

Initial Guidance for Implementation of the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act

The Forest Service's national office is working closely across Trails, Volunteer and Services, Fire and Aviation Management, Wilderness, and Special Uses program areas to develop and provide guidance and training materials related to implementation of the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act. In the meantime, this initial guidance is provided to assist Forest Service employees and partners in taking steps to prepare for implementing the requirements of the Act.

Major Requirements and Deliverables of the Act:

1. Develop National Trail Volunteer and Partner Strategy, wherein the Forest Service shall:
 - a. Aim to Increase Partner and Volunteer Contributions by 100% within 5 Years
 - b. Study the Use of Fire Crews in Trail Maintenance
2. Implement Priority Trail Maintenance Program in 9 to 15 Priority Areas
3. Establish Outfitter and Guide Stewardship Credit Pilot Program on at least 20 National Forests
4. Submit Report on Findings to Congress

Initial Guidance:

- **Aim to Double Partner and Volunteer Contribution within 5 Years:** To achieve the goal of increasing partner and volunteer trail maintenance contributions by 100 percent within 5 years, it will be essential to actively work to foster increased partner and volunteer trail maintenance contributions across the majority of the National Forest trail system. Forest Service units, volunteers, and partners are encouraged to explore, develop, and expand opportunities for partner and volunteer trail maintenance assistance across the National Forest trail system, wherever local circumstances and opportunities present themselves.
- **Implement Priority Trail Maintenance Program:**
 - a. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to work with local Forest Service units to share and develop ideas regarding the identification trail maintenance priority areas and should also share those recommendations with the regional point of contact indicated in the list below.
 - b. While the Act stipulates the Forest Service consider any public input on the identification of 9 to 15 priority areas received by February 28, 2017, regions will be continuing to welcome public input beyond February 28th as they work to identify and rank their recommended priority areas.
 - c. Each region will be required to submit at least 3 to 4 proposed priority areas to the Washington Office by April 15, 2017. The format for submitting regionally ranked and prioritized areas will be forthcoming.
 - d. The Forest Service is working to define selection criteria that will help guide regional identification and national selection of priority areas, in addition to the criteria listed in the Act. We are anticipating a general set of criteria that provides considerable discretion to regions to best identify those opportunities that leverage and maximize volunteer and partner contributions and opportunities for on-the-ground results where most needed. Our intent is that the nationally selected 9 to 15 priority areas will include a mosaic of areas with known trail maintenance needs that: include both urban-proximate and remote areas of varying sizes and trail mileages; encompass both motorized and non-motorized and wilderness and non-wilderness trails; and that incorporate a varied combination of partner and volunteer approaches and solutions. We welcome additional insights regarding

selection criteria and invite interested parties to share their suggestions via a survey monkey that has been developed for this purpose by a group of our trail partners at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TrailsActSurvey>. We anticipate finalizing and sharing the selection criteria by mid-March.

- e. The national selection of 9 to 15 priority areas will be completed by May 28, 2017.
- f. While only 9 to 15 priority areas will be nationally selected, regions are encouraged to implement additionally identified focus areas and approaches they identify to incorporate increased contribution of trail maintenance by partners and volunteers on Agency trails.

• **Establish Outfitter and Guide Stewardship Credit Pilot Program:**

- a. The identification of national forests participating in the outfitter and guide stewardship credit program will occur after April 2017 and before establishment of the program in November 2017, with additional information regarding submittal dates and selection criteria forthcoming.
- b. In the meantime, interested outfitter and guides are encouraged to contact local Forest Service offices, along with regional office contacts, to discuss the new program. As we formalize establishment of this pilot program, early adopter forests will be welcome to begin implementing the program during the 2017 field season, subject to prior coordination with the associated Region and Washington Office.

Tracking Accomplishments

Annual accomplishments associated with implementation of the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act will be reported via the Agency’s Volunteer and Services database and the NRM Infra Trails module. This will include the capability to record and track accomplishments by priority areas, outfitter and guide fee offset trails, and by other regionally-identified focus areas or associated efforts. Potential modifications to these databases will be forthcoming, along with specific guidance regarding annual reporting of associated accomplishments.

Regional Points of Contact regarding the Identification of Trail Maintenance Priority Areas:

Region	Contact	Email	Phone
1 – Northern Region	Kent Wellner	kwellner@fs.fed.us	406-329-3150
2 – Rocky Mountain Region	Scott Haas	sehaas@fs.fed.us	303-275-5164
3 – Southwestern Region	Dennis Garcia	dggarcia@fs.fed.us	505-842-3443
4 – Intermountain Region	Chris Hartman	chartman01@fs.fed.us	801-625-5164
5 – Pacific Southwest Region	Garrett Villanueva	gvillanueva@fs.fed.us	530-543-2762
6 – Pacific Northwest Region	Dennis Benson	denniscbenson@fs.fed.us	541-604-4570
8 – Southern Region	Debbie Caffin	dcaffin@fs.fed.us	404-347-4033
9 – Eastern Region	Leon LaVigne	llavigne@fs.fed.us	414-297-1313
10 – Alaska Region	Sharon Seim	sharongseim@fs.fed.us	907-388-8804

Additional Information

Additional guidance and training materials are currently being developed. In the meantime if you have additional questions, please contact the Regional Points of Contact listed above or National Trail Program Manager Jaime Schmidt (jtschmidt@fs.fed.us or 202-360-6119) or Assistant National Trail Program Manager Jeff Mast (jmast@fs.fed.us or 503-808-2443).