



National Trails System Act
50th Anniversary Commemoration
Final Report

October 2, 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson's signing of the National Trails System Act. Trails connect us, and in celebrating this notable anniversary, a coalition of trail organizations energized and engaged thousands of people and built on the community of trail lovers to continue to discover, create, and sustain National Scenic, Historic, Recreation, and Water Trails.

Under the umbrella name of "Trails 50," eight national nonprofit trail organizations and federal agencies collaborated to share this anniversary effort with a wide audience: American Hiking Society, American Trails, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Partnership for the National Trails System, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service. This interagency public/private cooperative project built on existing relationships and laid the groundwork for a continued alliance for the support of the National Trails System.



*California National Historic Trail
Photo credit: Mike Needham*

*Hawksbill Crag Trail, Arkansas
Photo credit: Steve Lutze*



Trails 50 Online and Media Presence

In summer of 2017, the Trails 50 coalition launched a new **website** to gather anniversary information in one location.

Since then, Trails50.org has had over 140,000 views from 56,000 unique visitors in all 50 states and 57 countries. A total of 1,558 visitors signed up to receive Trails 50 e-Newsletters.

Trails50.org also features a **toolkit** where trail organizations, individuals, and members of the media could find videos, images, logos, fact sheets, a social media guide, and more. Many resources were available in both Spanish and English.

A **story collection** tool offered trail users an opportunity to share their trail stories. More than 70 submissions were collected and shared throughout the year via the Trails 50 Blog.

The Trails 50 Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages grew to 5,220+ followers. Facebook posts on the Trails 50 Facebook page were viewed over 650,000 times in 2018.

The campaign hashtag **#findyourtrail** was used 52,000 times on Instagram. The hashtag **#findyourway**, which celebrated the joint anniversary of the National Trails System and the Wild and Scenic Rivers, was used 129,000 times on Instagram.

Trails50.org was home to a Trails 50 **Photo Contest**, which received nearly 300 submissions in the categories of Volunteerism, Historic Trails, Beauty of Trails, and Multi-Use Trails.

Media coverage of the National Trails System anniversary was extensive, with more than 33,000 articles written in local and national newspapers, websites, and magazines since mid-2017. Highlights from this coverage include:

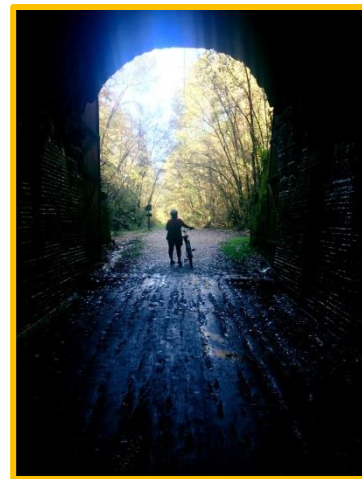
USA Today, [National Trails photo story](#), April 5, 2018

PBS, [Travels With Darley television episode](#) on the Rio Chama Wild and Scenic River and Continental Divide Trail (Aired nationwide beginning March 2018)

Southwest Magazine, [Happy Trails](#), October 2018

AAA World Magazine, [Trail Tales](#), January/February 2018

Parks & Recreation magazine, [#FindYourWay on America's Rivers and Trails](#), April 2018



Elroy/Sparta Trail, Wisconsin
Photo credit: Joel Kempfer

Think Out Loud Productions partnered with the National Park Service to develop a video campaign to reach a new, diverse millennial audience. The commercial series features unique stories of young people connecting with the outdoors from coast to coast.

Garnering three major advertising awards, the #FindYourWay videos have been viewed over a million times on Facebook. The series won two awards from the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (gold awards from the Hermes Creative and AVA Awards) and a bronze Telly Award in the online commercial campaign nonprofit category.

Merchandise



Trails 50 partnered with several companies to produce 50th anniversary themed and logo **merchandise**. Eagle River Designs offered logo pins, patches, magnets, walking stick/bike medallions, and decals. In total, 23,867 of these items were sold, with Trails 50 receiving over \$4,000 in proceeds. Crown Trails Headwear produced more than 1,000 Trails 50 hats in four styles.

