



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service



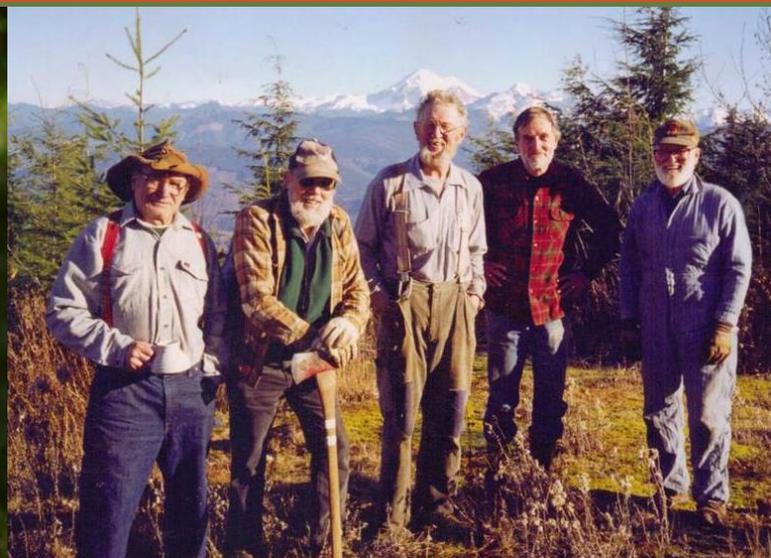
pacific northwest national scenic trail our sustainable recreation future





Perhaps the rebuilding of the body and spirit is the greatest service derivable from our forests, for what worth are material things if we lose the character and quality of people that are the soul of America.

-Arthur Carhart, Forest Service Landscape Architect, 1919



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renewing body and spirit, inspiring passion for the land

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national scenic trails provide outstanding long-distance recreation through iconic landscapes

National Scenic Trails (NSTs) are long-distance trails that provide unique opportunities to journey on foot or horseback for hundreds or even thousands of miles through areas of outstanding scenic beauty.

NSTs cross many jurisdictions—National Forests, National Parks, BLM, tribal, state, and private land—but allow visitors to experience the trail as a single continuous non-motorized route. NSTs are **Congressionally designated** areas with special legislative requirements from the **National Trails System Act**.

The original and best-known NSTs are the Appalachian and Pacific Crest trails. Completing a “thru-hike” of a NST is a challenge many aspire to and hundreds accomplish each year. The popularity of long-distance hiking on these iconic trails has increased with the visibility of books like *Wild* and *A Walk in the Woods*, both now Hollywood films.



The Forest Service administers 5 of America's 11 National Scenic Trails:



18,230

miles of National Scenic Trails are in America's National Trails System

9,050

miles of National Scenic Trails are administered by the Forest Service

1,635+

miles of the National Scenic Trails administered by the National Park Service and BLM are on National Forest lands

51

congressional districts in 10 states have a Forest Service-administered National Scenic Trail running through them

187,248

volunteer hours were contributed on the 5 Forest Service-administered National Scenic Trails in 2013

\$4,145,670

value of volunteer hours on the 5 Forest Service-administered National Scenic Trails in 2013

20

weeks an average thru-hiker takes to complete the entire Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada

95+

weeks Cheryl Strayed's book *Wild*, about her journey on the Pacific Crest Trail, has been on the bestseller list

the pacific northwest national scenic trail is a 1,200-mile route from the continental divide to the pacific ocean



The **Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT)** travels through remote and rugged wilderness, working landscapes, and downtown Main Streets in small communities.

In some areas, hundreds of thousands of people enjoy this national treasure each year, while in others only 50 people might walk the trail. Some travel only a few miles, while others complete a “thru-hike” of the entire 1,200-mile PNT in a season.

First proposed in the 1970s, the PNT was designated by Congress as one of America’s 11 National Scenic Trails in the **Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009**.



HIKING

Hiking is the primary activity on the PNT. Thru-hikers typically start at Chief Mountain in early July and finish at the Pacific in September. The PNT now gets about 20 thru-hikers each summer, and thousands more day or overnight hikers year round.



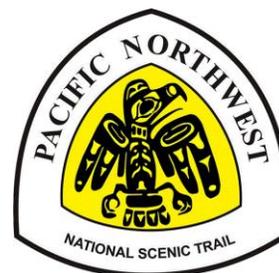
PACK & SADDLE

Many of the early builders of the PNT were horse riders and packers. Today, you can take pack & saddle stock on most of the PNT. It is not currently possible to “thru-ride” the PNT due to some impassable sections and local closures.

