board,[3] Trails Advisory Group, and National Scenic and Historic Trail Administrators[4] group. These trail leaders will review, update, and share the action items (table 3) in a guidebook updated annually. The phase, version number, and revision date for each guidebook is on the front cover. Please send comments or suggestions about improving this document to the Forest Service's Trail Management Program (wo_trail_program@usda.gov).

Key Points About the Trail Challenge

- **It provides a framework** to carry out the National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System and the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act of 2016.

- **Goals are to** increase collective trail workforce capacity and increase trail sustainability.

- **Implementation is divided into three phases** with increasing focus in each phase: *Launch and Learn, Hitting Our Stride, and Peak Performance*.

- **Progress is measured** through annually updated action items organized in seven categories (called "elements") and through nine metrics.

- **Phase 1 (*Launch and Learn*) is largely focused on developing foundational tools and processes** at the regional and national level to be used by the field in later phases.

- **Increased workforce capacity and trail sustainability** should be achieved at the end of the Trail Challenge. Administrative tools and processes will be standardized and consistently applied. Transformational relationships and practices for managing and maintaining trails will be common in the trail community.

- **Agency employees are encouraged to work with their line officers** and regional trail program managers to implement the Trail Challenge.

- **Partners and volunteers are encouraged to work with local agency trail staff** to implement the Trail Challenge.

- **The latest guidebook with action items and reporting instructions** can be downloaded from the Trail Challenge web page. Visit the National Trail Program SharePoint site for supporting templates and communication material about the Trail Challenge.[5]

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[3] The National Trail Board is made up of Forest Service staff representing regional office trail programs, Washington Office staff, and liaisons from other programs throughout the agency (including the National Scenic and Historic Trail Administrators, the Trails Advisory Group, and regional office recreation directors).

[4] Visit the America's National Trails web page for more information about Forest Service-administered National Scenic and Historic Trails, available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails.
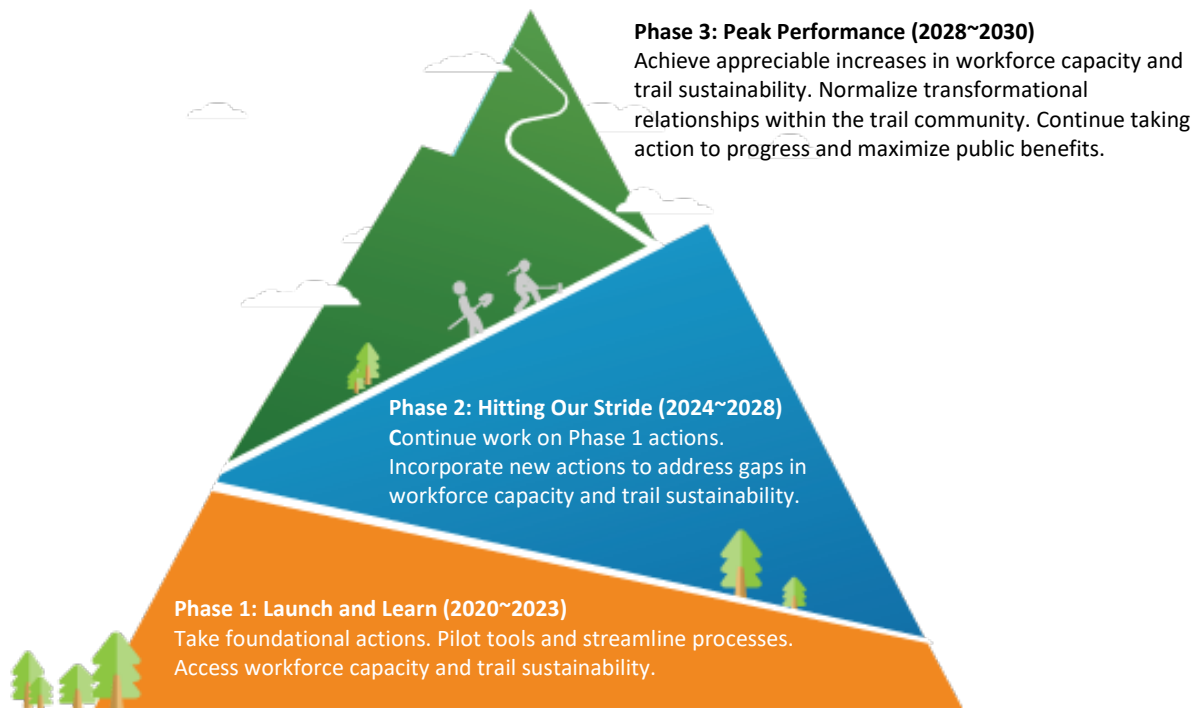
[5] The National Trail Program SharePoint site will be available in spring 2022 at *(internal link)* https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-ntprg.

