Final Report
2020
National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding

Submitted by:
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SPA: 18-CS-11132424-168
The 2020 National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding is a joint project between the US Forest Service and the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA). The purpose of the Trail Stewardship funding is to help implement the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act goals of increasing volunteer participation on the National Forest Trail System. This year approximately $200,000 was made available for projects around the country.

The 2020 Trail Stewardship Partner Funding was announced to the trail stewardship community in February 2020. NWSA developed a strategy of engaging the broader trail community by involving key national trail organizations, the American Hiking Society, American Trails, Back Country Horsemen of America, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, the American Motorcycling Association, and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, in outreach for the program. Application information was provided on the NWSA website and through email blasts to trail stewardship groups associated with the national organizations.

The Trail Funding application period began January 15 and ended March 30th. Sixty five grant applications, totaling over $1.4 million in project requests were received and evaluated. A total of forty projects were awarded funding though some were not able to complete work due to the Covid-19 pandemic (See Table 1). Awardees were notified and grant work began around May 1st. Projects were implemented mainly during the summer of 2020 though several continued into the fall and early winter of 2020. Because of Covid, a couple of projects were allowed to carryover to 2021 and will be reported later.
### Table 1

**Organizations Receiving Trail Stewardship Partner Funding and Completing Trail Projects**

(projects affected by Covid listed as partial or cancelled)

- Arizona Trail Association
- BCHA-Kentucky
- BCHA-Mother Lode Chapter TRTA (partial)
- BCHA-San Joaquin Chapter
- BCHA-Washington - Umatilla (cancelled)
- BCHA-Washington - Mt Baker
- Blue Mountain Land Trust (cancelled)
- Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation
- Cascades Volunteers
- Chequamegon Mountain Bike
- Climbing Resource Advocates for Greater Sacramento
- Continental Divide Trail Coalition
- Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance (partial)
- Friends of Blackwater
- Friends of Panthertown
- Friends of Scotchman Peaks
- Idaho Trail Association (partial)
- LaVeta Trails
- Mountain Bike the Tetons
- New Mexico Off-Highway Vehicle Alliance
- New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors
- North Carolina Bartram Trail Society (partial)
- Northwoods Volunteer Connection
- Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
- Reno Area Dirtriders
- Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association
2020 Trail Stewardship Partnership Funding

Table 1
Organizations Receiving Trail Stewardship Partner Funding and Completing Trail Projects (continued)

Salt Lake Climbers Alliance (cancelled)
San Diego Ultra Running Friends (carryover)
Sedona Red Rock Trail Fund
Selway Bitterroot - Frank Church Foundation
Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship (cancelled)
Southern California Mountains
Upper Merced River Watershed Council/Mariposa Trails
Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado
Volunteers of Lewis Trails (cancelled)
Washington Trails Association
Watershed Research Center
Wild South
Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (partial)
Yavapai Trails Association
2020 Key Statistics

- Sixty five organizations applied, submitting sixty five proposals totaling over $1.4 million in requests
- Forty trail projects were awarded $300,000 in funding. Because of Covid-19 34 projects were actually accomplished.
- Six projects were ultimately cancelled, and five projects were only able to complete partial projects because of Covid-19 issues on volunteers and crews.
- Projects were in every region of the FS except Alaska (See Table 2)
- Funding provided staff and crew time, purchased equipment, supplies, volunteer food, equipment rental and materials to support volunteer trail projects during 2020.
- Over $612,430 in Cash Match from selected projects
- Estimated nearly $875,553 in In-Kind Match from selected projects
- Over 1,890 Volunteers and 156 staff/crew supported doing maintenance on over 1,300 miles of trail.
- Approximately a 5:1 return on investment
Other Accomplishments

| 2020 Key Statistics | 524 drainage features cleaned |
| National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Program | 139 drainage structures repaired |
| | 234 drainage structures constructed |
| | 4 bridges constructed |
| | 88 trail junction signs installed |
| | 4 wilderness entrance signs installed |
| | 125’ turnpike built |
| | 132’ Boardwalk constructed |
| | 500’ puncheon cleaned, repaired and/or constructed |
| | Over 80 check steps and water bars constructed |
| | 10 acres noxious weeds sprayed |
| | 1,764 trees cleared |
| | 2 bear boxes installed |
| | New sawyers certified |
| | Trail assessments completed |
| | Some new trail constructed |
| | 8 trail benches installed |
| | And numerous spot treatments, brushing, and trail cleaning |
2020 Trail Stewardship Regional Participation

