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MARCH 2012

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Trail Tracks is our monthly e-Newsletter with links to www.AmericanTrails.org, one of the world's most comprehensive online resources for planning, designing, building, funding, managing, and enhancing trails and greenways. We also bring you news from the halls of Congress, new studies and resources, interesting articles, events, and training opportunities. Check the topics below for what's new in the trails world!

Special thanks to the sponsor of this issue:

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WHAT'S HOT

Webinar: Best Practices for Developing Interpretive Panels for Trails

The American Trails Webinar Series brings you "Telling a Better Story: Best Practices for Developing Interpretive Panels for Trails" that will be held Thursday, April 26 at 10:00 a.m. Pacific. The focus is on strategies for captivating your trail audience with provocative, well designed interpretive panels. Get practical advice for developing theme-based messages, establishing budgets, selecting images and design elements, understanding how visitors learn, writing interpretive text, and preparing files for production. Presenters are environmental education consultants Jennifer Rigby and Erica Fielder. [Learn more and sign up for the Webinar...](#)

Transportation bills in Congress still cause for concern

The House is in the spotlight on federal transportation funding, following Senate passage of its version of the bill. Last week, the Senate approved a \$109 billion transportation bill. The bipartisan bill passed by a vote of 74-22. After all the rhetoric and amendments and work to support trails in the House and Senate transportation bills, it looks like there will be an extension of the current programs. John Mica (R-FL), Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said the House won't address the bill passed by the Senate, but will simply extend the funding authorization, possibly until the November elections. However, with the

International Trails Award to make its debut at the 2013 Symposium

National Trails Awards nomination form is now available!

THANK YOU EXHIBITORS!
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Help American Trails fight for funding and support for trails

current authorization expiring on March 31, it's apparent that Congress must now simply extend SAFETEA-LU, as it has done eight times. For trails and bike/ped programs, life would go on as it has since 2009 when the first extension took place. [Watch for breaking news and be ready to add your support...](#)

March 31 is deadline for Recreational Trails Program awards

The Coalition for Recreational Trails sponsors the Annual Achievement Awards as part of the ongoing effort to build awareness and appreciation of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). This is an important year to show how vital RTP funding is to building and preserving our nationwide trail systems. All types of outstanding projects funded by RTP are eligible for the awards. Honorees will be invited to the awards ceremony on Capitol Hill the first week in June during the annual celebration for Great Outdoors Week. [Read more and download the nomination form...](#)

"Navigating Radical Change -- The New Normal" theme for CA Trails & Greenways Conference

We encourage you to attend the CA Trails & Greenways Conference April 18-20, 2012 in Woodland Hills, CA as it will provide valuable insights into linking trails to transportation funding, the expanding role of trails in fostering health and well-being, and exploring a wide variety of partnerships. In selecting the theme, *Navigating Radical Change -- The New Normal*, they'll use the conference venue to explore strategies for success in turbulent times. Bob Searns, American Trails Chair and Owner of The Greenway Team, will be a keynote speaker. [Learn more and register today...](#)

National Trails Surface Study seeks survey participants

A study underway will look at trail surfaces and implications for accessibility. Through a collaborative effort with the U.S. Access Board and Oklahoma State University, the National Center on Accessibility is seeking information on construction practices of pedestrian/hiker, natural surface trails in the United States. This study will provide better insight into the products used on trail surfaces, the firmness and stability of those surfaces, and the frequency of maintenance/repair activities performed. [Learn more and how to get involved...](#)

American Hiking Society's National Trails Day 2012: register your trail event

Looking for a great opportunity to showcase your trail and to generate more support and funding for your projects? Sponsored by American Hiking Society and a variety of partners, National Trails Day is celebrated the first Saturday of each June. The goals are to promote the need for trails, get some work done, recognize volunteers, and generate buzz for local trails. Access the free Event Organizer's Manual for information on planning and building your event. [Read more...](#)

Take action for trails: get the facts and contacts in one place

American Trails "SUPPORTING TRAILS" pages provide the facts on current issues and debates and the ongoing efforts of American Trails to continue its years of support for positive policies and funding for trails and greenways. Please join our efforts to document the value of trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities as transportation infrastructure, and be an active and positive voice in the reauthorization process, economic stimulus proposals, and Federal land management agency budgets. We continuously add news and action items to these pages. [Check back often and forward this link on through your networks...](#)