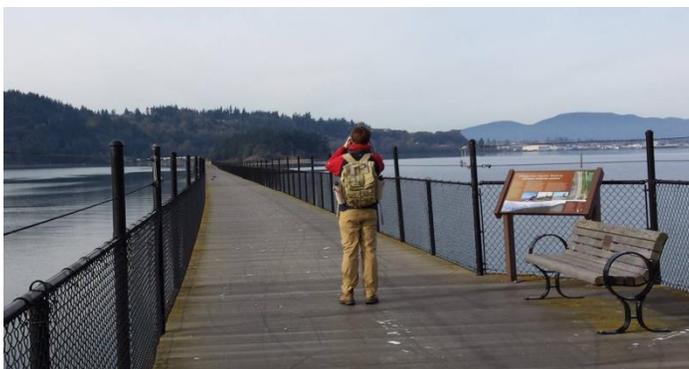


BIKING

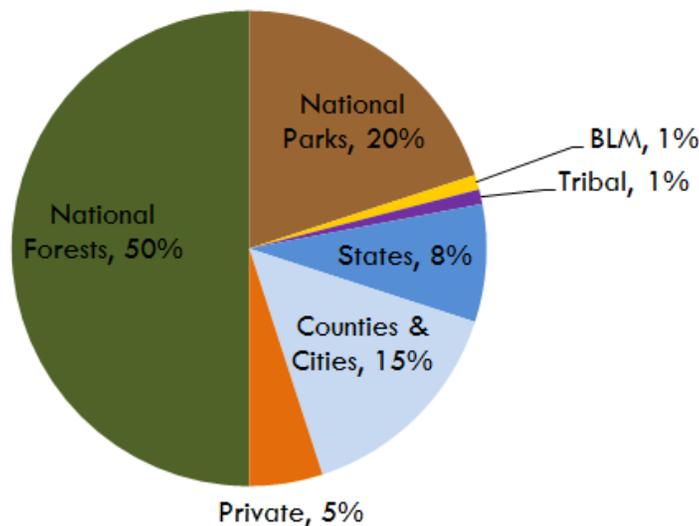
Bicycling is allowed on the PNT where permitted by the local land manager, outside of National Parks and wilderness.



we reach across boundaries



The Forest Service administers the entire PNT, including more than **600 miles** not on the National Forest System:



3 states

Montana, Idaho, Washington

7 congressional districts

7 National Forests

Region 1: Flathead, Kootenai, Idaho Panhandle

Region 6: Colville, Okanogan-Wenatchee, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, Olympic

3 National Parks

Glacier, North Cascades, Olympic

6 Wilderness areas

Salmo-Priest, Pasayten, Stephen Mather, Mt. Baker, Buckhorn, Olympic

2 other National Scenic Trails

Continental Divide Trail, Pacific Crest Trail

mountain ranges

Rockies, Selkirks, Kettles, Cascades, Olympics

the Columbia River

Puget Sound

we forge partnerships

The Forest Service has active partnership agreements with the **Pacific Northwest Trail Association (PNTA)**, the citizen group that has championed and stewarded the PNT since the 1990s. Together, we can better serve trail users and communities across 1,200 miles. The PNTA performs trail maintenance, provides up-to-date trail maps and visitor information, and holds agreements with timber companies that host the PNT on private land.



In FY14, every **\$1** the Forest Service invested in its partnership with the PNTA leveraged an additional **\$4.57**



\$ + \$\$\$\$



The Forest Service and the PNTA also partner with a number of other groups to steward the PNT, including:

- 9 chapters of the **Back Country Horsemen**,
- **Montana Conservation Corps**,
- **Washington Trails Association**,
- **Skagit-Whatcom-Island Trail Maintenance Organization (SWITMO)**, and
- **Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance**.



National Scenic Trails are a model for recreation partnerships. That's because when Congress established National Scenic and Historic Trails through the **National Trails System Act of 1968**, it had the foresight to make citizen volunteers a key part of the Act:

The Congress recognizes the valuable contributions that volunteers and private, nonprofit trail groups have made to the development and maintenance of the Nation's trails. In recognition of these contributions, it is further the purpose of this Act to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, maintenance, and management ... of trails. [P.L. 90-543, Sec. 2(c)]

Today, the federal agencies that administer National Scenic and Historic Trails enjoy strong partnerships with trail associations and their umbrella organization, the **Partnership for the National Trails System**, which hosts annual trainings for agency staff, association staff and board members, and youth trail apprentices.

we promote citizen stewards

National Scenic Trails provide diverse public service opportunities for people of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. These opportunities are delivered through agency staff, volunteers, Youth Conservation Corps, and partner organizations.

