THE TRAIL FUND

Legacy Trails Program

AMERICAN TRAILS
MORE TRAILS. BETTER TRAILS.
◄ Since 1988 ►

The Trail Fund Grant Programs

Legacy Trails Program
Enables Forest Service partners to complete trail projects that:

- **Restore** aquatic habitat,
- **Preserve** access,
- Obliterate 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

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

$1.5 M
Legacy Trails Program yearly budget

$50K
Trail Capacity Program 2022 budget

Who can apply to the Legacy Trails Program?

Nonprofit organizations, businesses, or non-Federal agencies with a partnership agreement with their local Forest Service office may apply for this funding.
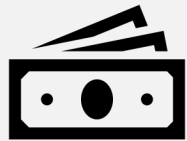
Volunteer involvement is encouraged!
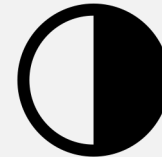
Legacy Trails Program

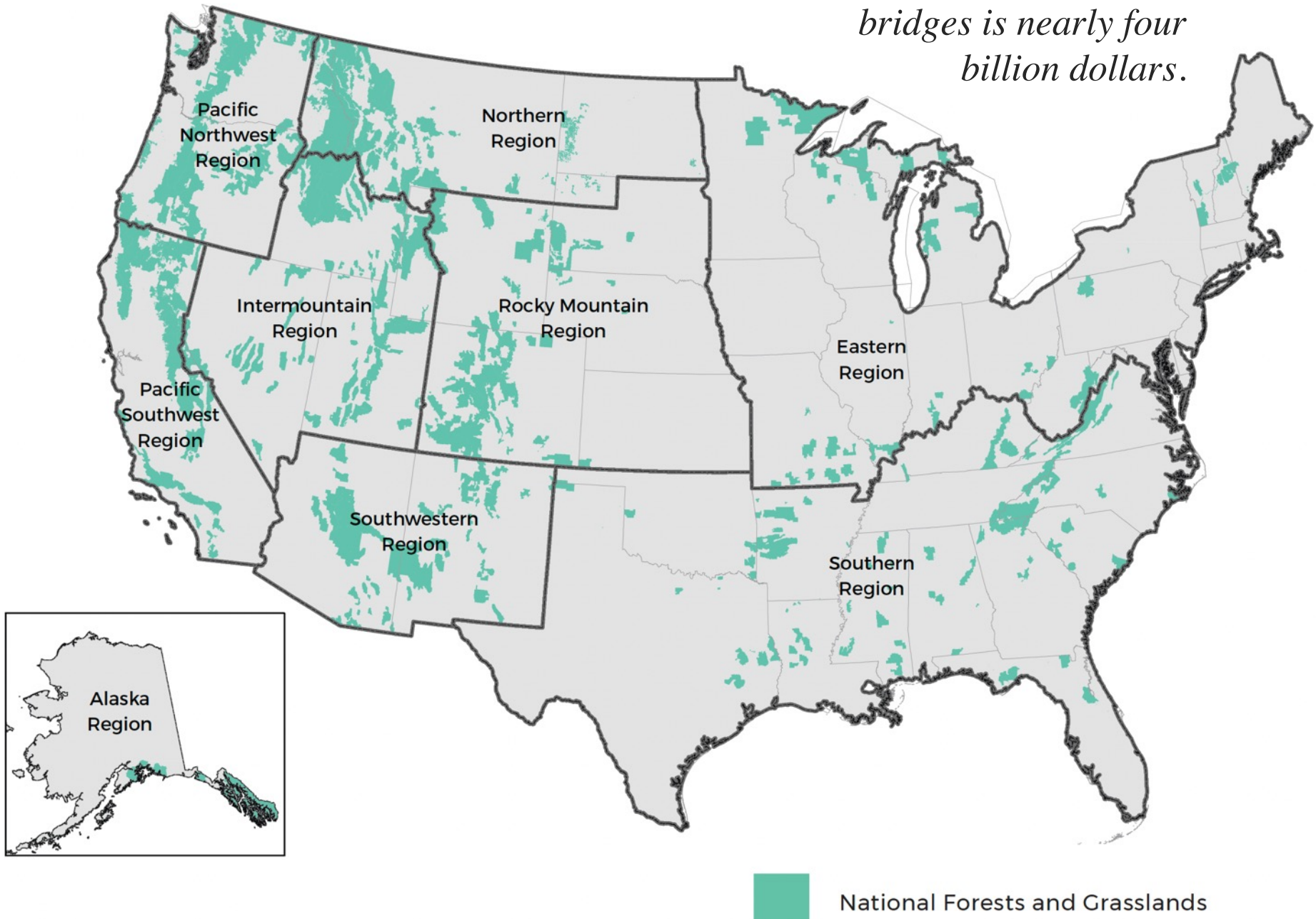| Grant Program Overview			
Funding Available	**Important Dates**	**Match Requirement**	**Trail Types**
Funding between $5,000 and $100,000 per project.	Fall 2022 application for Spring 2023 award	50% match – may be in-kind Cash is preferred	Motorized or non-motorized trails in National Forests

