



# The Trail FUnd Legacy Trails Program

# The Trail Fund Grant Programs

## Legacy Trails Program

For trail projects on land managed by the National Forest Service that:

- **Restore** aquatic habitat,
- **Preserve** access,
- **Remove** unauthorized trails,
- **Decommission** unauthorized and previously closed roads/trails **and/or**
- **Create** more resilient and sustainable National Forest Service Trails, trail bridges and trail infrastructure

**\$1.5 M**

Legacy Trails  
Program yearly  
budget

## Trails Capacity Program

Invests in building trails community capacity nationwide through research, education and stewardship.

**\$122K**

Trails Capacity  
Program  
2022/23 budget



# Who can apply to the Legacy Trails Program?

Nonprofit organizations, businesses, or non-Federal agencies may apply\* for this funding. American Trails manages the program and awards the funding.

**Volunteer involvement is encouraged!**

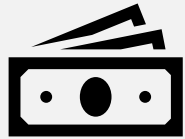
\*Applicants must have a letter of support from their local Forest Service office.



# Legacy Trails Program

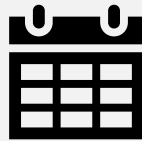
## Grant Program Overview

### Funding Available



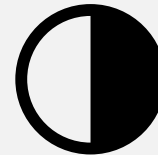
Funding between  
\$5,000 and \$100,000  
per project.

