



PATHWAYS

Across America

July 2023

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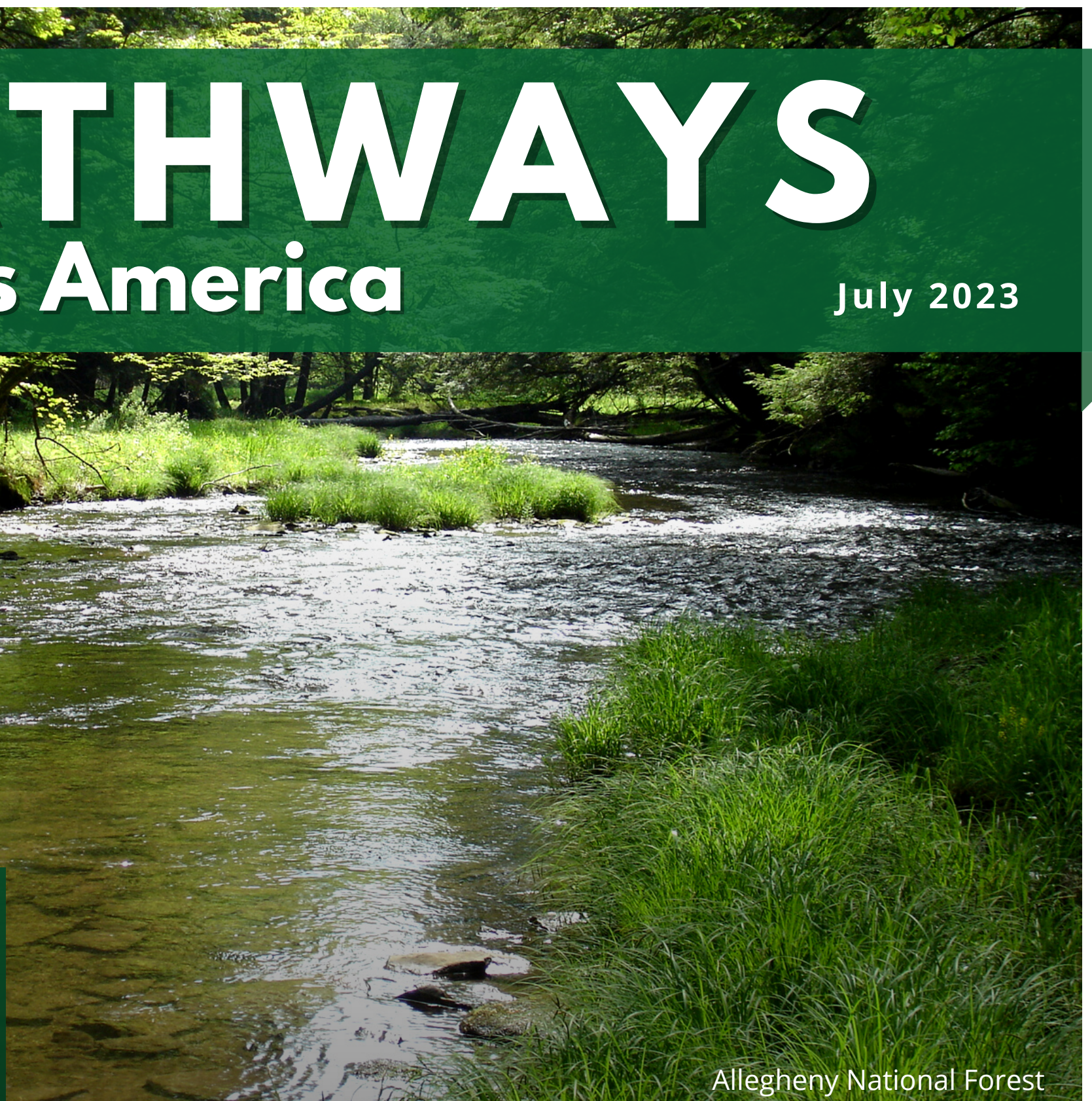
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OUTREACH

11TH ANNUAL ALLEGHENY 100 CHALLENGE

BY NANCY BROZEK, NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Each June, dedicated volunteers with the North country Trail Association (NCTA) Allegheny National Forest Chapter in Northern Pennsylvania plan, organize, and host the Allegheny 100 Challenge. The A-100 is an unsupported endurance hiking challenge with no timekeepers, no aid stations, and no finish line other than the one hikers set for themselves. Participants choose to traverse 25, 50, 75 or 100 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) through Pennsylvania's rugged Allegheny National Forest (ANF) in 50 hours.