Quick Links

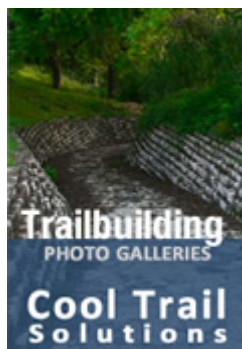
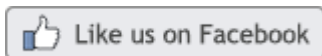
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April 14-17, 2013 ~ Fountain Hills, Arizona

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Trails Lead Everywhere

Exhibitors: sign up with your support by March 31 and save 20%

Exhibitors can save 20% off exhibitor fees until March 31. Additional early exhibitor discounts include a logo link on our homepage and Symposium webpages, an article in one issue of our Trail Tracks e-Newsletter, and choice of booth location in the order we receive their contract (some exceptions apply). Exhibitors also get to help us design the "indoor trails and greenways system." [Learn more about the benefits of coming in early and download the exhibitor contract...](#)

International Trails Award to make its debut at the 2013 Symposium

The new International Trails Award will recognize an outstanding project or partnership -- that occurred outside the United States -- that demonstrates outstanding planning, design, or implementation and enhances the overall trails movement worldwide. Submissions describing the trail or greenway (or trail or greenway system) including successful aspects such as planning, design, challenges solved, public participation, sustainability, economic benefits, promotion, eco-tourism, and benefits to the local and global community are encouraged. The deadline for submissions is October 31, 2012. [Read more and download the nomination packet...](#)

National Trails Awards nomination form is now available!

Don't miss this opportunity to nominate an outstanding person, project, or organization that has impacted the world of trails over the last two years. The National Trails Awards are one way American Trails recognizes the tremendous contributions of volunteers, professionals, and other leaders who are working to create a national system of trails for all Americans. Winners will be announced at the 21st American Trails International Trails Symposium (ITS) Awards Banquet in Arizona, April 16, 2013. The deadline for submitting nominations is October 31, 2012. See [previous award winners](#) and learn more about the [National Trails Awards...](#)

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- **What is an interpretive master plan worth?**

Jennifer Rigby, Director of **The Acorn Group**, tells us how to approach designing exhibits or signs for new trails and visitor centers: "An interpretive master plan challenges you to take stock of your site, tease out the important elements and messages, and determine which communication strategies are best suited for achieving your interpretive goals." The key elements are management, markets, mechanics of the site, messages, and media. [Read more and see photos...](#)

- **More than just words: experience trails through interactive interpretive panels**

More than words, interactive signs amplify the experience of trail patrons by engaging the senses. When multiple senses are engaged, awareness is heightened, which means patrons are more likely to internalize the information contained on a single sign. **Interpretive Graphics** explains how this internalization fosters connections, increases the desire for stewardship, and intensifies the desire for more learning, making interactive signage a powerful interpretive tool. [Read more...](#)

- **Interpretive signs for Illinois Route 66 National Scenic Byway**

Signs and interpretive wayside panels bring Illinois Route 66 Heritage Road to life for visitors from around the world. The first phase of the project produced an interpretive master plan with multiple access points and hundreds of attractions from Chicago to St. Louis. The second phase featured interpretive wayside panels, designed by **iZone**, shaped in a streamlined design, with supports meant to resemble chrome features of 1950s automobiles. [Read more and see photos...](#)

Learn how your organization can get an article as an exhibitor in our e-Newsletter. Email Candace Mitchell, Exhibitor Coordinator, at candace@americantrails.org.

NEWS

National Water Trails System to promote healthy, accessible rivers

The Department of the Interior has announced a Secretarial Order that establishes national water trails as a class of national recreational trails. The stated goal is to "help facilitate outdoor recreation on waterways in and around urban areas, and provide national recognition and resources to existing, local water trails." The Chattahoochee River Water Trail in Georgia will be the first river to be included as a National Water Trail under the new system. [Read more...](#)