### Important Dates



Oct 2- Dec 1  
application window  
for  
Feb 1 award

### Match Requirement



20% match –  
In-kind  
Is acceptable

### Trail Types

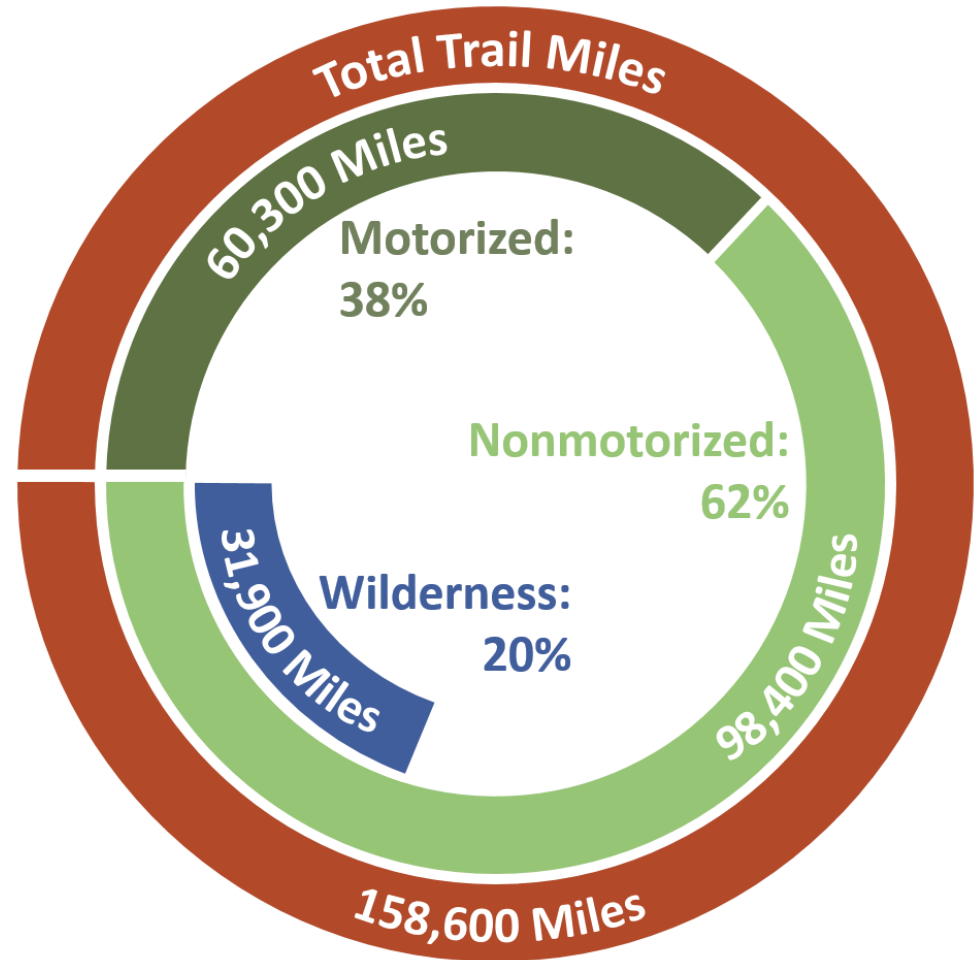


Motorized or non-  
motorized trails in  
National Forests

# Grant Oversight and Distribution



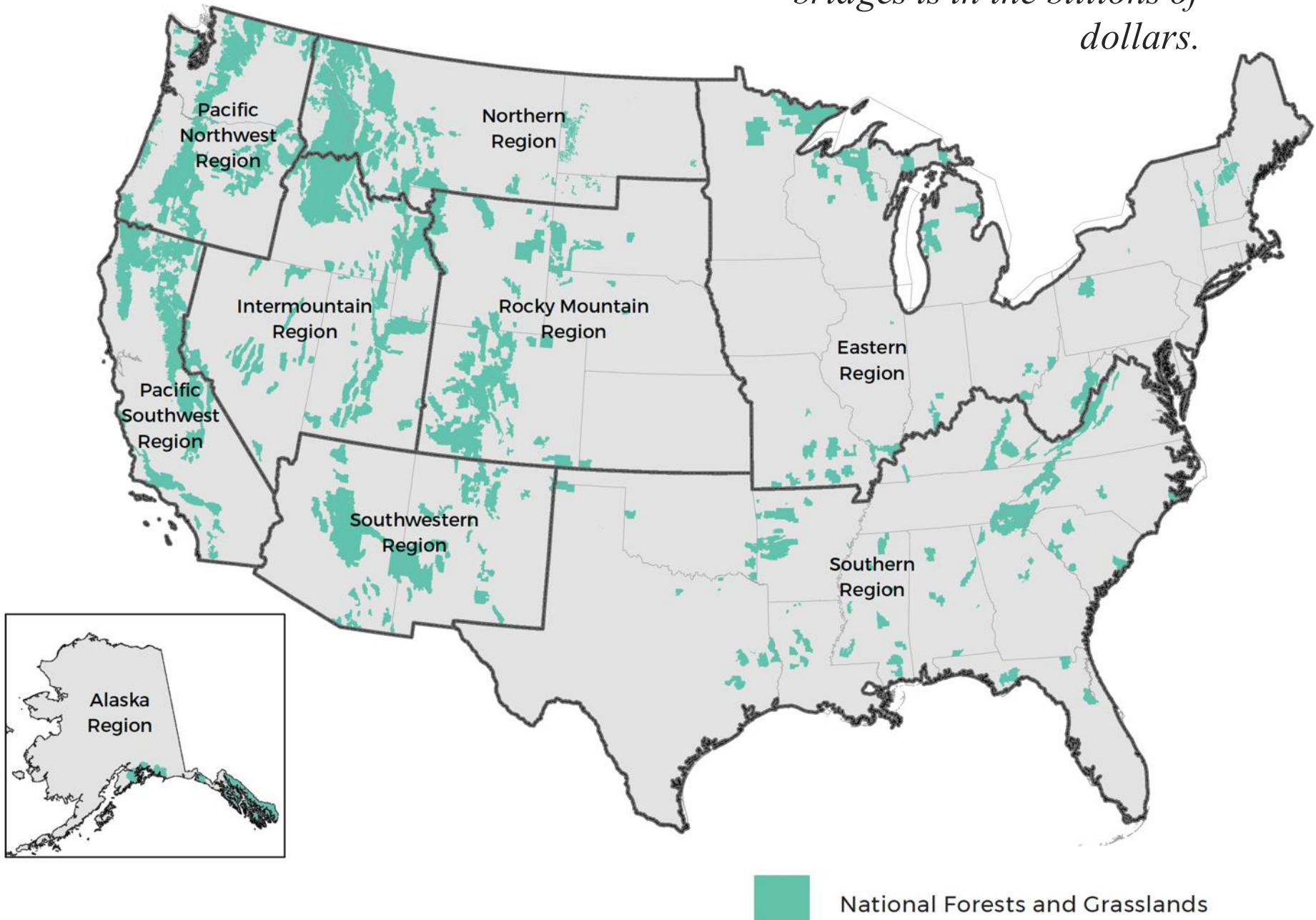
## Evaluation & Selection



American Trails and our project partners will seek to award project funding equitably, proportionate to percentage of National Forest System Trail miles on the ground.



*The Forest Service estimates that the current maintenance backlog on roads, trails, and bridges is in the billions of dollars.*







# An access problem

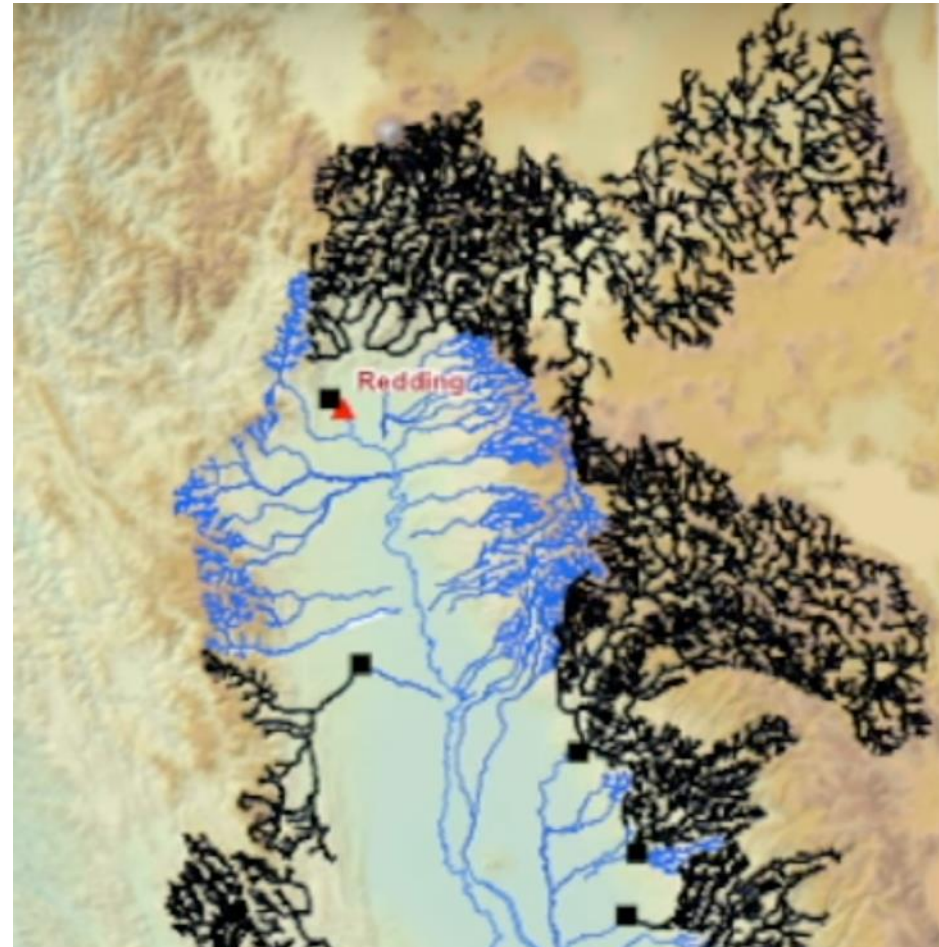
National Forest System Trails suffer from deferred maintenance.



# A problem for fish

The upper reaches of many watersheds are no longer accessible to fish and other aquatic organisms, making these populations vulnerable to decline.

Culverts can prohibit upstream fish passage.



The headwaters of many streams and rivers are disconnected, such as the Sacramento River in California.



