



United States Department of Agriculture

National Scenic and Historic Trails Program



Forest Service

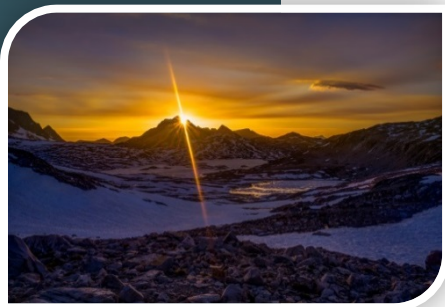
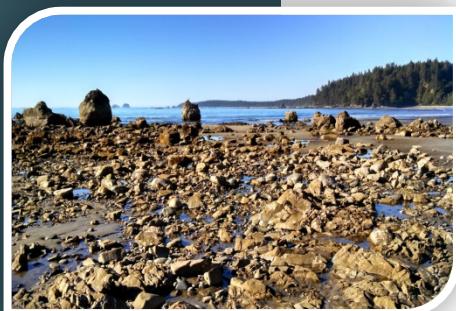
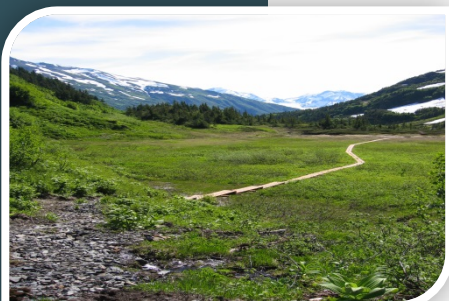


Photo 1: Iditarod Trail
- summer boardwalk.

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

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

Purpose

This paper provides background on National Scenic and Historic Trails (NSHTs) and identifies critical program components, based on legislative requirements, for the Forest Service. This information will be used in FY15 to help develop a new NSHT budget allocation model to provide for a new national scenic trail and changing program needs such as comprehensive plan revisions.

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

While NSHTs have many similarities to other congressionally designated areas such as Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers (WSRs), they have one key difference. Wilderness and WSRs are completely or mostly on federal lands; however NSHTs may be mostly on non-federal lands. For example, only 33% of the NPNHT is on federal lands and only 20% on National Forest System lands. The responsibility for this level of coordination with local governments and private landowners is unique to NSHTs.

In addition, it is important to note that like WSRs, NSHTs are not just the trail tread but include the **corridor** of resources associated with the trail experience. Corridors are managed in accordance with the nature and purposes for the trail, and are management areas in forest plans with associated standards and guidelines.

National Recreation Trails (NRTs) are also identified in the NSTA. The Forest Service manages over 370 NRTs, which are designated by regional foresters rather than Congress.

Administering Agency vs. Managing Agency Responsibilities

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

Administering agency responsibilities involve trail-wide coordination, guidance, technical assistance, and consultation with National Trail managers who have physical site management responsibility. All responsibilities for meeting base program components fall to the administering agency. Table A lists all the NSHTs and identifies the administering and managing agencies.

Table A: National Scenic and Historic Trails on NFS Lands

National Trail Name	Lead Agency	Lead FS Region	Other Regions Managing Trail
Arizona National Scenic Trail	USFS	R3	None
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail	USFS	R2	R1, R3
Florida National Scenic Trail	USFS	R8	None
Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail	USFS	R5	R4, R6
Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail	USFS	R6	R1
Nez Perce National Historic Trail	USFS	R1	R2, R4, R6
California National Historic Trail	NPS		R4, R5, R6
El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail	NPS		R8
Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail	NPS		R5
Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail	NPS		R1, R6, R9



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

The National Trails System was created by the National Trails System Act, P.L. 90-543,¹ which became law October 2, 1968. The Act created a series of national trails "to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation," and was last amended in 2009 with the designation of the Arizona and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trails.

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

Meeting Legislative Requirements:

Base Program Components for FS-administered NSHTs

National Scenic and Historic Trails are congressionally designated areas. As such, these special places have specific legislative requirements that are broader than typical trail construction and maintenance activities on National Forest System trails, and go beyond the Forest Service Manual, Handbook, and program direction for trails. These legislative requirements, particularly the requirement for volunteer engagement and the strength of our partnerships with volunteer organizations, drive the work of the NSHT program. Requirements from the NTSA are included here and detailed in Appendix B:

For Both NSTs and NHTs:

- **Advisory Council** – A FACA-compliant advisory council is generally required within one year of designation and should have a ten year term.
- **Comprehensive Plan** – Generally within two fiscal years of designation a Comprehensive Plan should be written that outlines the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail including carrying capacity determination.
- **Rights-of-Way /Trail Corridor** – The trail corridor must be selected, with the advice and assistance of landowners, land managers, and other interested parties, and published in the *Federal Register*.
- **Acquisition Plan Development** – This plan will require cooperative agreements, general and site-specific development plans and anticipated costs.
- **Cooperation to Provide and Protect the Trail Corridor** – This requires both interagency and intergovernmental cooperation and landowner and local community engagement.
- **Volunteer Stewardship** – Congress recognized the valuable contributions that volunteers and non-profit groups

The National Scenic and Historic Trail program directives may be found in FSM 2350.



Photo: Pacific Northwest Trail – A portion of the trail managed by community, Penn Cove, near Coupville, WA.

make in the development of the National Trail System and encourages their continued involvement in future trail management.



- **Visitor Information and Education** – Providing information on how to access and utilize the trail, trail conditions, closures (temporary due to fire/seasonal restrictions) and more permanent, and maps and guidebooks, and permits needed is an agency responsibility that may be shared with the partner organizations.
- **Cultural and Historic Requirements** – The historic and cultural settings are the geographic extent of the historic and/or cultural landscape elements that influence the actual and vicarious trail experiences that are important for all national trails. National Historic Trails have additional requirements.
- **Trail Administrator** – For each National Trail, an official is identified who will be responsible for administration of the trail and related resources (see “administering agency” above.) The National Trail shall provide trail-wide leadership and guidance for trail-wide stewardship responsibilities.
- **Consult with State and local agencies** – regarding the planning and development of the trail. Includes Federally recognized tribes for all trail and auto tour route actions including interpretive and educational materials.



Photo: Nez Perce National Historic Trail – A portion located in Bannack State Park, Montana.

For NHTs Only:








- **Identify high potential historic sites and high potential route segments** – This is part of the comprehensive plan and also requires selecting the federal protection components.
- **Identify all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved** – These are specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including high potential historic sites and high potential route segments.
- **Identify and protect historic remnant and artifacts** – Identify these for public use and enjoyment.

- **Auto Tour Routes** – National historic trail segments may be marked to facilitate retracement of the historic route, and where a national historic trail parallels an existing public road, such road may be marked to commemorate the historic route.
- **Site Certification** – Certify other lands as protected segments of an historic trail involved if such segments meet the national historic trail criteria.

*Photos: Nez Perce National Historic Trail
– Lolo motorway, near Powell, Idaho*



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

<p>NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL SYSTEM</p> 	<p>Pacific Crest Trail NST</p> 	<p>Continental Divide Trail NST</p> 	<p>Florida NST</p> 	<p>Nez Perce NHT</p> 	<p>Arizona NST</p> 	<p>Pacific Northwest NST</p> 
Advisory Council	1970-1989	1978-1985	1984-1994	Established 1989-1991	Charter established, currently collecting applications	Charter established, currently collecting applications
Comprehensive Plan	Completed 1/1982	Completed 1985. Revised 2009	Completed 1986	Completed 10/1990. Revision underway	Pre-NEPA public engagement 2011-12. Beginning 2014	Beginning 2014
Rights-of- way / corridor selection	1/1973		Corridor selection identified in 1986 Comp Plan	No*	No	No
Acquisition Plan Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	2002	No* Some agreements in place	No specific plan but several agreements are established	Ongoing
Inventory of High Potential Historic Sites and Routes	NA	NA	NA	Some identified in 1990 CP*	NA	NA
Inventory significant natural, historical, and cultural resources	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing locally*	In progress	Ongoing at local level
Identify and protect historic remnants and artifacts	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing locally*	Ongoing at local level	Ongoing at local level
Consult with appropriate State and local agencies in the planning and development of the trail AND Federally recognized Tribes on all trail and auto tour route actions including interpretive and educational materials.	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).	Ongoing at local level	On-going through formal certification agreements and FNST Coalition	Ongoing project specific*	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).	Ongoing at local level as needed. (No auto tour routes).

*Nez Perce NHT – Items to be included or expanded in the Comprehensive Plan Revision

Appendices

Appendix A: National Scenic & Historic Trails Budget

Figure 1 Net to Regions and NSHTs 10

Figure 2 Percent of Net Region CMTL to NSHTs 10

Figure 3 National Scenic and Historic Trail Allocation 11

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

Appendix B: Details of Legislative Requirements 13

Appendix C: Administering vs. Agencies 16



Pacific Northwest Trail – Signing is an important part of trail management.



