



The Partnership's Statement of Solidarity

The Partnership for the National Trails System stands in solidarity with the Black community and other people of color in condemning recent injustices -- especially loss of life -- as well as the systemic racism that has persisted in our country for generations.

The Partnership recognizes that historical injustices have resulted in barriers preventing people of color from accessing nature and the outdoors, including trails and their resources. We are becoming increasingly aware of how unsafe the outdoors is for marginalized and underrepresented communities.

Everyone has a right to connect with nature, history, and culture without being subjected to microaggressions, suspicion, intimidation, and violence.

Tragic events in recent weeks have resulted in the senseless deaths of African Americans, including Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and others. We also know that the experience of Christian Cooper in New York is shared by many other people of color who have been targeted and harassed for simply trying to enjoy nature.

While the habitual occurrence of these incidents exposes a challenge to our society that goes well beyond the National Trails System, we believe trails present an opportunity to connect people, places, and cultures.

Originally focused on the recreational aspects of scenic trails, the National Trails System has evolved to include historic trails -- recognizing the multiple paths that have shaped our collective history. For example, the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail traces the painful journey of Native Americans who were forcibly removed from their homeland; the multi-layered history of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail includes a fugitive slave escape route that has been recognized as part of the Underground Railroad; and the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail follows the historic march that Black Americans took for voting rights legislation.

But the current trail experience inadequately addresses the injustices experienced by people of color. We have much work to do within the Partnership and broader trails community. And the time is now.

Recognizing this, the Partnership is committed to working toward justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all people. We recognize that the trails community we serve quite often does not represent the diversity of America. We cannot get to our vision of providing recreational benefits for all until we address these inequities and injustices. We must redefine what we stand for, who we represent, and how we do our work.

In February 2020, the Partnership adopted a formal [Statement of Inclusion](#), which documents our intent to “work to ensure equal opportunities for everyone to access our national scenic and historic trails as well as feel valued and represented.” We acknowledge a critical extension of that work is for all people to feel welcome and safe to enjoy not only the trails, but also the parks, forests, rural communities, and urban areas they intersect.

We recognize that intention is not enough, and we are committed to continually learning and striving to recognize and understand our biases. It is our responsibility to engage with, listen to, and learn from the African American community and all people.

We want to hear your voices and ideas as we -- our staff, members, volunteers, partners, supporters, the entire Partnership -- take steps toward real and meaningful change within the trails community and to make the outdoors a safe place for all.

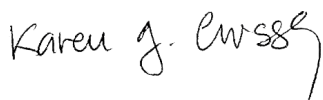
We respectfully ask all trail advocates and enthusiasts to join us in investing time in broadening our understanding of systemic racism. We are compiling [resources on our website](#) for reference to help us all become more aware, informed, and better equipped to take action.

The Partnership aspires to champion a culture of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion to cultivate greater strength and resilience within and beyond our network as we welcome all to protect, enjoy, and support the National Trails System.

This effort may never be perfect, but the Partnership is committed to making the National Trails System safe and welcoming to all people.

In solidarity,

The Partnership for the National Trails System



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All views expressed herein are perspectives of the Partnership and do not necessarily represent the viewpoint of our Federal agency partners.

Adopted by the leadership of the Partnership Board and Trail Leaders Council June 3, 2020