



PATHWAYS

Across America

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PROTECTION

THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM GROWS BY 340 MILES



Newly designated Iron Hills Trail System in Utah. BLM Photo.

On June 2, nine new National Recreation trails were designated by the Secretary of the Interior in celebration of National Trails Day and Great Outdoors Month, marking an exciting milestone for the Biden-Harris America the Beautiful Initiative and the expansion of trails protected by the National Trails System.

"These trails offer an abundance of opportunities to experience the breathtaking landscapes of our country, all while supporting outdoor recreation activities and boosting local economies," said Secretary Haaland.

The 340 new miles have joined more than 1,300 other National Recreation Trails spanning all 50 states, providing access to the outdoors, recreation, history, and nature to people of all ages, interests, skills, and physical abilities.

"National recreation trails, including these new designations, are some of our country's highest caliber trails and provide close-to-home recreation opportunities and the benefits of spending time outdoors," said National Park Service Director Chuck Sams. "They can be used by everyone and provide for the ever-increasing recreation needs of our growing population, especially in urban areas."

Here are the nine new trail destinations to explore for yourself:

CROWN ZELLERBACH TRAIL

Vernonia, OR

Also called the Crown Z, this trail follows the path of the historic Portland and Southwestern Railroad through the Columbia River Wetlands and Coastal Range. It is mostly made of gravel, making it a great trail for trail users of all levels.

ENTERPRISE SOUTH NATURE PARK

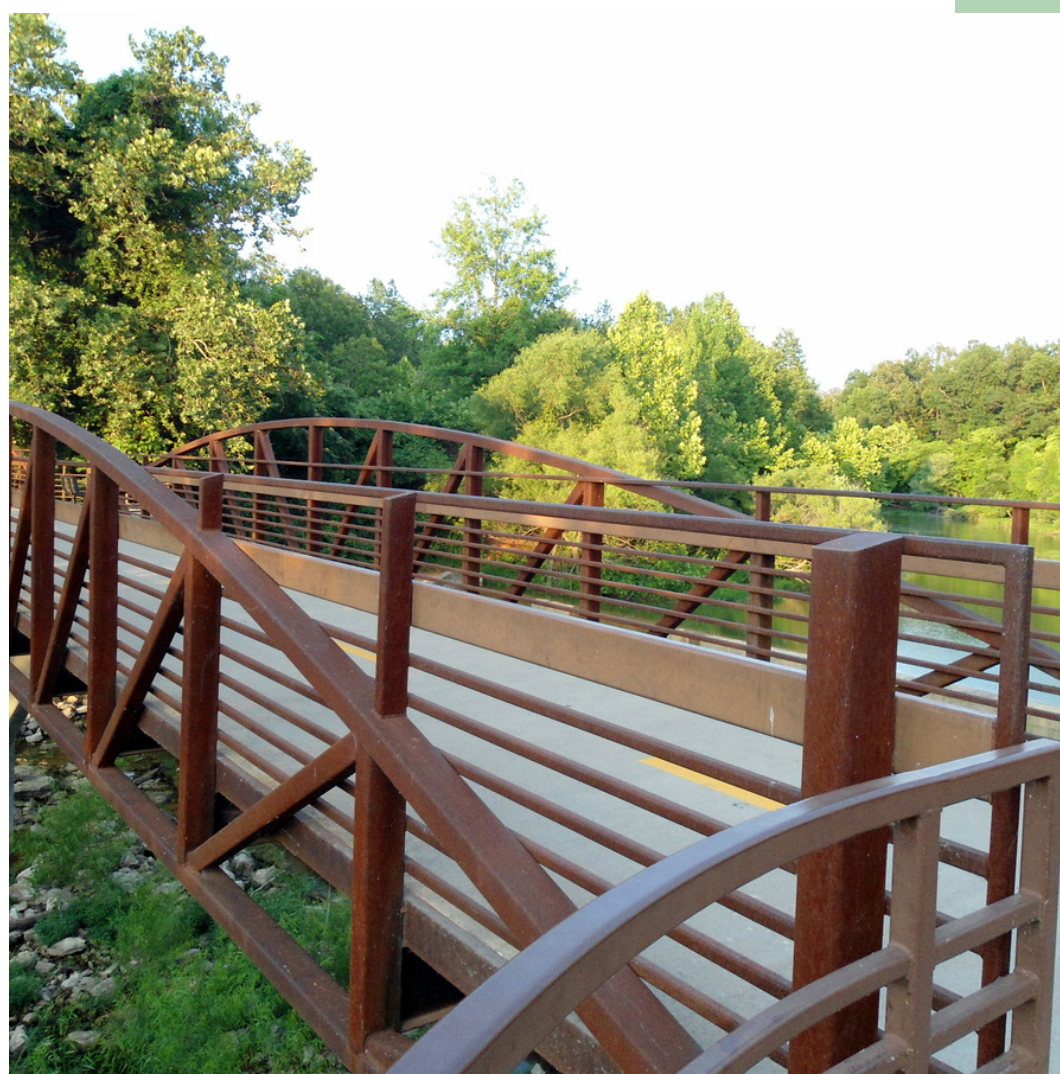
Chattanooga, TN

The park includes 70 miles of walking and cycling paths, ranging from beginner to advanced, through heavily wooded and varying terrain. The network of trails throughout the park offers a place for recreation, enjoyment, and solitude in close proximity to an urban area.