Appendix A: National Scenic and Historic Trails Budget

Figure 1.

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

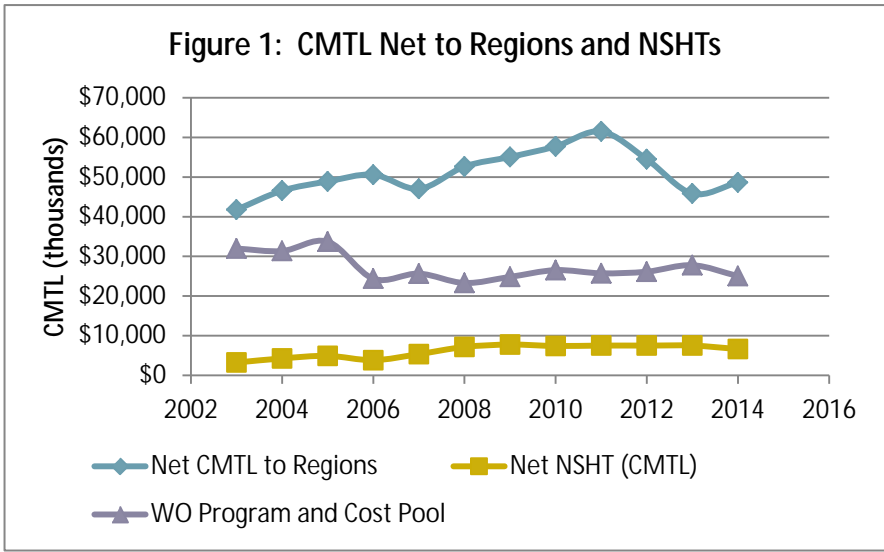
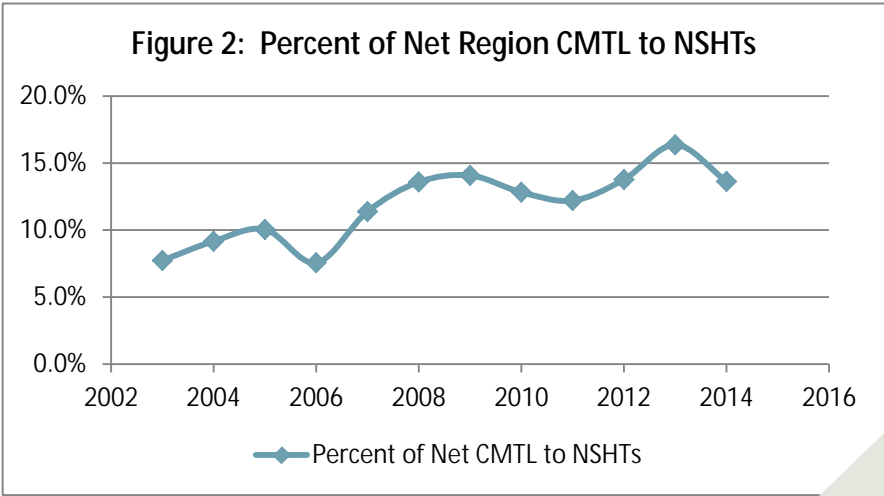


Figure 2.