Trail Challenge Phases

The Trail Challenge has three phases with increasing requirements and standardization with each phase (figure 1). Phase 1 is titled *Launch and Learn*. In this phase, Forest Service staff at the regional and national levels take foundational actions to support field units and those units' partners and volunteers. Examples of foundational work include setting up a SharePoint site for trail managers and developing consistent tools and processes for assessing trails for sustainability.

FIGURE 1. TRAIL CHALLENGE PHASES

Tracking Progress

Phase 3: Peak Performance (2028~2030)
Achieve appreciable increases in workforce capacity and trail sustainability. Normalize transformational relationships within the trail community. Continue taking action to progress and maximize public benefits.

Phase 2: Hitting Our Stride (2024~2028)
Continue work on Phase 1 actions. Incorporate new actions to address gaps in workforce capacity and trail sustainability.

Phase 1: Launch and Learn (2020~2023)
Take foundational actions. Pilot tools and streamline processes. Access workforce capacity and trail sustainability.

Progress is tracked through the annual reporting of nine metrics (table 1) and accomplishment of actions organized under seven Trail Challenge elements (table 2). The majority of the metrics are part of regular annual reporting for National Forest System trails and the Volunteers and Services program.[6] The remaining metrics will be reported online by district, forest, grassland, and regional trail leads.[7] Progress will be displayed on an ArcGIS Online dashboard.[8] Reporting is due October 31 each year.

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[6] Find more information about the Volunteer and Services program reporting at *(internal link)* http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rhwr/vsp/index.shtml.

[7] Online reporting will be through ArcGIS Online surveys. Forests and grassland units should designate individuals to enter Trail Challenge accomplishments through a Survey123 form. The designated person requires an ArcGIS Online account. Employee access can be granted through the Web GIS SharePoint site at *(internal link)* https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cio-webgis/SitePages/Home.aspx.

[8] The Trail Challenge dashboard will be available for fiscal year (FY) 2022 reporting as a link from the National Trail Program SharePoint site *(internal link)* https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-ntprg.

Metrics

TABLE 1. TRAIL CHALLENGE METRICS

Trail Challenge goal	Metric	Reporting instructions	Reporting resources
Goal 1: Increase collective workforce capacity	Metric 1: Number of forests and grasslands with baseline trails workforce.	**Forests and grasslands** participate in regionally led workforce evaluations. **Regions** enter the outcomes for each forest and grassland in an ArcGIS Online survey.	The recommended tool to evaluate baseline workforce will be posted on the National Trail Program SharePoint site. **Reporting on this metric is not required for fiscal year 2022.**
	Metric 2: Number of partner and volunteer hours contributed to trails.	**Forests and grasslands** enter hours in the Volunteer and Services Reports database as part of regular annual reporting. Select "Trails" in the "Focus Areas" section for Priority 1, 2, or 3.	Volunteer and Services reporting database
Goal 2: Increase trail sustainability	Metric 3: Number of National Forest System trail miles maintained.	**Forests and grasslands** enter miles in Infra as part of regular annual reporting.	Infra Trails Module
	Metric 4: Number of National Forest System trail miles improved.	**Forests and grasslands** enter miles in Infra as part of regular annual reporting.	Infra Trails Module

Trail Challenge goal	Metric	Reporting instructions	Reporting resources
	Metric 5: Number of National Forest System trail miles meeting standard.[9]	**Forests and grasslands** enter miles in Infra as part of regular annual reporting.	Infra Trails Module
	Metric 6: Number of National Forest System trail miles assessed for sustainability.	**Districts** report, in an ArcGIS Online survey, the number of trail miles that have been assessed for sustainability in the current fiscal year. Reporting on this metric is cumulative. The number of assessed trail miles will be added to the previous years to show progress toward assessing 100 percent of all National Forest System trails.	The recommended assessment tool will be posted on the National Trail Program SharePoint site. **Reporting on this metric is not required for fiscal year 2022.**
	Metric 7: Number of sustainable National Forest System trail miles identified from the assessments.	**Districts** report, in an ArcGIS Online survey, the total miles of sustainable National Forest System trails on the district in the current fiscal year. The number of sustainable trail miles will be added to the total from previous years to show progress.	**Reporting on this metric is not required for fiscal year 2022.**

[9] Trails that "meet standard" meet a level of quality for health and cleanliness, resource setting, safety and security, responsiveness, and condition as described in Forest Service Handbook 2309.18, available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5403600.pdf.