RAZORBACK GREENWAY

Fayetteville, AR

This 40-mile greenway is considered by many as “The Backbone of Northwest Arkansas” and an ideal jumping-off point for exploring the Ozark Mountains of Northwest Arkansas. It connects the cities of Fayetteville, Johnson, Springdale, Lowell, Rogers, Bentonville and Bella Vista, while also providing access to museums, historic sites, entertainment venues, lakes and local businesses.



Razorback Greenway. Wikipedia Creative Commons Photo.

VERNON BUSH GARDEN TRAIL

Jackson County, AL

Spanning just one mile, this trail provides visitors with scenic lake views, picnic areas, and a wide variety of plant species that deliver a beautiful and ever-changing scenic experience for all.

HARRIS GREENWAY TRAIL

Gwinnett County, GA

Connecting Tribble Mill Park to Harbins Park, the Harris Greenway Trail provides over 5 miles of paved multi-use trail for recreation and connections to local parks, local businesses, neighborhoods, and other local trail systems. It's named after Lloyd N. Harris, who helped strengthen and expand the county's public lands.

FABULOUS FOX! WATER TRAIL

WI and IL

This unique water trail along the Fox River invites kayakers, rafters, canoers and paddle boarders to explore 158 miles throughout southeast Wisconsin and northeast Illinois. It offers more than 70 access points, allowing users to explore vibrant Midwest communities and varying landscapes along the Fox River.

IRON HILLS TRAIL SYSTEM

Southwest UT

The Iron Hills Trail System is a 29-mile network of trails located on Bureau of Land Management land north of Zion National Park in southwest Utah. The trail system is known for its premier mountain biking opportunities but is also a popular destination for hikers, trail runners, equestrians, and wildlife viewers.

WILSON CREEK TRAIL

McKinney, TX

The Wilson Creek Trail is a nearly 10-mile trail system that not only provides recreation opportunities on the trail itself, but also connects residents and visitors of McKinney, TX to various local parks, community resources, and other local open spaces. The trail provides access to other recreation amenities such as playgrounds, a disc golf course, an outdoor fitness court, and a special 0.44-mile dog park loop.

OLD HIGHWAY 131 TRAIL

Kickapoo Valley Reserve, WI

This 4.5-mile Old Highway 131 Trail provides a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities such as hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, just to name a few. In addition to recreation opportunities, the trail traverses land rich in Indigenous culture and history.

Partnership Updates

2023 National Trails Workshop

Registration is now open for the 2023 National Trails Workshop! This year, sessions will include topics such as succession planning, designing more inclusive trails, and resiliency planning. Learn more and register for the event at pnts.org.

Join the Two Hearted Trail Pledge!

For every hour you spend hiking, walking, biking, running, attending events, or volunteering on trails, Bells Brewery will donate \$1 to the Partnership for the National Trails System! If it involves trails, your hours can be pledged. Pledge your hours online at bellsbeer.com/trails and enter for a chance to win a \$1,000 gift card to REI!

COMINGS AND GOINGS

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW PNTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESIDENT, ANDREA KETCHMARK

What do trails mean to you? How have they impacted your life?

Trails have had a tremendous impact on my life. From my early days spent exploring Wildwood MetroPark in Toledo Ohio, trails were the avenue for me to explore the natural world around me, learn about plants and animals and spend quality time with family. As I grew and began traveling, I explored National Parks and Forests all over the country. They've taken me to incredible places and helped me find myself in the process.

You are an influential leader in the trails community in so many ways. How did you become involved with trails professionally?

I knew I wanted a career in natural resources but it took me a while to find my niche. When I realized I could major in outdoor recreation and that my time could be spent helping forge the connection between people and nature, that was it for me. I was hooked! My first job in the field was with the American Hiking Society, first as an intern and then running the Volunteer Vacations program. It was incredible to help coordinate trail projects across the country that both filled the need for agency partners and fulfilled volunteers in a way that I'd never seen before. In school, we learned mostly about land management agencies and it was in that experience at AHS that my eyes were opened to the role that partner organizations and volunteers play in managing our public lands. I was in awe!



What inspires you most about the national trails system?

I've been involved with the Partnership since my time at the American Hiking Society. My first Hike the Hill was 2006 and it was immediately evident that this was a community that was a force when working together. I've always been attracted to coalitions and the Partnership is a great example of how powerful we can be when we team up with shared goals. I've participated in every Hike the Hill since and it's inspiring to watch us build on our previous successes and aim for new and bigger goals each time.