# Projects should address problems

- Deferred maintenance
- & Overuse
  - which can lead to*
- Unauthorized/informal trails & Unsafe/confusing trails
  - vulnerable to*
- Extreme weather
  - which causes/worsens*
- Erosion and flooding
  - which causes/worsens*
- Damage to habitat
- Impacts to public drinking water sources

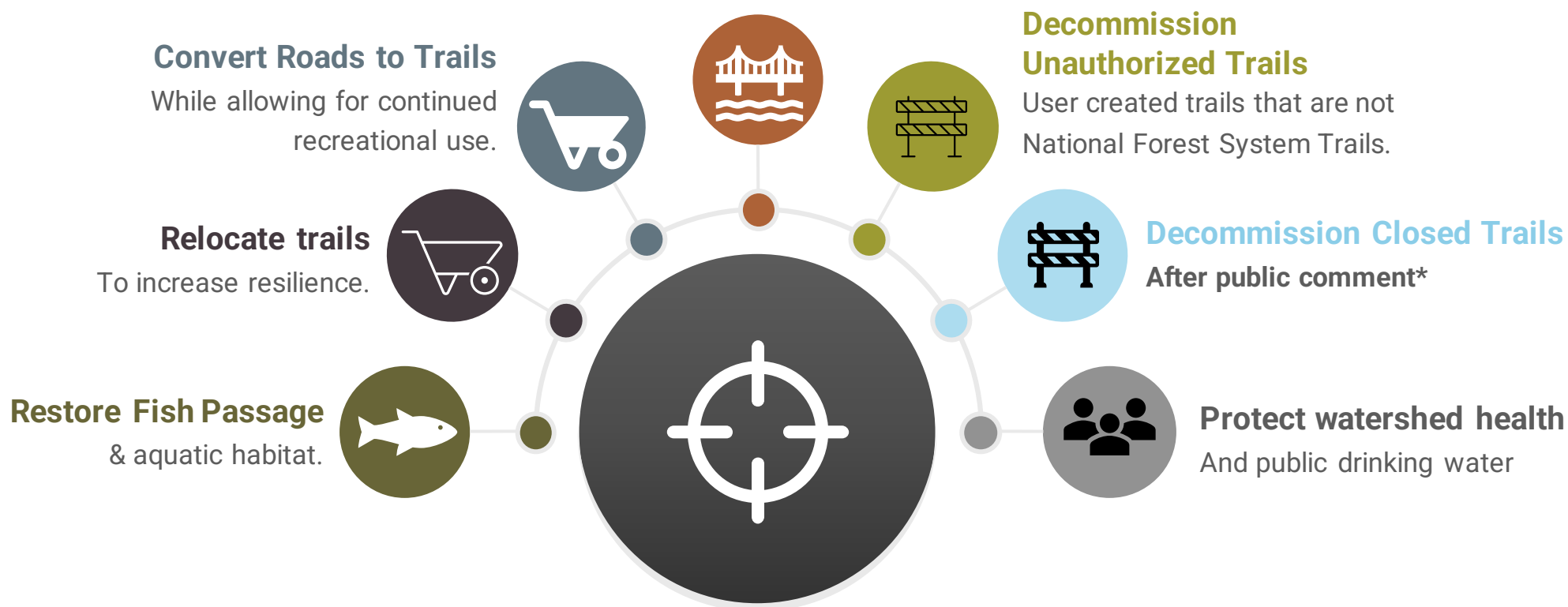


# Grant Intent

To carry out projects on National Forest System Trails and trail bridges to improve resilience to weather events, flooding, or other natural disasters.

## Build Trail Bridges

To improve aquatic habitat and improve resilience



\* Projects which decommission forest roads and trails may only be funded **if public comment was previously and separately solicited** for changing the management status of the applicable National Forest System road or trail: 1) to close the road or trail to access; and 2) to minimize impacts to natural resources; and has closed the road or trail to access.



