

2020 Recreational Trails Program Annual Report



FHWA-HEP-20-036



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

*A report on the use and benefits of Federal Recreational
Trails Program funds across the United States
Covers the period of Federal FY 1993 – FY 2019*

Central Oregon Trail Alliance (COTA) prepping for a trail day in Ochoco National Forest, OR
Photo Credit: Katie Sox

Cover Photo: RTP-funded staging area and trailhead, Sierra Ridgecrest Trail, CA
Photo Credit: American Motorcyclist Association

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Executive Summary

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is an assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that provides funds to the States for recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. This Annual Report describes how RTP funds are used, with examples of the variety of projects that States have selected to build and enhance recreational trails across the U.S. Tables show the annual levels of funding since FY 1993, and each State's share of RTP funds in the most recent Federal Fiscal Year, 2019.

Funding and Administration

The RTP embraces the "user-pay/user-benefit" philosophy of the Highway Trust Fund, which collects an estimated \$270 million per year in motor fuel excise tax from nonhighway recreational fuel use. These funds represent fuel used in recreational activities with snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-highway motorcycles, and off-highway light trucks. States are required to use 40 percent of their RTP funds for diverse recreational trail use, 30 percent for motorized recreation, and 30 percent for nonmotorized recreation. Each State develops and manages its own program of project selection and grant administration, in partnership with communities, agencies, and nonprofit organizations. For FY 2019, the Federal government authorized \$82.4 million for the RTP.

Use of RTP Funds

States may use RTP funds for a variety of project types and expenditures which fall under eight categories of permissible uses. Examples of all of these categories of projects are included in this report. The RTP legislation identifies these general permissible use categories:

- Trail maintenance and restoration
- Trailside and trailhead facilities
- Equipment for construction and maintenance
- Construction of new recreational trails
- Acquisition of trail corridors
- Assessment of trail conditions
- Safety and environmental education
- Administration

RTP funding is highly leveraged by community and State funds, as well as contributions from organizations and businesses. Of the projects completed between FY 1993 and FY 2019, total funds apportioned in the RTP was nearly \$1.38 billion with additional matching funds of \$1.02

billion, showing that each RTP dollar was matched by 74 cents with other funds. Further program efficiencies are seen by the use of youth conservation and service corps working in cooperation with private contractors, agency or community staff, and volunteers.

RTP Database

The RTP Database (<http://www.rtpinfo.org>) provides an online record of RTP project data. This database contains more than 25,397 projects which can be searched by State, County, Congressional District, Trail Name, Project Name, Permissible Use, Managed Use, Land Ownership, and Year Awarded.

National Benefits

RTP funding has become an essential element in the development and management of the nationwide systems of trails. It has also been the key resource for States to develop statewide trails programs that respond to the variety of outdoor recreation interests.



Corps crew on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, ID
Photo Credit: Idaho Conservation Corps

Examples of how RTP funding support larger public priorities include:

- Community connections and health
- Cost effectiveness
- Economic development
- Habitat improvement
- Partnership development
- Public land maintenance
- Safe recreation
- Trails for all
- Workforce development

This report shows the many, varied, and beneficial results of the RTP in States across the country.

Funding and Administration

The RTP is a Federal-aid assistance program of the FHWA that apportions funds to States by statutory formula. Each State administers its own program to build and maintain recreational trails and related facilities and activities in partnership with businesses, communities, agencies, and nonprofit organizations. A State Recreational Trails Advisory Committee or Council representing both motorized and nonmotorized recreational trail users provides public input on policies and project selection.

States seek to use RTP funds effectively, including streamlining required reviews and approvals, clarifying financial accountability, improving project selection, reducing project implementation costs for sponsors, and tracking program and project performance.

Project Requirements

States are required to use 40 percent of their RTP funds for diverse recreational trail use, 30 percent for motorized recreation, and 30 percent for nonmotorized recreation. The 40-30-30 calculation takes place after accounting for State administrative costs. A small State exclusion exempts Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, and Rhode Island from 30 percent motorized and nonmotorized requirements.

The specifics of how to apply this formula to project selection is up to the States, and varies considerably around the country. States with large Federal land ownership sometimes fund backcountry projects with both motorized and nonmotorized use to achieve diversity. Others may fund projects with adjacent paved and unpaved trail surfaces for diverse nonmotorized activities, or trails with both winter snowmobiling and summer ATV use.

The Federal funds generally provide up to 80 percent of the project cost (with higher amounts permitted in States with a higher percentage of public lands), and require project sponsors to provide the remaining amount in matching resources (generally at least 20 percent). Some project sponsors provide more than 60 percent of the funds from non-Federal sources.

Legislative History

The RTP was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), reauthorized in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), again in 2005 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU),

and the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). On December 4, 2015, the RTP was reauthorized as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, for FY 2016-20 (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/>).

Managed Uses

Managed Uses include a wide variety of both motorized and nonmotorized trail activities that are appropriate to recreational trails. The RTP legislation defines the term "recreational trail" as "a thoroughfare or track across land or snow, used for recreational purposes," and includes the following activities:

- A. Pedestrian activities, including wheelchair use;
- B. Skating or skateboarding;
- C. Equestrian activities, including carriage driving;
- D. Nonmotorized snow trail activities, including skiing;
- E. Bicycling or use of other human powered vehicles;
- F. Aquatic or water activities; and
- G. Motorized vehicular activities, including all terrain vehicle riding, motorcycling, snowmobiling, use of offroad light trucks, or use of other offroad motorized vehicles.

The tables on the next three pages provide an overview of the historic funding of the RTP and a more detailed breakdown of FY 2019 funding.



Kartchner Caverns State Park, AZ
Photo Credit: Arizona Trail Association

Table 1: Apportionments All States, All Fiscal Years

The obligation rate represents the percentage of funds committed to projects compared to the funds available. The obligation rate for the overall Federal-aid highway program averages about 95 percent over time. The obligation rate for the RTP has trended in the 85 percent range.

There are many reasons why the RTP has a lower obligation rate. Most Federal-aid highway funds, including the RTP, are available for a total of four fiscal years (current fiscal year, plus three more years), which gives States flexibility to determine priorities over several years. The obligation authority for the Federal-aid highway program is usually lower than the apportionments, so some States give priority to other Federal-aid highway programs. Several States report that they select projects on two-year cycles (even-numbered years tend to have lower obligation rates). Other States report that they delay project selection and implementation when there is uncertainty about the reauthorization of the program, or take time to implement the program after each new authorization act.

The difference in the totals in Table 1 on this page and Table 3 on page 7 is due to the different sources providing the information and the manner in which a State obligates its funding (e.g., some States obligate funds every other year). The source for the data in Tables 1 and 2 is the Federal Highway Administration Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty. The data source for Tables 3 (page 7) and 4 (page 17) is information voluntarily provided by the States and the District of Columbia for the RTP Database (<http://www.rtpinfo.org>).

Additionally, the RTP Database does not currently have complete data for all States; data collection and validation for the RTP Database is an on-going effort. Data will be regularly entered into the Database as it is received from the States and the District of Columbia.

Apportionments (FY)	RTP Funding	Obligated
1993	\$7,275,000	\$5,696,543
1994	\$0	\$1,581,335
1995	\$0	\$0
1996	\$14,688,000	\$11,595,075
1997	\$14,688,000	\$16,256,403
1998	\$29,550,000	\$14,691,339
1999	\$39,400,000	\$33,750,926
2000	\$49,250,000	\$44,161,037
2001	\$49,250,000	\$44,826,248
2002	\$49,250,000	\$47,586,188
2003	\$48,929,875	\$44,915,197
2004	\$57,656,952	\$43,957,595
2005	\$59,160,000	\$43,459,118
2006	\$68,468,400	\$57,983,555
2007	\$74,160,000	\$65,913,964
2008	\$79,160,000	\$62,787,840
2009	\$84,160,000	\$81,113,236
2010	\$84,160,000	\$52,908,922
2011	\$96,570,196	\$88,649,335
2012	\$78,569,033	\$68,360,434
2013	\$79,212,744	\$65,371,220
2014	\$80,741,889	\$64,842,044
2015	\$80,741,889	\$71,980,520
2016	\$82,365,802	\$68,808,853
2017	\$82,365,802	\$83,165,826
2018	\$82,365,802	\$72,579,414
2019	\$82,365,802	\$105,969,383
FY1993-2019 Totals	\$1,554,505,186	\$1,362,911,550
FY1993-2019 Obligation Rate		87.67%

Table 2: Funding per State for FY 2019

This table shows the number of selected projects, apportionments, and obligations per State for FY 2019. The apportionments are based on the amount each State received in FY 2009. In that year, half of the funds were distributed equally among all States, and half were distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of off-road recreational fuel use in each State: fuel used for off-road recreation by snowmobiles, ATVs, off-road motorcycles, and off-road light trucks.