What is your proudest contribution to trails in your career or beyond?

I've been able to grow my own organization, the North Country Trail Association, to better meet the needs of America's longest National Scenic Trail. In just the last few years, we've grown a Next Generation Coalition program, built a new grant program for DEI initiatives, hired regional staff to cover our eight states and are building a new lands program to close our gaps and protect the trail corridor. It's rewarding to be able to see long-term goals actually coming to fruition.

What challenges have you encountered along the way?

National Trails are incredibly complex projects. Hundreds of partners and thousands of volunteers have a stake. The challenges are many but so are the rewards and it's worth it if you can find a way to sort through the challenges to find ways forward.

What made you decide to take on the role of president of the BOD?

The Partnership has been such a central part of my development as a professional in this community. I believe in our work and want to help usher the organization into a new era.

What is your vision for PNTS? Are there any changes you are excited to make, or new directions you want to take?

We'll soon be releasing our new strategic plan, which focuses on connecting our community, enhancing the resources we provide, elevating trails through advocacy and ensuring organizational excellence. Throughout our history, our community has shown up every day to do the work and I hope to help us grow so we can shoulder more of the effort and cost associated with this work. In order to take National Trails to a new level, we have to be prepared with the capacity, funding and resources to do that work.

If you could send one piece of advice to leaders throughout the National Trails System, what would it be?

It's not quick work but it does matter. We aren't just building and maintaining trails, we are creating opportunities for every American to experience nature in ways that improve their health and wellbeing, foster life-changing experiences and protect the viability of our species by protecting our landscapes. Know that you are making the world a better place, one mile at a time.

Andrea is the Executive Director of the North Country Trail Association and Board of Directors president for the Partnership for the National Trails System. She has a degree in Natural Resources Recreation and Tourism from Colorado State University, where she fell in love with trails and connecting people to outdoor spaces. Andrea has engaged in building countless partnering relationships at state, national, and local levels, and represents the NCTA in the larger trails and recreation community.

TRAIL APPRENTICE HIGHLIGHTS

INTRODUCING 2023 TRAIL APPRENTICE GABRIEL PACHECO SANTA (HE/HIM/ÉL)



The Trail Apprentice Program provides learning, leadership development, peer exchange, and networking opportunities for students and young professionals between the ages of 18 and 28 who are considering careers in trails and public lands.

Gabriel is one of seven individuals selected to be a 2023 trail apprentice. He is an environmental educator and outdoor recreation enthusiast from Puerto Rico working as an environmental interpreter for Para la Naturaleza, a local non-profit that focuses on the conservation of lands of high ecological value in Puerto Rico's archipelago. He holds a BS in Chemical Engineering with a minor in Writing and Communication and master's level coursework in Water, Soil and Air Quality Management. An avid hiker for years, Gabriel got his start in trail maintenance as a volunteer at El Yunque National Forest's trail system built originally by the Civilian Conservation Corps early in the 1900's. He enjoys hiking with his dog Cupey, mountain biking, birdwatching, and tracing new trails he still has no business building.

What are your career aspirations?

I would like to find a role in which I get to lead or support the design, construction and maintenance of multi-use trails that leverage environmental and cultural interpretation to help folks make stronger connections to their public lands. I care about trails because they're one of the most fun and economical ways to connect with our natural landscapes. For me, every trail is an opportunity to clear my mind, exercise, and explore new ecosystems. I also care about trails because they are my everyday tools for environmental interpretation, mental healing, and community building.

Why did you decide to join the Trail Apprentice Program?

The chance to connect with trail practitioners and apprentices from all backgrounds, learn about trail management strategies, and explore career opportunities in the outdoor recreation industry. I hope to identify the key professional competencies and strategies for trail management careers, opportunities to improve and increase access to our National Trail System, and meet the folks that do it day in and day out.

What is a memorable trail experience you would like to share?

In the summer of 2021, smack in the middle of the pandemic, I joined the White River National Forest's trail crew at the Aspen-Sopris Ranger District in Carbondale, Colorado. On one backpacking trip, my crew got to crosscut a huge Douglas fir and use it to build a primitive 30-foot creek crossing to Conundrum Hot Springs in a designated wilderness area. No chainsaws, motorized winches or power tools; just Pulaskis, crosscut saws, backcountry-made tripods, webbing, and a whole lot of teamwork, brainstorming and on-the-fly problem solving. It took 8 crewmates, 2 weeks, and too many Clif Bars to count, but seeing folks cross that new bridge seconds after easing it over the gabions literally brought tears to my eyes.



PATHWAYS Across America

Pathways Across America is the only national publication devoted to the news and issues of America's national scenic and historic trails. It is published monthly by the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) under cooperative agreements with four Federal agencies.



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