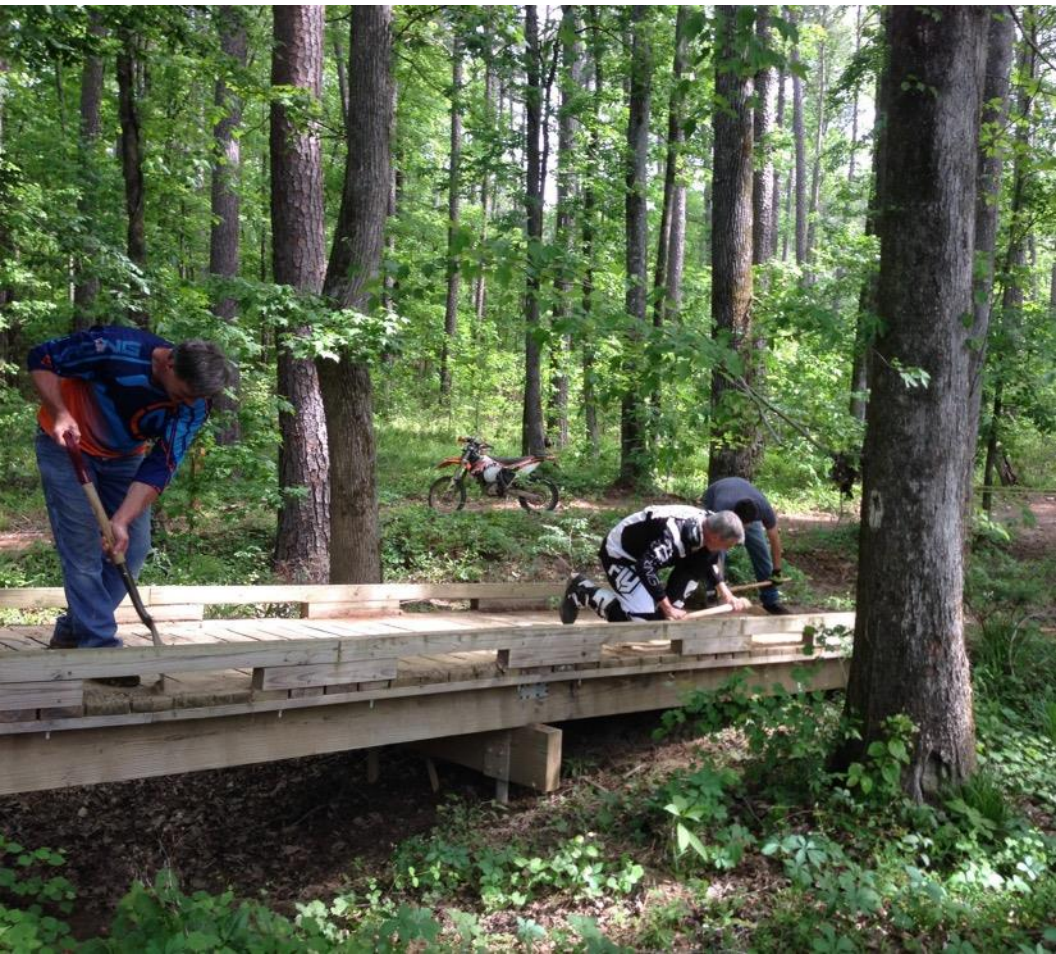
# Project examples

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## Build Trail Bridges

To improve aquatic habitat and improve resilience

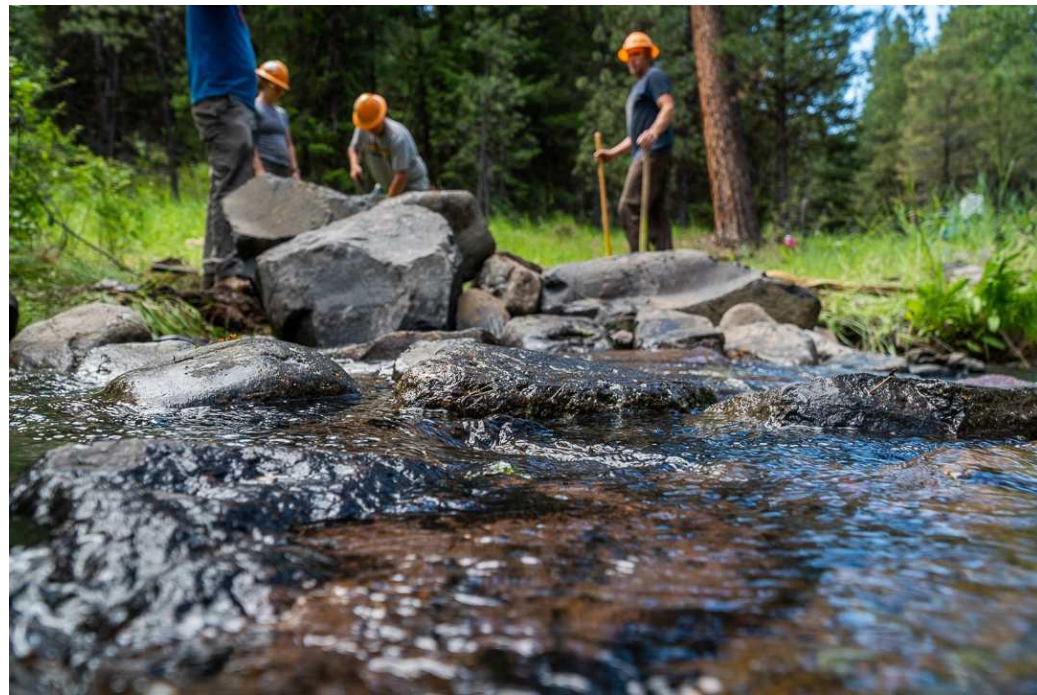


## Restore Fish Passage

& aquatic habitat.



A successful project allows anadromous fish passage and natural water flow year-round. Well designed and constructed trail-stream crossings accommodate flash floods or other extreme weather events without trail washouts.





# Project example

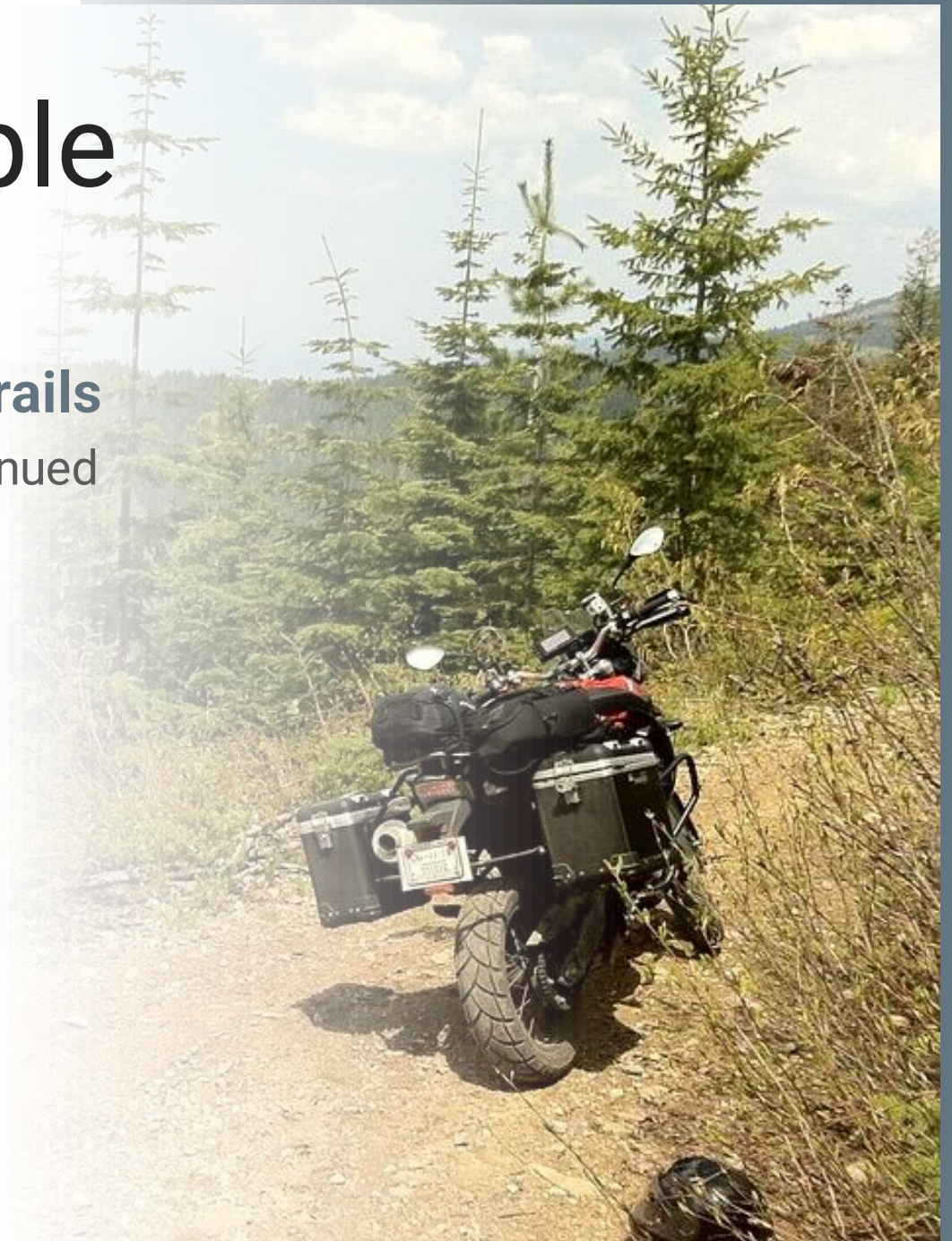


## Convert Roads to Trails

While allowing for continued recreational use.