This table also shows obligations by State. Obligations are the Federal government's legal commitment to pay or reimburse the States or other entities for the Federal share of a project's eligible costs.

Several States reported that their FY 2019 plans were impacted by the potential for a rescission of funds included in the FAST Act. Some States accelerated obligations so funds would not be rescinded; others delayed obligations because their States wanted to obligate other highway funds. The FY 2020 Appropriations Act repealed the FAST Act rescission.

¹ State's Governor opted out of the RTP: CT

² State did not provide funding and match information for FY 2019: KY, WV

³ State did not select projects in FY 2019, but obligated funds: CA, IL, MO, OH, TN

⁴ Negative amount represents deobligated funds: MO

Source: Federal Highway Administration Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty (https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/funding/apportionments_obligations/recfunds_2019.cfm)

* RTP Net includes 1% return to FHWA for program administration under 23 U.S.C. 133(h)(5)(B).

State	# 2019 Projects	FY 2019 Apportionment	FY 2019 Obligation
Alabama	5	\$1,732,289	\$1,432,996
Alaska	22	\$1,512,643	\$1,033,968
Arizona	27	\$1,915,514	\$1,418,722
Arkansas	10	\$1,479,029	\$464,705
California ³	0	\$5,698,627	\$7,426,643
Colorado	36	\$1,575,735	\$3,474,535
Connecticut ¹	0	\$0	\$0
Delaware	1	\$896,623	\$1,035,427
Dist.Columbia	4	\$816,847	\$517,715
Florida	19	\$2,576,507	\$2,983,909
Georgia	1	\$1,722,736	\$942,731
Hawaii	15	\$950,859	\$828,198
Idaho	22	\$1,693,454	\$1,514,754
Illinois ³	0	\$1,510,044	\$1,466,253
Indiana	6	\$1,189,692	\$1,513,835
Iowa	5	\$1,361,069	\$1,611,380
Kansas	21	\$1,370,407	\$1,249,477
Kentucky ²	0	\$1,410,151	\$5,640,604
Louisiana	17	\$1,502,467	\$931,545
Maine	25	\$1,428,314	\$789,542
Maryland	19	\$1,112,384	\$2,525,471
Massachusetts	52	\$1,174,862	\$2,371,509
Michigan	18	\$2,825,415	\$5,527,852
Minnesota	31	\$2,391,888	\$3,715,682
Mississippi	15	\$1,348,305	\$1,247,752
Missouri ^{3,4}	0	\$1,646,765	-\$12,276
Montana	49	\$1,590,638	\$1,521,647
Nebraska	7	\$1,205,213	\$4,222,401
Nevada	22	\$1,344,370	\$1,435,146
New Hampshire	22	\$1,255,265	\$639,261
New Jersey	13	\$1,214,489	\$4,508,206
New Mexico	1	\$1,415,533	\$678,148
New York	11	\$2,182,510	\$5,404,605
North Carolina	19	\$1,597,424	\$859,669
North Dakota	12	\$1,120,562	\$932,906
Ohio ³	0	\$1,655,132	\$1,591,234
Oklahoma	6	\$1,769,212	\$1,150,881
Oregon	16	\$1,594,051	\$4,908,258
Pennsylvania	8	\$1,971,353	\$3,915,385
Rhode Island	3	\$856,384	\$805,750
South Carolina	14	\$1,199,108	\$965,701
South Dakota	12	\$1,125,821	\$1,033,506
Tennessee ³	0	\$1,624,207	\$4,113,280
Texas	22	\$3,954,874	\$5,309,998
Utah	38	\$1,546,233	\$1,803,776
Vermont	58	\$1,017,730	\$874,556
Virginia	4	\$1,511,889	\$357,830
Washington	34	\$1,867,407	\$1,867,407
West Virginia ²	0	\$1,297,964	\$544,503
Wisconsin	69	\$2,146,076	\$3,629,504
Wyoming	16	\$1,459,731	\$1,242,895
Total to States	827	\$82,365,802	\$105,969,383
2019 Obligation Rate			128.66%

Table 3: Funding by State, FY 1993-2019

This table shows the number of projects funded plus the amount of funding by State for Federal FY 1993-2019.

This table shows the total RTP funds obligated by each State during the period. In addition, the "Total Other Funding" column shows how much additional match was provided by project sponsors. Note that the matching funds are generally higher than the 20 percent minimum required by RTP—from 1993 through 2019, States matched each RTP dollar by 74 cents in other funds. In nine States the match is higher than the total RTP funds apportioned.

Since FY 1993, nearly \$1.38 billion in RTP funds generated nearly \$1.02 billion in other funds, resulting in a total of over \$2.4 billion for trails: 58 percent from Federal funds and 42 percent from other sources.

¹ State's Governor opted out of the RTP: CT

² State is missing data from prior year(s): DC, MI, NJ

³ State did not provide funding and match information for FY 2019: KY, WV

This data is voluntarily provided by the States and the District of Columbia for the Recreational Trails Program Database (<http://www.rtpinfo.org>), and its accuracy is subject to the quality of the data reported and the timeliness of the reporting.

State	# FY 1993-2019 Projects	Total RTP Funding	Total Other Funding
Alabama	378	\$33,047,957	\$10,632,636
Alaska	529	\$19,344,231	\$5,793,157
Arizona	333	\$26,743,215	\$7,357,693
Arkansas	398	\$21,763,407	\$10,031,104
California	409	\$65,859,452	\$41,087,192
Colorado	498	\$23,607,302	\$26,505,455
Connecticut ¹	369	\$19,178,479	\$11,921,480
Delaware	156	\$13,071,370	\$6,686,295
Dist.Columbia ²	42	\$9,031,681	\$2,042,689
Florida	279	\$40,402,099	\$32,138,037
Georgia	355	\$33,485,415	\$24,793,736
Hawaii	1,615	\$14,682,063	\$3,769,618
Idaho	771	\$28,230,266	\$23,893,680
Illinois	331	\$35,091,257	\$15,234,188
Indiana	171	\$24,708,372	\$7,482,616
Iowa	143	\$33,562,891	\$15,453,246
Kansas	372	\$22,372,798	\$13,546,381
Kentucky ³	546	\$21,168,738	\$20,576,987
Louisiana	421	\$26,548,203	\$26,259,220
Maine	765	\$18,989,540	\$9,559,602
Maryland	942	\$23,327,161	\$8,265,301
Massachusetts	680	\$22,563,958	\$21,833,597
Michigan ²	334	\$42,362,916	\$27,380,153
Minnesota	579	\$38,174,179	\$64,312,273
Mississippi	331	\$27,222,844	\$6,416,474
Missouri	365	\$29,494,839	\$29,380,656
Montana	1,056	\$25,531,602	\$19,652,849
Nebraska	158	\$23,379,256	\$10,370,536
Nevada	404	\$20,292,416	\$10,751,944
New Hampshire	835	\$15,849,855	\$16,270,378
New Jersey ²	859	\$21,649,988	\$44,532,535
New Mexico	207	\$18,750,216	\$6,763,982
New York	468	\$39,681,987	\$16,793,468
North Carolina	617	\$34,794,868	\$39,899,708
North Dakota	309	\$18,761,048	\$5,466,694
Ohio	333	\$27,613,971	\$27,349,091
Oklahoma	322	\$30,957,994	\$16,793,131
Oregon	468	\$24,441,212	\$21,983,075
Pennsylvania	421	\$39,819,665	\$23,227,149
Rhode Island	403	\$7,127,004	\$2,948,694
South Carolina	311	\$19,831,022	\$6,561,476
South Dakota	415	\$23,485,758	\$12,493,007
Tennessee	270	\$22,797,853	\$6,719,730
Texas	574	\$71,510,541	\$23,242,629
Utah	637	\$30,588,140	\$58,396,929
Vermont	1,433	\$16,629,658	\$25,954,596
Virginia	324	\$27,338,817	\$10,783,917
Washington	725	\$30,717,071	\$48,754,107
West Virginia ³	333	\$16,797,099	\$4,410,102
Wisconsin	869	\$29,261,117	\$65,746,193
Wyoming	534	\$26,722,517	\$17,048,653
Totals	25,397	\$1,378,365,308	\$1,015,268,039
Percent Share of Funds		57.6%	42.4%

RTP Database

The goal of the RTP Database is to provide comprehensive, up-to-date project data on recreational trails projects in all 50 States and the District of Columbia over the RTP program's entire life-cycle. The online RTP Database (<http://www.rtpinfo.org>) for FY 1993-2019 includes more than 25,397 projects that have received nearly \$1.38 billion in funding. These projects have been matched with nearly \$1.02 billion in funds and contributions.

New mountain bike flow trail construction in the City of Frederick, MD
Photo Credit: Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts

RTPINFO.ORG

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

STATE - BY - STATE

The RTP Database provides a central repository for project data that may be used by the FHWA, Congress, the States, RTP administrators, project managers, and the public. The database promotes transparency by providing program and project information to the public.