Project Management

Project Evaluation and Selection

The Forest Service estimates that the current maintenance backlog on roads, trails, and bridges is nearly four billion dollars.

Pacific Northwest Region

Northern Region

Intermountain Region

Rocky Mountain Region

Eastern Region

Pacific Southwest Region

Southwestern Region

Southern Region

Alaska Region

National Forests and Grasslands

An access problem

National Forest System Trails suffer
from deferred maintenance.

A safety and erosion problem

Deferred maintenance coupled with overuse can cause rogue trails to proliferate.

The resultant trails are vulnerable to further damage by extreme weather events.
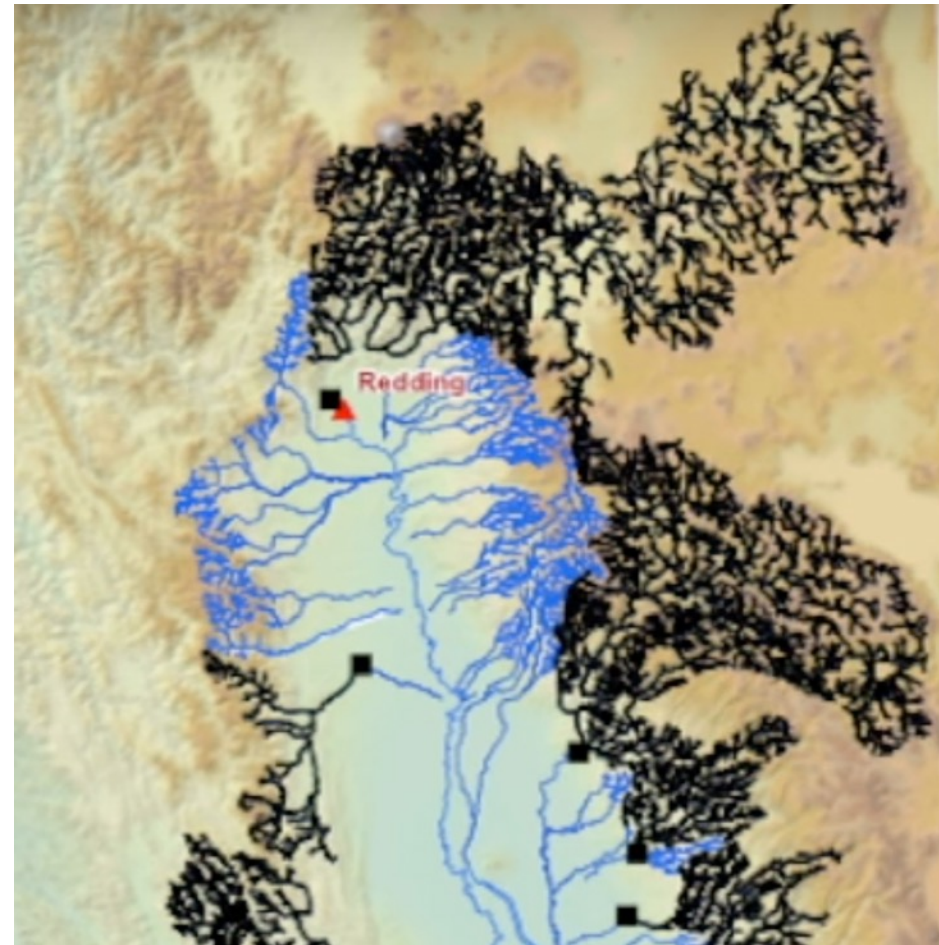
These trails can be confusing, and cause erosion, which damages aquatic habitat and may impact public drinking water sources.