Projects can include clearing, brushing, tread repair, bridge and structure repair or replacement, and installation of trail signs provided they contribute to the goals of the Legacy Trails Program. These activities can also reduce existing trail deferred maintenance.

**All trail work must meet National Quality Standards and the Forest Service Trail Management Objectives.**

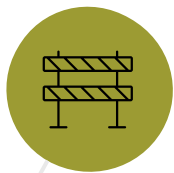






# Project example

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## **Decommission Unauthorized Trails**

User created trails that are not  
National Forest System Trails.

## **Relocate trails**

To increase resilience.



# The Application Packet

## Project Narrative

- ☐ Project description
- ☐ Specific accomplishments
- ☐ Benefit of the project

## Letter of Support

- ☐ Signed by District Ranger
- ☐ Identifies project location

## Project Budget

- ☐ Budget narrative
- ☐ Spreadsheet with match

## Documentation of Legal status

- ☐ IRS letter: Tax exempt status
- ☐ EIN or business license

## Project Timeline

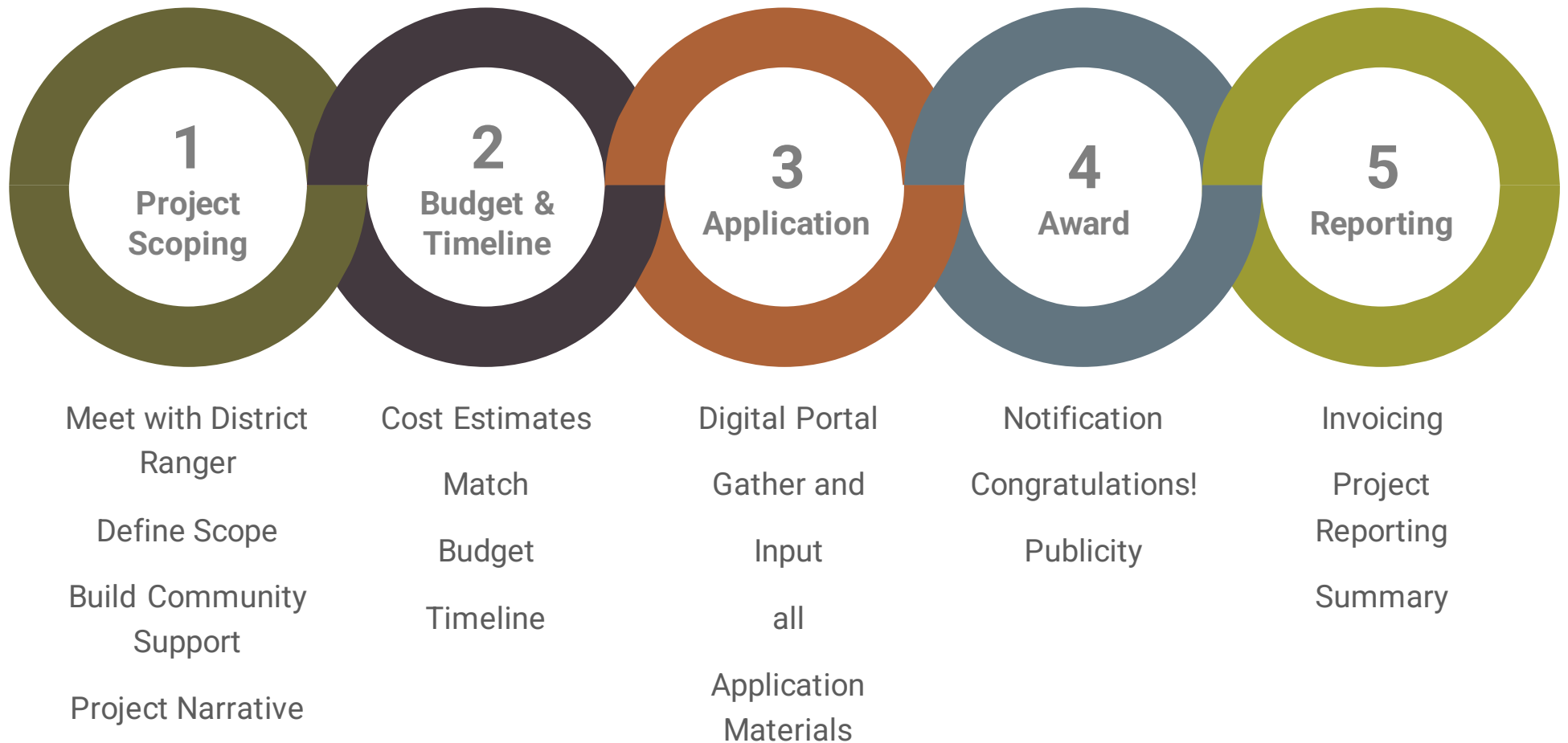
- ☐ Project timeline narrative
- ☐ Complete in 2 yrs

## Other Documentation

- ☐ Additional letters of support
- ☐ Map of project site/context
- ☐ Photos of site/context



# The Application/Award Process



# 1

## PREPARE TO APPLY

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### Project Feasibility, Scoping, and Narrative

#### How feasible is your project?

- Approval by District Ranger/Forest Supervisor
- Amount of match

#### What does your project accomplish?

- Miles of trail improved
- Maintenance needs in priority areas
- Overall benefit to National Forest Trail System (NFTS)

#### Priority projects protect or restore:

- Water quality/ watershed function,
- A watershed that supplies a public drinking water system
- Habitat of threatened, endangered, or sensitive fish or wildlife, or species of conservation concern,
- A watershed with a watershed protection and restoration action plan

#### Who does it engage, does it have support?

- Volunteer participation and community support is encouraged.