Trail Challenge goal	Metric	Reporting instructions	Reporting resources
	Metric 8: Percent of each Forest Service-administered National Scenic and Historic Trail[10] that is complete.[11]	**National Scenic and Historic Trail Administrators** communicate the percent complete with the National Trail Program lead (including miles on and off land managed by the Forest Service).	Email current National Trail Program manager or wo_trail_program@usda.gov.
Metric common to both goals	Metric 9: Diversity, equity, and inclusion principles that forests and grasslands are implementing.	**Districts** select or describe how diversity, equity, and inclusion principles were incorporated on the district during the fiscal year.	Access the survey https://arcg.is/1LSKiG0.[12]

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[10] Visit the America's National Trails web page for more information about Forest Service-administered National Scenic and Historic Trails, available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails.

[11] A National Scenic Trail is "complete" when it has continuous trail tread with permanent public access. A National Historic Trail is "complete" when the original route(s) is/are identified and mapped, the cultural landscape or corridor is delineated, and appropriate interpretation has been developed through consultation and is in place.

[12] Forests and grassland units should designate individuals to enter Trail Challenge accomplishments through a Survey123 form. The designated person requires an ArcGIS Online account. Employee access can be granted through the Web GIS SharePoint site at *(internal link)* https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cio-webgis/SitePages/Home.aspx.

Elements

Action items are organized into seven categories (called "elements"): Training, Workforce, Trail Sustainability, Data, Agency Processes, Working Together, and National Scenic and Historic Tails (table 2). Collectively, these action items are referred to as the "Trail Challenge Program of Work." The Trail Challenge Program of Work will be reviewed and updated annually by the national trail teams and included in an updated version of this guidebook.

Action items being taken in fiscal year (FY) 2022 are described in table 3. Actions specific to Forest Service field employees and potential actions for partners and volunteers are listed in the boxes below table 3.

Partners and volunteers are encouraged to work on element actions with agency employees, where feasible and desirable, and to take the lead on additional actions to make progress toward the Trail Challenge goals.

TABLE **2.** TRAIL CHALLENGE ELEMENTS

Element
A. Training (Trail Strategy Actions 2.3, 2.4) *Implement a collaborative approach to trail training and partner, volunteer, and contract management.*
B. Workforce (Trail Strategy Actions 2.1, 2.2, 3.5, 5.3) *Retain trail skills and talent. Achieve baseline workforce capacity that reflects the demographics of the American public.*
C. Trail Sustainability (Trail Strategy Actions 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5) *Provide well-designed and well-maintained trails that are well suited to support recreation use today and into the future.*
D. Data (Trail Strategy Actions 6.1, 6.2, 6.3) *Meet trail data standards. Improve trail data tools and processes and integrate shared data collection and use.*
E. Agency Processes (Trail Strategy Actions 5.1, 5.2, 5.4) *Share solutions and best practices. Streamline processes for effective partnering and trail program management.*
F. Working Together (Trail Strategy Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4) *Prioritize actions that help all people realize the physical, spiritual, mental, and economic benefits provided by National Forest System trails.*
G. National Scenic and Historic Trails *Raise awareness of National Scenic and Historic Trails as special areas and take actions to complete these trails.*

Table 3 Key

Acronym or abbreviation	Description of Forest Service program area, group, or process
EP	Enterprise Program[13]
FIELD	Districts, forests, and grasslands together with partners and volunteers
NSHT	National Scenic and Historic Trails Group
NTB	National Trail Board
TAG	Trails Advisory Group
TRACS	Trail Assessment and Condition Surveys
TTT	Trails Technical Team
WO TRAILS	Washington Office Trail Program

TABLE 3. FISCAL YEAR 2022 TRAIL CHALLENGE PROGRAM OF WORK

Element	Fiscal year 2022 action items	Lead
A. Training	In partnership with American Trails[14] and others, develop trail training core competencies for all agencies, partners, and volunteers working in trails.	WO Trails
	In partnership with American Trails and others, develop a centralized location for online training.	WO Trails
	Publish and share stories about innovative trail management practices.	EP
	Develop Trail Management 101 training for line officers.	EP
B. Workforce	With American Trails, share a short film that inspires and invites young people to work or volunteer for the Forest Service or trail partners.	WO Trails
	Build support to provide training and certification to volunteers and partners to complete major trail bridge inspections.	WO Trails, NTB
	Expand and continue supporting the Outfitter and Guide Fee Offset Pilot Program (per Trails Stewardship Act).	WO Trails, EP
	Study the use of wildland firefighting crews in assisting with trail maintenance (per Trails Stewardship Act).	WO Trails, EP

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[13] The Forest Service Enterprise Program is a flexible and mobile workforce that supplements agency workforce and expertise capacity, provides training, and develops high-quality products that support agency needs. Visit its website for more information, available at https://www.fs.fed.us/enterprise/.

