

2023
2028



PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

STRATEGIC PLAN



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WHO WE ARE



PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

The Partnership for the National Trails System (“Partnership”) brings together trail organizations, government partners and trail stewards who work together to advance National Trails System priorities, and support National Historic and Scenic Trails.

Congress designates National Historic Trails to commemorate historic routes for their national significance, and National Scenic Trails for their significant scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities. There are currently 32 National Historic and Scenic Trails across the U.S.

The Partnership may be traced back to 1992 when representatives of what was then 17 National Scenic & Historic Trails formed a coalition to advocate for their mutual federal interests. It was in that year that testimony for increased, dedicated funding for Trails was presented to Congress.

Over the next almost ten years, the coalition of Trails grew substantially and in 2001 the Partnership was incorporated in Wisconsin and granted 501c3 status from the IRS in 2003.

Since then the Partnership has grown to represent 32 Trails across the country, East Coast to West Coast, Alaska & Hawaii running through all 50 states.

Prior to 2019, the Partnership had a single full-time employee, its Executive Director, with a smattering of part-time and seasonal staff. Currently, the Partnership employs three full-time and two part-time, project-focused employees.

WE SUPPORT OUR NATIONAL HISTORIC AND SCENIC TRAILS BY:






- Expanding resource protection and funding,
- Enhancing the profile of the National Trails System, and
- Connecting and supporting trail managers, organizations and champions.

SCENIC & HISTORIC TRAILS MAP





Note: Abbreviations at right are for federal lands shown on this map. In many places exact trail locations have not yet been determined. Portions of the trails indicated on this map may not be accessible for public use. Please check with individual trail clubs and managing offices for the latest available trail locations.

National Park System

	MEM Memorial	NP National Park
	NB National Battlefield	N PRES National Preserve
	NBP National Battlefield Park	NRA National Recreation Area
	NHP National Historical Park	NRR National Recreational River
	NHS National Historic Site	N RES National Reserve
	NL National Lakeshore	NS National Seashore
	NM National Monument	NSR National Scenic Riverway
	N MEM National Memorial	PKWY Parkway
	NMP National Military Park	

National Forest System

	National Forest
	National Grassland

Only national park, forest areas, and wildlife refuges that relate to the National Trails System are shown.

Fish and Wildlife Service

	NWR National Wildlife Refuge
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Bureau of Land Management



TRAIL PARTNERS

SCENIC TRAILS



HISTORIC TRAILS



NEWLY DESIGNATED TRAILS IN 2023

Butterfield Overland Trail
Chilkoot Trail



OUR VISION

We envision a thriving National Trails System that connects people and landscapes, commemorates diverse stories, and assures extraordinary experiences for all, now and in the future.

OUR MISSION

We connect, strengthen and amplify a vibrant network of partners united to preserve, enhance and promote National Historic & Scenic Trails.



OUR VALUES

National Trails exist because of the people and communities that walked the path before us. They preserve cultural heritage and history, protect critical landscapes and provide opportunities for adventure, reflection and enjoyment. We value National Trails lands and the ecosystems and landscapes they connect. We value the experiences that National Trails provide to the public and the contributions they bring to the lives and livelihoods of people and communities - past, present and future - that are touched by them. Building on this legacy, the Partnership is guided by a set of core values:

COLLABORATION

Just as the National Trails System connects public lands and urban and rural communities, we connect people who enjoy National Historic & Scenic Trails and work to make them great.

As partners, we listen, work, innovate and grow together to advance system-wide goals through our individual actions and our shared work.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity makes us, and the National Trails System, stronger. We strive to engage people of all perspectives, identities, backgrounds, skills and styles. We create spaces that ensure and prioritize meaningful and diverse participation.

INTEGRITY

We build trust through responsible actions and honest relationships. We judiciously use the resources entrusted to us.