In 2016, FHWA contracted with KMS Enterprises, Inc. (which subcontracted with American Trails and Arch Systems LLC) to develop, operate, and update a searchable RTP Database to be available on a website, and to provide annual reports on RTP funding. An average of 1,000 new records are annually entered into the Database as the States, District of Columbia, and other sources voluntarily provide this information.

Database users can search by State, County, Congressional District, Trail Name, Project Name, Permissible Use, Managed Use, Land Ownership, and Year Awarded. Reports can be printed from the search results. Users can view a record of the project for more information.

USA

Recognizing outstanding use of funding from the Recreational Trails Program.

PROJECTS

25,397

ENSURES EQUIVALENT SUPPORT FOR ALL TRAIL USER TYPES BY
REQUIRING A DIVERSE DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS

40% for diverse recreational trail use (more than one user type)

30% for motorized recreation use only

30% for nonmotorized recreation use only

Funding is based on off-highway fuel taxes generated in each State to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The Annual Report highlights some of the best projects across the U.S.

35%

FUNDING REDUCES BACKLOG MAINTENANCE AND
REHABILITATION PROJECTS

MAINTENANCE FUNDING

\$521 M

TOTAL FUNDS

\$1.38 B

MATCHING FUNDS

\$1 B

ENCOURAGES AGREEMENTS WITH





YOUTH CORPS

VISIT RTPINFO.ORG FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SEARCH
OF THE DATABASE AND PHOTO LIBRARY

Enabling DOT Priorities

USDOT Strategic Goals

The [U.S. Department of Transportation Strategic Plan for FY 2018-2022](#) establishes the DOT's strategic goals and objectives:

-  **Safety:** Reduce Transportation-Related Fatalities and Serious Injuries Across the Transportation System.
-  **Infrastructure:** Invest in Infrastructure to Ensure Mobility and Accessibility and to Stimulate Economic Growth, Productivity, and Competitiveness for American Workers and Businesses.
-  **Innovation:** Lead in the Development and Deployment of Innovative Practices and Technologies that Improve the Safety and Performance of the Nation's Transportation System.
-  **Accountability:** Serve the Nation with Reduced Regulatory Burden and Greater Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Accountability.

This report demonstrates how the RTP relates to these strategic goals and exhibits innovative projects and partnerships in the program by using the above symbols to represent each goal, and describing how each project example supports innovations in the appropriate goal areas.

RTP Excellence Awards

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT), a federation of national trail-related organizations, hosts an annual achievement awards program to recognize outstanding trail projects funded by the RTP.

The winners are recognized each year in Washington, DC during the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's Great Outdoors Month in early June. The awards are part of the Coalition's ongoing effort to build awareness of RTP accomplishments. Award winners are selected from projects nominated by public agencies, State administrators, organizations, or project sponsors. Find out more at [RecTrails.org](https://www.rec-trails.org).

Any project listed in this report that has recently won one of these prestigious awards will be signified with the symbol.



RTP is Unique in Building Maintenance and Rehabilitation Capacity

There are a variety of issues that are increasingly impacting the RTP and the greater trails industry. None are more pressing than the persistent, growing issue of the trail maintenance backlog on public lands. In the U.S. Forest Service alone, more than \$5.2 billion in infrastructure repairs and maintenance have been postponed year-after-year, otherwise known as "deferred maintenance." Of that staggering amount, \$3.7 billion comes from transportation infrastructure (includes all roads, trails, bridges, and tunnels). This backlog impacts every aspect of the Forest Service mission, including wildfire fighting and active management of our nation's forests, and affects access for millions of Americans to recreation opportunities and for rural communities who depend on these amenities for their livelihoods and economic prosperity.

The RTP uniquely provides the most consistent source of funding needed to address America's huge trail maintenance backlog. Land managers are able to leverage trail projects and RTP funding to develop opportunities to engage volunteers and habitat specialists in improving trail experiences, natural habitats, and economic benefits from enhanced outdoor recreation.

RTP Promotes Innovation

Sustainability and Accessibility

Maintenance and restoration of existing trails, includes trail maintenance, restoration, rehabilitation, or relocation. This category may also include maintenance and restoration of trail bridges.

Project Example: Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, Illinois



The Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve in Fults, Illinois received \$185,000 in RTP funding to complete an innovative accessible trail. The preserve sits at the mouth of the Fogelpole Cave, which is the largest and most diverse cave system in Illinois. The preserve ensures that water entering the cave system remains unpolluted, thus protecting the diverse lifeforms that dwell within the cave structure. Due to this, the construction methods had to be as natural as possible to not disrupt the ecosystem. This meant use of concrete, asphalt, or oil and chip was not feasible, however a hard surface was still necessary for accessibility. Local vendor Columbia Quarry worked with the preserve for an innovative solution, developing a hard coat surface made of a rock aggregate.



Photo Credit: Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, IL

Trail Tread Structures

Trail tread structures can, more than almost any other aspect of trail design, create a unique feel and identity to a trail. Structures like artistic bridges, hand stonework retaining walls, and water management systems simultaneously make trails memorable and sustainable.



Project Example: 10-Ton Timber Bridge at Auburn Valley State Park, Delaware

Bridge Builders USA, Inc. constructed a 140-foot long x 16-foot wide ten-ton timber bridge with 20-foot x 20-foot platform for [Auburn Valley State Park](#) in Yorklyn, DE. The park is Delaware's newest State park and features new hiking and paved biking trails, the historic Marshall Mansion completed in 1897, and the Auburn Valley 1/8-scale railroad. Along with exploring the park's natural resources, tours of the Marshall Mansion Estate are a unique feature where you'll learn about the family that once called Auburn Valley State Park home.



Photo Credit: Bridge Builders USA, DE

Technology Implementation

RTP projects are encouraged to use the best in technological innovation. For trails, this may mean better route planning, mitigation of impacts, using recycled materials, and using amenities that minimize energy and repair. To trail managers, this is key to reducing expenditures on maintenance by better design of trails and the use of appropriate materials and structures.

Project Example: Borden Tunnel Solar Lighting Project, Maryland



Maryland funded a project to install solar-powered LED lighting in the 955-foot Borden Tunnel on the Greater Allegheny Passage which is part of the [Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail](#). This project incorporated long lasting LED bulbs, and a top of the line solar charging system that will require almost no maintenance or management for many years to come, while ensuring that Allegheny Passage trail users have consistent and appropriate lighting for safe use of the tunnel.



Photo Credit: Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, MD

Permissible Use of RTP Funds

The RTP legislation identifies eight categories of permissible uses for how States may use RTP funds. The following pages provide details and examples for each use. The categories are:

- (A) Trail maintenance and restoration*
- (B) Trailside and trailhead facilities*
- (C) Equipment for construction and maintenance*
- (D) Construction of new recreational trails*
- (E) Acquisition of trail corridors*
- (F) Assessment of trail conditions*
- (G) Education for safety and environmental protection*
- (H) Administration*



Diverse motorized use on
Sierra Ridgecrest Trail, CA
Photo Credit: American Motorcyclist
Association

Permissible Use A:

Trail maintenance and restoration

Maintenance and restoration of existing trails, including trail rehabilitation or relocation. This category may also include maintenance and restoration of trail bridges and other trail tread built features.

Project Example: St. Albans City Park Nature Trail Improvements, West Virginia



In St. Albans, West Virginia the city recently rededicated its [City Park Nature Trail](#) after improvements made using RTP funding. The trail received numerous upgrades which included refacing the entire trail with stone, and in some cases completely rebuilding old sections by recutting them and making them easier to traverse. Additionally two bridges were replaced on the trail.



Photo Credit: St. Albans City, WV

Project Example: Stage Coach Trail, Vermont

The [Stage Coach Trail Improvements Project](#) took place on the Stage Coach Trail in the town of Woodford, Vermont. The project consisted of a three-way partnership between [Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association \(VASA\)](#), the [Green Mountain National Forest](#) and the [Green Mountain Club](#) to relocate sections of trail and perform maintenance which improves and corrects erosion and improper drainage issues. This project has made the trails safer, more accessible, and provides improvements for multiple user groups, including both motorized and nonmotorized users. On September 24, 2019, Vermont's Governor Phil Scott and his team made a special visit to experience the Stage Coach Trail for themselves.



Photo Credit: VASA, VT

Permissible Use B:

Trailside and trailhead facilities

Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails. Typical eligible work includes parking areas, toilets, horse and vehicle unloading facilities, providing appropriate signage, and seating.

Project Example: Smith Mountain Fire Tower Trail, Alabama



The [Cherokee Ridge Alpine Trail Association](#) (CRATA) installed educational signs and kiosks at the trailhead and along the Smith Mountain Fire Tower Trail in Alabama. CRATA was awarded \$87,000 in RTP funds and began an exhaustive research process to assess the information the displays would contain. The information covers the area's wildlife, unique forestry, geology and soils, mining history, weather and climate, and the cultural heritage of the area from pre-Columbian times up to the present. This project will help people better understand the nature around them, and through that understanding become better stewards of the land.