Two shirt campaigns were hosted on bonfire.com, which netted over \$4,000 profit. In the last quarter of 2018, Trails 50 partnered with Seek Dry Goods to produce anniversary themed T-shirts and sweatshirts. To date, more than 500 shirts have been sold through these partnerships.



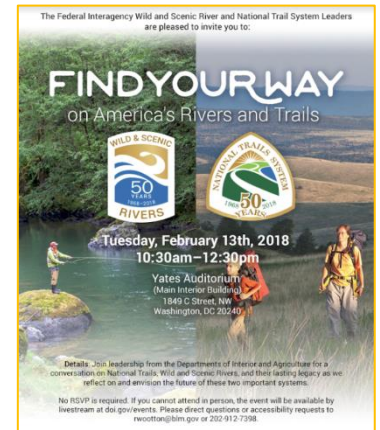
REI Co-op launched an interactive map of the national scenic trails and merchandise featuring the Appalachian, Continental Divide, and Pacific Crest trails. Five percent of these commemorative sales will be donated to support the national scenic trails. This year, REI is investing \$643,000 in 17 nonprofits dedicated to stewarding and maintaining the 11 national scenic trails.

Events

Trails50.org also featured an **events map**, where local organizations and Federal agency offices could share information about their anniversary-related events. A total of 242 events in 40 states and Washington, D.C. were added to the calendar in 2018, with an estimated attendance of nearly 150,000 people.

Highlighted events included:

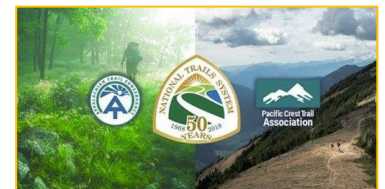
Hike the Hill: Organized by the American Hiking Society and the Partnership for the National Trails System, Hike the Hill 2018 brought more than 120 trail advocates from across the country to Washington, D.C. to meet with their congressional representatives about the National Trails System. More than 150 attendees observed the 50th anniversary at a reception in the Russell Senate Building. A panel discussion hosted by the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture introduced agency employees to the joint “Find Your Way” campaign for the National Trails and Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.



National Trails Day: To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System, American Hiking Society encouraged trail enthusiasts nationwide to "Join the Party" on National Trails Day and celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System. A goal was set to improve 2,802 miles of trail, the distance across the U.S., in a single day. Overall 108,947 participants at 1,203 events across the country improved nearly 4,000 miles of trail in a single day. Prior to National Trails Day, the public was encouraged to pledge to improve a trail in celebration of the 50th Anniversary. Overall 24,192 volunteers performed work valued at \$2.65 million.

AZT in a Day: On October 6, 2018, at least 796 people hiked, biked, or went horseback riding on the Arizona National Scenic Trail. In an attempt to collectively traverse the entire trail in one day, participants covered a collective 5,784 miles -- that's enough to cover the AZT's 800-mile length 7 times! Nearly 96% of the trail was covered that day, and plans are underway for the event to be repeated in 2019.

Two Sister Trails, One Celebration: On October 2, 2018, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail celebrated the 50th anniversary of the designation of our nation's first two national scenic trails with a live webcast. Hosted by National Geographic Adventurer of the Year and endurance athlete Jennifer Pharr Davis, the webcast features author and New York Times columnist Cheryl Strayed and a huge variety of guests from every corner of the PCT and AT trail communities, including trail volunteers, students, hikers, trail advocates, and more.



Bart Smith: Also on October 2, 2018, family, friends, and trail fans welcomed photographer Bart Smith to Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis, Missouri, as he took the final steps of his decades-long journey to thru-hike all 30 of the national scenic and historic trails. Smith's photographs of his journeys are available on his website walkingdownadream.com

National Trails Festival: The Florida Trail Association celebrated the anniversary with 450 trail enthusiasts at the National Trails Festival in Deland, Florida from October 5-7, 2018. Attendees, presenters, tabling organizations, workshop instructors, and FTA staff and volunteers gathered to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System and Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.