New boardwalk at Washington Wildlife Refuge increases visitation

The Tacoma (WA) News Tribune reports that the Nisqually Estuary Boardwalk Trail has become a big attraction since it opened a year ago: "For the first time at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, visitation topped 200,000 for the year. That count was 33 percent higher than the previous year. The \$2.8 million, mile-long boardwalk was one of the key new elements when the refuge tore down much of the Brown Farm dike and trail as part of the refuge's three-year, \$13 million restoration project." [Read more and see photos...](#)

Rail trail across the Mississippi River planned for Memphis

Arkansas and Tennessee Departments of Transportation are looking into a pedestrian walkway and bike path along the Harahan Bridge, as a way of extending the Mississippi River Trail across the river. The project combines longstanding efforts to improve the downtown Memphis mall and to

establish a bicycling and walking route across the Mississippi River on the 1916 Harahan Bridge -- a railroad span that has, on both sides of the tracks, cantilevered structures that once carried motor vehicles. [Read more and see photos...](#)

As river health improves, interest in water trails increases

In New Jersey, the South Bergenite reports on increasing recreation opportunities along two local rivers. "Sandwiched between the Passaic River and the Hackensack River, South Bergen residents have access to both rivers and the programming that focuses on them. And local officials in charge of programming along the rivers say as the health of the rivers slowly improves, there's more to see and do each time you make it out onto one of the waterways." [Read more and see photos...](#)

Frisco Trail repairs of 2011 flood damage expected to begin

The Fayetteville Flyer (AR) reports on the repairs of the severe flood damage from 2011, which are just now getting underway on the Frisco Trail. "Heavy flooding last April caused a large portion of the streamside slope leading up to the trail to be washed away. Part of the expected delay was attributed to the lengthy processes needed just to get the project out for bid. The slope damage was so severe that repairs required a lot more than just pouring some concrete." [Read more and see photos...](#)

FEATURES

TRACKS works for better trail systems in Arizona

TRACKS is a group of over 350 volunteers who plan, build, and maintain over 200 miles of trails for hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, and trail runners in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests of northeast Arizona. Much of the work involves coordination with the U.S. Forest Service as well as with the Arizona State Committee on Trails. The group has been working to develop the White Mountains Trail System since the early 1990s. [Read more and see photos...](#)

Children's Center trail project helps break down barriers

A new "barriers" trail is helping patients at the Children's Center in Bethany, Oklahoma learn to maneuver on and around common barriers in a safe environment. The trail includes surface challenge areas made of materials patients may face in everyday situations. Materials include concrete, rubber, pea gravel, brick with mortar joints, mulch, boardwalk decking, and concrete pavers. The trail was funded by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, OK Department of Transportation, and OK Recreational Trails Program. [Read more and see photos...](#)

National Recreation Trails: see our photo contest winners

American Trails sponsors the annual Photo Contest for National Recreation Trails. In celebration of these great trails we are presenting awards in several categories to highlight the diversity of NRTs. Pictures include nearly every trail user group, urban trails, interesting facilities, great scenery, and artistic photography. See our picks for winning photos in 19 categories, and view all 275 entries. [Read our blog and see photos...](#)

American Trails website offers gateway for both trail users and professionals

One of the recent improvements we have made to our expansive website is to create a clearer and user friendly gateway to our two main streams of visitors -- Trail Users & Trail Professionals.

- The [Trail Users](#) gateway is for those looking for places to hike or ride, or to connect with trail organizations and learn about projects in their state.
- The [Trail Professionals](#) gateway page gives quick access to our web areas on skills, training, resources, and advocacy.

As always, we're interested in your feedback! Email us at trailhead@americantrails.org.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Best Practices: Principles of Ecologically Sustainable Trails

Trails are our most important tool for linking conservation and recreation. As such, they must be developed and maintained in ways that avoid negative impacts to our ecological resources. These "guiding principles" when developing and maintaining trail systems are from the Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation and Recreation and their *Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual*, and adapted from Minnesota DNR's *Trails and Waterways Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines*. [Learn more...](#)

Outdoor Stewardship Institute (OSI) provides wide range of training

Sponsored by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, the OSI continues its broad program of trail-related training across the state. Workshops are open to anyone interested. The focus is on creating more effective volunteers on trails and natural resource management projects. Workshops scheduled include:

- April 11: Working with Youth in the Outdoors (Denver)
- April 14-15: Crew Leadership for Trails Training (Denver)
- April 14-15: Leadership for Trails OR Ecological Restoration Training (Grand Junction)
- April 25: Stewardship Advisor Training (Denver)
- April 28-29: Crew Leadership for Trails Training (Cheyenne Mtn. State Park)
- May 1, 3, and 5: Crew Leadership for Trails Training (Morrison)

[Learn more about the Outdoor Stewardship Institute...](#)

Training opportunities for 2012: see our online calendar

Check the Online Training Calendar for a wide variety of learning opportunities for volunteers and professionals engaged with trails of all kinds. American Trails, through the National Trails Training Partnership (NTTP), works with agencies and organizations across America to promote trail-related training. Let us know if we can publicize your training, courses, workshops, or conferences! See *details on events below and many more opportunities for training on the [Online Trails Training Calendar...](#)*

Spring training for volunteers, staff members, and students:

March 29-April 1 - Sedona, AZ
* Subaru/IMBA Trailbuilders School

March 29-April 1 - Moore's Springs, NC
 * Subaru/IMBA Trailbuilders School

April 11 - Webinar: 2:00 p.m. (Eastern)
 * Developing a Fundraising Plan

April 16-17 - Salem, OR
 * Oregon Active Transportation Summit

April 16-19 - Baton Rouge, LA
 * National Association of Recreation Resource Planners Conference

April 17-20 - Lake Mead National Recreation Area, NV
 * Access to Parks and Outdoor Recreation Areas

April 18-20 - Woodland Hills, CA
 * California Trails & Greenways Conference

April 21 - Poughkeepsie, NY
 * Dutchess County Regional Trails Conference

April 23 - Toronto, ON, Canada
 * Complete Streets Forum

April 24-26, 2012 - Ashville, NC
 * River Management Society Symposium

April 26 - Webinar: 10:00 a.m. (Pacific)
 * Telling a Better Story: Best Practices for Developing Interpretive Panels for Trails ~ [Purchase Now!](#)

April 28 - Redding, CA
 * Shasta Living Streets ("Cycloviva") / Whole Earth and Watershed Festival

Contact us with your scheduled training opportunities at
NTTP@AmericanTrails.org.

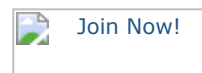
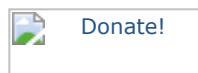
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Your support helps us help trails!

American Trails strives to enrich the quality of life for all people and the sustainable development of communities by advancing and promoting the development, preservation, and enjoyment of diverse, high quality trails and greenways. We envision a network of trails *within 15 minutes of every home, school, and workplace.*

American Trails knows that you are passionate about trails and the positive impacts they bring to your community. **Congress is taking dramatic steps to reduce federal trails funding in the upcoming year.** We need your commitment of support in order to help us secure funding and to continue advocating for more and better trails across the country! *Please take a moment to [become a member of the American Trails network](#) or [make a donation](#) to support our work...*

Thank you for supporting American Trails and America's trails!



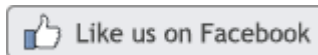
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- The largest online resource in the world for trail advocates is www.AmericanTrails.org.
- **Attend, Exhibit, Sponsor!** The [21st American Trails International Trails Symposium \(ITS\)](#) ~ April 14-17, 2013. Check out the early exhibitor discounts and benefits and their deadlines!
- Learn about and find [National Recreation Trails \(NRT\)](#) near you today!
- I'm a [Pathways for Play](#) advocate. [Ask me why.](#)
- The [Online Trails Training Calendar](#) connects you with courses, conferences, and trail-related training.
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- Need Trails Training? Visit www.TrailsTraining.net.
- [Cool Trail Solutions](#): view galleries of trail projects, enhancements, and facilities to give you ideas and see how others solved typical trails and greenways problems.
- If you appreciate the thousands of resources we provide to help you do your work better, please help support American Trails ~ [make a donation today](#).
Help us better serve you! [Take our online web survey!](#)
- **Join American Trails** - the World's most comprehensive online go-to source for planning, designing, building, funding, managing, enhancing, and supporting trails and greenways ~ [Join Now!](#)

Send news and calendar items to trailhead@americantrails.org.

American Trails is a tax-exempt, nonprofit charitable organization under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.



Header photo: Winter rains bring spring flowers on San Diego County trails; photo by Stuart Macdonald