[14] American Trails is a nonprofit organization that supports development of diverse, high-quality trails and greenways. Visit its website for more information, available at https://www.americantrails.org/.

Element	Fiscal year 2022 action items	Lead
	Articulate what it takes to run a trail program (i.e., baseline staffing), including needed skills, roles, resources.	NTB, TAG
	Explore developing career ladder opportunities for trail professionals.	NTB, TAG
	Work with Forest Service Human Resources Management to improve temporary hiring practices.	TAG
	Develop and share best practice documents to support workforce development.	EP
	Initiate development of a tool that evaluates if local trail employee, partner, and volunteer workforces meet minimum staffing needs.	EP
	Articulate tradeoffs between hiring temporary employees and establishing permanent seasonal positions to retain skilled trail professionals.	EP
	Begin conducting trail workforce evaluations on each forest and grassland as resources allow. Evaluations should identify whether staffing is adequate to effectively work with partners and volunteers in shared stewardship. Results should be documented using a forthcoming tool or process.	Field
	Add trail employee contact and skill information to the Trail Community Map.[15]	Field
C. Trail Sustainability	Invite trail partners and businesses linked to the recreation economy to initiate and manage a trail endowment.	NTB, WO Trails
	Recommend tools or processes to assess trail sustainability.	NTB, EP
	Develop and share documents describing best practices for achieving sustainable trails (for example, screening proposed new trail developments).	EP
	Begin assessing existing trails for sustainability as resources allow, using the forthcoming tool or process. Trail Assessments completed previously are still valued if they are repeatable and consider social, ecologic, and economic sustainability.	EP, Field
	Expand understanding among the trail community about how trails can support local needs and values. An example of this could be local districts, along with partners or community members, discussing how trails meet the needs of the public, including traditionally underserved community members. Another example could be focusing trail maintenance in priority areas identified through the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.	Field
	Take actions to make trails more sustainable as resources allow. For example, seek funding through the Great American Outdoors Act, Legacy Roads and Trails Program, or Federal Lands Transportation Program to accomplish trail projects.	Field

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[15] The Trail Community Map and user guide is available as a link from the Trail Management Tools web page at https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/trail-management-tools. At this time, contributions to the map are limited to Forest Service employees.

Element	Fiscal year 2022 action items	Lead
D. Data	Begin full redesign of Infra Trails, Trail Bridges, and Access and Travel Management modules.	All trail teams
	Develop mobile data collection tools to streamline field data collection: Survey123 for TRACS and trail bridge inspection.	WO Trails, EP
	Coordinate Infra Trails trainings for field staff.	WO Trails, TTT
	Develop an online trail data dashboard.	EP
	Complete annual accomplishment reporting for National Forest System trails.[16]	Field
	Publish forest and grassland trail data in the Enterprise Data Warehouse,[17] that includes information about trail location, accessibility status, development class, surface, and allowable and prohibited uses (also known as "management-level" information).	Field
E. Agency Processes	Host biannual Washington Office listening sessions with the field and line officers.	WO Trails
	Adapt the Trails Capital Improvement and Maintenance (CMTL) budget allocation model to reflect the new budget model and equity across regions.	NTB
	Publish an updated Trail Challenge technical guidebook.	WO Trails, NTB, EP
	Develop a National Trail Program SharePoint site comprised of toolboxes, best practices, and success stories.	EP
	Develop and share documents describing best practices and frequently asked questions for managing trails impacted by natural disasters.	EP
	Develop and share a document describing best practices for applying the National Environmental Policy Act to trail projects, particularly about trail maintenance, improvement, construction/reconstruction, decommissioning, and obliteration.	EP
	Develop and share a document describing the considerations and implications of converting roads to trails.	EP
	Foster understanding among line officers about the Trail Challenge to elicit support and prioritization of action items.	Field

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[16]Trail managers are required to report annually on National Forest System trail inventory, maintenance, and management, as well as accessibility accomplishments. Fiscal year reporting requirements are posted on the Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources Integrated Business Systems website, available at *(internal link)* http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rhwr/ibsc/tr-cost-mi.shtml.

[17]Publishing trail data to "management level" was required by 2020. Unit trail data summary publication status is available at https://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/webapps/DataStatusTable/. Detailed information about unit trail data publication status is on the Enterprise Data Warehouse web page, available at (*internal link*) https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cio-edwts/SitePages/NEW-EDW-Trails-Publication-Guide.aspx.