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.
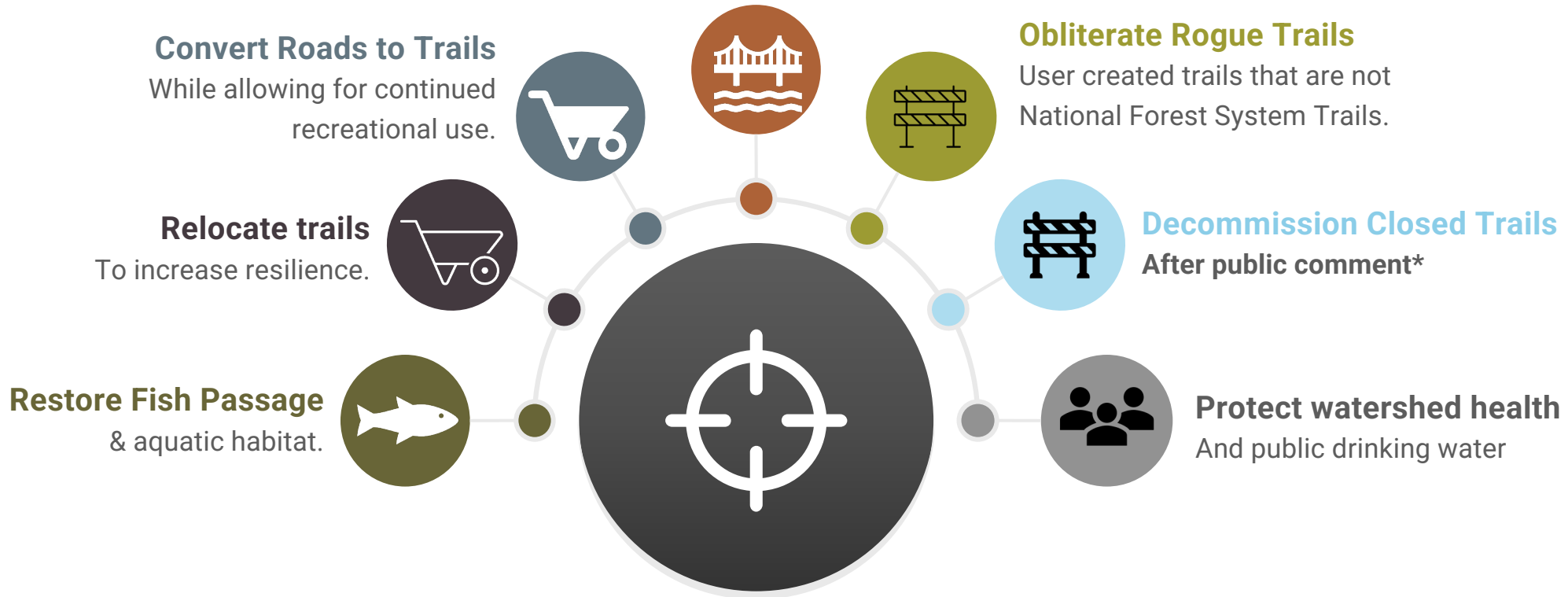
Culverts can prohibit upstream fish passage.

The headwaters of many streams and rivers in California are disconnected.

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

Convert Roads to Trails
While allowing for continued recreational use.

Obliterate Rogue Trails
User created trails that are not National Forest System Trails.

Relocate trails
To increase resilience.