Photo Credit: Cherokee Ridge Alpine Trail Association, AL

Permissible Use C:

Equipment for construction and maintenance

Purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment. Examples include snow trail grooming equipment, mechanized trailbuilding equipment, vehicles for trail maintenance, and other equipment to help maintain the trail surface, drainage, and adjacent vegetation.

Project Example: Dozer Purchase for Pleasure Valley Raceway, Pennsylvania



[Pleasure Valley Raceway](#) in Seward, Pennsylvania was awarded \$175,700 in RTP funding to help the raceway purchase a bulldozer for maintenance on the race track. The raceway serves as a beacon for tourism to the area, and in 2019 attracted motorcyclists from 25 States as well as Canada. The racetrack itself offers free primitive camping onsite, and during racing weekends the hotels and local bed and breakfasts are known to sell out due to the popularity of the events. The bulldozer purchase allows the racetrack to better maintain their well used tracks, and continue to be an economic driver for the area.



Photo Credit: Pleasure Valley Raceway, PA

Permissible Use D:

Construction of new recreational trails

Construction of new recreational trails. This is the largest category of expenditures in most States, and includes paved and unpaved trails, water trails, snow trails, and bridges. The needs of local communities, agencies, and trail users are reflected in the great variety of trail construction that has been accomplished.

Project Example: Whiskey Run Mountain Biking Trail, Oregon



The [Whiskey Run Mountain Biking Trail](#) located in Bandon, Oregon was awarded \$214,618 in RTP funds. The eventual goal is to expand the trail to 30 miles in length, and the initial build has completed 10 miles of trail. The project is located in Coos County where the primary economic driver is forestry. The trails will add a much needed tourism boost to subsidize the economy outside of forestry season. There are a number of partners who have prioritized completing all 30 miles of Whiskey Run, including The Rural Tourism Studios of Travel Oregon, The [Wild Rivers Coast Alliance Foundation](#), Travel Southern Oregon Coast, and Coos County. Trail construction was undertaken using a combination of professionals, volunteers, and two separate youth crews.



Photo Credit: Coos County, OR



Photo Credit: SCDNR, SC

Project Example: Sassafras Peak Trail & Observation Tower, South Carolina

At 3,553-foot altitude, Sassafras Mountain soars at the border of South and North Carolina, and offers scenic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. These long-awaited RTP projects were completed in early 2019 and the [Peak Trail and observation tower](#) officially opened to the public on April 22, 2019 (Earth Day). The project included an accessible trail and ramp, along with a paved road that travels to the top. On a clear day from the top of the tower, a visitor can see 30-50 miles into the States of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. The observation tower took two years to build and was the work of multiple partners including South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), Duke Energy, Pickens County, Clemson University, The Conservation Fund, The Highpointers Club, the Foothills Trail Conservancy, and the Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund.



Permissible Use E:

Acquisition of trail corridors

RTP funds are often used for the acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property for the purpose of developing recreational trails or recreational trail corridors. This category may include acquisition of old road or railroad bridges to be converted to trail use. Acquisition of any kind of interest in property must be from a willing landowner or seller.

Project Example: Tahlequah Mission Park, Oklahoma





 The [Tahlequah Mission Park](#) Project in Tahlequah, Oklahoma received a RTP grant of \$240,000 that was used towards the purchase of land for a 21-acre multi-use park, which will include an ADA-compliant trail in addition to the other park facilities. This will not only be the first park on the west side of Tahlequah, but the largest park in the city. Tahlequah is located on tribal land, and is known as the heart of Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.  Originally the 21-acre lot was purchased by a development firm with the intention of building apartments. However, the community created the Tahlequah Mission Park Project to purchase the land back from the developers in order to preserve it as a space that would better serve the community and preserve the wildlife in the area.  






Photo Credit: Tahlequah Mission Park, OK



Photo Credit: Palmetto Conservation Foundation, SC

Project Example: Ross Mountain Passage, South Carolina

[Ross Mountain Passage](#) provides hikers and mountain bikers a continuous connection from downtown Walhalla to the Stumphouse Passage, Oconee State Park, and beyond. Trail lovers have the ability to enjoy the [Stumphouse Mountain Bike Park](#) and then ride along the [Palmetto Trail](#) (a key portion of the [Mountains to Sea Trail](#)) to their campsite at Oconee State Park, or ride into the charming downtown area for lunch and shopping on Main Street. The mountain biking and hiking trails serve as a catalyst for genuine economic growth and cultural enrichment for the Walhalla community.   

Permissible Use F:

Assessment of trail conditions

Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance, authorizes specific projects to assess trails to determine the level of accessibility for people who have disabilities, to develop programs to provide trail access information, and to assess trails for current or future maintenance needs.

Project Example: Las Vegas Trail Assessment and Signage, Nevada




 [Get Outdoors Nevada](#), together with the [Accessible Trails Foundation](#), are assessing 24.4 miles of trail in the Las Vegas area. The project will determine trail accessibility for differently-abled users and produce signs with that information. The project purchased an innovative new tool and assessment process developed by [Beneficial Designs, Inc.](#) called the High-Efficiency Trail Assessment Process cart, conducted staff training on the equipment, and purchased and installed Carsonite signs with relevant trail information. Signage includes trail dimensional data such as slope, cross slope, tread width, stability of surface, and any obstacles found on each assessed trail.  



Photo Credit: Accessible Trails Foundation, NV

Permissible Use G:

Education for safety and environmental protection

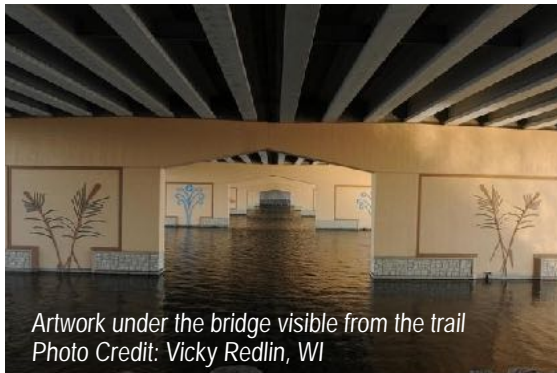
Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection. A State may use up to five percent of its apportionment each fiscal year for the operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection as those objectives relate to the use of recreational trails.

Project Example: Sierra Nevada Journeys, Nevada



[Sierra Nevada Journeys](#) (SNJ) received \$18,000 in RTP funding in order to deliver trail education classes to approximately 1,134 sixth grade students from northern Nevada schools. Around 42 classes of school children were able to take a day-long field trip to a local trail site thanks to this funding. SNJ instructors addressed trail etiquette using the [Tread Lightly!](#) curriculum. Additionally, instructors addressed ecological systems and basic environmental principles.

Photo Credit: SNJ, NV



Artwork under the bridge visible from the trail
Photo Credit: Vicky Redlin, WI

Project Example: Tribal Heritage Crossing of the WIOUWASH Trail, Wisconsin

The [WIOUWASH State Trail](#) is a rail-trail in northeastern Wisconsin, named after the four counties it traverses—Winnebago, Outagamie, Waupaca, and Shawano. The Tribal Heritage Crossing uses the Interstate 41 / U.S. 41 bridge over Lake Butte des Morts in Winnebago County. This RTP-funded trail includes 13 educational kiosks providing Native American history and a tribute to the 11 Native American Tribes located within the State of Wisconsin. The trail also features two fishing spots. The trail's Tribal Heritage Crossing of Lake Butte des Morts is also a designated National Recreation Trail.



Permissible Use H:

Administration

Payment of costs to the State incurred in administering the program. In addition to Staff time to administer the program and grants, other activities related to recreational trails are eligible under this category, including:

- Costs related to the State recreational trail advisory committee — newsletters, websites, or other communications
- Publications and conferences related to trail planning, design, construction, maintenance, operation, and assessment
- Statewide trail planning

A State may use up to seven percent of its apportionment each fiscal year for State administrative costs in that fiscal year. Any funds not used for administration within a fiscal year must be used for on-the-ground trail projects.

Project Example: Augusta Trails, Maine



[Augusta Trails](#), of Augusta, Maine, was awarded \$4,500 in RTP funds. These funds were used “to develop, print, and disseminate map products that combine existing trail resources from a wide range of trail systems and land owners, all maintaining public access, to provide a single resource for all trail and outdoor recreation resources in the community with an emphasis on human powered trail areas.” The maps are web-friendly; users can click on trail names to see each trail alignment. Augusta’s trails include multiuse hiking, cycling, and snow trails. By having updated trail maps, users are better able to plan their recreational activities leading to more use of the trails.