# 2

## ASSEMBLE PROJECT INFO

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**Project Budget  
and Timeline**

**And other  
Documentation**



### Matching contribution

- Must be at least 20% of total requested funding
- In-kind is an acceptable match



### Budget amounts

- Small – between 5-20K
- Large – up to 100K



### Project Timeline

- Can span two field seasons

# 3



Upload project info  
▪ [Americantrails.org](https://Americantrails.org)

# 4



Receive award

- Press release and social media posts

# 5



Invoicing & Reporting

- Complete work first, for reimbursement
- Keep good records
- Refer to Quick Guide to Invoicing
- Progress check-ins
- Final report

## APPLY AND GET FUNDED

Total funding amounts are expected to be \$1,500,000 per year for the next five years beginning in 2023. This program is dependent on the FS depositing Challenge Cost Share Program funding with American Trails each year. A final federal budget and allocation into this agreement is required prior to project awards.



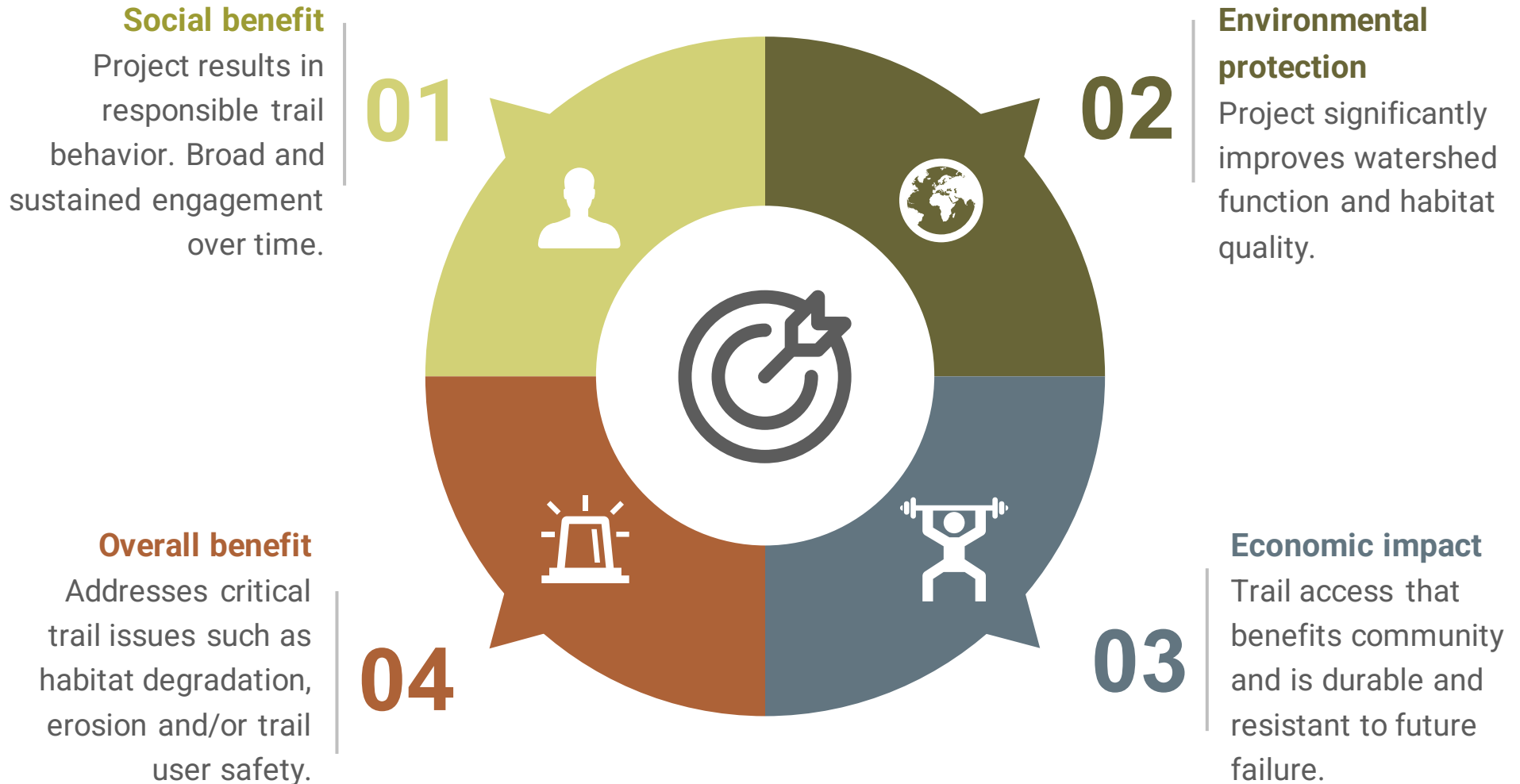
# Required Project Prequalification

Projects that meet all basic grant requirements will be further evaluated.

Evaluation criteria	YES	NO	Social	Economic	Environmental	Overall Benefit
Eligible Activities	✓					
Forest Service Support	✓					
Feasibility	✓					
Eligible Organization	✓					
Volunteers/JEDI/Social value						
Match/Investment/ \$ Value						
Priority Program Goals						
Improvements By The Mile						
Trail/Stream Crossings (bridges, culverts, other)						
Overall Assessment	Y		/5	/5	/5	/5

# Project Evaluation Criteria

Projects that score highest will maximize resiliency and sustainability







# Social Engagement & Benefit

A successful project engages a significant number of volunteers relative to its size, and improves social harmony, connectivity and access.

Project serves a wide variety of ages and abilities, culturally diverse and/or locally under-represented or under-served populations.







# Environmental Protection

The most successful  
project reconnects  
impacted aquatic habitat,  
reduces erosion, and  
improves viability for  
impacted species.





