

A BRIEF REPORT ON THE EFFECT OF  
THIS PANDEMIC ON TRAILS, MAY 2020

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# COVID-19 and Trails

**Advancing Trails**



For those who build,  
maintain, use,  
and dream of trails...

**American Trails**

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PREPARED BY

American Trails - based on data compiled  
through a nationwide survey on trail use  
during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## OVERVIEW

# How Trails are Being Effected

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American Trails has collected data from a nationwide survey filled out by over 250 trail professionals on the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on trails. The effects on the ground range from closing of trails to modification of trail use, increased signage, new regulations, and more. We also collected data on how trail organizations are being effected including employment, funding, working from home modifications, etc. Additionally we surveyed trail users through social media for a glimpse at how changes look from the user perspective. We have assembled the data in this report, and encourage you to use and share this data as needed.

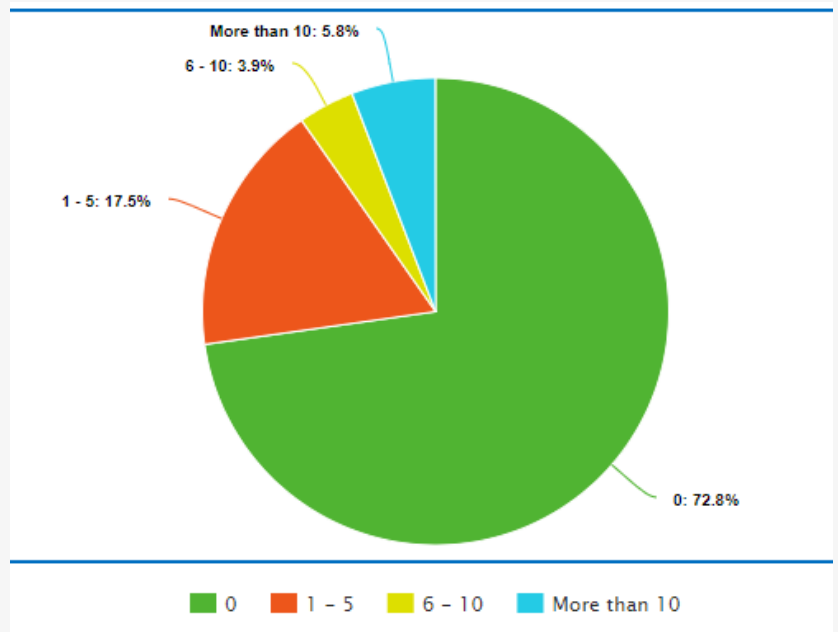


# Who Did We Talk To?

We received a total of 257 responses from federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies (includes cities, counties, planning organizations, metro organizations), land organizations (includes land trusts and conservation groups), nonprofit organizations, conservation corps, professional trailbuilders, clubs and groups, and tourism industries.



We asked survey participants to tell us how many employees they expect to be laid off or furloughed due to the pandemic. The responses are below.





# Project Losses

One unfortunate side effect of COVID-19 has been both the delay and cancellation of projects and contracts for trails. We asked the survey participants to tell us both the number of contract losses they have experienced, as well as the value lost from those contracts.

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## Numbers of Contracts Lost

The good news is that almost 60% of those surveyed have not yet reported loss of contracts due to the pandemic, although for many there could be a yet to be determined impact.

20% of those surveyed have lost at least one contract, with higher numbers reported from planning and architecture firms. The remaining 20% are unsure or the question does not apply.

There is also a loss seen from rental reservations that have been cancelled both for lodging and equipment rental.

## Value of Contracts Lost

The losses are still being tabulated due to unknown factors, such as how long social distancing measures will be in place. Of those who have lost contracts the numbers are as follows:

- 42% - Loss of \$50,000 or less
- 26% - Loss of between \$50,000 - \$150,000
- 24% - Loss of over \$150,000
- 8% - Undetermined value for their confirmed loss of projects and contracts



# Lost Volunteer Hours

We asked survey respondents, "If your organization manages volunteers, how many volunteer-hours do you expect to be cancelled in 2020?"

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- Over 80% of respondents reported volunteer hours lost.
  - 50% of respondents expect at least 1,000 volunteer hours to be lost.
  - 18% of respondents expect between 1,000 - 20,000 volunteer hours to be lost.
  - 12% of respondents see losses of over 20,000 hours as a possibility.



# From the Trail User Perspective

We took to social media to survey trail users and get their perspective on how their outdoor recreation experience has changed due to COVID-19. Many trail users are frustrated due to overcrowding on some trails, as well as other users not respecting social distancing guidelines. Overwhelmingly trail users support trails staying open, but would like to see regulation and safety measures in place to stave off overcrowding and make sure everyone is following guidelines. Many trail users stated that more education is needed, such as signage along trails and communication from trail management explaining proper etiquette and protocol during this time.



# Conclusions

The trails industry has seen a significant impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall numbers we have projected based on our survey are:

Total value of contracts lost: \$13.8 M+

Total volunteer hours lost: 383,000+

Total projects or events cancelled or postponed: 3,865+

Although the highest numbers of losses come from larger organizations, such as state agencies, even very small organizations are seeing the impact from volunteer hours and donations cut due to the current situation. We believe the trails industry can play a significant role in boosting the economy of the country as a whole, and now more than ever it is important to lobby for full funding and recovery of trail industry losses so the outdoor recreation industry can help move the country forward.

Please note: These numbers are based on current estimates, and can fluctuate based on the duration of the pandemic.



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THE BEST WAY OUT IS ALWAYS THROUGH.

- ROBERT FROST



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