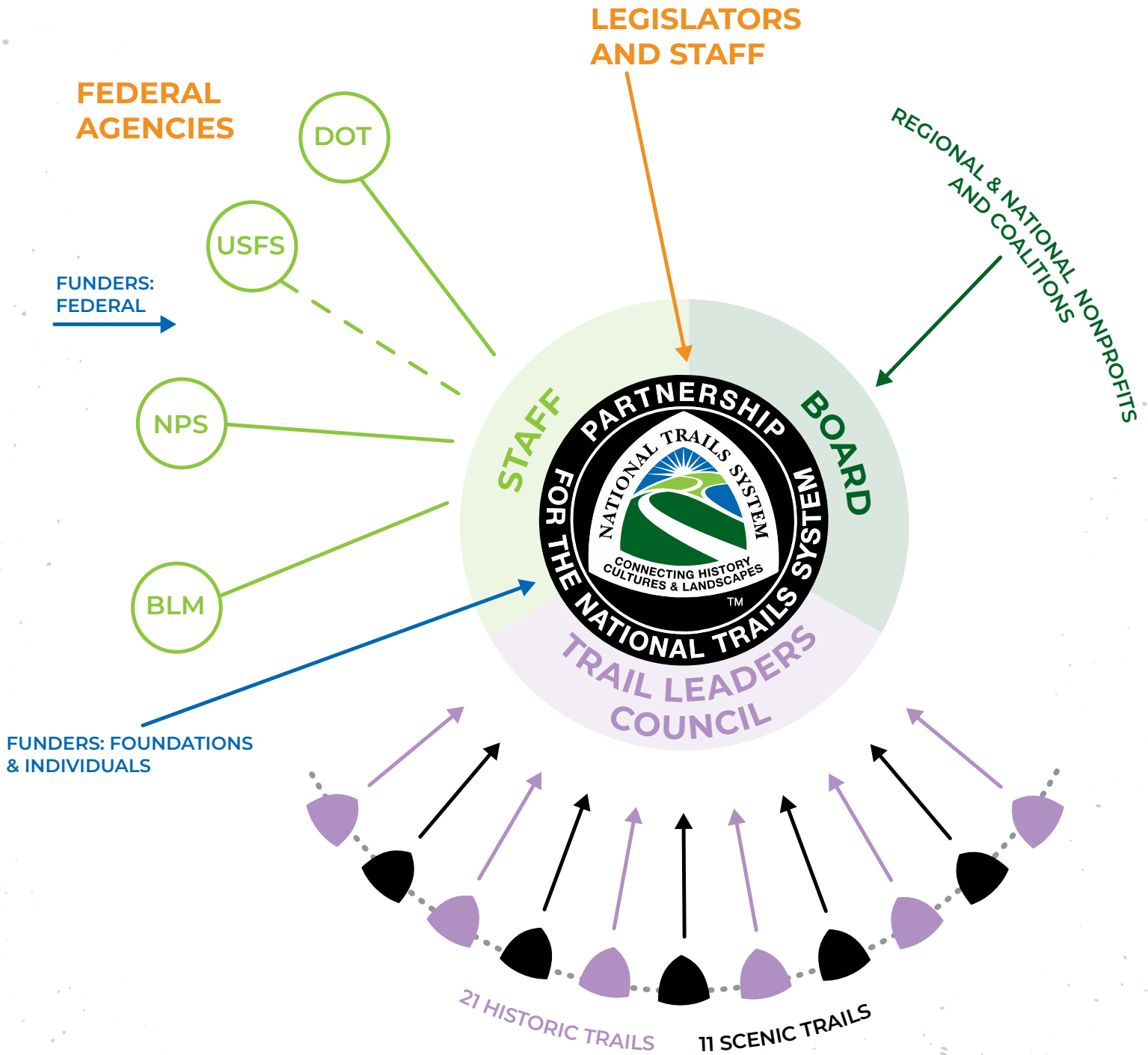
SUSTAINABILITY

We address the evolving needs of a growing National Trails System and the people who enjoy it. We continue to improve our sustainability and resilience as a network of partners.

RESPECT

We appreciate the people, communities, cultures, organizations, partners, that contribute to the National Trails System and their varied ecosystems. As a broad, diverse and ever-expanding network, we will treat each other fairly and with dignity.

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM COMMUNITY



OUR PLAN



LIVING DOCUMENT

This strategic plan is a rolling five-year plan. It is a living plan intended to be revisited annually to assess progress toward goals and objectives and to inform work plan development. As goals and objectives are achieved they can fall away, making room for new goals to be set.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

WHO WAS INVOLVED

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANT:

Southwest Decision Resources

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM:

A 10-member team comprised of Partnership board and staff, leaders of trail organizations (Trail Leaders Council members), and representatives of trail-related organizations beyond the Partnership

PARTICIPANTS:

Partnership staff, board, and committees;
Trail Leaders Council (trail organization leaders);
federal trail administering agencies; and other
trail partners

STRATEGIC PLAN APPROVAL:

Partnership board

TIMING

The Strategic Plan
was developed from
February 2022 - June 2023

SUMMARY STEPS

The strategic plan was collaboratively developed with robust engagement of the diverse Partnership community. This highly interactive process included multiple methods and settings - virtual workshops and meetings, focus group discussions, online surveys, and one on one interviews. The plan reflects iterative feedback and development over 18 months. Following is a summary of the key steps.

1. INITIAL ASSESSMENT:

Individual interviews with Partnership Executive Committee and Strategic Planning Team members.

2. PROCESS DEVELOPMENT:

Tailored planning process based on initial assessment results.

3. INPUT ON NEEDS AND PRIORITIES:

- a. Online survey of the broader Partnership community
- b. Interviews with scenic and historic trail organization directors by Strategic Planning Team members
- c. Joint meetings with Board and Trail Leaders Council
- d. Focus group discussions with the National Trail Administrators Roundtable and with federal partners

4. SYNTHESIS OF NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

5. DEVELOPMENT OF DRAFT MISSION AND VISION:

Review and discussion with Partnership Board

SUMMARY STEPS

6. STRATEGIC PLANNING BY KEY FOCUS AREA:

- a. Agreement on Focus Areas (federal relations, advocacy, communication and awareness raising, programs)
- b. Discussion of needs and priorities by Focus Areas with key partners

7. DEVELOPMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

8. REVIEW AND REFINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- a. Partnership committees (Advocacy and Policy, DEI, Finance, Programs)
- b. Board and Trail Leaders Council

9. FINALIZE DRAFT PLAN

10. BOARD APPROVAL OF STRATEGIC PLAN:

August 9, 2023

GOALS AND KEY STRATEGIES

These are the four priorities and associated goals that will help guide the Partnership's work over the next 5 years.