Photo Credit: Augusta Trails, ME

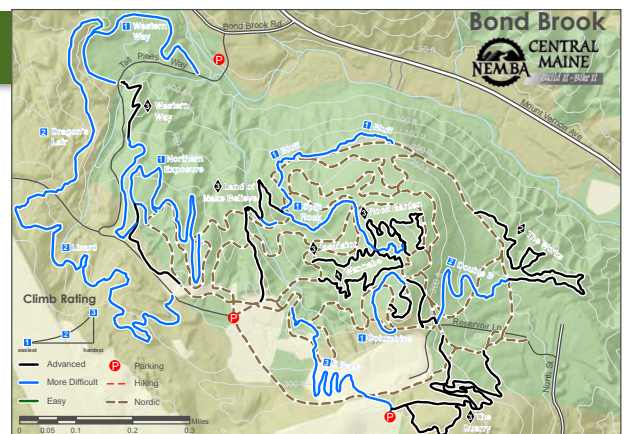


Table 4: RTP Database Trail Project Work by Permissible Use for Federal FY 1993 - 2019

Project types within the categories show the variety of projects funded.

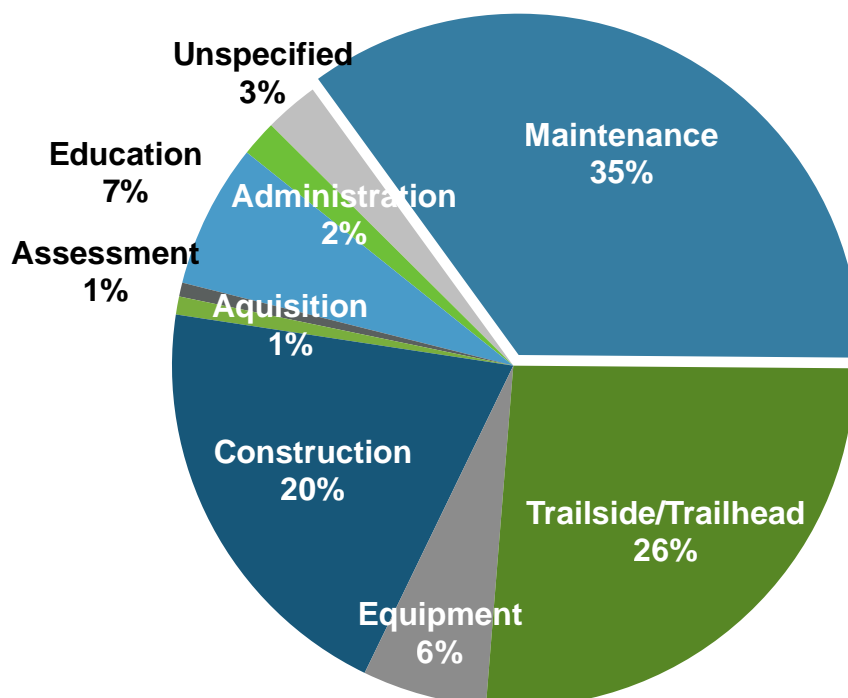
RTP funds may be used for projects within eight permissible use categories. The table shows the number of projects funded within each category since the inception of the program. Some categories are broken down further to specify the project type.

Many projects are listed under more than one category, so a total would double or triple count many projects. Maintenance and restoration projects are the most common projects, followed by trail facilities, and new trail construction.

Education funds are used for many kinds of projects such as signs, video guides, interpretive kiosks, safety brochures, and training programs. Many of these products are for trailheads and interpretation that are specific to an individual trail, and training is typically an event in a specific venue. States are also sharing educational curricula, off highway vehicle (OHV) safety campaign materials, and designs for standard signs.

The source for the data in Table 4 is information that the States provided for the RTP Database (<http://www.rtpinfo.org>).

A. Maintenance and Restoration	17,736
Trail Restoration/Rehabilitation	6,372
Trail Relocation	616
Trail Grooming	2,249
Trail Maintenance	6,480
Bridge Restoration/Rehabilitation	1,131
Bridge Relocation	67
Bridge Maintenance	821
B. Trailside and Trailhead Facilities	13,208
Trailhead Work	2,814
Parking	1,892
Signs	4,303
Restrooms	1,170
Accessibility Features	823
Access Ramps	549
Other Trailhead and Trailside Facilities	1,657
C. Equipment for Construction and Maintenance	2,978
D. Construction of New Recreation Trails	10,212
Trail	8,368
Bridge	1,844
E. Acquisition of Trail Corridors	431
F. Assessment of Trail Conditions	334
G. Education for Safety and Environmental Protection	3,447
Publications (Maps and Brochures)	716
Safety Programs	1,138
Environmental Programs	1,042
Other Educational Programs	551
H. Administration	860
I. Unspecified (project permissible use not self reported by States)	1,292



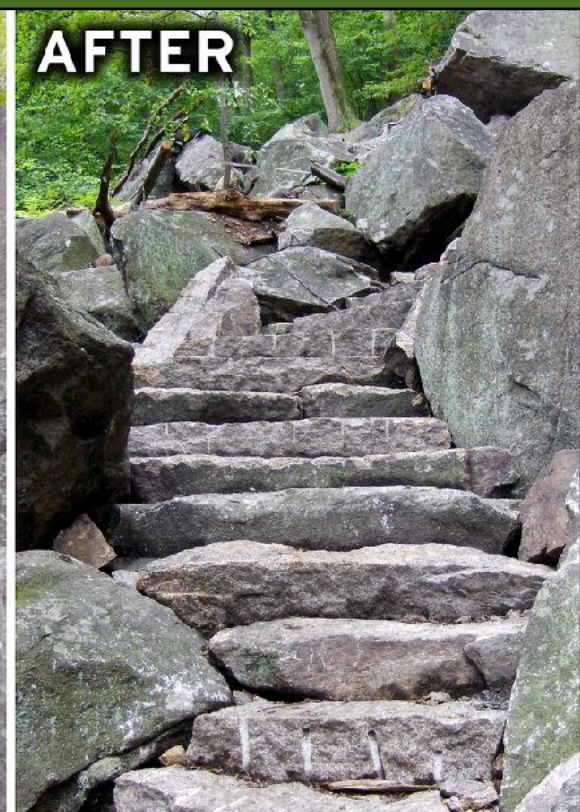
National Benefits

A review of RTP-funded projects reveals the many benefits of providing quality trails in our communities and across our Federal, State, and local public lands. This section highlights important benefits and identifies examples of how trails support aspirations for maintaining the health of people as well as the environment, encouraging rural economic activity, and providing jobs and education across the U.S.

Examples of how RTP funding supports larger public priorities include increased:

- Community connections and health
- Cost effectiveness
- Economic development
- Habitat improvement
- Partnership development
- Public land maintenance
- Safe recreation
- Trails for all
- Workforce development

Bear Mountain stone stair construction on the
Appalachian National Scenic Trail, NY
Photo Credit: Appalachian Trail Conservancy



Community Connections and Health

Public health researchers have been working hard to explore the effects of trails on communities. According to a [study](#) released in 2014 by the American Journal of Public Health, there is a direct and significant measurable correlation between how close people live to biking and walking infrastructure and the amount of weekly exercise they get.

In addition to providing recreation and health benefits, trails and greenways can function as nonmotorized transportation corridors to help pedestrians and cyclists access schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. In every State, cities, towns, and counties are working to plan and build interconnected networks of trails. These routes tie in with open spaces as well as the built environment.



The Frisco Highline Trail connects five key communities across Missouri
Photo Credit: Ozark Greenways



The [Frisco Highline Trail](#) (FHT) is Missouri's second longest rail-trail and is 35 miles of both paved and gravel trail that connects Springfield, Willard, Walnut Grove, Wishart, and Bolivar communities. The trail was designated a National Recreation Trail by the Secretary of the Interior in 2004. This project included the installation of signage along the trail to promote linkages among the communities. In total, wayfinding signs were improved by adding 35 uniform mile markers and trailhead signs, on-surface comfort decals every tenth of a mile on paved sections, road crossing signs at all road crossings, and uniform signs for the on-street connection in Bolivar. Four new educational kiosks were installed to highlight historic areas along the rail-trail.

Cost Effectiveness

Because RTP requires significant matching resources for grants, project sponsors aim to design trails that provide maximum benefit for their cost. Trail planners are working with new technologies and creative use of materials. For snow trails, both cross-country ski and snowmobile routes, the major expenditures are in annual trail maintenance. Trail managers are working to find equipment that is fuel efficient, low maintenance, and environmentally friendly. In recent years,

managers of backcountry trail systems have relied increasingly on mechanized trail building equipment. Gradually, manufacturers have improved these machines to cause less resource disruption while building a more stable and sustainable trail tread. In many cases, trail crews and volunteers have provided the fine-tuning required to finish the projects.

Our trails and parks are proving to be vulnerable to increasingly damaging flood and weather events. It is essential that trail planners, designers and builders focus efforts on making future trail projects more resilient to these forces. According to the Professional TrailBuilders Association, trail maintenance costs from damaging rainfall can be increased ten-fold by poor design and location of trails. RTP funding offers key opportunities to mitigate and respond to these severe weather events.

