

Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

History and Planning Overview
USDA-Forest Service
Pacific Northwest and Northern Regions
February 2015



Welcome to the Pacific Northwest Trail

1,200 miles from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean



Experience wilderness, working landscapes, and small town Main Streets on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

All about the Pacific Northwest Trail



1. What is a National Scenic Trail
2. About the Pacific Northwest Trail
3. Planning

Trails for America (1966)

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation report recommending a series of long-distance trails across America, defined as:

“extended trails which have natural, scenic, or historic qualities that give them recreation-use potential of national significance”



Pacific Northwest Trail near Mt. Shuksan, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington

National Trails System Act (1968)



Pacific Northwest Trail in Fort Casey State Park, near Coupeville, Washington












- Established National Scenic Trails (NSTs) and National Historic Trails (NHTs)
- Pacific Crest Trail and Appalachian Trail were the first NSTs
- Amended since then to include 11 NSTs and 19 NHTs

Why do we have National Scenic Trails?

Section 2(a) of the Act:

“to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation”

Eleven National Scenic Trails

Trail Name	Year Designated	Miles	Lead
Appalachian	1968	2,174	
Pacific Crest	1968	2,638	
Continental Divide	1978	3,100	
North Country	1980	4,600	
Ice Age	1980	1,200	
Florida	1983	1,400	
Potomac Heritage	1983	700	
Natchez Trace	1983	695	
Arizona	2009	807	
New England	2009	220	
Pacific Northwest	2009	1,200	

- The Pacific Northwest NST and Arizona NST were designated by Congress in 2009 and are administered by the Forest Service.
- Both trails started work on long-term Comprehensive Plans in 2013.

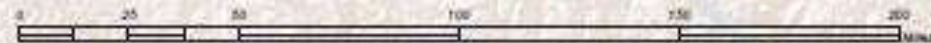
History of the Pacific Northwest Trail

- 1970 – Ron Strickland's big idea
- 1977 – Pacific Northwest Trail Association formed
- 1990s – first local trail maintenance organization formed
- 1999 – Service Knowledge Youth (SKY) program begins
- Mid 2000s – PNTA advocates for NST status
- 2009 – Congress designates PNT as a National Scenic Trail, adding it to the National Trails System

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail



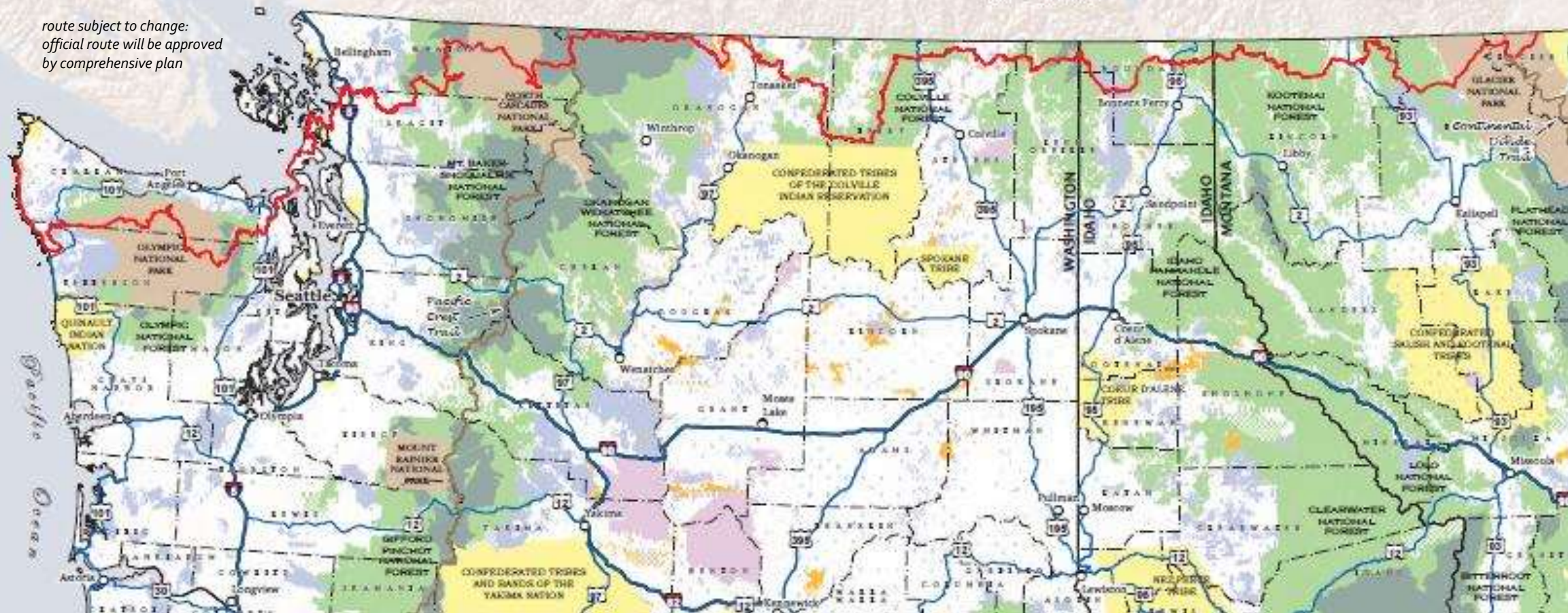
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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail — Other National Scenic Trail — Interstate Highway — U.S. Highway — State Line — County Line ⊙ Capital City ○ City | Land Ownership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ U.S. Forest Service ■ U.S. Forest Service Wilderness ■ Bureau of Land Management ■ Bureau of Indian Affairs ■ National Park Service ■ Other Federal Land ■ State Land ■ Other Land, including Private |
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D. Keston 17 January 2014