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



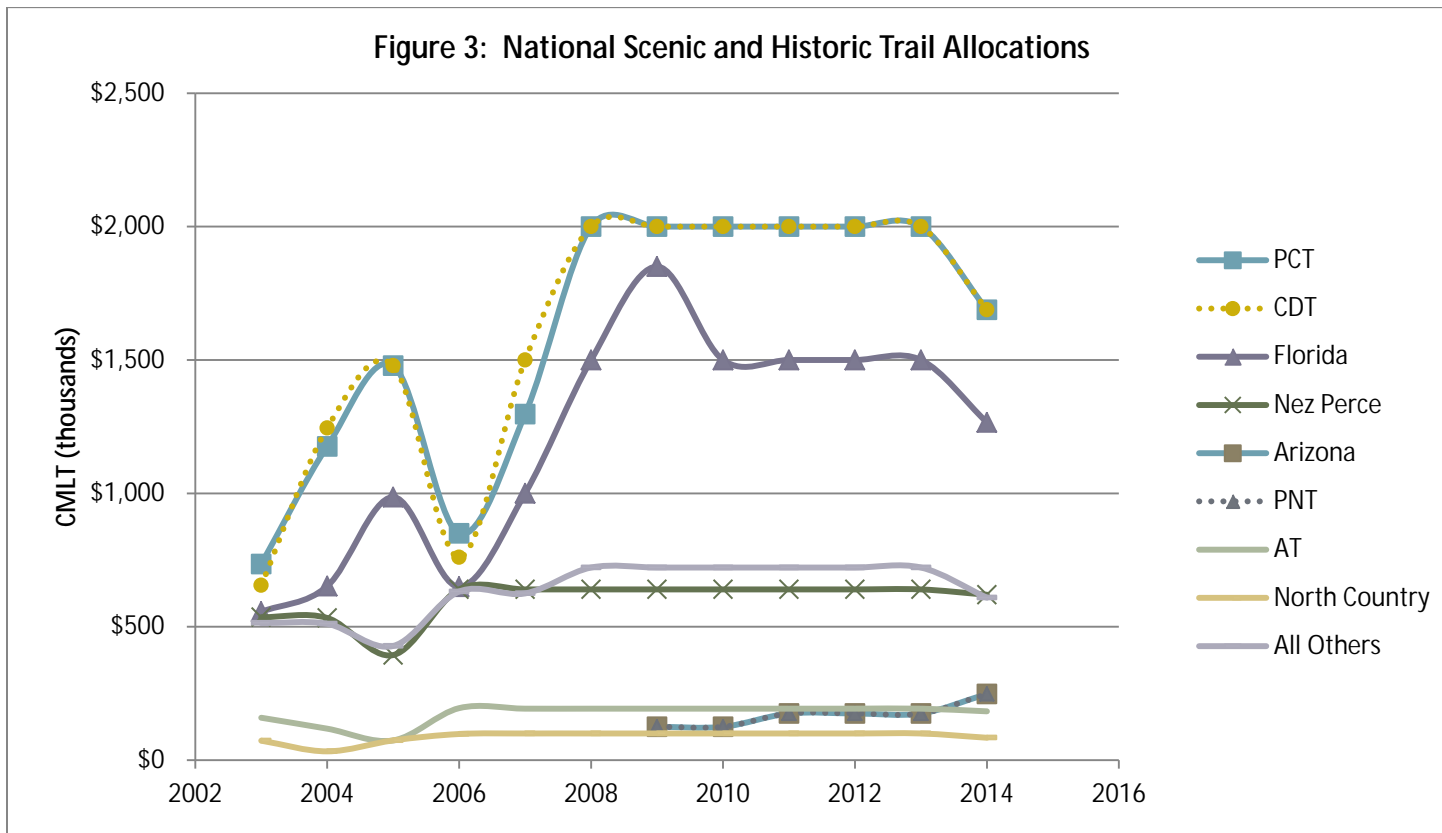


Figure 3.

