TRAIL TRACKS

December 2023

ISMA Snowmobilers on the trail; photo by Terry Durby

Why Trails Matter: Forming and Running State or Regional Trail Coalitions

Are you interested in creating a trails coalition in your state or region? Strong leadership, open communication channels, and effective conflict-resolution methods characterize successful coalitions. A crucial aspect of forming a successful coalition is identifying shared goals and benefits of working together early on. It is also important to identify short-term outcomes when adopting specific coalition activities. Bob Walker, American Trails board member and Chair of the Montana Trails

Coalition, provides some tips and discusses the results of a nationwide survey of trails coalitions conducted by American Trails in February 2023.

Find out more

Special Opportunity!

Virtual Briefings on Trails Policy

American Trails is pleased to present in partnership the virtual issue briefings of the annual Hike the Hill® advocacy event, a joint effort of the Partnership for the National Trails System and American Hiking Society. This event has options for both virtual participation (issue briefings January 22-26) and meeting resources for scheduling your own congressional meetings) and in-person participation in Washington, D.C. (February 11-15) (group meetings and a Trails Celebration Party). This exciting event will bring together the diverse trails community, with a focus on the National Trails System, to advance shared trail priorities with congressional and federal agency leaders including trail funding, public lands management and conservation, equitable access, and other top priority issues that sustain trails and improve access to public lands.

Registration is now open and a tentative schedule of events is available. If you'd like more information about the event please contact Tyler Ray at tray@americanhiking.org.

Funding and Legislation

Three National Scenic Trails Designated as Units of the National Park System

The Ice Age, New England, and North Country national scenic trails, all previously established by Congress and administered by the National Park Service as part of the National Trails System, are now also recognized as units of the National Park System. Find out more ››

Public Input Request on Proposed Policy for Monitoring Health of National Forests and Grasslands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is seeking public input on a proposed policy for monitoring the health of national forests and grasslands. The proposed policy is designed to provide a framework that supports and strengthens the current monitoring policy, minimizing inconsistencies and improving government-to-government relationships with Tribes. **Comments must be received in writing by December 28**. Find out more ››

THE TRAILS CAPACITY PROGRAM

The Trails Capacity Program

The Trails Capacity Program supports partners from all nonmotorized and motorized trail user groups, including water trails. American Trails is administering this grant program, and is soliciting applications for funding, with awards between $5K and $10K per project. Projects may include trail stewardship training, maintenance and research projects that are inclusive, engaging, educational, and foster improved trail user behavior. This program targets all federal, state, local, and private lands accessible to the general public. **Applications close January 15.** Find out more ››

Public Input Request on Managing Climbing Opportunities on National Forests, Grasslands, and Parks

The USDA Forest Service and the National Park Service are seeking public input on proposed guidance that would guide agency personnel in managing climbing opportunities on national forests, grasslands, and parks. **The public is invited to provide input on both agencies' guidance through January 16.** Find out more ››

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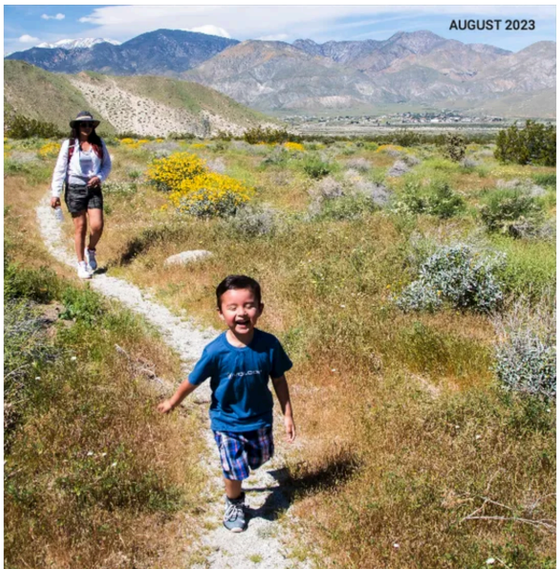