To trail managers, an important aspect of sustainability is reducing expenditures on maintenance by better design of trails, and the use of appropriate materials and structures. RTP funding applied to training is most often specifically intended to improve the quality of trail development by project sponsors.

A great example of how the RTP supports accountability and cost effective use of public funds can be seen in the Friends of Holmdel Open Space (FOHOS) project in New Jersey. FOHOS coordinated eight Eagle Scout community service projects to accomplish a huge amount of trail work, including:



- Construct a 100-foot boardwalk through seasonally wet area along Red Trail at Bayonet Farm.
- Install gateway signs on the Ramanessin Brook Greenway at a new half-mile trail segment.
- Install new kiosk at Red Trail trailhead at Bayonet Farm, with maps and area information.
- Rebuild and replace the educational/interpretive signs along the Ramanessin Brook Greenway Nature Trail.
- Construct two small boardwalks over muddy spots on Red Trail.
- Rehabilitate the trail entrance area including repainting the sign, replacing the fencing, and mulching the area.
- Install benches overlooking a pond along the new half-mile trail segment.
- Add wayfinding (destination/distance) signs along Red Trail.

Dozens of scouts and scout leaders contributed hundreds of hours of volunteer community service to complete these trail projects, saving FOHOS tens of thousands of dollars in professional construction costs.



Ramanessin Brook Greenway Projects , NJ
Photo Credit: Friends of Holmdel Open Space



Economic Development

Trails contribute to the economy by providing construction and maintenance jobs, attracting tourists and visitors, and providing business for outfitters, guides, and tour companies. One major benefit of trail tourism is that it is money spent in rural towns and in more economically disadvantaged areas. The impacts of trail use and related activities have been documented in many studies, which show that local businesses especially benefit from trail users. Many of the people traveling to a trail and spending a night or more in the area are economically well off and have significant discretionary income.



*Diversified Winter Trail Grooming , WY
Photo Credit: Division of State Parks,
Historic Sites, & Trails*

For example, winter trail grooming in three trail systems in Wyoming provides an average of 205,000 snowmobile user days per winter season that generates over \$25 million in annual spending by snowmobilers (University of Wyoming, 2011), which is a tremendous benefit to local winter economies. The number of total recreation user days by the other diversified winter recreation user groups is unknown in these



particular areas; however, there is a very substantive amount of diversified trail use across all three trail systems groomed by this project, particularly in the Togwotee area near Jackson Hole. Trail grooming supported by this project supports a number of annual sled dog races and fat tire bike races in all three areas. Most notable are the iconic Pedigree Stage Stop (Sled Dog) Race and the Togwotee Winter Classic fat bike race.

Habitat Improvement

An important aspect of trail development is creating a positive experience for visitors while preserving the important natural resources that plants and animals depend on. In many RTP-funded projects, this process goes further in improving the habitat along the trail corridor. RTP funding is also commonly used for projects involving acquisition of land for habitat and ecological connectivity. Planning efforts may also focus on trail systems that guide visitors away from sensitive wildlife areas and into more adaptable settings. Best practices for trail development also includes mitigation of impacts, revegetation of disturbed areas, using recycled materials, and reducing erosion. Often the environmental work is done by volunteers and conservation corps crews, which also provides opportunities for education about environmental issues.

The Tim Scott Trail at the [Duck River Reservoir Recreational Area](#) project in Alabama was conceived as part of the development of a 600-acre water supply reservoir to serve Cullman County. With the primary objective to protect and ensure water quality, the reservoir's permit required the

preservation of an undeveloped buffer zone around its perimeter. This area of old growth forest, rolling terrain, and rocky streams has a minimum width of 100 feet from the lake's full pool elevation. The guaranteed protection of this corridor through north Alabama wilderness alongside the shimmering lake provided an unmatched opportunity for construction of a low impact pedestrian and biking trail. The trail enjoys diverse usage by trail runners, bikers, and walkers. The reservoir's recreational area, which includes boat ramp access and fishing piers, also caters to paddlers and fishermen.



*Duck River Reservoir Recreation Area, AL
Photo Credit: Cullman County*

Partnership Development

RTP funds contribute to the success of trail projects by encouraging effective partnerships. For many trails the key requirement is cooperation among jurisdictions, such as a rail-trail that passes from town to town. In many cases the partnership is between public and private interests that bring volunteers and citizens groups together to assist in building and maintaining trails managed by different levels of government.

Another benefit of trail project partnerships is in bringing together agencies with different missions, such as parks, health, transportation, and education. Project sponsors find common ground by developing funding partners of businesses, trail clubs, and a variety of nonprofit organizations.

Oregon demonstrates an excellent example of partnership development in action. The [John Day Bike Park](#) is a collaborative effort between Grant County Economic Council, [Eastern Oregon Trail Alliance](#) – both local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations – and [Grant School District 3](#). The bike park consists of 1.5 miles of trails ranging from beginner to expert skills levels, a trailhead, parking lot, and signage. The trails are the only biking trails in the city limits and the perimeter trail (Nugget) also provides walkers and joggers more opportunity to recreate and exercise with expansive views of the Strawberry and Aldrich mountain ranges. The trail system was professionally built by Ptarmigan P-trails with many hours of volunteer support from the City of John Day, County Road Department, local youth conservation corps, Boys Scout troops, and church youth groups, all of which made this community project possible.



*John Day Bike Park signage, OR
Photo Credit: Eastern Oregon Trail Alliance*



Public Land Maintenance

One of the RTP's originally stated purposes was to address the huge trail maintenance backlog in the U.S. Land managers use trail projects as opportunities to engage volunteers and habitat specialists in improving natural habitats. Benefits include restoring degraded stream corridors, routing trails to avoid sensitive wildlife habitat, and removing invasive plants.

Just as our communities and transportation systems are vulnerable to major damage, so are our trails and parks. All trails need maintenance, but extreme weather events as well as heavy visitor use will require additional rebuilding. Damage from wildfires and resulting erosion have affected many miles of trails on public lands. RTP funds have been used to address renovation needs such as:

- Wildfire damage
- Trees blown down across trails
- Erosion damage and washed-out culverts
- Flooded trail and greenway corridors
- Bridges needing replacement or rehabilitation

The quintessential example of RTP funds enhancing the stewardship on public lands can be seen when the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference was awarded RTP grant funds to complete the maintenance and rehabilitation of the historic

[Bear Mountain Trails Project](#). Over two million people visit Bear Mountain State Park in New York each year, making this original section of the Appalachian Trail the most heavily used. When issues of heavy use and degradation came to a head in 2004, a plan was needed to accommodate this high volume of hikers and protect the mountain from being "loved to death." Over the last 14 years, the Trail Conference has rallied the community to help

Hand stonework on the Bear Mountain Trail, NY
Photo Credit: Timber and Stone LLC

rehabilitate the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain from an eroded, washed-out, 10-foot-wide scar into a safe, sustainable, and world-class footpath.

Safe Recreation

As with all transportation programs, safety is a vital component. The sheer variety of trail types and recreation goals means that some trail activities do include strenuous efforts, journeying into remote country, and all the risks of the natural world. The goal for backcountry land managers is to reduce known hazards and to warn trail users of the unexpected.

At the other end of the spectrum of trail activities are highly constructed urban trails. To make trail recreation more inclusive, planners are emphasizing routes that are easier to get to and safe to use. At the same time, people who are not outdoor enthusiasts are being courted by health interests who want to encourage more active living and social interaction. Another element is the aging population of active seniors who need safe facilities to participate in recreational activities.

To address these issues, many States use RTP funds for educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection. Safety is a key part of the training and resources provided by States and organizations for planning, managing, and promoting water trail facilities. OHV and snowmobile training and educational materials have been an important type of RTP expenditures in the safety area. The popularity of boating and designated water trails has also brought attention to safety issues on these water-based corridors.



Elk Lake Creek Trail restoration in burn area before (left) and after (below), OR
Photo Credit: Territorial Riders Back Country Horsemen of Oregon



The [Elk Lake Creek Trail](#) restoration project widened and restored a trail in [Bull of the Woods Wilderness Area](#) after a 2010 wildfire swept through the area leaving sections of the trail destroyed or unsafe. This project in Oregon is a great example of RTP funds building safety for hikers and equestrian trail users. The project was undertaken to enhance accessibility and safety by widening the trail bed to a safe width of 48-inches in Work Area 1 and 24 to 30-inches in Work Area 2. Both areas had initial widths of 12 to 18-inches and crossed steep side slopes in a recent burn area. The soil was loose due to the burn and the steepness of the sidehill off of the trail was such that if riders or hikers ended up off of the trail there was little chance of recovery prior to going over the cliff at the bottom. Many of the local equestrian group members were concerned about this section of trail and would no longer ride this trail segment due to the high level of risk involved in traversing the area.