# Metrics

## Priority goals

- Improves a watershed that supplies a public drinking water source
- Number of listed species positively impacted
- Cultural impacts mitigated

## Trail improvements by the mile

- Deferred maintenance miles
- Miles of trail improved or relocated
- Miles of unauthorized trails decommissioned
- Miles of closed trails decommissioned
- Miles of road converted to trail
- Miles of upstream habitat reconnected

## Trail/stream improvements

- Number of trail bridges
- Number of culverts replaced





# Economic Impact

The highest-scoring project shows significant local investment, significantly improves infrastructural resilience to weather events, flooding or other natural disasters, and economically benefits the community







# Overall Benefit

A successful project engages and benefits the trail using public, addresses critical ecological and infrastructural issues, and represents a fair distribution of funding around the country and by trail type.



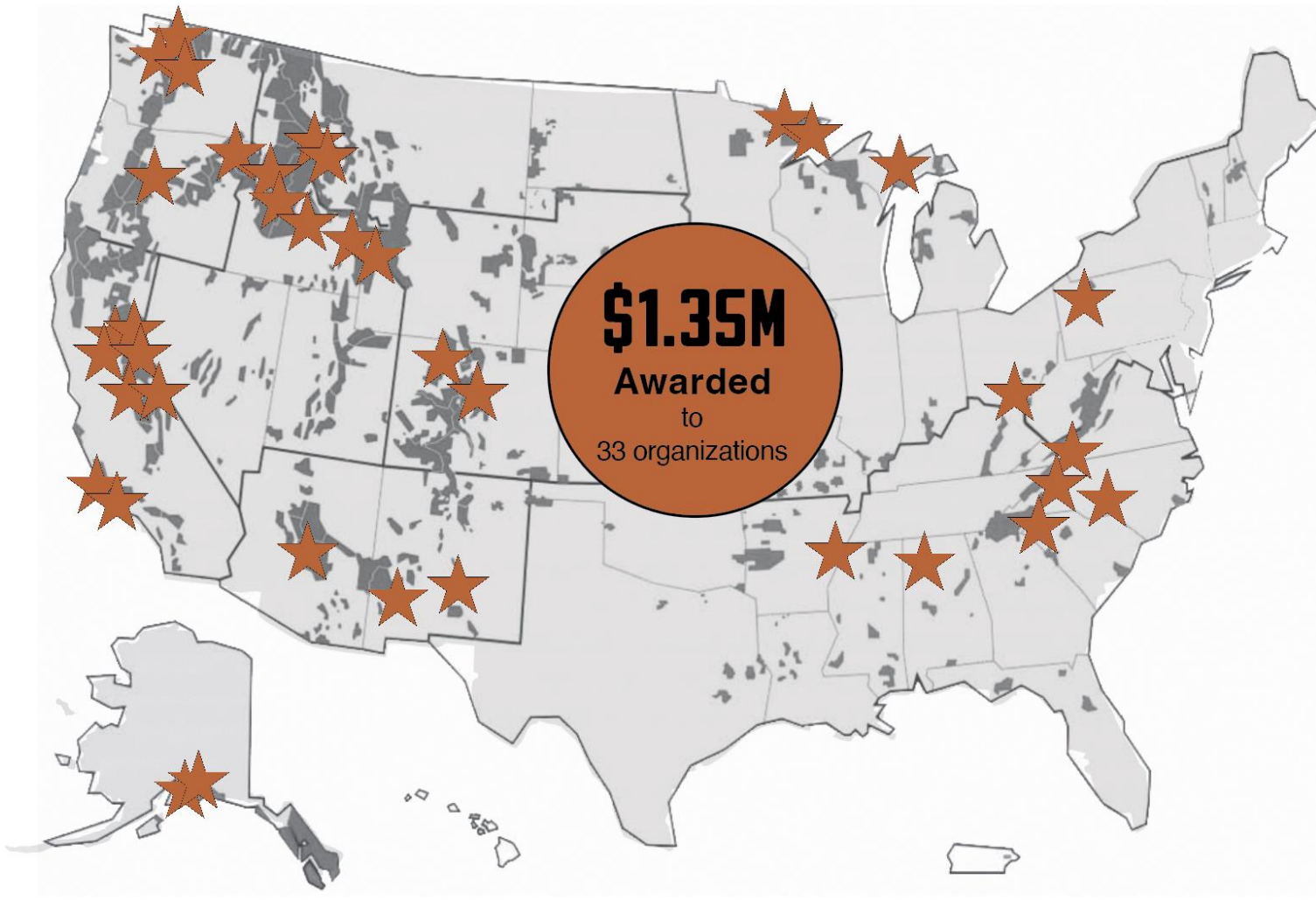


# Sample Project Evaluation

Projects meeting all pre-screening criteria with scores above a certain level will be considered for award.

Evaluation criteria	YES	NO	Social	Economic	Environmental	Overall Benefit	Final Score
Eligible Activities	✓						✓
Forest Service Support	✓						✓
Feasibility	✓						✓
Eligible Organization	✓						✓
Volunteers/JEDI/Social Value			2				2
Match/Investment/ \$ Value				4			4
Priority Program Goals					2		2
Improvements					1		1
Critical issues/ distribution						5	5
Overall Assessment	Y		2/5	4/5	3/5	5/5	14/20

# Awarded in 2023



**80%**

of projects  
address unsafe/  
confusing trails,  
inviting broader  
participation