Joint Conference: The 2018 National Trails System Conference theme was “Pathways to the Future.” The October 22-25, 2018 event was held in Vancouver, Washington and was co-located with the River Management Society’s biannual Symposium, and celebrated the anniversaries of both the National Trails System and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts. More than 220 registrants attended the Trails Conference, including 33 young Trail Apprentices, who received scholarships to attend.

The 2018 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree featured a “Find Your Trail” theme and loosely followed the route of the Oregon National Historic Trail in reverse, on its way from Willamette National Forest in Oregon to the grounds of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. The tree was decorated with trail symbols from the National Scenic, Historic, and Recreation Trails along with the Trails 50 logo, and the tree lighting ceremony honored the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System.



Additional Highlights



The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail “launched” a plush toy replica of Seaman, the Newfoundland dog that accompanied Lewis and Clark, on a mission to commemorate and protect the trail by visiting notable spots along the Lewis and Clark NHT and other National Scenic and Historic Trails. He also explored a new frontier when he visited the International Space Station in the summer of 2018.

The **American Solar Challenge**, a multi-day, 1,500-2,000 mile cross-country endurance rally featuring both single and multi-occupant solar powered vehicles, honored the 50th anniversary this year by following a route inspired by the Oregon National Historic Trail and other westward trails.



Continuing their work to expand recreational opportunities on public lands, the U.S. Department of the Interior designated 19 new **National Recreation Trails** in 17 states, adding more than 370 miles to the national recreation trails system of more than 1,000 trails in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Each of the newly designated trails received a certificate of designation, a set of trail markers, and a letter of recognition.

The **U.S. Forest Service** announced The National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System in February 2018. Forest Service employees, partners, volunteers, and friends are collaborating to implement the 26 scalable actions outlined in the strategy. Leaders, employees, partners, volunteers, trail users, and friends can use this document to strengthen stewardship and dedication to improve a world-class, diverse trail system as one of America’s greatest legacies.

Grants and Funding

The **Partnership for the National Trails System**, in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service, awarded twenty grants totaling \$190,000. These National Trail Intern Grants created opportunities for young adults to become involved with national trails and helped strengthen the capacity of the partner organizations and agencies to administer and manage the national scenic and historic trails.



In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the National Trails and National Wild & Scenic Rivers Systems, video game company **Niantic Labs** and the **National Park Foundation** created a special campaign encouraging players to explore trails and rivers. Players collectively visited thousands of trails and river sites across the U.S. Participants were encouraged to share their adventures on social media and via mail, and were rewarded with a special patch. For each digital or physical postcard players shared, Niantic will donate \$5 to the National Park Foundation, up to \$100,000. Instagram user @stoug002 found this Pokémon on the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

REI Co-op is investing a total of \$643,000 in 17 nonprofit organizations dedicated to stewarding and maintaining the country's 11 National Scenic Trails. The co-op also created a collection of 50th anniversary gear and apparel. Five percent of the purchase price of those items will provide additional support for nonprofit organizations working on National Scenic Trails.

The **National Park Foundation** awarded twenty grants, totaling more than \$500,000, that will enhance the country's national trails and wild and scenic rivers and provide increased public access. The projects align with and advance the Department of the Interior priorities related to creating a conservation and stewardship legacy, modernizing infrastructure, increasing access to recreational opportunities, and working with local communities. Collaborations with local philanthropic organizations and trail, river, and park partners make each grantee's project possible. All project descriptions can be viewed on the Rivers and Trails 50th Anniversary Grants Map.



The focus of the National Park Service's 2018 **Challenge Cost Share program** was to support projects that strengthen the NPS National Trails System and the Wild and Scenic Rivers System as part of the 50th anniversary. The program is intended to support specific National Park Service mission related projects that align with goals of local project partners. Twenty projects were selected totaling \$361,000, which was added to \$1,209,200 in financial and in-kind contributions from project partners. Projects included support and improvements to the Juan Bautista de Anza and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trails, the Continental Divide, Ice Age, Potomac Heritage, New England, and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails, and the Linville Falls National Recreation Trail.