

Rivers, Trails and Conservation
Assistance Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Trails

Creating a network of trails for public health and enjoyment

The National Park Service collaborates with partners to create a system of local, regional and national trails to provide access to diverse outdoor recreation opportunities and improve community health.



NPS / STEPHAN NOHELD

The National Park Service

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

About Us

The **National Park Service**, through the **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance** program (NPS-RTCA), has supported locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States for more than 30 years. NPS-RTCA assists communities in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. Through an annual application process, community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies can apply for NPS-RTCA technical assistance.

Our Model

Across the country, NPS-RTCA staff pair their professional planning, design and technical expertise with your team and knowledge experts from the community. Together, our 1 to 2 year-long partnership works to achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision. Based on the complexity of the project, we tailor our assistance to meet your needs and help you navigate a path to success. Although NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, we can help your organization identify potential funding sources for your project.

Community Engagement

As a collaborative partner, we strive to achieve successful project outcomes by engaging communities in the visioning, planning and implementation of each project. We encourage strong community partnerships and facilitate meaningful engagement to ensure your conservation and outdoor recreation projects last into perpetuity.

Washington and Oregon

A Bi-state 354-Mile Trail Network

The Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan is a community-driven strategy for a trails network through Columbia and Walla Walla counties in Washington, and northeastern Umatilla County in Oregon. The idea for the plan started when communities across the Blue Mountain region recognized the potential of the beautiful landscape to enhance economies, health and the overall quality of life for small towns in the valley.

Collaborating with more than 30 local, regional, state and federal partners, NPS-RTCA facilitated planning workshops to gather ideas and recommendations from the local communities for the trail network. Additionally, NPS-RTCA identified existing and potential trail connections between towns as a means to increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities. More than 600 people participated in the workshops and their visions were used to create the final concept plan for the proposed 354-mile trail network.



Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan

In 2018, the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan was finalized and shared with the public. The plan, which received the Governor's Award for Excellence, features the proposed trail network, next steps and funding sources that has since spurred partners to action with implementing the plan.

New York

From Rails to Trails

About 100 miles north of New York City, lies Kingston, the major city of Ulster County, which is located at the base of the Catskills where idle railroads once twisted in and out of the city and through the mountain range. Though the municipality and its surrounding area have long been tourist destinations, residents of the area recognized the need for a community recreation space. The community sought to convert abandoned railroad corridors into an interconnected trail network throughout the county.

NPS-RTCA collaborated with the county officials and community groups to link Kingston to the wider trail network. Additionally, NPS-RTCA devised community engagement strategies and assisted in establishing a management plan for incomplete sections of the trail.

In 2017, the Governor of New York established a goal and provided funding to develop the 750-mile Empire State Trail. Ulster County agreed to link their Rails to Trails project with this larger effort by adding 20 new trail miles to connect the county to the Empire State Trail.



Frequently Asked Questions

Who are we?

The **National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA)** assists communities, public land managers and nonprofit organizations with conservation and outdoor recreation projects. NPS-RTCA provides professional planning, design and technical expertise to help achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision.

Does NPS-RTCA provide funding?

No. NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, but we can help you identify potential funding sources for your project.

What kind of projects does NPS-RTCA support?

Our program staff support locally-led projects that develop or restore parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as create outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.

Are NPS-RTCA staff contractors?

The NPS-RTCA model is to combine the skills of our staff with those of your organization. It's a partnership – we work alongside your team and local knowledge experts to assist with the work that you are leading.

How much time do NPS-RTCA staff spend on each project?

Typically, NPS-RTCA staff collaborate with communities for 1 to 2 years on conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Depending on the complexity of the project and our staffing capacity, the time frame may be extended.

Who can apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?

NPS-RTCA provides services to established community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies.

How can you apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?

NPS-RTCA support is provided when we are invited to assist you on a conservation or outdoor recreation project. We encourage you to contact us to discuss your project before applying. The application is available on our website: www.nps.gov/RTCA

 nps.gov/RTCA

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