Trails for All

The RTP has significantly contributed to a long-term trend to make communities, trails, and recreation facilities more available to all Americans. This means improving trails for persons with disabilities, but also understanding the needs of older people, families with children, and those who are new to trail activities or lack affordable access to trail opportunities.


As the demographics of residents and visitors evolves over time, public land managers are seeking ways to make trails more available to the public. Many RTP projects are seeking to connect with underserved populations, provide opportunities for public input on parks and facilities, and to involve a variety of disciplines in larger corridor planning.

Conservation corps and other educational programs use trails to help young people connect with outdoor resources and to learn about stewardship of public lands.



New trail access to the fishing pond and skate park, OR
Photo Credit: Joe Kline/The Bulletin

The City of Madras in Oregon applied and received funding for the Madras Bike and Skate Park to the Youth Fishing Pond at Jefferson County Fairgrounds trail. This project provided the last link in the system

 to provide an alternative safe and healthy mode of transportation for the public. This trail connection allows children to safely walk or bike to the local youth fishing pond, which is stocked each year for youth and individuals with disabilities to fish. The completed trail also provided connectivity throughout the city for individuals with disabilities to use the trail as an alternative route for safe travel. This creates and provides accessibility for everyone in Madras. The city is in the process of utilizing this section of trail for the Track Trails Program to encourage children to use the trail. This program will provide activities for children to be active while also engaging in educational activities. The trail is located next to the local senior center to provide an option for senior outings and activities.

Workforce Development

Across the country, young people are exploring opportunities in the trail building and management industry to find long-term careers in resource management and outdoor recreation. Youth and conservation corps are important programs for teaching many of the needed skills, from familiar hand tools to heavy mechanized equipment. Corps members learn valuable lessons in working with different agencies, and learning the skills required to be quality employees. In particular, Corps

organizations work to recruit and train economically and educationally disadvantaged young adults.

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, Section 1524, requires the DOT to encourage the States and regional transportation planning agencies to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with qualified youth service or conservation corps to perform appropriate projects. These projects include pedestrian and bicycle, transportation alternatives, and recreational trails.

Many RTP-funded projects involve young adults in entry-level positions. Other programs help college students gain practical experience and qualify for federal internships. Besides construction techniques, those working on trail projects learn many other valuable skills, such as crew leadership and supervision, project management and logistics, environmental review requirements, and tracking accomplishments, materials, and future needs.

The [Pole Mountain Trail](#) project in Laramie, Wyoming demonstrates an innovative approach to building the local workforce through high quality trail projects. Pole Mountain used a hybrid trail build model which combined a professional trail builder with a small trail machine leading the trail work with a [Wyoming Conservation Corps](#) (WCC) hand crew following behind, creating high quality single track trail. The project proved to be a huge success using this "hybrid" model of trail work. Wyoming Pathways staff and board members also contributed trail layout and crew oversight assistance to this wonderful project. The project also included large volunteer contributions assisting with reclaiming the abandoned old trail segments. The professional trailbuilder, Adam Buck with Pathfinder Trailbuilding, provided expert education training for WCC crews and local volunteers, helping build improved lasting trail skills in the community.

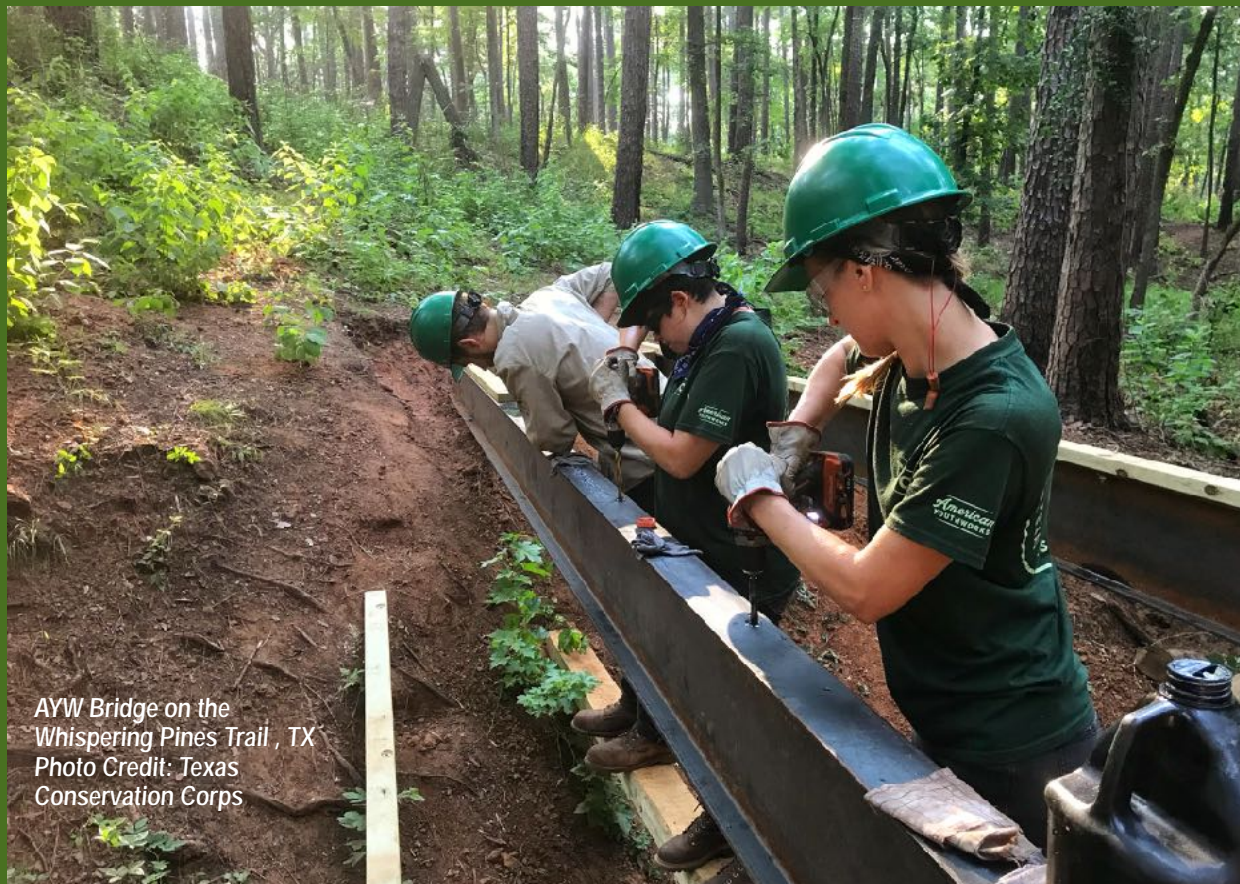


Bringing together crews and volunteers for trail training, WY
Photo Credit: Wyoming Conservation Corps

Nationwide Training Efforts

FHWA uses one percent of the RTP funds for administrative, research, technical assistance, and training expenses. Expenditures include funds for the RTP website, which links to many [publications](#) developed through the U.S. Forest Service over the past 20 years, and the RTP database and annual report. In FY 2019, FHWA also supported:

- National Trails Training (American Trails)
- National Trails Day (American Hiking Society)
- Snowmobile Safety and Access (American Council of Snowmobile Associations)
- Off-Highway Vehicle User Training Ethics, Safety, and Access (Tread Lightly!)
- National Scenic and Historic Trails Inventory, Assessment, and Monitoring Program (Bureau of Land Management)
- National Trails System Information, Corridor Protection, and Training (Partnership for the National Trails System)
- Youth Service and Conservation Corps Workforce Development (The Corps Network)



AYW Bridge on the
Whispering Pines Trail, TX
Photo Credit: Texas
Conservation Corps

National Trails Training

[American Trails](#) supports the National Trails Training Partnership, which includes a trails training website and information center (with the largest known [trail resource library](#)), supports monthly trail training webinars, and promotes trail accessibility. In 2019, American Trails worked with more than 30 partners to host the [International Trails Symposium](#) and Training Institute (serving more than 700 participants and volunteers), 11 [Advancing Trails webinars](#) (more than 2,500 individuals), and launched a new Regional Trails Training initiative. American Trails also built a searchable online resource of the most up-to-date and relevant training opportunities, core competencies, best practices, research, and thought leadership in the greater trails industry.

National Trails Day

The [American Hiking Society](#) coordinates planning, outreach, and reporting for [National Trails Day](#) (NTD) each year. NTD increases public awareness, maintenance, and use of all kinds of trails—including recreational trails in and around urban and suburban areas used for transportation. In 2019, events for more than 85,000 trail users were held across the country, including nearly 300 events for bicycles (including safety clinics) and running. NTD has a social media reach of nearly 19 million people.