In 2013, 1,044,407 hours of service were contributed by volunteers on National Scenic and Historic Trails (NSHTs). For Forest Service-administered NSHTs, partners contributed 204,998 hours in FY13:

- Arizona Trail Association: 17,700
- Continental Divide Trail Coalition: 29,881
- Florida Trail Association: 20,760
- Nez Perce Trail Foundation: 17,750
- Pacific Crest Trail Association: 85,479
- Pacific Northwest Trail Association: 33,428

Volunteer programs produce significant long-term benefits by building a knowledgeable and energetic constituency for natural resources and the agency's mission.



Partners have contributed more than 178,000 hours on the PNT since 2009.

These contributions were worth more than \$3.6 million, and represented the work of a crew of 14 full-time employees on the PNT each year. Volunteer hours grew by 16% from 2013 to 2014.

Partner organizations maintained 360 miles of the PNT in FY14.

Volunteers and crew from the Pacific Northwest Trail Association and partners contributed 31,400 hours on National Forest lands and 7,400 hours on state, county, and private lands.

More than 160 youth aged 8-24 were impacted through stewardship and employment programs on the PNT in FY14.

Youth crews and volunteers performed 22,523 hours of trail maintenance work and construction on the PNT this year.



we improve quality of life

Walks in the woods are good for you.

Researchers have linked time spent outdoors with decreases in stress, nervousness, blood pressure, and heart rate. It's also associated with greater physical and mental well-being and greater social connectivity.



Nature makes you more creative.

After 3 days hiking and camping in the wilderness, study participants improved their scores on tests of creativity by 50%.

The PNT includes more than 350 miles in designated wilderness, including a 110-mile crossing of the vast Pasayten Wilderness.



More than **4,857,000 Americans** live within **100 miles** of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

With more Americans living in urban areas, the importance of our public lands as natural refuges has never been greater.

National Scenic Trails connect people and communities to the land, and to each other. The PNT brings long-distance hiking and riding opportunities into more than a dozen communities. **We help strengthen local trail systems.**

For example, we are partnering with Skagit County Parks & Recreation to create a trail link between the farm towns of Sedro-Woolley and Burlington and the rest of the PNT. This is an urbanizing area with growing demand for recreation trails. In the future, people will be able to walk from their homes in town to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest—or go west on the PNT all the way to the ocean.



we generate economic growth

Recreation is big business. In a recent report, the Outdoor Industry Association found the national “outdoor economy” generates \$646 billion in direct yearly spending. Outdoor economy spending directly supports 6.1 million American jobs, from outdoor gear manufacturers and retailers to outfitters and guides.

In the three states the PNT travels through – Montana, Idaho, and Washington—the outdoor economy generates \$30.5 billion in direct yearly spending, **supports more than 300,000 jobs**, and yields more than \$2.1 billion in state and local tax revenue annually. In 2011, the outdoor economy accounted for more than 18% of Montana’s gross state product.



Trails increase property values and make communities more desirable.



National Association of Realtors survey respondents ranked trails as the 2nd most important community amenity—above 16 other options including pools, sports fields, and golf courses.

People want to live near trails. Studies find that proximity to trails has a positive impact on home saleability and increases property value by 1% to 6.5%—as much as 20% for adjacent properties. Trails draw active, affluent retirees who want to live in places with plentiful recreation opportunities.

Long-distance hiking supports small businesses and U.S. manufacturing.



\$1000 - \$2000

typical spending for a high quality lightweight backpacking kit

Thru-hikers need gear that is light and durable. To serve this niche, some have started designing, manufacturing, and selling their own equipment—often out of their garages with a small team of employees. Examples include Pacific Crest Trail-inspired companies ULA Equipment and YAMA Mountain Gear.

Recreation produces more jobs and contributes more to GDP than anything else the National Forest System does.



One dollar invested in Forest Service recreation programs becomes a \$33 contribution to GDP

we support resilient communities



The PNT brings recreation tourism to 18 rural communities.

Successful trail town programs on other NSTs like the Appalachian Trail show that the PNT can be a catalyst for sustainable economic development. The Pacific Northwest Trail Association is studying the PNT's economic impact on trail towns.



PNT thru-hikers patronize cafes, grocery stores, post offices, laundromats, motels, and resorts.

And hikers share their experiences, praising local burrito joints and B&Bs in blogs and facebook posts that draw more travelers. Hiker Melanie Simmerman publishes a PNT trail town guidebook.