The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation

The BLM is developing a "Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation" (Blueprint) intended to guide investments, partnerships, outreach, and program development to respond to current demand and chart a course to meet future needs. The Blueprint presents several major shifts in how the agency prioritizes and supports outdoor recreation. Find out more ››

Foundation for America's Public Lands: Opportunities for Action

The Foundation for America's Public Lands (Foundation) is the official charitable partner of the BLM. Its mission is to connect people to public lands and waters and to maintain them for the benefit of present and future generations. Find out more ››

Implementing the BLM Blueprint will require forging new relationships, partnerships, and resources. It is impossible for the BLM to achieve its vision alone. Therefore, the Foundation cordially invites all Americans to join in the stewardship and enjoyment of public lands and share their insights and perspectives as we work together to support the next steps. Find out more ››

If you would like to help spread the message, the Partner Social Media and Messaging Toolkit is available here.

Updated Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding Opportunities Table

This table indicates likely eligibility for pedestrian and bicycle activities and projects under the U.S. Department of Transportation surface transportation funding programs. Find out more ››

Training and Resources

Call for Proposals: 2024 World Trails Conference in Ottawa, Canada

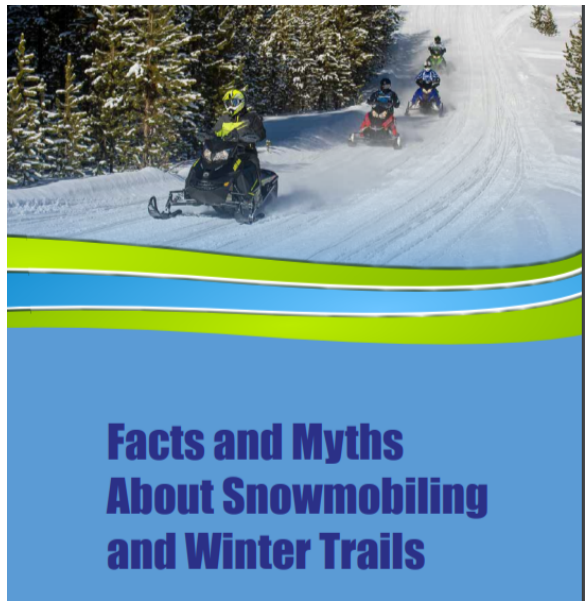
The 2024 World Trails Conference call for speaker proposals is officially open! The World Trails Network invites you to submit a proposal to present on the theme of Connecting People, Places, and the Planet at the 2024 World Trails Conference, hosted by Trans Canada Trail. With this theme, the conference will explore the profound bonds that link humanity to the natural world and develop a new understanding of how our trails impact the environment, communities, and each other. Read the Speaker Guidelines. Proposals may focus on research, data, projects, stories, or initiatives and are **due January 31.** Submit a proposal ››

SOCIETY OF
OUTDOOR RECREATION
PROFESSIONALS

The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) Nominations for Individual Service and Project Excellence Awards

SORP is currently accepting nominations for the 2024 Awards. These awards will be presented at the National Outdoor Recreation Conference in South Lake Tahoe, Stateline, Nevada in May. The awards aim to recognize exceptional achievements in outdoor recreation planning, management, research, and policy. The two awards open for nominations are the Individual Service Award and the Project Excellence