Decommission Closed Trails
After public comment*

Restore Fish Passage
& aquatic habitat.

Protect watershed health
And public drinking water

* 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

Build Trail Bridges
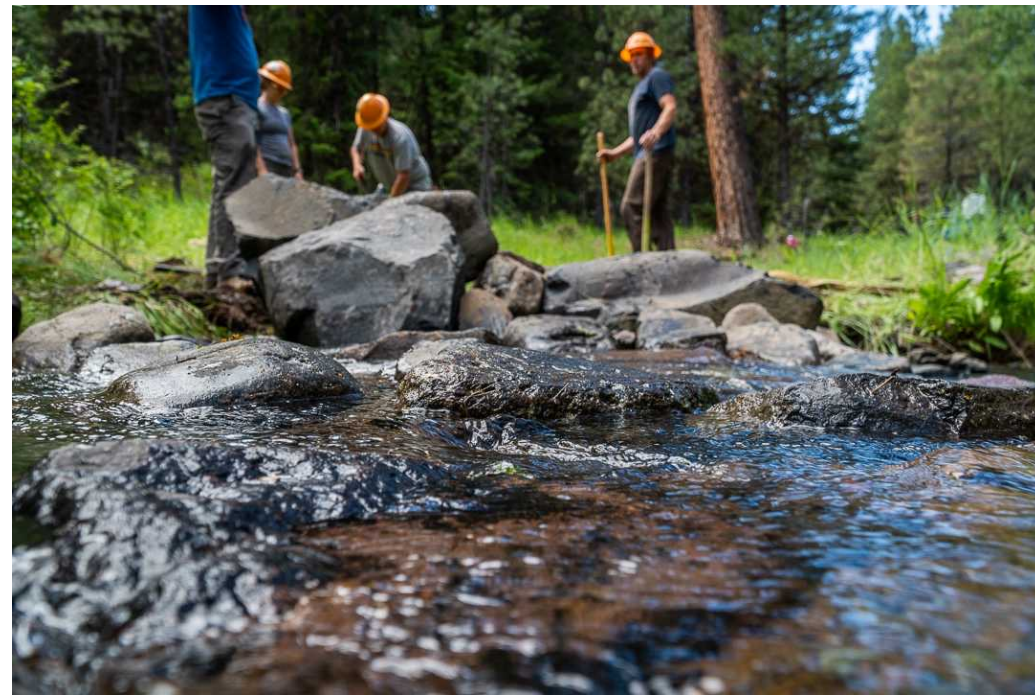To improve aquatic habitat and improve resilience

