

AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY'S
NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®
Event Host Guide

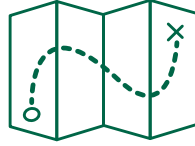


A woman with short dark hair, wearing a grey t-shirt with a blue logo and dark pants, stands in a sun-dappled forest with her arms raised in a celebratory gesture. She is surrounded by lush green foliage and tall grasses. The background is a dense wall of green trees.

Together we can leave the trails and the outdoor community better than we found them.

This guide will provide you with the following resources and knowledge you need to plan and promote a successful event for National Trails Day®.

- ▶ 10 Steps to Plan a Successful National Trails Day® Event
- ▶ National Trails Day® Event Framework



10 STEPS TO PLAN A SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL TRAILS DAY® EVENT

National Trails Day® (NTD) events can be as simple as organizing a trail cleanup, hike, ride, or paddle trip on your favorite trail, or you can go all out by coordinating a volunteer trail service project with a local land manager. This guide will walk you through the 10-step process of planning a successful NTD event.

1. Clarify Your NTD Goal: Before diving into the details of event planning it's a great idea to write down your desired outcome for your National Trails Day® event. A clear objective will help the planning process. Possible goals could include:

- ▶ Introduce community members to their hometown trails
- ▶ Lead [X number of] participants on their first nature hike
- ▶ Provide a safe space and community for individuals who may not feel welcome on trails
- ▶ Remove litter from the most heavily used sections of trail in your community
- ▶ Clear [X miles] of an overgrown trail
- ▶ Clean out [X number of] water bars or drainages
- ▶ Increase equitable access to trails by providing a transportation service from underprivileged communities
- ▶ Increase opportunities for underprivileged communities to enjoy the outdoors by running a gear drive
- ▶ Educate [X number of] trails users about Leave No Trace and [#RecreateResponsibly](#)
- ▶ Raise enough money to build a new foot bridge
- ▶ Increase membership to your club by [X number of] people
- ▶ Register [X number of] runners for a trail race

My NTD goal: _____

2. Make sure your event is inclusive and equitable. Work with local community leaders and Indigenous groups to plan the event.

- ▶ [9 Ways to Make Absolutely Everyone Feel Welcome at Your Event](#)
- ▶ [Diversify Outdoors Resources](#)
- ▶ [Engaging with Disabled People: An Event Planning Guide](#)

3. Envision Your Intended Participants: Based on your goals, what type of participants will help you reach your goal? Your intended participants could include:

- ▶ Families with young children
- ▶ Adult volunteers
- ▶ Disabled individuals (please [verify accessibility](#) before the event)
- ▶ People new to hiking/bicycling/birding etc.
- ▶ Folks from marginalized communities with limited access to quality green spaces
- ▶ Nature photographers
- ▶ People outside your existing network

My participants: _____

4. Choose Your Activities: Select appealing activities for your intended audience that will help you reach your NTD goal. Any trail activity or outdoor education activity can be registered as an NTD event. Your event can include one activity or many activities. Check the box for each activity you'll include or write in unique activities:

- Trail cleanup
- Day hike
- Trail service project
- Trail run
- Mountain bike ride
- Paddling trip
- Activities for children
- First aid or Leave No Trace demos
- Outdoor photography clinic
- Educational exhibits and learning projects
- Birding trip
- Other: _____

- 5. Find an Ideal Event Location:** When choosing an event location, consider the following:
- ▶ Accessibility - How easy will it be for your intended participants to get to your event? If your community has public transportation, consider locations near public transit stops.
 - ▶ Terrain - With your intended audience in mind, select trails to suit their skill level.
 - ▶ Approval - It is advised to seek approval from the land manager/owner to host an event at the desired location. Certain areas have restrictions on usage and group size. If you don't know who manages the land, start by contacting your local parks & recreation department.

My first choice event location: _____

A possible backup location: _____

- 6. Evaluate Possible Partnerships:** Many of the most successful NTD events are collaborative events organized by two or more organizations. Everything's more fun shared with friends! Partnering with other organizations can help expand your event's reach and adds helping hands on the day of the event.

Here's an example, partner with an active run club and a local brewery for a "trails and ales" event. Volunteers clean up a trail they run on regularly and meet up at the brewery afterwards. Perhaps local businesses could promote the event and provide products and services for a raffle at the end of the event for participants, sounds fun right?

Consider partnerships with the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land managers/owner | <input type="checkbox"/> Chamber of commerce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor/conservation groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Meetup groups (meetup.com) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor affinity group | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/wellness organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local breweries | <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor retailers | <input type="checkbox"/> Small businesses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Climbing/Fitness gyms | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and rec department |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Run clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth or senior groups |

People and organizations I'll reach out to: _____

- 7. Define the Logistics:** You may want to elicit help for some of the following tasks, if they are applicable for your event. Write down people who will be willing to help with various possible tasks:

- ▶ Event Promotion/Marketing: _____
- ▶ Signage and parking: _____
- ▶ Participant sign in: _____
- ▶ Event introduction: _____
- ▶ Tool coordination: _____
- ▶ Activity leaders: _____
- ▶ Rainy day plan: _____
- ▶ Other: _____

8. Gather Resources: Based on your event activities you may want to create a list of items you will want for your event. If you don't have access to specific items, consider partnering with organizations who might help supply event materials such as snacks, water, and work gloves. Use the following list to help brainstorm what you will need; simple NTD events may not need much:

- Event signage
- Hand sanitizer
- Sign-in sheets, handouts, liability waivers, pens, clipboards or have folks complete their sign-in online before arriving
- Raffle items and giveaways
- Trail maintenance tools
- First aid kit
- Tables, chairs, sun/rain fly
- Audio/visual equipment for presentations
- Clean up materials – trash bags, and trash cans
- Other: _____

9. Promote Your Event: American Hiking Society develops promotional resources to help event hosts promote their event at the local level. Links to the promotional materials will be emailed to all registered event hosts and posted on the [NTD event host webpage](#) before May. The following are a few resources included in the promotional kit, check the resources you think you'll use:

- Social media sample posts and best practices
- Images, graphics, and logos
- Sample blog posts/email copy

Best ways to communicate with my intended participants: _____

10. Register Your Event for FREE: The NTD website receives tens of thousands of views, so it's important that all events are registered at AmericanHiking.org/national-trails-day/add-event. American Hiking Society highly encourages all events to be **registered no later than May 1** to benefit from increased web traffic the month leading up to NTD.