Element	Fiscal year 2022 action items	Lead
	Prepare the trail community for Phase 2 (*Hitting Our Stride*) by sharing examples and innovations developed in Phase 1. Examples could include the widescale adoption of Survey123 for collecting trail condition data or piloting other new tools or processes.	Field
F. Working Together	Implement an agreement with the Next 100 Coalition[18] to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in trail program delivery.	WO Trails
	Collaborate with the Partnership for the National Trails System[19] and U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management to hire an indigenous intern to raise awareness of ancestral lands along National Scenic and Historic Trails.	WO Trails
	Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at National Trails Day events in partnership with the American Hiking Society.[20]	WO Trails
	Expand understanding among the trail community about how trails can support local needs and values. An example of this could be local districts, along with partners or community members, discussing how trails meet the needs of the public, including traditionally underserved community members. Another example could be focusing trail maintenance in priority areas identified as part of the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.	Field
	Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into trail program delivery.[21]	WO Trails, Field
G. National Scenic and Historic Trails	Revise Forest Service Manual 2350 to include better direction for National Scenic and Historic Trail management.	NSHT
	Update an existing National Scenic and Historic Trails brochure and share broadly.	NSHT
	Continue to share the "National Trails System/National Scenic and Historic Trails 101" training video.	NSHT
	Continue to work toward closing gaps in trail routing so entire trail corridors are permanently protected.	NSHT

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[18] The Next 100 Coalition is a nonprofit organization that supports inclusivity during the next 100 years of conservation and stewardship on public lands. Visit its website for more information, available at https://next100coalition.org/.

[19] The Partnership for the National Trails System is a nonprofit organization that supports all National Scenic and Historic Trails. Visit its website for more information, available at https://pnts.org/new/.

[20] The American Hiking Society is a nonprofit organization that supports hiking opportunities in America. Visit its website for more information, available at https://americanhiking.org/.

[21] Refer to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility page on the Trail Program SharePoint site for ideas to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into trail program delivery, available at *(internal link)* https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-ntprg/SitePages/Diversity,%20Equity,%20Inclusion,%20and%20Accessibility.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=579F14.

Phase 1 Focus for the Field: Forest Service Employees

These field-led action items are also listed by element in table 3.

- Foster understanding among line officers about the Trail Challenge to elicit support and prioritization of action items.

- Prepare the trail community for Phase 2 (Hitting Our Stride) by sharing examples and innovations developed in Phase 1. Examples could include the widescale adoption of Survey123 for collecting trail condition data or piloting other new tools or processes.

- Complete annual accomplishment reporting for National Forest System trails.

- Publish forest and grassland trail data in the Enterprise Data Warehouse that includes information about trail location, accessibility status, development, surface, and allowable and prohibited uses (also known as "management-level" information).

- Add trail employee contact and skill information to the Trail Community Map.

- Expand communication in the trail community to understand what trail opportunities are needed and valued. An example of this could be discussing how local trail opportunities currently meet the needs of the public, including meeting the needs of traditionally underserved communities or focusing trail maintenance in areas prioritized through the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.

- Begin conducting trail workforce evaluations on each forest and grassland as resources allow. Evaluations should identify whether staffing is adequate to effectively work with partners and volunteers in shared stewardship. Results should be documented using a forthcoming tool or process.

- Begin assessing existing trails for sustainability as resources allow using the forthcoming tool or process. Trail Assessments completed previously are still valued if they are repeatable and consider social, ecologic, and economic sustainability.

- Take actions to make trails more sustainable as resources allow. For example, seek funding through the Great American Outdoors Act, Legacy Roads and Trails Program, or Federal Lands Transportation Program to accomplish trail projects.

- Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into trail program delivery.

Phase 1 Focus for the Field: Partners and Volunteers

Partner and volunteer engagement is integral to implementation of the Trail Challenge. Employees, partners, and volunteers are encouraged to work together on action items identified in this guidebook. For example, multipartner groups could form at various geographic scales (local, regional, or national) and work with Forest Service employees to implement specific action items. Partners and volunteers can support the Trail Challenge in other ways.

- Join or start a coalition to work on specific action items.
- Reach out to a nearby Forest Service office to help maintain trails.
- Become a certified sawyer to help with tree and brush removal or become a certified major trail bridge inspector.
- Coordinate the work of existing partners and volunteers (for example, through an Adopt-a-Trail program).
- Write and manage grants to accomplish specific tasks.
- Help promote education and outreach programs, such as TreadLightly! and Leave No Trace.

As partners and volunteers contact local Forest Service recreation and trail program managers to help, they may notice the capacity for agency staff to engage varies from unit to unit. Many recreation and trail program managers have limited time to manage individual volunteers. They might encourage interested individuals to contact the forest or grassland volunteer program manager (if one exists) or an existing partner group or organization. If a partner group or organization is not available in the area, this might be a good opportunity to start a partner group or help bring various partner groups together to help implement the Trail Challenge.