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.
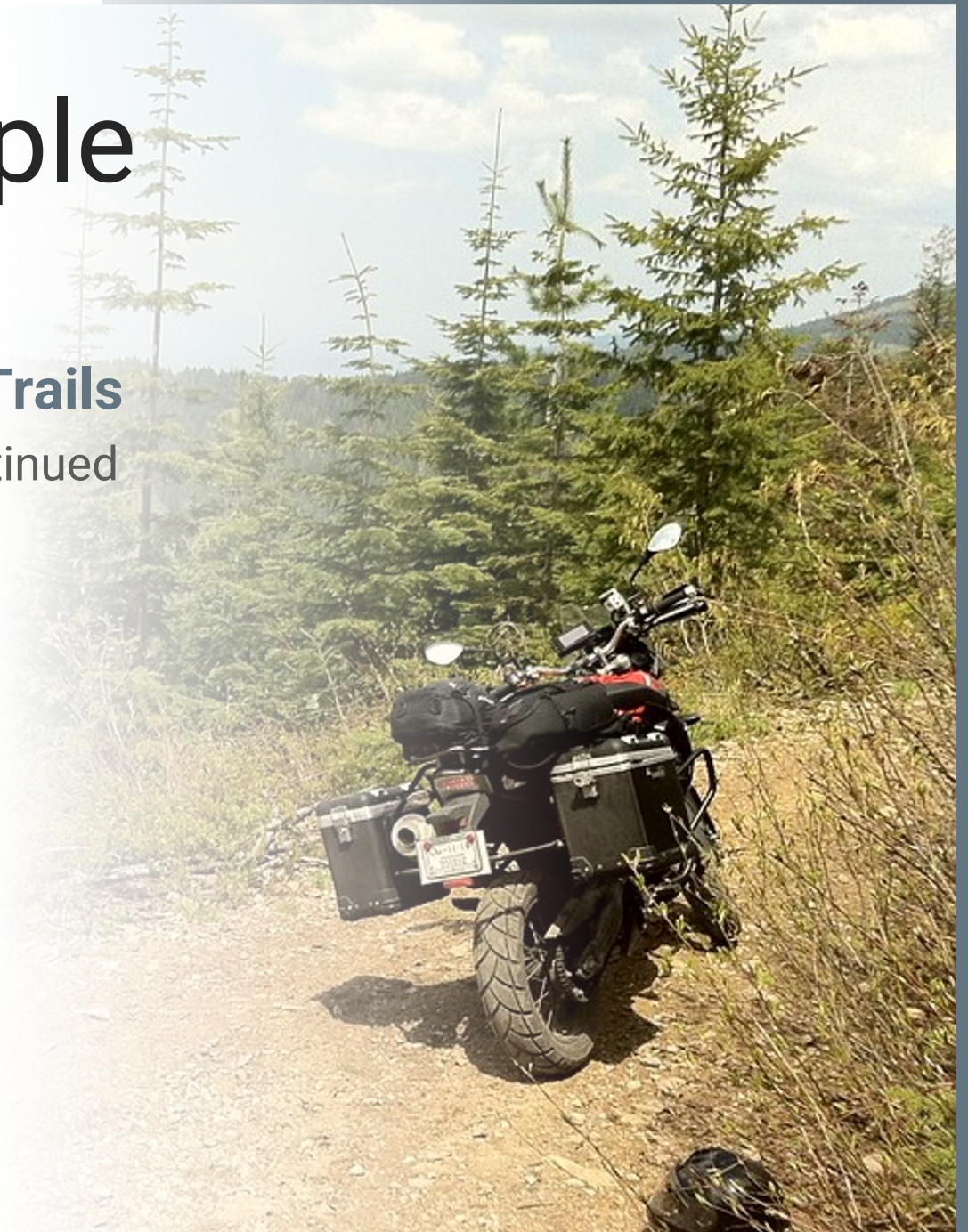
Project example

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 Roads and Trail Act. 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
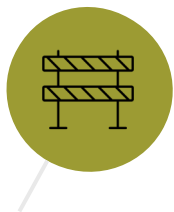
Obliterate Rogue Trails
User created trails that are not National Forest System Trails.

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

The Application/Award Process

1
Project Scoping

2
Budget & Timeline

3
Application

4
Award

5
Reporting

Meet with District Ranger

Define Scope

Build Community Support

Project Narrative

Cost Estimates

Match

Budget

Timeline

Digital Portal

Gather and Input all

Application Materials

Notification

Congratulations!

Publicity

Invoicing

Project Reporting

Summary

1

PREPARE TO APPLY

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?
- Volunteer participation is encouraged.

2

ASSEMBLE PROJECT INFO

Project Budget and Timeline

Matching contribution
- Must be at least 50% of total requested funding
- Cash match encouraged but not mandatory

Budget amounts
- Small – between 5-20K
- Large – 21-100K

Project Timeline
- Can span two field seasons

3

Upload project info
- 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)						
Overall Assessment	Y		/5	/5	/5	/5

Project Evaluation Criteria

Projects that score highest will maximize resiliency and sustainability

Social benefit
01

Project results in responsible trail behavior. Broad and sustained engagement over time.

Environmental protection
02

Project significantly improves watershed function and habitat quality.

Economic impact
03

Trail access that benefits community and is durable and resistant to future failure.

Overall benefit
04

Addresses critical trail issues such as habitat degradation, erosion and/or trail user safety.

Social Engagement & Benefit

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

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 obliterated

• 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

MORE RESOURCES

From
U. S. Forest Service

- 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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