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



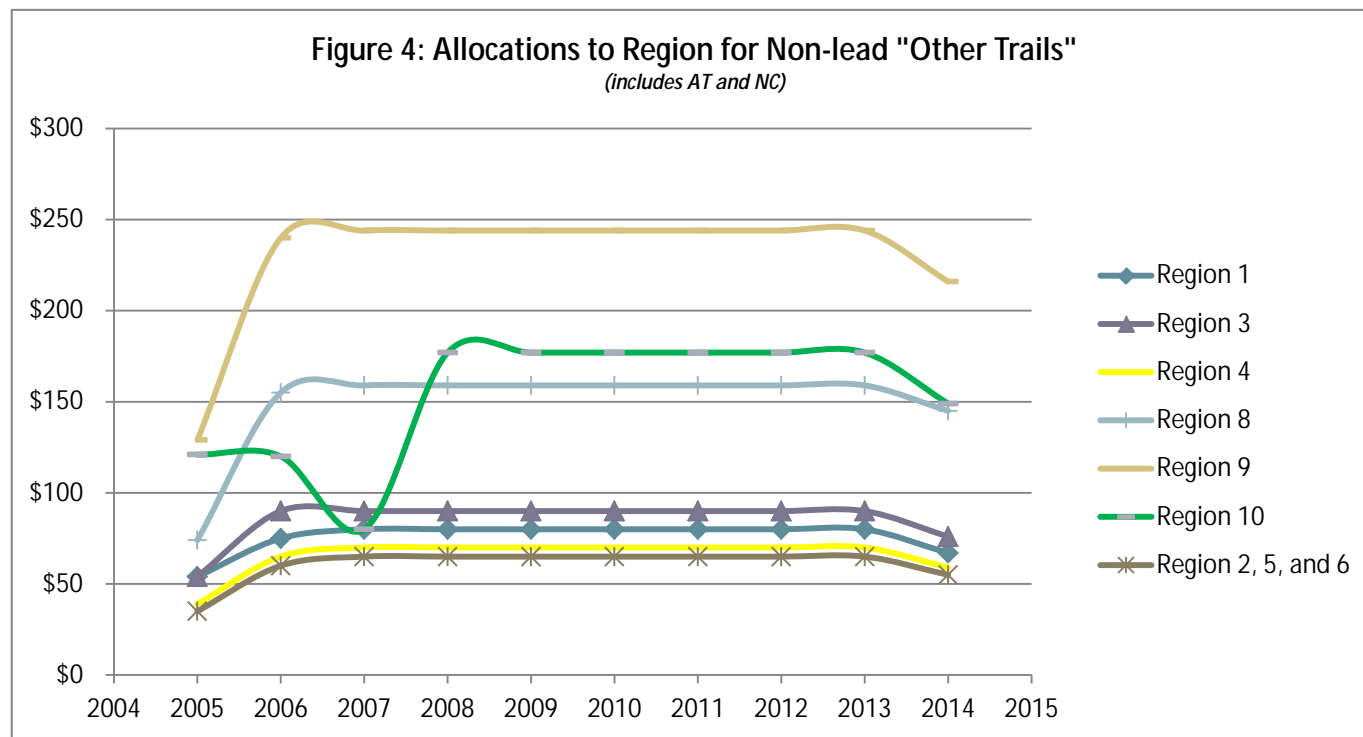


Figure 4.

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



Photo: Arizona Scenic Trail

Appendix B: Details of Legislative Requirements

This section details specific language and citations for National Scenic and Historic Trails.

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For Both NSTs and NHTs:

- **Comprehensive Plan** – Generally within two fiscal years of designation and outlines the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail.
 - **NSTA Sec. 5 (e & f).** This plan includes, but is not limited to management objectives and practices; **agreements; carrying capacity** for the trail and plan for its implementation; **acquisition and protection plan**; and general and site-specific **development plans**.
 - The effective implementation of this plan necessitates on-going involvement in Forest Plan revisions, project NEPA compliance, both on and off NFS lands, and other state, county level and local level comprehensive plans, to ensure that the trail is protected across land management boundaries. Comprehensive plans, especially for NHTs, also include plans for interpretation and signage.
- **Advisory Council** – A FACA-compliant advisory council is generally required within one year of designation.
 - **NSTA Sec. 5(d):** The advisory council will have a ten-year term. The Secretary of the administering agency shall consult with the council on matters relating to the trail, including selection of rights-of-way, standards for the erection and maintenance of markers along the trail, and administration of the trail.
- **Rights-of-Way /Trail Corridor** – The trail corridor must be selected, with the advice and assistance of landowners, land managers, and others concerned, and published in the *Federal Register*.
 - **NSTA Sec. 7(a)(2).** The Secretary shall select the rights-of-way. Legislative history indicates that the term “rights-of-way” is intended to mean *trail corridor* rather than legal rights and privileges typically associated with the term. Some NSTs have authority to acquire lands within the corridor for long term trail protection.
- **Cooperation to Provide and Protect the Trail Corridor** – Due to the sheer length of NSTs, ranging from hundreds to thousands of miles, coordinating management can include upwards of 30 federal, state, local and private organizations across 70 or more management units, and a variety of stewardship groups, which demonstrates the need for a strong program focus on partnerships and entails substantial grants and agreements administration responsibilities. These lengthy corridors are also susceptible to development

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

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



pressure, including energy and transmission lines, changing recreation uses, and increasing use numbers which requires additional partner cooperation for effective trail management and long term protection.