Award. **The deadline for award submissions is February 1**. Find out more ››



Facts and Myths About Snowmobiling and Winter Trails

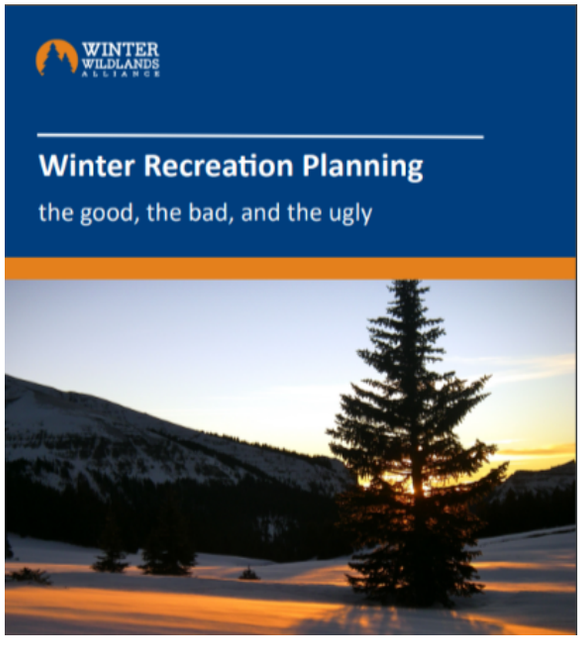
Did you know that most of the 135,000 miles of snowmobile trails are open for multiple uses? Read about the facts and myths of multiple-use winter recreation. Find out more ››

Managing Winter Trails: Increasing Opportunities and Adapting to Climate Change

Download this free webinar centered around groomed winter trails for XC skiers. It also addresses the importance of providing opportunities for snowshoeing, fat biking, winter hiking, and winter trail running. Find out more ››

Planning and Designing Cross Country Skiing and Winter Trails in an Era of Climate Change

Based on examples from across the United States and internationally, this presentation will review fundamental trail design considerations for skiing and winter trails, with new techniques and approaches to address issues of warmer winters and less snowfall. Find out more ››



Winter Recreation Planning: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Planning travel can't solve all user conflicts, but a consistent, mandatory winter travel management process across National Forest lands can add balance and certainty in the backcountry. These case studies demonstrate effective and ineffective strategies in winter travel planning to guide future efforts. Find out more ››

TRAIL TRACKS
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American Trails brings agencies, trail builders, planners, architects, advocates, and volunteers the latest in state-of-the-art information on all aspects of trails and greenways.

All webinars are recorded and can be accessed for free via our online store at any time. Recordings of past webinars are also being added to our YouTube channel on a weekly basis.

Advancing Trails Webinar Series

Free December Webinars

- December 7: Trail Planning and Design: Foundations of Success
- December 14: Encouraging Indigenous Participation in Trail Management and Interpretation
- December 21: Outdoor Electric Assist Devices: Opportunity or Opposition

Free Future Webinars

- January 11: Risk Management During Trail Construction
- January 18: The Third Mode: Bonus Chapters
- January 25: The Path to Mental Health: Using Trails to Equip Healthy Communities
- February 1: Volunteer Recruitment *(registration coming soon)*
- February 8: Systemic Condition Analysis and Management for Multi-Use Trails
- February 22: Trails are Rural Economic Drivers *(registration coming soon)*
- February 29: Trail Assessment for Accessibility and Sustainability *(registration coming soon)*

Additional Free Learning Credit Opportunities

American Trails is partnering with the following organization(s) to offer free learning credits to attendees.

Send us an email if you wish to offer learning credits for FREE to your attendees for your conference, webinar, workshop, etc. (virtual or in-person).

Consensus That Works: Formal Consensus Decision Making for Groups and Organizations – January 16-30, 2024 (three two-hour video conference sessions) – Virtual
In partnership with The Harbinger Consultancy (save 15% by using

“AmericanTrails" discount code)
Learn more ››

Outdoor Recreation Roadmap: A Community-Led Approach to Leveraging Your Natural Assets for Economic Success and Local Renewal – January 24-February 28, 2024 (six one-hour video conference sessions) – Virtual
In partnership with The Harbinger Consultancy (save 15% by using “AmericanTrails" discount code)
Learn more ››