Snowmobile Safety and Access

The [American Council of Snowmobile Associations](#) operates a [snowmobile safety and resource information center](#), maintains a best practices library, identifies training opportunities, and develops and revises snowmobile safety and access materials. It hosts hundreds of downloadable education resources for snowmobilers and trail managers. One highlight of FY 2019 education product development included the production of five new 30-second radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs) addressing Impaired Operation, Speed Kills, Private Lands Trespass, Avalanche Safety, and Ice Safety—with targeted distribution of the new PSAs resulting in 8,628 airings with 25.8 million gross impressions across snowbelt States.



Off-Highway Vehicle User Training Ethics, Safety, and Access

[Tread Lightly!, Inc.](#) operates [Tread Trainer](#), a train-the-trainer off-highway vehicle (OHV) user ethics training program. In 2019, Tread Lightly! trainings and messaging educated 402,357 individuals in 31 States about responsible, sustainable OHV



use. Participants were taught off-highway ethics through online courses, in-person trainings, and attended events where the Tread Lightly! educational messages were shared. The [National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council](#) (NOHVCC) operates an OHV safety and resource information center, maintains a best practices library, identifies training opportunities, and develops and revises OHV safety and access materials. In 2019, NOHVCC's [online resource center](#) was accessed 120,000 times. Some of NOHVCC's most read webpages included How To Know If Your Child Is Ready To Ride An ATV and a compilation of OHV economic impact studies that highlight the importance of OHV recreation to primarily rural economies. NOHVCC also unveiled its new Adventure Trail interactive website targeted at children that includes new messages and artwork designed to promote safe use of OHVs near railways to help reduce transportation injuries and fatalities.

National Scenic and Historic Trails Inventory, Assessment, and Monitoring Program

The [Bureau of Land Management](#) (BLM) completed a methodology and field guide to inventory and monitor trails, focusing on National Scenic and Historic Trails. This project will be useful for all kinds of trails, and assist State grantees and Federal Land Management Agencies in the administration of their recreational trail programs by contributing to research and technical assistance. In FY 2019, the BLM contractor completed performance and data management deliverables and pilot-tested the field-based course in Arizona with agency and trail partners along the Arizona National Scenic Trail and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The final methodology and field guide technical report is available in [BLM's Technical References Library](#) under National Scenic and Historic Trails Management.

National Trails System Information, Corridor Protection, and Training

The [Partnership for the National Trails System](#) (PNTS) is performing a two-year gap analysis and corridor protection research project. PNTS is developing resources to build capacity to better administer, manage, and sustain trails, focusing on National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails, but with concepts transferable to all kinds of trails. PNTS collaborated with the Pacific Crest Trail Association to produce [Saving Land on the Trinity Divide: A Pacific Crest Trail Success Story](#). This report highlights the importance of community engagement and partners working together to resolve several challenges in public land management to save the hiking experience from potential threats. The Trinity Divide project illustrates how partnerships help reduce the risk of pedestrian-vehicle crashes by providing permanent protection for an off-road route for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and by providing public transportation to a safe trailhead parking area. PNTS also produces the [Pathways Across America](#) magazine, which provides news and information about National Scenic and Historic Trails.

Youth Service and Conservation Corps Workforce Development

[The Corps Network](#) (TCN) is developing and distributing information to support youth service and conservation corps, expanding youth workforce development opportunities, and facilitating transportation and recreation career development, including case studies, best practices, and audiovisual resources for the Corps and for States. TCN developed a [Trails and Transportation webpage](#), and completed [Building the Future: A Guide for Utilizing the Recreational Trails Program to Partner with Service and Conservation Corps](#). TCN produced a number of resources to promote the value of partnering with youth service and conservation corps on recreational trail, transportation, and infrastructure projects including an RTP video and an RTP Listserv for keeping partners connected. The Corps Network hosted 12 presentations, teleconferences, and webinars for Federal, State, and local land managers, trail, and transportation agencies. This resulted in 23 new State trail programs and Corps connections working towards making a conscious effort to include the use of Corps in their strategic planning, and developing contracts and agreements with Corps as direct grantees.



McPhee Reservoir, CO
Photo Credit: Southwest Conservation Corps



Lassen Peak, CA
Photo Credit: California Conservation Corps

Conclusion

The RTP funding has been an essential ingredient in creating and improving over 25,397 trail-related projects nationwide, including urban greenways, nature centers, and horse, hiking, mountain bike, and motorized trails, as well as snow and water routes. States are able to add miles of trails and importantly provides funding for badly needed maintenance and restoration of existing trails on Federal, State, and local public lands through grants to local project sponsors each year.

For FY 2019, the Federal government authorized \$82.4 million for the RTP. These funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund, which collects an estimated \$270 million per year in motor fuel excise tax from nonhighway recreational fuel use. These funds represent fuel used in recreational activities with snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles, and off-highway light trucks. Each State develops and manages its own program of project selection and grant administration, in partnership with communities, agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

A review of RTP-funded projects reveals many benefits to employment, environmental education, health, resource conservation, and community development. The program has encouraged productive cooperation among agencies and jurisdictions, facilitated healthy outdoor recreation, and supported economic activity in communities.

Like other Highway Trust Fund programs, the RTP provides benefits to nearly every county in the United States. It is also the foundation for State trail programs across the country. Every State has established its own initiatives to develop and improve trails for all users. The RTP Database and Image Library have many examples of RTP-funded projects gathered from all States and the District of Columbia, categorized by State and by permissible use, that demonstrate the value of these projects.

RTP funding is highly leveraged by community and State funds, as well as contributions from organizations and businesses. Of the projects completed between FY 1993 and FY 2019, total RTP funding was nearly \$1.38 billion with additional matching funds of \$1.02 billion, showing that RTP dollars were matched by over 74 percent with other funds. Further program efficiencies are seen by the use of youth conservation and service corps working in cooperation with private contractors, agency or community staff, and volunteers.

In every State, equestrians and cyclists, hikers and snowmobilers, ATV enthusiasts and paddlers have joined in support of local as well as regional efforts to meet the trail

needs of all users. Because the funds are distributed for both motorized and nonmotorized trail work, all trail interests have incentives to cooperate and learn from each other.

All of these trends are helping create a climate for improving the design of trails, while exploring innovative materials, technology, and techniques. Through RTP-supported training, the expertise of organizations and individuals is being made available to project sponsors in every region.

Projects using RTP funds also illustrate a variety of ways that these trails address the DOT strategic goals:

- Safety, by providing well-maintained trails and safety education;
- Infrastructure, through projects that connect communities and enhance public lands across America;
- Innovation, through trail assessment and communication technology, and through public-private partnerships and workforce development; and
- Accountability, by sharing best practices for trail management and effective program delivery.

The RTP uniquely provides the most consistent source of funding needed to address the huge trail maintenance backlog in the U.S. Without this robust program, our nation's trails infrastructure would not serve to enhance health, enjoyment, and transportation options for all Americans.



*Petrified stump on a trail ride at the China wall area on the Maah Daah Hey National Recreation Trail, ND
Photo credit: Curt Glasoe*

Resources

For more information on many topics related to RTP funding as well as technical resources on trails of all types, see the following resources.

Recreational Trails Program

Recreational Trails Program Database: <http://www.rtpinfo.org>

The Recreational Trails Program website for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

FHWA guidance and policies for RTP: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/guidance/

For policies and funding in every State, see the State RTP Administrators List to find program contacts and websites:
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/rtpstate.cfm

The Coalition for Recreational Trails gives awards each year for outstanding projects funded through State RTP grants:
<http://www.americantrails.org/rtp/crtawards.html>

Accessible Trails

FHWA guidance to provide best practices for trail accessibility, and trail design, construction, and maintenance:
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/guidance/accessibility_guidance/

U.S. Forest Service trail and outdoor facility accessibility guidelines:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/accessibility/>

More resources on accessible trails: <https://www.americantrails.org/user-types/trail-user/accessible>

Trail Planning, Development, and Management

For many resources on trail planning, design, construction, management, accessibility, funding, training, for both motorized and nonmotorized trails, see the National Trails Training Partnership Resources and Library on the American Trails website: <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/planning-design>

Youth and Conservation Corps

FHWA Youth Workforce Development Resources:
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/youth_workforcedev.cfm

FHWA Youth Service and Conservation Corps Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/qandas/qayscc.cfm>

A guide to transportation funding programs for service and conservation corps; "Building the Future: A Guide for Utilizing the Recreational Trails Program to Partner with Service and Conservation Corps" (pdf 26.9 mb):
https://corpsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Building-the-Future_RTP-Partnership-Guide_5.13.19.pdf

More about opportunities with Corps nationwide at The Corps Network:
<http://www.corpsnetwork.org>

Technical Assistance

Recreational Trails Program Database Website: <http://www.rtpinfo.org>

Technical Questions: Call the number or send an email to the address below.

RTP Database Technical Assistance Section

American Trails

P.O. Box 491797

Redding, CA 96049-1797

(530) 605-4395 | info@recreationaltrailsinfo.org

Website issues: Write to webmaster@recreationaltrailsinfo.org

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