Appendix A—Frequently Asked Questions

Not finding an answer to a question? Please contact the appropriate regional office trail program lead or email the Forest Service Trail Program (wo_trail_program@usda.gov).

General Questions and Answers

- **What is a "sustainable trail"?**
  A trail that is well-designed, well-maintained, and well suited to support recreation use today and into the future.

- **What is a "sustainable trail system"?**
  A network of trails that are well-designed, well-maintained, and well suited to support recreation use today and into the future. Sustainable trail systems are well managed and could cross unit and jurisdictional boundaries, such as with other Forest Service units, other agencies, Indian Tribes, and municipalities.

- **When does the Trail Challenge start?**
  The Chief launched the Trail Challenge in 2020. Units, together with partners and volunteers, will continue implementing Trail Challenge elements through 2030 and beyond. The goals of the Trail Challenge will be incorporated into Forest Service priorities until the agency reaches a shared trail workforce capacity that satisfies the need for sustainable trail management.

- **What is the purpose of the Trail Challenge and who developed it?**
  The purpose of the Trail Challenge is to focus the collective efforts and resources of employees, partners, and volunteers on actions that will make the most difference in helping to increase the collective trail workforce capacity to manage and maintain trails and increase trail sustainability. The Trail Challenge implements portions of the national trail strategy and the Trails Stewardship Act, both of which direct the agency to increase its collective capacity to maintain trails and achieve a sustainable trail system. Learn more about these two efforts on the Forest Service National Trail Program web page.
  Hundreds of Forest Service employees from all levels of the organization, partners, and volunteers contributed to development of the Trail Challenge by taking part in listening and working sessions, online webinars, and document reviews.

- **How are diversity, equity, and inclusion principles integrated into the Trail Challenge?**
  These are important principles that connect to the Forest Service's core values of service, conservation, interdependence, diversity, and safety. They are incorporated throughout the Trail Challenge, including in targeted actions in Element F: Working Together. They influence hiring practices and outreach to partners and volunteers, how the agency collaborates with people, communities, and Indian Tribes, and how it provides high-quality trail experiences to the public.

Forest and grassland units, together with existing and new partners and volunteers, are encouraged to innovate and find opportunities to further incorporate these principles into every element of the Trail Challenge.

- **Who is participating in the Trail Challenge?**
  Forest Service staff with trails responsibilities and partners and volunteers who help with trail maintenance activities are the main participants in the Trail Challenge. Others who share in supporting and benefiting from National Forest System trails are also invited to participate. These include Forest Service employees from all program areas, other partners and volunteers, other Federal agencies, Tribal organizations, State governments, communities, academia, organizations engaging people of color, youth, veterans, traditionally underrepresented identities, and businesses that benefit from trails and outdoor recreation.
  Participating forest and grassland units will be featured on the Trail Challenge online dashboard.

- **Where is the Trail Challenge being carried out?**
  All National Forest System trails are included in the Trail Challenge, including the six National Scenic and Historic Trails administered by the Forest Service. Units are encouraged to collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions that manage adjoining trails systems, such as other Forest Service units, other Federal agencies, and State, Tribal, and county entities.

- **How are national and regional agency leaders supporting the Trail Challenge?**
  Forest Service executive and regional leaders understand the importance of trails in connecting people with public lands and in engaging the next generation of public land stewards. They also recognize trails as tools that support other agency priorities, such as fire, timber, and watershed restoration. In February 2020, Chief Vicki Christiansen expressed the agency's commitment to implementing the Trail Challenge across landscapes "in order to achieve a trail system nationwide that contributes to ecologic resiliency, meets the needs of current and new users, and is stewarded by adequate resources."

- **How does the Trail Challenge support other priorities, such as implementing the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020 and the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act of 2016?**
  Trail Challenge implementation will help units maximize the benefits of the Great American Outdoors Act. Forest and grassland units, together with partners, volunteers, Indian Tribes, and communities, will determine the locally desired sustainable trail system and be better prepared to prioritize deferred maintenance needs and leverage shared resources to attain that system. Implementing the Trail Challenge is also maximizing benefits of the Trails Stewardship Act, such as studying the involvement of firefighters in trail maintenance and leading units to double trail maintenance accomplishments by partners and volunteers.

- **Where is progress reported and displayed?**
  During Phase 1: *Launch and Learn*, employees with an ArcGIS Online account can view unit and regional progress on an online dashboard. Regional trail program leads, forest and grassland data

stewards, and the primary Trail Challenge data steward who have an ArcGIS Online account can enter accomplishment data through a Survey123 application.