Creative Placemaking: Creating Communities We Love Through Arts & Culture, Diverse Partners and Community Spaces – March 28-April 11, 2024 (three two-hour video conference sessions) – Virtual
In partnership with The Harbinger Consultancy (save 15% by using “AmericanTrails" discount code)
Learn more ››

California Trails and Greenways Conference – April 30-May 3, 2024 – North Lake Tahoe/Olympic Valley, California
In partnership with the California Trails Conference Foundation
Learn more ››

National Outdoor Recreation Conference – May 6-9, 2024 – South Lake Tahoe/Stateline, Nevada
In partnership with the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals
Learn more ››

Enter the Trails Workforce
Job Board

Build Your Skills
Training Calendar

Trail Workers of America
Join Online Group Here

More to Explore...

14 Winter Recreation Tips

Winter has arrived and the country is blanketed in snow! It's time to dust off your skis, snowboards, and snowshoes and hit the slopes and backcountry areas we all love. Whether you're spending a day at your local ski resort or taking a backcountry trip to ski to a hut, it's important to keep Leave No Trace principles in mind at all times. Find out more ››

20 Public Lands to Explore This Winter

Across the country, America’s public lands are becoming winter wonderlands. As snow falls and temperatures drop, these special places take on a whole new personality, revealing a spectacular wonder. While the days may be colder and shorter, they are still full of adventure — whether you like to ski, snowshoe, hike, or just enjoy the frosty view. Find out more ››

Looking for a New Winter Sport?

Discover five new snow activities to try this winter: Fat Biking, Ski Biking, Snowmobiling/Snow Biking, Snowkiting, and Snow Surfing/Noboarding! Find out more ››

Winter Travel Planning: Finding Balance in the Backcountry

Winter Wonderlands Alliance is collaborating with local partners to involve the human-powered backcountry community in winter travel planning for various National Forests across the country. Find out more ››

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Featured Business Directory Advertiser

For long-lasting trail signage and frames, Pannier leads the way. Pannier manufactures a full range of durable signage, panels, bases, and frames, all designed for the harshest environments. With all production under one roof, they can deliver outstanding reliability and on-time delivery, time and again. Find out more ››

Featured Trails...

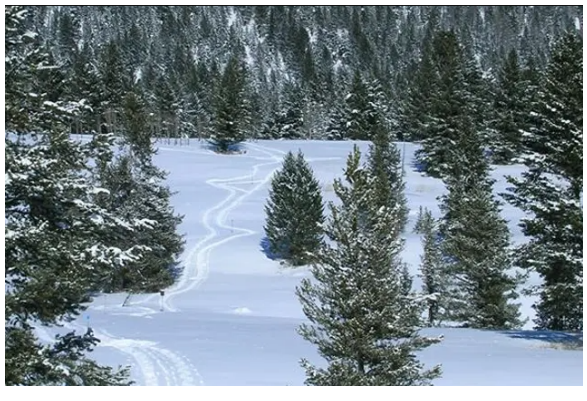
National Recreation Trails (NRT) are recognized by the federal government, with the consent of any Federal, State, Tribal, local, nonprofit, or private entity having jurisdiction over these lands. Today over 1,300 of these trails have been designated throughout the country. Find more trails using the NRT Trail Finder.

Winter Wilderness Recreation

During winter, wilderness areas do not simply hibernate. From peak to slope, wilderness offers a variety of opportunities for winter recreation. Consider exploring these NRTs that provide winter recreation options. Before you go, make sure to check the latest weather and trail conditions.

Featured NRT: Two Top Snowmobile Trail, Montana

The Two Top Snowmobile Trail is famous for its ghost trees, also known as snow ghosts. Find out more ››



Featured NRT: Refuge Point Cross Country Ski Trail, Montana

The Madison Earthquake River Canyon Area offers a wonderful opportunity for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in a beautiful snowy landscape. Find out more ››

Discover the benefits to designating your trail(s) as an NRT, the history of NRT program, the process for trails to become NRTs, and more. The deadline to apply is November 1 of every year. Find out more ››