The Allegheny 100 Challenge (A-100) was one of the first events I learned about when I began my career with the NCTA, and was soon added to my trail bucket list. Not necessarily hiking 100 miles in 50 hours, but experiencing this endurance event firsthand. Finally, this year, the stars aligned and I had an opportunity to volunteer.

I could write a novella with the stories I heard from these hikers. A mother and her 13-year-old son set their sights on 25 miles of family time. Their faces expressed the perfect balance of nerves and confidence. A man from Austin, Texas shared he had never done anything like this before. When asked about his plan, he simply stated, "Just to walk." I felt the heartache of a young woman who had trained for this, but her body would not comply with her determination that day. I watched the realization of her dreams disappearing as she told me she was officially scratching from the event. I was also beaming with pride for a woman named Maria - a seasoned hiker who took on this challenge alone. As she entered the 50-mile mark, I quietly walked over to share that she made it to the checkpoint before noon - she was one of only about 20 hikers to check in by this point. Her smile upon hearing this news is one of my favorite moments. She completed the 100-mile challenge and was one of only two women to do so this year.

There are so many more stories. For the hikers, this event is a rollercoaster of emotions. They are sleep deprived, their bodies are taxed, and the weather plays a huge factor in their mental game. This event is a competitive challenge against you and you alone.

And yet, like all who experience the Trail, they are not alone.



50-mile hikers Tina, Linda, and Lisa. Photo provided by Kate Lemon, NCTA.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of this event. The NCTA Allegheny National Forest Chapter spent 1,000 hours readying their section of NCNST, as did many members of the neighboring Clarion County Chapter. Many serve behind-the-scenes to ensure registration runs smoothly, questions get answered, and checkpoints get monitored throughout the weekend for hikers' safety.

At the 50-mile mark, there is a checkpoint. Regardless of the direction you're traveling, you will encounter a long and grueling switchback. Here, it is A-100 tradition for the hiker to ring a bell as she descends. Once she reaches the bottom, a freshly grilled hamburger awaits her. The 50-mile mark is also where hikers find water sources, carried in and continually refilled by volunteers; a seat in some shade; and emotional support from their trail community.

For two friends from New York, first-time adventurers, arriving sleepless and doubting their confidence to keep going, the 50-mile mark was a make or break moment. One was covered in dirt from a fall he had taken. The other was surprisingly clean - so clean it was mentioned by many who met him. They were ready to scratch from the event and would have, if left to their own accord. After a brief rest, some hot food, and pep talks from the volunteers, they journeyed on to complete their goal of 100 miles.

A rugged trail, hikers, and the volunteers who support them. A beautiful blend of humanity and nature working together to create a unique experience for all who choose to explore. One might say the A-100 embodies the spirit of the Trail, and each of us carry a piece of it within us.

Learn more about the event at northcountrytrail.org/a-100 and about the Chapter at northcountrytrail.org/anf.

A-100 Results

This year, hikers ventured out from the Route 66 Trailhead, on the south end of the National Forest, near Vowinckel, Pa. Cool temperatures, sunny skies, and dry trail were enjoyed and appreciated by all.

The first 100-milers finished at just after midnight on Sunday morning, which means they covered 100 miles of trail in a little more than 30 hours. Another pair of 100-mile finishers interrupted their hike to drive a sick participant back to their car, and they still finished in the allotted time of 50 hours. One family of five traveled from Connecticut to do the 25-mile hike together, and they all completed their challenge.

- **164 participants**
- **Participants from New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas, Oregon, Florida, Michigan, Wisconsin, and the Eastern seaboard**
- **24 hikers completed all 100 miles**
- **14 completed 75 miles**
- **88 completed 50 miles**
- **29 completed 25 miles**

"Truly an incredible event. Top-notch trails and awesome dedication from all the volunteers who make this event happen! I know we will all be back again next year!" (Bridget Walker, participant)

"This was a great event. Very well run, and an enjoyable weekend. Thank you to all of the volunteers for everything that you do to care for the Trail and for taking great care of us, especially with the burgers and cold drinks at the end!" (Katie Diebold-Dudzic, participant)

"It is the combination of beautiful trails, personal challenge and accomplishment, and fantastic camaraderie between hikers and volunteers that make so many of us come back for the next year." (Stacy Markovich, participant)