Gateway communities provide access to public lands and services. These towns' distinguishing feature is proximity to public lands. Managing for sustainable recreation means providing opportunities for small businesses, such as restaurants, motels, and other tourism-related enterprises. It means sustaining current businesses and jobs and helping new ones get started.

In March 2013, the Pacific Northwest Trail Association led a workshop in Metaline Falls, WA. The PNT brings hikers down the town's Main Street. District Ranger Gayne Sears, elected officials, and residents brainstormed how recreation-based tourism could help the town's ailing economy. They raised local awareness of the PNT and connected hikers with services like cafes and kayak tours.

In July and August 2014, the Chamber of Commerce found that hikers boosted local businesses' profits by more than \$10,000.



we inspire and connect people

When did you first hear about the PNT?

I went to a meeting at the Forest Service office about a trail that would be coming through Metaline Falls. I wanted to make sure local opinions and voices were represented and heard, so I wanted to get involved.

When did you start letting thru-hikers stay in your yard?

I've noticed more and more hikers the past few years. They would ask if there was somewhere they could camp in town while they were waiting for a package. I knew there wasn't that type of place so I started letting hikers camp in my teepee.

What motivates you [to support the PNT]?

The legacy, and what it's going to bring to this community. I look at the Appalachian Trail and where it was 50 years ago. That's where we are now. I think it could be the anchor point for this community in the future.

—from an interview with Mary Hodges Cates, small business owner and PNT trail angel



Long-distance trails transform lives.

People tell us hiking the Pacific Northwest Trail is one of the most challenging and personally significant accomplishments of their life. Sharing the trail with friends and family forges strong bonds. Hiking solo offers an opportunity for solitude and self-reliance.

“The Pacific Northwest Trail had been the most rugged, challenging, beautiful, and rewarding nine weeks of my life; full of highs and lows, triumphs and hardships, close calls and immense pleasures...”

— Jeff Kish, GearJunkie.com contributing editor, blogger, and 2014 PNT thru-hiker



The PNT brings people together.

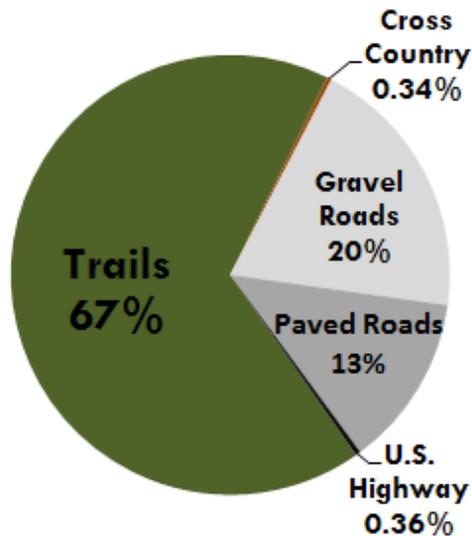
PNT hikers have included Triple Crowners, retirees, new college graduates, teachers, corporate accountants, outdoor professionals, Montanans, and Manhattanites. Hikers help each other on the trail, sharing tips, condition reports, food, gear, and camaraderie.

challenges remain

400 miles of the Pacific Northwest "Trail" is on roads.

To meet the legislative requirements for a National Scenic Trail, we must work with local offices, partners, and landowners to re-route the PNT off roads and onto trails.

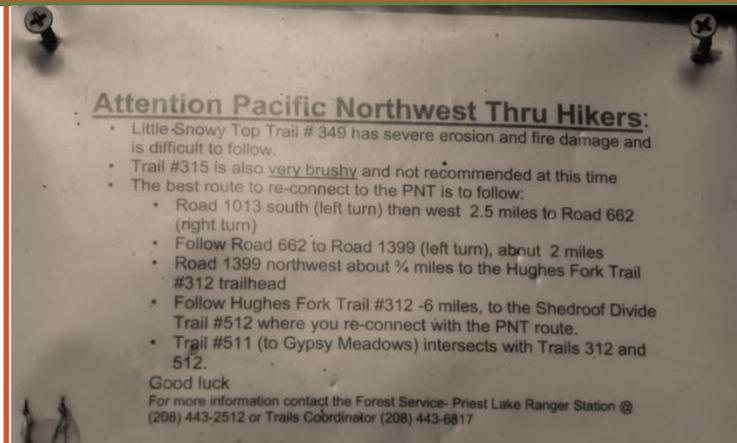
The experience of the neighboring Pacific Crest Trail suggests getting the PNT entirely off roads will take decades. But **some roads pose immediate safety concerns**, such as Hwy 37 along Lake Kooncanusa and Mt. Baker Hwy SR 542, and these areas should be prioritized to protect hikers and motorists.