- **Interagency and intergovernmental cooperation (Sec. 7 (d) (h))** –The Secretary shall consult with the heads of all other affected state and federal agencies in administering and managing the trail. (Sec. 7 (a)(1)(A)) The administering agency shall provide for the development and maintenance of trails on federal lands. (Sec. 7 (h)) The Secretary shall encourage state governments to enter into cooperative agreements to provide the trail right-of-way on state lands.
 - **Landowner and local community engagement (Sec. 7 (d) (h))** – Local governments and private landowners are also encouraged to enter into cooperative agreements to provide the trail right-of-way on municipal and private lands.
- **Volunteer Stewardship** – Congress recognized the valuable contributions that volunteers and non-profit groups make in the development of the National Trail System and emphasized their continued involvement in future trail management.
- **Volunteer assistance in all steps (Sec 11)** – Volunteers and volunteer organizations are encouraged to be involved in **planning, developing, constructing, maintaining, and managing trails**.
 - For NSHTs, much of our volunteer engagement is through our trail associations, the **primary non-profit partner** group or groups specific to each NSHT (i.e., Arizona Trail Association, Pacific Crest Trail Association, etc.) These primary partners assist us with planning and on-the-ground management, recruit and train volunteers, run volunteer and youth crews to perform much of the maintenance on our trails, provide visitor education and information services, and promote the trail. These trail associations coordinate through the Partnership for the National Trails System, a coalition that promotes and advocates for NSHTs and conducts trainings and policy workshops for partners and agency staff.

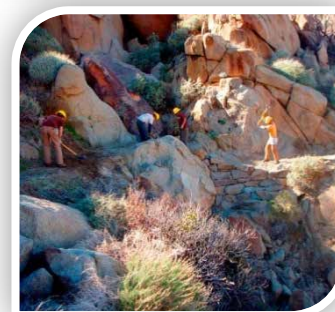


Photo 1: Pacific Crest Trail – Jefferson Park, volunteers work in the rain to manually move logs.

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

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

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

- In addition, NSHTs work with many of the groups that partner with the FS on National Forest System Trails, such as the Back Country Horsemen, Student Conservation Association, scouting organizations, and local outdoors and volunteer organizations. Our shared work is achieved through MOUs and Challenge Cost-Share agreements with stewardship non-profit organizations and sponsored volunteer agreements.
- Our partners assist the FS in engaging a diverse community of adult and youth volunteers. In 2013, the National Trail System accounted for **1,144,407 volunteer hours valued at \$25,337,171**.

- **Visitor Information and Education** – Each long distance national trail has its own nature and purposes, which is reflected in the wide variety of partner organizations that support these trails. The public views each trail as a unique resource with many users planning long distance travel across a mix of land ownership. Providing information on how to access and utilize the trail, trail conditions, closures (temporary due to fire/seasonal restrictions) and more permanent, and maps and guidebooks, and permits needed is an agency responsibility that may be shared with the partner organizations. In addition, NSHT Comprehensive Plans include plans for signage and interpretation that require considerable coordination within and across agencies to implement.
- **Cultural and Historic Requirements** – The historic and cultural settings are the geographic extent of the historic and/or cultural landscape elements that influence the actual and vicarious trail experiences that are important for all national trails. Additional requirements for National Historic Trails include consideration of:
 - a) the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance to maximize vicarious experiences and provide resource protection,
 - b) the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment and
 - c) the Federal Protection Components of a historic trail on federally owned lands which meet national historic trail criteria established in the NTSA, including high potential historic sites and high potential route segments. (See Appendix B for NHT Program Specifics)
- **Trail Administrator** – For each National Trail, an official is identified who will be responsible for administration of the trail and related resources (see “administering agency” above.) The National Trail shall provide trail-wide leadership and guidance for trail-wide stewardship responsibilities.



Photos: Nez Perce National Historic Trail – 1-Dedication of a site; 2-Trail on the Snake River.



For National Historic Trails Only:

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



Photo: Nez Perce National Historic Trail interpretive sign, Chief Joseph Scenic Byway.

Appendix C: Administering vs. Managing Agencies

[RETURN](#)

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

The administering responsibility involves:

- trail-wide coordination,
- guidance, technical assistance, and
- consultation with National Trail managers who have physical site management responsibility.

National Trail administration responsibilities are fulfilled as directed in the NTSA in coordination with tribes; other National Trail Administrators; National Trail managing agencies (including all FS public land managers along the National Trail); other federal, state, and local government agencies; private and non-profit organizations (including the primary partner trail associations); willing landowners; land users; and individuals (tribes, affected agencies, willing landowners, partners, and interested parties.)

National Trail administration includes leadership in the development of the statutorily required Comprehensive Plan, which provides strategic direction for National Trail administration and management, including identification of the nature and purposes of the National Trail and selection of the National Trail rights-of-way. More of the specific responsibilities of the administering agency are described in the National Trails System Act, as described in the “base program components” section of this paper.

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



Photo: Pacific Northwest Trail sign, Upper Swift Creek.





Photo: Big Hole Mountain Memorial

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