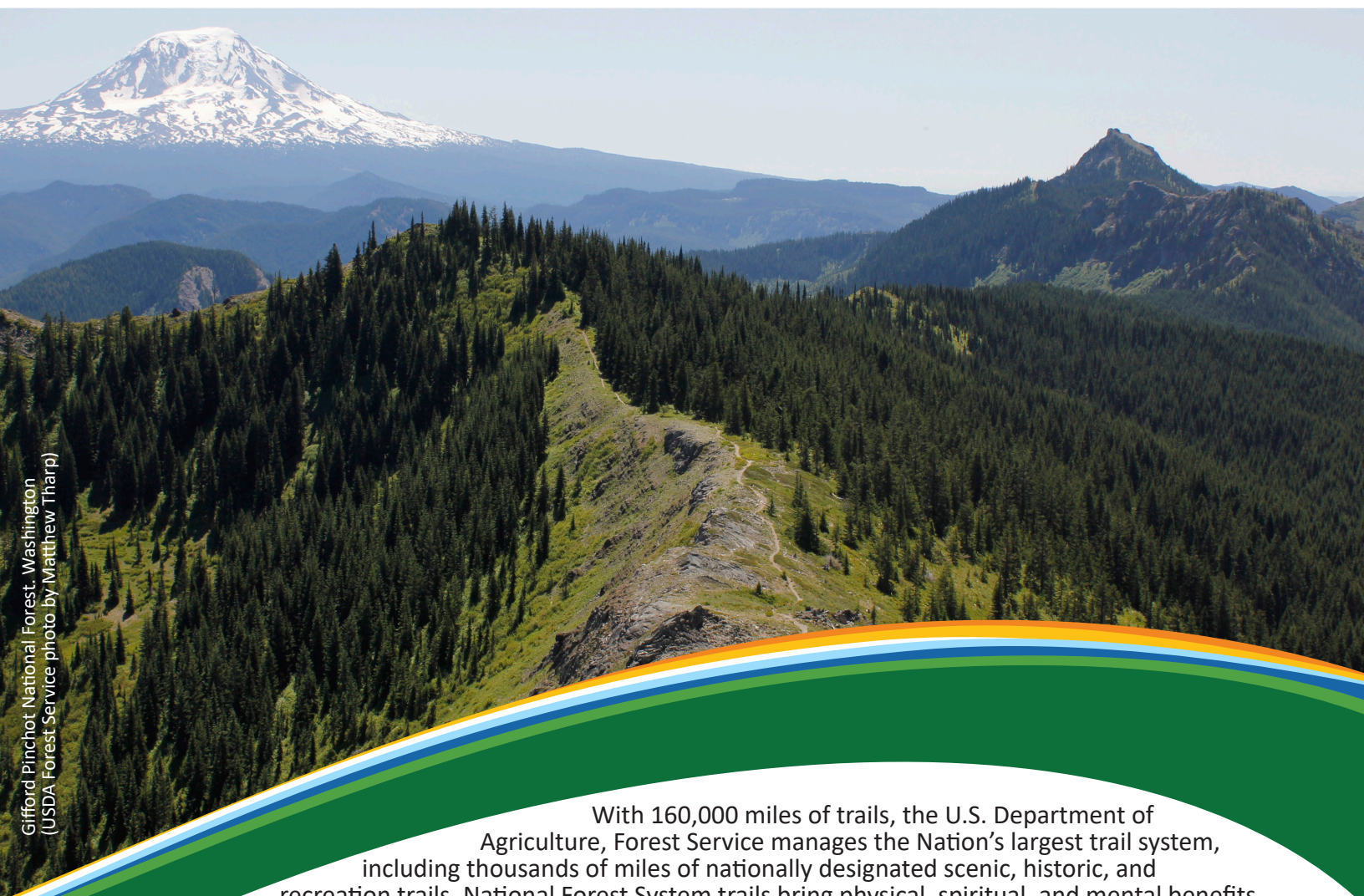


Ten-Year Trail Shared Stewardship **CHALLENGE** 2020–2030

An Overview



Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Washington
(USDA Forest Service photo by Matthew Tharp)

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. National Forest System trails bring physical, spiritual, and mental benefits to communities and individuals nationwide. These trails are also powerful economic generators, contributing billions of dollars each year to the economy. Continued maintenance of these trail resources is dependent on the shared stewardship of agency employees, Indian Tribes, partners, volunteers, contractors, permittees, and communities—collectively known as the “trail community.”

Despite the great work happening in support of trails, workload demands continue to outpace the capacity of agency staff, partners, and volunteers. 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.

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.

Trail Challenge *Goals*



Increase collective trail workforce capacity.



Increase trail sustainability.



Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Oregon
(Courtesy photo by Pacific Crest Trail Association)

Who Participates?

The main participants are Forest Service line officers, employees with trail management responsibilities, and related partners and volunteers. Others who share in supporting and benefiting from National Forest System trails are also invited to participate.

Key Points:

- Provides a framework to carry out the [National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System](#) and the [National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act](#).
- Implementation is divided into three phases, with increasing focus in each phase.
- Progress is measured through annually updated action items organized in seven categories (called “elements”) and through nine metrics.
- 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.

Sustainable trails are well-designed, well-maintained, and well suited to support recreat on use today and into the future.

Tracking Progress

Progress is tracked through the reporting of nine metrics and the accomplishment of annual actions organized under seven Trail Challenge elements. Reporting is due by October 31 each year. Visit the Trail Challenge [website](#) to download the annually updated implementation guidebook for reporting details and a list of action items.

Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina
(Courtesy photo by Christine Vigie, Back Country Horsemen of Pisgah)



Trail Challenge *Elements*

- 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 with Communities** (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 (NSHTs)** Raise awareness of National Scenic and Historic Trails as special areas and take actions to complete these trails.

Trail Challenge *Goals*

GOAL 1:

Increase collective workforce capacity

Metric 1: Number of forests and grasslands with a baseline trails workforce.

Metric 2: Number of partner and volunteer hours contributed to trails.

GOAL 2:

Increase trail sustainability

Metric 3: Number of National Forest System trail miles maintained.

Metric 4: Number of National Forest System trail miles improved.

Metric 5: Number of National Forest System trail miles meeting standard.

Metric 6: Number of National Forest System trail miles assessed for sustainability.

Metric 7: Number of sustainable National Forest System trail miles identified from the assessments.

Metric 8: Percent of each Forest Service-administered National Scenic and Historic Trail that is complete.

METRICS COMMON TO BOTH GOALS:

Metric 9: Diversity, equity, and inclusion principles that forests and grasslands are implementing.

At the start of the Trail Challenge in 2020, **only 24%** of National Forest System trails were reported as meeting agency safety and quality standards.



Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California (Courtesy photo by Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association (TAMBA))



Phases

The Trail Challenge has three phases with increasing requirements and standardization in each phase.

Phase 3: Peak Performance (2028–2030)

Achieve appreciable increases in workforce capacity and trail sustainability. Continue to identify actions to further progress. Normalize transformational relationships within the trail community.



Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests, Colorado (Courtesy photo by Western Slope ATV Association)

Phase 2: Hitting Our Stride (2024–2027)

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. Assess trail sustainability and workforce capacity.

For more information visit the Trail Challenge [website](https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/10YTC) (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/10YTC>) or contact the [Forest Service National Trail Program](mailto:wo_trail_program@usda.gov) (wo_trail_program@usda.gov).