Partnership Updates

2023 National Trails Workshop

The *Schedule at a Glance* for the National Trails Workshop is now available! Learn more, view the schedule and session descriptions, 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

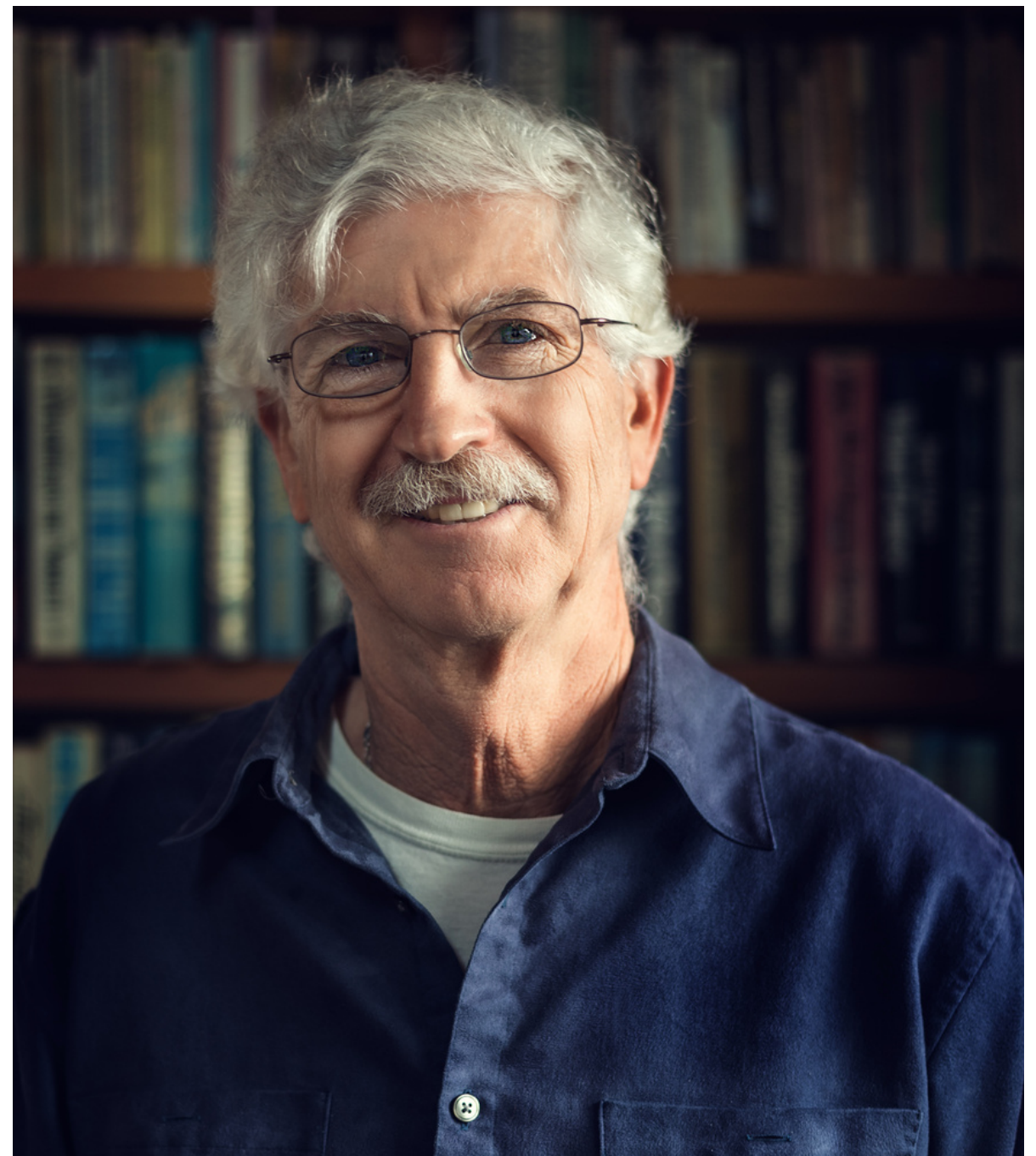
REFLECTIONS: BARNEY SCOUT MANN, AS THE GAVEL IS PASSED—PARTNERSHIP PRESIDENT 2019-2023

BY BARNEY SCOUT MANN

Today I dusted off my "Introduction to your new President." I wrote it to the Board and the Trail Leaders Council in 2018. It was two dozen board meetings ago, a different era, a different world. I wrote that I'd been to every Hike the Hill since 2008. Now there have been five more. I wrote that I had three goals: 1. Guide the transition from founding executive director to a new ED; 2. Build a board culture where the Partnership is a top-three priority; and 3. Complete the 2016 Strategic Plan and lay the groundwork for the next. I have served four executive directors, Gary Werner for a year, the interim Karen Crossley for eight months, Valerie Rupp for two and a half years, and now interim Mike Wollmer, as we are on the verge of our next ED.

