



Partnership for the National Trails System

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September 8, 2020

Ms. Margaret Everson
Acting Director, National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Acting Director Everson:

The Partnership for the National Trails System congratulates you on your appointments as Acting Director of the National Park Service and as Chair of the Secretary's recently formed Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Coordination and Implementation Task Force. We look forward to working with you in both capacities in the very near future.

The Partnership represents the non-profit partners of the federally designated National Scenic and Historic Trails that make up the flagship components of the National Trails System, which is a key component of a vibrant outdoor recreation economy. An estimated 200 million people live within an hour's drive of one or more of the 30 National Scenic & Historic Trails – a 55,000-mile network that includes all 50 states – and millions upon millions of Americans walk, hike, ride, or otherwise travel and experience the outdoor recreation, scenic beauty, and historic significance of our National Scenic & Historic Trails. In 2019 alone, the Partnership and these organizations generated almost a million hours of volunteer labor valued at more than \$25 million. The National Trails System connects with 84 national parks, 89 national forests, 70 national wildlife refuges and 100 BLM units. Our national trails are a cornerstone of the public lands system that is so important to a healthy economy.

We request that you include the Partnership and its members in the Department's ongoing activities and discussions with external partners on GAOA implementation, given the importance of the GAOA to the needs of the National Trails, and recognizing the value our National Trails bring to local economies and the leveraging opportunities they generate. We have a longstanding track record of success as a non-profit partner to the federal land management agencies under the Department's purview and hope that relationship will be enhanced through the GAOA implementation effort.

Partner Organizations

National Scenic Trail Members:

Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arizona Trail Association
Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Continental Divide Trail Society
Florida Trail Association
Ice Age Trail Alliance
Natchez Trace Parkway Association
North Country Trail Association
Pacific Crest Trail Association
Pacific Northwest Trail Association
Potomac Heritage Trail Association

National Historic Trail Members:

Ala Kahakai Trail Association
Anza Trail Foundation
Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail Association
Chesapeake Conservancy
E Mau Nā Ala Hele
El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association
Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
Lewis and Clark Trust, Inc.
Mormon Trails Association
Nez Perce Trail Foundation
Old Spanish Trail Association
Oregon-California Trails Association
Overmountain Victory Trail Association
Santa Fe Trail Association
Trail of Tears Association
Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route NHT Association, Inc.

Affiliate Members:

American Discovery Trail Association
American Hiking Society
Back Country Horsemen of America
Carson Valley Trails Association
Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association
National Frontier Trails Museum
National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance
Smoky Hill Trail Association
Tahoe Rim Trail Association

We are grateful for the Administration's support of the GAOA and are ready to work with you on its successful implementation. The Partnership actively advocated for many years toward the goal of full and dedicated funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and was pleased that it was linked to dedicated funding to address deferred maintenance needs at National Parks and on other federal lands. Both dedicated funding sources established in the GAOA are important to the health and future of the national trails system and we hope that investments in national trail needs through GAOA funds will be a Departmental priority.

LWCF in particular has been a proven success for over 50 years. We hope you will move quickly to provide Congress with the required FY 2021 program allocations and federal agency land acquisition project lists that will address the backlog of conservation and recreation access needs at every level, including along our National Trails. With full funding, we are excited to be able to address national trail land acquisition needs to increase and improve opportunities for public access and enjoyment that Congress envisioned when it created the National Trails System in the 1968 Act. And with the benefit of secure funding and permanent authorization, the Partnership is also ready to examine synergies that might exist among trail management and protection agencies and partners at the national, state and local levels and invest in related trail planning work.

Through cooperative management agreements authorized under the National Trails System Act, the Partnership and our individual nonprofit national trail organizations work with federal agencies to ensure the proper management, protection and maintenance of the 30 National Scenic and Historic Trails in the system, 23 of which are administered by the National Park Service and one by the Bureau of Land Management, and all of which cut across large swaths of public lands under the purview of your Department. We believe we can play an important role in ensuring the success of the GAOA and look forward to working with you and members of your staff toward that end.

Thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Rupp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Valerie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Rupp".

Valerie Rupp
Executive Director