The dashboard is anticipated to be available for viewing by employees (without an ArcGIS Online account), partners, volunteers, and the public in later phases of the Trail Challenge.

- **Is extra funding available?**
  In past fiscal years, priority allocations supporting the Trail Challenge have been distributed to regional offices in addition to appropriated funds. Partner and volunteer grants for increasing trail maintenance and reducing deferred maintenance on National Forest System trails have also been available through the [National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Program](#) and an agreement with the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance.[22] Leveraging the Great American Outdoors Act is another way progress is being made. Pursing additional funding for Trail Challenge implementation will continue, although specific annual appropriated funding is not guaranteed.

- **How do I account for related work that I'm already doing or have done?**
  The Trail Challenge is intended to build on the work units are already doing to increase capacity and sustainable trails. For example, units that have already conducted trail sustainability or trail system sustainability assessments are not asked to recreate the assessment; they only need to ensure their assessment meets the minimum requirements. The minimum requirements will be posted on the Trail Challenge SharePoint [site](#) when available.

- **What trainings and resources are available to help units implement the Trail Challenge?**
  The annually updated technical guidebook is the primary resource for information about the Trail Challenge. Trail Challenge actions and metrics are described in this guidebook, including what employees should be focusing on during each phase and how partners can be involved. The updated guidebook will be posted annually on the Trail Challenge [website](#). Existing and additional resources, such as standardized trail and workforce assessments, will be made available on the National Trail Program SharePoint [site](#).

Involving Partners, Volunteers, Communities, and Tribes

- **I am interested in helping as a trail partner or volunteer. Who do I contact?**
  Contacting a Forest Service regional headquarters or local Forest Service [office](#)[23] for partner and volunteer opportunities is a good place to start. Information about jobs, partnering, and volunteering opportunities is also available on the "Working with Us" [website](#).[24]

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[22] Information about the National Forest System trail stewardship [partner funding program](#) is available on the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance web page at https://www.wildernessalliance.org/trail_funding.

[23] [Contact information](#) for Forest Service regional and unit offices is available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/organization.

[24] ["Working with Us" web page](#) is available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us.

Reporting Progress and Accountability

- **How much time does reporting take?**
  Every effort has been made to reduce the impact of reporting on forest and grassland units. Annual reporting time is estimated to take 10 minutes.

- **How is progress tracked and when is reporting due?**
  Progress is tracked through annual reporting on nine metrics (table 1) as well as the accomplishment of actions organized under seven Trail Challenge elements (table 3). The majority of the metrics are part of regular annual reporting for National Forest System trails and the Volunteers and Services program. The remaining metrics will be reported through ArcGIS Online surveys for district, forest, grassland, and regional trail leads. Forests and grassland units should designate an individual to enter Trail Challenge accomplishments through a Survey123 form. The designated person requires an [ArcGIS Online account](#).

  Reporting is due by October 31 each year.

  By January 1 of each year, the Washington Office trail program will develop and share a report about unit, regional, national, and partner progress.

- **How are Trail Challenge data being used?**
  Data trends will help demonstrate progress made toward achieving Trail Challenge goals. Progress will also help inform and refine each phase of the Trail Challenge. The National Trail Program, regional headquarters, and units will also use the data to find opportunities to reward success and understand and improve performance.

Appendix B—Glossary

Capacity: Ability to accomplish something. May be limited by time, staffing, funding, and/or the availability of other resources.

Dashboard: The Trail Challenge dashboard tracks and displays progress on metrics by forest and grassland unit and is summarized regionally and nationally. The data is sourced in several ways, including reports from the Infra Trails module, the Volunteer and Services Reporting database, and direct entry in an online survey. When complete, the dashboard will be available as a link from the National Trail Program SharePoint site, available at *(internal link)* https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-nfs-ntprg.

Data standards for trails: Trail managers are required to report annually on National Forest System trail inventory, maintenance, and management, as well as accessibility accomplishments. Required reporting elements are shared annually with employees in a letter. The current fiscal year letter is posted on the Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources Integrated Business Systems website, available at *(internal link)* http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rhwr/ibsc/tr-cost-mi.shtml.

Data steward: A Trail Challenge data steward should be designated for each district and forest or grassland unit. The data steward should have, or can request, an ArcGIS Online user account. A national data steward is also designated to gather and enter unit-level data from existing reporting sources into the Trail Challenge dashboard.

Deferred maintenance: Maintenance that was not performed when it should have been or when it was scheduled and was put off or delayed for a future period. Deferred trail maintenance includes repair, replacement, and decommissioning.

Field: Forest Service districts, forests, and grasslands, together with partners and volunteers.

Great American Outdoors Act of 2020: Enacted legislation that enables the Forest Service and other Federal agencies to aggressively address deferred maintenance and other infrastructure projects.