*route subject to change:
official route will be approved
by comprehensive plan*



The Congressional route

- 1,206 miles, ~850 on federal land
 - Forest Service: 597 miles (trail = 400, road = 200)
 - National Park Service: 243 miles
 - Bureau of Land Management: 11 miles
- 300+ miles in Wilderness areas
- 75 miles on state land (State Parks/DNR-State Forest)
- 65 miles on county land (mostly paved roads)
- 63 miles on private land (mostly timber companies)
- 4 miles on Tribal land (Swinomish, Quileute)

What National Scenic Trail status does



Backpackers on the Pacific Northwest Trail in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness

- directs the Forest Service to collaborate with partners to manage the Trail as one linear unit
- provides additional resources for management of the Trail and helps improve adjacent trail systems
- can be a valuable promotional tool for local communities

What National Scenic Trail status does not do

- does not grant access across private lands or affect private landowner rights
- does not prohibit motorized use on existing motorized routes
- does not take away the decision authority of local land managers on the trail within their area



Webb Mountain Lookout on the Pacific Northwest Trail, Kootenai National Forest

Planning requirements

- Section 5(e) of the Act requires the Forest Service to submit to Congress “a comprehensive plan for the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail”
- Also work with local FS/NPS/BLM offices to integrate PNT into primary land use plans



Old farm along the PNT in the Sinlahekin River Valley near Loomis, Washington

A few more planning requirements

National Scenic Trails have associated corridors (also called rights-of-way) that:

- “will be of sufficient width to protect natural, scenic, and historic features along the trails” (House Report 90-1631, 1968)
- we will “protect to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact” (Executive Order 13195, 2001)
- shall be selected by the Secretary* and published in the Federal Register (National Trails System Act, 1968)

* = For the PNT, which is administered by Forest Service, this is the Secretary of Agriculture

Key components of the Comprehensive Plan



Pacific Northwest Trail at Third Beach, Olympic National Park

- Describe the interagency, public-private management vision
- Describe the nature and purposes of the PNNST
- Refinement of the Congressional route
- Define the trail corridor and management standards
- Select trail right-of-way and publish in the Federal Register

Comprehensive Plan components – a closer look

Interagency, public-private management vision

- How do the varied land managers, communities, and recreational users work together to improve and protect the trail?
- How does the PNT benefit local communities?

Nature and Purposes

- Similar to a mission statement
- Concisely states the purposes for which the PNT was established and the key characteristics we want to manage for and protect
- The Act says future actions on or adjacent to the PNT may not substantially interfere with its nature and purposes

Comprehensive Plan components – a closer look

Refinement of Congressional route

- Plan can approve minor reroutes
- Are there areas where the Congressional route is not in a good location? – Yes
- Are there areas where we may want to relocate the trail to mitigate specific resource impacts? – Probably
- Major reroutes must be approved by Congress

Trail corridor and management standards

- Specifically required by the Act and Executive Order 13195
- What area around the trail tread should be managed to preserve the PNNST experience?
- How do we work collaboratively with non-federal landowners to provide high-quality recreation opportunities?
- Are any land acquisitions necessary or desirable for long-term management of the trail? By law, all acquisitions must be sold by a willing seller

National Environmental Policy Act



Backcountry skiing on the Pacific Northwest Trail at Sherman Pass on the Colville National Forest

- Planning guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) evaluates consequences of proposed action (trail corridor and management) and alternatives
- Opportunities for public comment through meetings, mail, and email

How do we write the Comprehensive Plan?

- Forest Service PNT staff manage the process
- Local offices provide input on the trail in their areas
- Interdisciplinary team of Forest Service resource specialists prepare EIS
- Advisory Council advises staff and decision makers
- Communities and public provide input at all stages
- USFS Regional Forester makes final decision and signs CP



The Pacific Northwest Trail crosses the Pend Oreille River in Metaline Falls, Washington

Planning process



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Regional Forester of the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region issues a **Record of Decision (ROD)** for the EIS and **signs the CP**

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Comprehensive Plan is submitted to **Congress** and the trail corridor is published in the **Federal Register**

Planning schedule

	Phase	Start	End
1	Community Engagement / Informal Scoping	1/13	ongoing
2	Project Planning / Start up	5/13	8/14
3	Internal Scoping and Data Collection	8/13	12/14
4	Advisory Council Establishment	8/13	ongoing
5	Establish Planning Team	6/14	5/15
6	Develop Preliminary Proposed Action	3/15	6/15
7	First Advisory Council meeting	6/15	ongoing, every 6 mo.
8	Gateway Community Planning Workshops	7/15	10/15
9	Refine Preliminary Proposed Action	8/15	11/15
10	Second Advisory Council meeting	11/15	ongoing, every 6 mo.
11	Publish Notice of Intent (NOI); Public Scoping	1/16	5/16
12	Alternative Development	8/16	12/16
13	Draft Comprehensive Plan (CP)	1/17	6/17
14	Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement	4/17	12/17
15	Public Comment	1/18	5/18
16	Final CP/PEIS	5/18	8/18

How you can get involved?



Rainbow over the Pacific Northwest Trail, Skagit County, Washington

- Seeking as much public involvement as possible – ongoing and also NEPA-prescribed formal comment periods
- Check PNNST website for current planning info
- Promote the PNT in gateway communities
- Volunteer with the Pacific Northwest Trail Association

Questions? Need more information?

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