**\$266K**

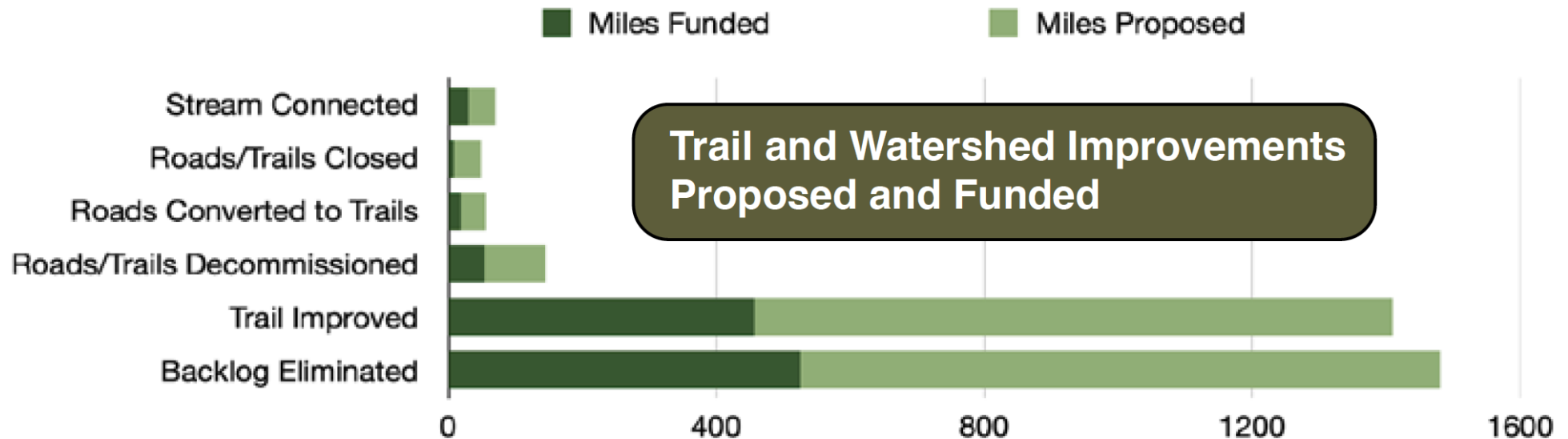
Total awarded to  
23 small projects  
(under 20K each)

**2:1** 

\$2 cash or in-kind  
match for every  
dollar awarded

# THE TRAIL FUND 2023 Fact Sheet

## Legacy Trails Program- By the Numbers



**70** 

Trail bridges  
built or improved

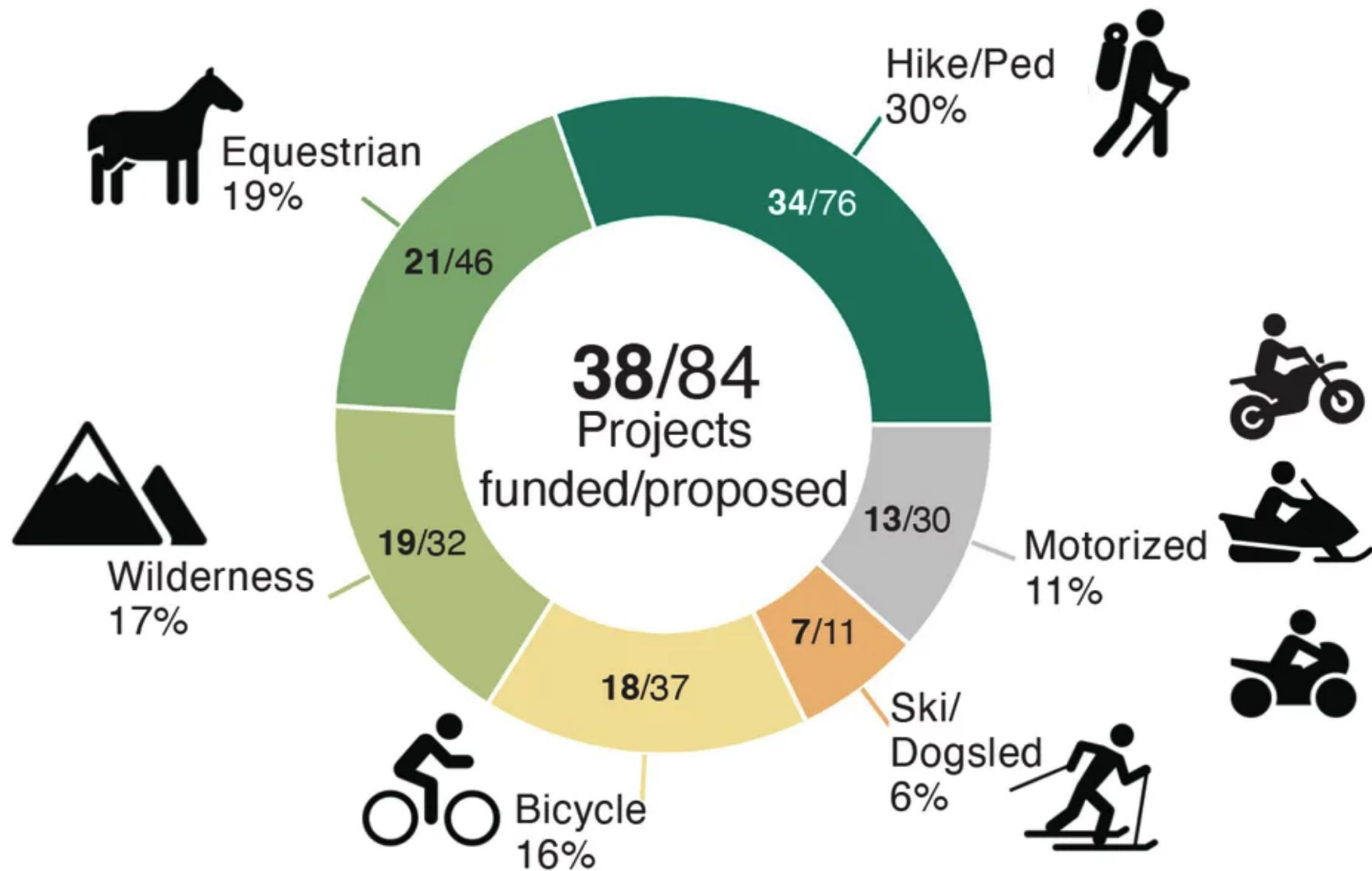
**3,384** 

Volunteers and staff  
representing 182,835  
hours

**1,008** 

Miles of trail funded





## Primary Trail Use Types Funded

Ratio indicates total funded vs. total proposed projects by trail use types. Percentage is % of total projects funded by primary use type. Most projects include multi-use trails. Some trails are both in and out of wilderness.



## MORE RESOURCES

# From U. S. Forest Service

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- [USFS Legacy Roads & Trails Program website](#)
- [National Stream and Aquatic Ecology Center website](#)
- [Aquatic Organism Passage slide deck](#)
- [National Inventory and Assessment Procedure for Identifying Barriers to Aquatic Organism Passage at Road-Stream Crossings](#)
- [Aquatic Organism Passage Restoration video](#)





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