Infra Trails database: The agency's official database about National Forest System trail infrastructure inventory and management.

Line officers: Forest Service employees who have designated decision-making authority, such as the Chief, regional foresters, forest supervisors, and district rangers.

National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act of 2016: Enacted legislation that focuses the agency's efforts in increasing the role of partners and volunteers in trail maintenance.

National leaders (Forest Service): Washington Office leadership includes the executive leadership of the Chief and staff, as well as the Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources program.

National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System: The agency's strategic plan about trails published in 2017. The plan describes 26 actions for the agency to take with partners and volunteers to achieve a more sustainable trail system.

National Trail Board: A group of Forest Service trail leaders made up of regional trail program leads, Forest Service Washington Office staff, and liaisons from other programs (including National Scenic and Historic Trail Administrators group, the Trails Advisory Group, and regional office recreation directors).

New trails: Newly constructed routes or adopted portions of unauthorized or user-created routes that are officially added to the National Forest System.

Partner: Typically refers to groups, organizations, Indian Tribes, and other Federal agencies with a formal relationship with the Forest Service, such as through a signed agreement other than a general volunteer agreement.[25]

Regional leaders (Forest Service): Includes regional office foresters and staff, including recreation directors and the trail program lead from each of the Forest Service's nine administrative regions.

Reporting: Entering accomplishment data into official databases about annual activities.

Shared stewardship: A management model where the Forest Service shifts to be an integrated part of a community of stewards who are supporting and receiving shared benefits from trails.

Sustainable trail: A trail that is well-designed, well-maintained, and well suited to support recreation use today and into the future.

Sustainable trail system: A network of trails that are well-designed, well-maintained, and well suited to support recreation use today and into the future. Sustainable trail systems are well managed and could cross unit and jurisdictional boundaries, such as with other Forest Service units, other agencies, Tribal organizations, and municipalities.

Trail (National Forest System trail): A trail identified in the Forest Service official database of record (Infra) that is wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving the National Forest System and that the Forest Service determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of National Forest System lands and the use and development of its resources.

Trail community: The general group of employees, partners, and volunteers who give to or receive benefits from trails. These include Forest Service employees, partners and volunteers, other Federal agencies, Indian Tribes, State governments, communities, academia, organizations engaging people of color, youth, and veterans, and businesses that benefit from trails and outdoor recreation.

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[25] Visit the Administrative and Legal Information website for details about partnering with the Forest Service, also available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/partnerships/legal-administrative-information.

Trail Community Map: An online networking tool for trail professionals designed to help the Forest Service and the greater trail community leverage capacity, share resources, and better serve the public. Employees and the public can use the map to find and contact local trail professionals and others with trail-related skills and experience. At this time, data entry is open only to Forest Service employees. The Trail Community Map is available as a link from the Trail Management Tools web page, available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/trail-management-tools.

Trail data publishing: The process of entering tabular and spatial data into the Forest Service's Enterprise Data Warehouse database. This database populates the agency's websites pertaining to National Forest System trails. Trail information within the database is categorized by the level or specificity of data recorded:

- Centerline: Trail name, number, centerline location, and length.

- Basic: "Centerline" attributes, plus general descriptive information (e.g., accessibility status, trail class, and typical trail surface).

- Management: "Centerline" and "basic" attributes, plus how the trail is managed, as well as allowable and prohibited trail uses (e.g., mountain bikes, horses, and off-highway vehicles).

Trails Advisory Group: A chartered national advisory group made up of nine Forest Service trail professionals and technicians and a liaison from the National Trail Program. Members help communicate within and between Forest Service administrative regions, the Washington Office, and the broader trail community about emerging trail issues, recommendations, and trends.

Unauthorized trail or route: An unauthorized and unplanned linear route that has been created by the consistent use of trail users or by unauthorized construction (also known as a "social trail").

Underserved communities: Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.[26]

Unit (forest or grassland): Centers of management of the physical land administered by the Forest Service. In this guidebook, the term "unit" refers to the administratively defined boundary of a forest, grassland, or special management area. There are currently 154 forests and 20 national grasslands that are divided into 559 districts throughout the United States, including Puerto Rico. In addition to these

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[26] Underserved communities are defined in Executive Order 14035—Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce. Available at https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/06/30/2021-14127/diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce.

districts, the Forest Service also oversees several special management units, such as national recreation areas.

Volunteer: Individuals and groups with varying levels of skills and abilities. They contribute by conducting maintenance and construction activities and helping to plan and coordinate activities.

Volunteers and Service Reporting (VS Reports) database: The agency's official database that records volunteer and partner hours and activities.

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