UNIFY TRAIL PARTNERS

Unite an, innovative community that conserves and enhances a thriving system of National Historic & Scenic Trails.

1. Foster a community that develops and advances shared System-wide priorities for National Historic & Scenic Trails.
 - a. Regularly convene National Historic & Scenic Trails-focused organizations and federal trails administrators to cooperatively set and monitor system-wide priorities.
 - b. Foster regular opportunities for the Partnership trail community to advise on priorities through the Trails Leaders Council and Historic & Scenic Trail-focused roundtables.
2. Provide forums for open peer exchange and collaboration.
 - a. Emphasize interactive opportunities for the Partnership and partners to share experience, tools and strategies at all levels.
3. Broaden the Partnership network through enhanced engagement opportunities.
 - a. Make the Partnership more inclusive and supportive of current and new partners, especially emerging leaders and underrepresented groups.
 - b. Develop resources to support successful co-stewardship of newly designated National Historic & Scenic Trails.



EXPAND PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES

Increase the knowledge, skills, resources and capacity of National Historic & Scenic Trail stewards and advocates

1. Expand equitable learning opportunities to grow the skills and capacity of trail stewards and advocates.
 - a. Deliver training, workshops and other learning opportunities.
 - b. Explore the potential for a NTS training certification program.
 - c. Prioritize under-represented groups in Partnership learning and engagement opportunities.
2. Increase access to resources and opportunities to support new and emerging leaders of National Historic & Scenic Trails.
 - a. Develop or connect members and agency partners to resources that help them employ better practices in recruiting and managing diverse workforces.
 - b. Expand and improve the Trail Apprentice Program.
 - c. Create opportunities for the Partnership and member's next generation programs to network and access information and professional development opportunities.
3. Enhance resources to better serve members with diverse interests, needs and capacities.
 - a. Carefully develop Partnership programs and member benefits that support organizations of all sizes and capacities.
 - b. Assess and adapt Partnership member participation model to reflect the evolving National Trails System and to ensure participation in the Partnership continues to be of high value to partners and the system.
 - c. Increase access to new and potential revenue sources for Partnership members.
4. Establish the Partnership as a valued source of information about the National Trails System.
 - a. Collect and share System-wide resources and information to highlight the value of National Scenic & Historic Trails.
 - b. Revamp the Partnership website to provide robust and timely information about the National Trails System.



ELEVATE TRAIL ADVOCACY

Elevate the priorities and profile of National Historic & Scenic Trails

1. Advance a well-resourced trail system by supporting a growing network of National Trails System advocates.
 - a. Collaboratively develop a System-wide advocacy agenda to effectively advance policy and management priorities.
 - b. Equip Partnership members and trail advocates to promote this agenda across multiple levels of government.

2. Expand trail administrators and federal legislators awareness and support for the National Trails System.
 - a. Collaborate with agency partners to educate a broader cross-section of agency staff and leaders about National Trails, their management, and the benefits they provide.
 - b. Develop an initiative for agency leaders and other key decision-makers to tour and experience National Trails.

3. Elevate the profile of National Historic & Scenic Trails within public lands, outdoor recreation and historic preservation communities.
 - a. Co-lead a broad awareness-raising campaign for the 60th anniversary of the National Trails Systems Act in 2028.
 - b. Coordinate participation in high priority national coalitions on behalf of the NHST network.

BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Build a solid foundation that incubates positive, collaborative relationships and promotes organizational excellence and impact.

1. Create an environment that encourages and supports robust and inclusive engagement within the Partnership.
 - a. Adapt the organizational model and framework, as needed, to increase meaningful participation and effectively achieve the Partnership mission.
 - b. Continue to strengthen relationships and communications among the Partnership, members, volunteers, and partners.
2. Strengthen the organizational foundation for programmatic growth.
 - a. Align and expand staff to achieve strategic plan goals and objectives.
 - b. Attract and retain high-quality staff and volunteers aligned with Partnership values.
 - c. Simplify and streamline finance systems, policies and procedures.
 - d. Explore and pursue opportunities to leverage capacity through partnerships with peer organizations.
3. Secure and sustain financial resources required to implement this strategic plan.
 - a. Ensure 3-6 months operational funding reserve.
 - b. Increase and diversify private funding to support program and organizational growth.
 - c. Proactively leverage resources available through Federal partners and other relevant agencies.
4. Refine the Partnership's communications strategy.
 - a. Develop a cohesive brand and focused messaging.
 - b. Implement effective ways to engage diverse audiences and stakeholders.



PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

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