Table 2

2020 National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding By Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
<th>Selected</th>
<th>Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>40*</td>
<td>34*</td>
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</table>

* Some projects in multiple regions
# 2020 Trail Stewardship Regional Participation

## Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Trails Maintained</th>
<th>Volunteers and Crew</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,299.4</td>
<td>2,046</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Some projects in multiple regions
2020 Trail Stewardship Partner Funding

The Trails community was excited to return to a fully funded 2020 Trail Stewardship Partner Funding. All groups were appreciative of the extra funding provided in 2020 and the extra capacity these grants gave to their summer activities. For some groups even a small amount of seed money from this program allowed them to expand their activities.

Lessons Learned

Specific lessons learned included:

- The demand for National Trail System Stewardship Partner Funding continues to be very high. We still get almost double the amount of requests than what we can fund. The key lesson is there is a pent up demand for trail funding for stewardship groups.

- NWSA brought together 6 other national trail groups (American Hiking Society, American Trails, Back Country Horsemen of America, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, the American Motorcycling Association, and the Blue Ribbon Coalition) to review and evaluate the projects. This group has begun to gel around other trail issues and supports each other better.

- Application and reporting materials have been expanded to provide key information on accomplishments.

- The Covid-19 Pandemic threw a real monkey-wrench into the plans of most trail organizations. Initially everyone was concerned about the use of volunteers during the shutdown phase of the pandemic. Ultimately however, most groups were able to complete their projects or do partial work. In some cases the Forest Service was the limiting factor for allowing volunteers to return to the field. We had five projects cancelled outright and another 6 do partial work because of Covid-19 issues.
The National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance is pleased by the results of this fourth year of the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding program. Even with the Covid Pandemic we were able to show substantive work on the National Forests and twenty nine of the 40 projects were able to complete their projects. We hope that this can become a continuing annual program. There is a great demand for trail funding across the trail community. This funding allowed many groups to work side by side with the Forest Service to complete needed trail work.

Bringing together the National Trail Organizations for review and evaluation of the projects continues to pay dividends in the future beyond just this program. People are talking together more, and working together on often contentious issues in a collaborative way.

A lot of good press and community relations were improved because of the funding program. Local groups did a great job of touting the program and giving credit to the Forest Service and NWSA for expanding their capabilities.

Funding is one of the key limiting factors small trail stewardship nonprofits face in doing more work on the National Forests. This program proved that they are capable of increasing their trail work when funding is available.

Overhead needs continue to be less than originally forseen. In the future NWSA feels we can continue to accomplish the funding program for under 5% of project funds. This will enable more funds to go to field projects if overall funding increases.

Randy Welsh, Executive Director, NWSA
“This is probably the wildest corner of southern Arizona, and only an hour from Tucson. I really appreciate the Arizona Trail and the landscapes it traverses.”

“Can we do this every year?!?”

“I’m impressed we got so much done with so few volunteers” - Ranger

“It was great. The most “laid back” of any trip I’ve been on—but that doesn’t mean we didn’t work hard!”

“We had a great trip! Beautiful weather and scenery, lot’s of hard work done, amazing mule and horse teams that packed gear for 6 in and out, and some fun stories and learning opportunities.”

“Nothing but smiles when we encounter riders as they come through the recent work.”

“I am so grateful for the rare opportunity to channel the romantic, yet inherently selfish pursuit of climbing into an opportunity for public service. The Leap is a national treasure, and I am honored to contribute to its beauty, sustainability, and longevity is such a friendly and education setting.”

“In the ever-developing hubbub of modern day life, public lands give us the opportunity to slow down, to make connections, to groq.”

“It’s important that we preserve, protect, and manage these lands because they are so beautiful, and they hold stories that have yet to be told and shared.”

“We had no idea how much work goes into taking care of trails. Thank you for letting us sign up for the work day! We were excited with volunteering to support Panthertown trails and learned so much. We hope to join you again soon.”

“I was wondering when that section of Shark’s Belly was going to go away. The new re-route is so great, I got to the end of the trail and completely forgot about having to hike my bike up through that nasty old muddy rut.”

“Great work being done for the OHV community in New Mexico. I am sure it has been a ton of work but thousands of riders will be able to enjoy your work for many years.”