



*Cycle
Forward*

Creating Impact for your Project with Creative Storytelling

**Telling your trail's – and your
community's – story**

**“The universe
is made of
stories, not
of atoms.”**

**--Muriel
Rukeyser**





The “Heart” of a Good Story



Image: The Parker House Inn, Confluence, PA

Damascus, VA



“Damascus is the heart, and each of the trails is like an artery. One brings economic prosperity, and the other brings the cultural aspect to our community.”

--Gavin Blevins, Town Manager



“New Story Now”



→ A story of an international heart connection

→ “New Story Now” - turning your painful challenges into powerful choices

→ Larysa Homans



A Few things about Stories



- Stories are always about energy (hearts and minds)
- The difference between “storyteller” and “story maker” is a shift in mindset
- Everybody sees the same story differently

Courtesy Larysa Homans



Relevance to Trail Communities



**“To survive,
you must tell
stories.”**

--Umberto Eco

Communities, too, have painful experiences to grapple with.



A Competitive Marketplace

- There are thousands of trails in the U.S. - more than 2,000 rail-trails alone
- What is your trail's (and your community's) value proposition?
- A compelling story comes into play.



Heart of Our Community Video





Telling a More Complete Story

The Danger of a Single Story

- “Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.”
- The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete.



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



Significance for Trails



- If people only care about and talk about only one benefit (economic, for example) we lose some of **the richness of trails**, the magic of trails. We lose out on supporters and so much more.



A More Complete Trails Promise

- An over-emphasis on any one benefit can be detrimental
- Economic impact can't be the only part of your trail's value proposition
- Let's elevate the social, health, conservation, and other benefits of trails!



Who Gets to Tell the Story?

- Story's not complete if voices are missing
- There are many stories in progress



Confluence's "More Complete" Story

- My story (of empowerment & creating a sense of community)
- Shari's story (of personal agency and right livelihood)
- Bill's story (of health & wellness)
- Brad & Maureen's story (of improved quality of life)





Wrapping Up

Things to Consider

- What kind of story you're telling
- How you're telling it
- Who's telling it
- Whether the telling is complete
- How the story might evolve



Tell the Economic Story of *Your* Trails



The Harbinger Consultancy
[Tell the Economic Story of Your
Conserved Lands and Trails Without
Hiring an Economist](#) (June 2023)

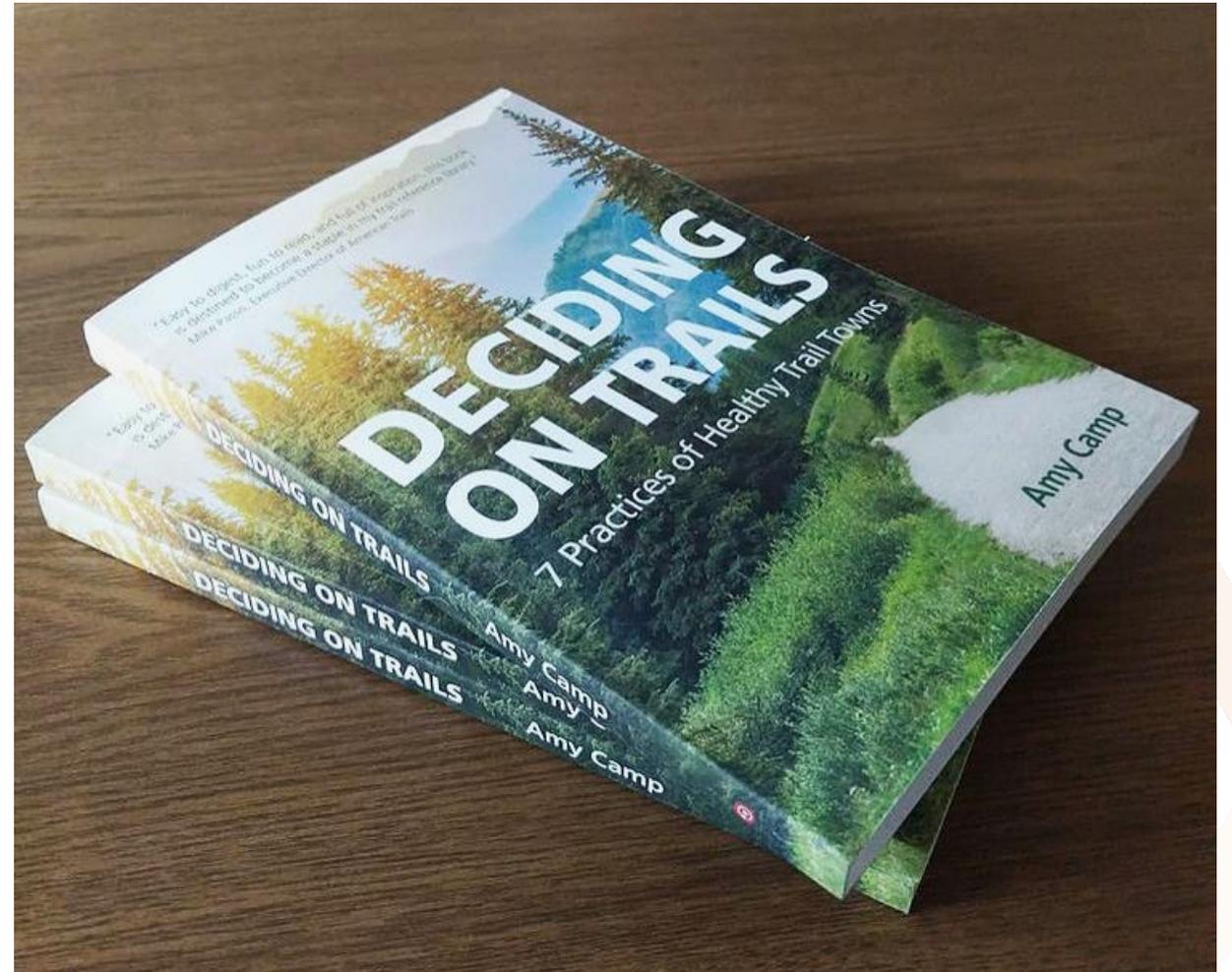
While a tremendous body of studies has substantiated the economic value of trails, it's most compelling to speak directly about the benefits of *your* program, *your* locally conserved lands, *your* trails.

How?

- Look for local studies
- Commission an economic study
- Look for help: local universities, Extension, outdoor recreation organizations, user groups, tourism agencies.
- **Learn to do it yourself.**

Deciding on Trails

- “Share your Story” chapter covers
- Telling a more complete story
 - Sense of place
 - Primary theme and tourism product
 - Dramatization
 - Personalization
 - Keeping it simple
 - Many ways of sharing





Learn more about trail towns, Deciding on Trails, and connecting with the All About Trail Towns Community



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