Our promise to the American people: a continuous, non-motorized trail from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean

28% of the PNT is off federal lands.

To protect the trail corridor, we must work with landowners to establish access agreements and develop a shared vision for management.



In FY15, the Forest Service's capital improvement and maintenance budget for trails (CMTL) is \$77.53 million. **It would take nearly \$300 million a year to sustain the Forest Service trail system.** Only one quarter of National Forest System trails are up to standard. The number of full-time Forest Service recreation employees has declined by nearly 30% since 2002.

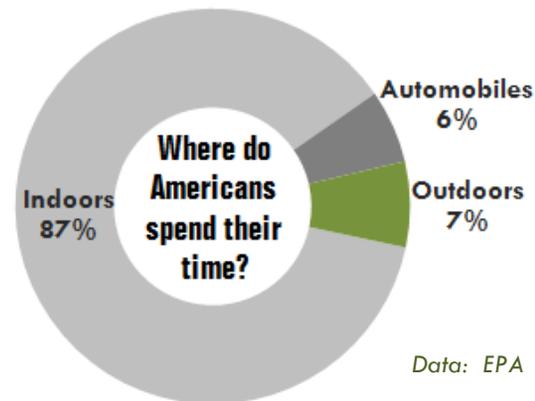
The FY14 budget for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Program was \$248,000. The program sent \$50,000 to seven Forests to support on-the-ground work. Still, **many parts of the PNT could not be maintained by Forest Service crews or volunteers due to limited staff capacity and resources.**

society is changing

About 83 percent of Americans today live in metropolitan areas, where opportunities to experience nature are often few. Urban areas are growing at nearly 6 times the rate of rural areas, putting pressure on nearby recreation sites. **More than 100 million additional people could be participating in outdoor recreation by 2060.**

Day hiking has one of the fastest projected increases. Walking for pleasure is now the most popular outdoor recreation activity, with 85% participation. **These changes in use change how we work.**

The PNT helps strengthen local trail systems in gateway communities. Our new EveryDay Hikes program introduces people to hiking through short, family-friendly hikes on the PNT near their community. EveryDay Hikes are designed to help new hikers build trail skills, confidence, and sense of place.



Overall, people spend less time outdoors than in past generations.

A 2004 U. Michigan study found children spend half as much time outdoors as kids 20 years prior, and they are less familiar with nature in general. Physical inactivity is more common across all age groups, with 28% of Americans inactive in 2012.

However, more Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2012 than any other year studied.

7% more people recreated in the outdoors between 2000-2009, and they spent 40% more time doing it. 75% of youth ages 6 to 19 reported spending two or more hours outdoors on a typical weekend day.

Urbanization is changing the country.

Urban and developed land areas will increase 41% by 2060—a loss of 16- to 34 million acres of forested land. Connecting cities and towns to natural areas through physical infrastructure like trails *and* through sense of place will be more important than ever before.

we are adapting

We offer a different kind of National Scenic Trail experience.

The PNT is not a wilderness trail. It has Wilderness, to be sure—350 spectacular miles of it. But the PNT also travels through working landscapes, beloved state parks, and small town Main Streets. The PNT connects people to the nature and culture of the Pacific Northwest.

We use the web and social media to engage the public.

In addition to our Forest Service PNT website (www.fs.usda.gov/pnt) we partner with the Pacific Northwest Trail Association to maintain a popular facebook page and to reach out to younger audiences through tumblr. We are active in the hiker-run PNT Hikers facebook group.

We are becoming more inclusive.

The U.S. is now 26% non-white. About 1/3 of backpackers are non-white. But on some National Forests the PNT travels through, only 1.9% of visitors are non-white. We are reaching out to people-of-color organizations to learn how we can better serve diverse communities so all Americans can enjoy the PNT.



Sustainable recreation is a fundamental part of the Forest Service's planning rule. Sustainable recreation means a range of recreational settings, opportunities, and access that can be sustained over time.

It helps connect people to nature, and it encourages outdoor activities that promote physical and mental health. It helps Americans understand their natural and cultural environments, and it helps engage them in the stewardship of the natural world. It brings the next generation into the fold, giving them opportunities to contribute to their public lands and develop lifelong land ethics.

The PNT fosters that shared sense of place. The trail experience reinforces the big ideas that **nature matters**, **nature provides**, and that our lives are enriched by **being in community**.