Registering an event will take 15-20 minutes to complete. After creating a host login you will have the ability to edit your event details at any point leading up to NTD.

Now that your event is registered you will receive additional time-saving tips, updates, reminders, and resources via NTD email updates. If you have further questions, or if you have ideas about how American Hiking can better support NTD event hosts, please send emails to NTD@AmericanHiking.org.

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®

EVENT FRAMEWORK

The following includes sample frameworks for National Trails Day® events. This guide intends to give you an idea of what an NTD event could look like, and more importantly, provide a basic framework for you to build upon and create your own unique event. Feel free to follow one of these events, or modify the framework to meet your goals and needs of your unique community. While there are no exact requirements for what an NTD event needs to look like, we encourage events to include all or some of the following building blocks:

Community-Based: The most impactful NTD events are community-driven. Focus on engaging the local community with the hometown trails right outside their back door. What businesses and community groups could come together to co-host an event

Activation Ideas:

- ▶ Host an event at a local park or trail
- ▶ Promote the event throughout the community at businesses and community centers and through local media outlets
- ▶ Engage community leaders and influencers
- ▶ Engage local environmental and social justice leaders and groups
- ▶ Engage local Parent-Teacher Associations
- ▶ Encourage everyone involved with the event to bring a friend

Trail Stewardship: An underlying goal of NTD fosters the next generation of trail stewards and serves as a conduit for more trail users to actively become engaged in the stewardship

of their favorite trails. Currently, of the 58 million people who hike in the U.S., only a tiny fraction of hikers actively give back through trail service. American Hiking envisions a future where trail users and trail stewards are one in the same.

Activation Ideas:

- ▶ Organize a park cleanup before or after a recreational activity
- ▶ Reach out to a local land manager and coordinate trail improvements. Many trail corridors need to be cleared each season
- ▶ Collaborate with an organization or park that has approval to build new trails or improve trail or park infrastructure

Trail Advocacy: Trail advocacy is at the heart of American Hiking Society's mission and a guiding intention of NTD. Trail advocacy ensures the continued preservation of existing trail networks and supports new trails for future generations. At the core level, advocacy means creating community support for trails and elevating trail users' collective voice. Trail advocacy can mean requesting adequate trail funding and improved access to quality green spaces, or on a more basic level, ushering in a new generation of trail users who will love their local trails and serve as advocates for trail use in their communities.

Activation Ideas:

- ▶ Help build community support for potential/proposed new trails and improvements
- ▶ Provide information to trail users on how to get involved with maintenance and preservation of local trails and green spaces

- ▶ Educate folks regarding threats facing current or future trails and green spaces
- ▶ Provide educational seminars on local trail networks, [Recreate Responsibly](#) and Leave No Trace principles, and other outdoor skills
- ▶ Equip trail users with resources on how to engage local, state, and national leaders to support trails and green spaces (American Hiking will send event hosts information regarding advocacy actions at the federal level prior to NTD)

Trail Recreation: Get your local community out and enjoying trails! The most powerful way to create a broader pipeline of trail stewards and advocates is to introduce more people to their local and regional trails. There are likely many people in your local community that do not currently participate in trail-based outdoor recreation or may not even know about local trail networks. NTD is an opportunity to introduce new people to local trail networks and create a broader base of passionate trail users. To create the trail stewards of tomorrow, the first step is to engage them in trail recreation.

Event Considerations for New Trail Users:

- ▶ A brief seminar the day of the event or email communication sent in advance covering the basics of the activity, LNT principles, and [Recreate Responsibly](#) tips
- ▶ If gear is not readily available to participants, we recommend connecting with a local outfitter to provide or rent necessary items for the day

Activation Ideas:

- ▶ Guided hikes
- ▶ Guided trail runs, races, fun runs
- ▶ Guided kayak/canoe/raft trips
- ▶ Guided bike rides
- ▶ Equestrian group rides

Pre/Post Community Gathering: Celebrate your trail community and highlight the event's success with a happy hour, or after-party at the conclusion of the day. It can be powerful to engage the local community by hosting the post-event gathering in town or at a community event center. The post-event gathering can be used as an opportunity to invite additional community members into the NTD atmosphere, even if they did not participate in the day's events. Think of this as an opportunity to recognize all those who participated in this year's NTD event, and create more exposure and hype to attract an even larger audience in coming years. Alternatively, the community gathering could be held the night before NTD to get participants excited and prepared for the next day's event.

Activation Ideas:

- ▶ On-site or off-site happy hour or after party.
- ▶ Opportunity to invite key leaders in the local/regional trail community to make a brief speech and speak to the importance of the event, advocacy, and local trail issues.
- ▶ Opportunity for fundraising via raffle or call for donations.
- ▶ Trail scavenger hunts for kids (look for wildlife, plants, historic markers, etc.)

We're excited to see the awesome event you come up with!

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