What I am most proud to see come to pass: Double, if not triple our Partnership staff, private-side donations increased nearly ten-fold (\$18k to \$170k), and we have built a strong board including constituencies previously not represented. I have personally valued the opportunity to deepen previous friendships and make so many new ones.

What has been most fun, my highlights: Getting everyone to stand and sing "This Trail is your Trail," which I wrote with each National Trail name in alphabetical order. Unearthing Benton MacKaye's compass from a dusty box where it had hidden for thirty years and then sharing it with all of you. Bringing tears to the eyes of Forest Service chief Vicki Christensen and having her share that story with her 30,000 staff in her next Chief's Message. Having nearly an hour alone with the Secretary of Agriculture, treated like royalty, getting to tell him the story and the needs of our great National Trails.



Barney Mann, Partnership President 2019-2023.

This is not where I walk off into the sunset. I term out, after three terms in 2025. I am so pleased that Andrea Ketchmarck was elected to serve as the next President. We are all in very capable hands.

*Barney Scout Mann is a trail advocate, retired attorney, long-distance hiker, and author. His most recent book, *Journeys North: The Pacific Crest Trail*, was a 2020 Banff Book Festival Adventure Travel finalist. Mann had a 25-year career as a real estate and business lawyer. He served on the Board of the Pacific Crest Trail Association from 2008 to 2017 (Board Chair for three years). He served on the Board of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition from 2016 to 2023 (Board president for three years). Mann thru-hiked the Pacific Crest Trail with his wife in 2007, and has since then thru-hiked the Continental Divide Trail (2015), the Appalachian Trail (2017) and the Arizona Trail (2021). Mann resides with his wife Sandy in San Diego, CA.*



Sandy Marra, Barney Mann and the Benton Mackaye compass. Photo provided by Barney Mann.

TRAIL APPRENTICE HIGHLIGHTS

INTRODUCING 2023 TRAIL APPRENTICE OLIVIA HALL (SHE/HER)



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.

Olivia is one of seven individuals selected to be a 2023 trail apprentice. She has been working in the outdoors since 2019. Having worked on a trail crew, a prescribed fire crew, a couple of biodynamic farms, and as a cook at a few outdoor education institutions, she finally had the chance to dip her toe into outdoor education in 2022. Hailing from Ohio, she is now based out of Asheville, NC. She is a big proponent of outdoor recreation and experiential education, valuing how they can cultivate personal growth and connectedness to both the natural world and human communities. She dedicates much of her time to making these spaces and experiences more accessible to marginalized communities, in particular to BIPOC folks in the Western North Carolina area.

What are your career aspirations?

I aspire to continue to work in the outdoor industry. One aspiration I have is to become a rock climbing guide, and in particular, I hope that one day I would be able to use this skillset to guide and instruct all folks in rock climbing, and in particular to facilitate learning experiences in affinity spaces. I also aspire to eventually work for or make my own outdoor events or festival. All of these aspirations are things that would, mostly if not entirely, occur on public lands or National Trails.

Why did you decide to join the Trail Apprentice Program?

So many of my most formative experiences have happened on trails! Hiking, and then later car-camping and backpacking, was my primary entry point to outdoor recreation, which has become one of the driving forces of my life. I enjoy both being in nature itself, as well as the internal challenge and growth it has elicited in me, and the close friends and personal connections I have forged in the outdoors. Though I've since gotten more involved in more of the outdoor adventure/sports side of the outdoors, I still love and appreciate trails, for how accessible of an entry-point they are to the outdoors and for the important purpose they serve for conservation, through creating a durable surface on which folks can tread.

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

I worked on a Conservation Corps in Maine, building and maintaining trails at 3 different sites in Maine for 4.5 months. In that experience, I spent 9 days on (5 days off) with my fellow crew members, primarily building stairsteps out of rock, occasionally out of felled wood, and even more rarely, walking the trails clearing blowdowns. That experience was, to date, the most physically intensive work I've ever done, and gave me a new understanding and appreciation of not only trails themselves but also the various design choices and methodologies which cause trails to look the way that they do.



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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