



# NRT NEWS

Fall 2005

**News and resources for National Recreation Trails managers**

## Start shooting for 2006 NRT Photo Contest

*Contest highlights great photos of great trails*

We are now accepting nominations for the 2006 contest for photographs of National Recreation Trails. The winning photographs and hundreds of entries for previous contests can be viewed on the NRT website. See [www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails](http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails).

Awards will be made in several categories to highlight the many uses and features of National Recreation Trails. We thank the National Park Service, BLM, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and USDA Forest Service for their enthusiastic support of the contest, which is sponsored by American Trails.

*On the Great Allegheny Passage, by Mary Shaw*



## Secretary of the Interior designates NRTs for 2005

*Announcement made on National Trails Day*

Secretary of the Interior **Gale A. Norton** announced the designation of 37 new National Recreation Trails in 23 states, as part of the National Trails System, in celebration of National Trails Day on Saturday, June 4th, 2005.

National Recreation Trail managers joined many other trails advocates in sponsoring National Trails Day tours, celebrations, and volunteer work days. This year's theme, "Take the Path to a Healthier You," celebrated the role of trails and greenways in promoting more physical activity for all Americans.

"The Interior Department plays a vital role in the public land recreation network, managing one-fifth of the land in the nation," Norton said. "National trails are a significant part of that outdoor network, providing an excellent opportunity for visitors to reconnect with nature and stay active and healthy in the process."

New web pages were created for many of the trails by American Trails, the lead nonprofit partner in the NRT program. These new pages and descriptions of the newly designated trails can be found on the NRT website: [www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails](http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails).

## Visitors increase on Hatfield-McCoy Trails

For the fifth consecutive year the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority has posted a new visitation record. For the 2005 fiscal year 25,138 permits were purchased. "This means our tourist destination is still growing, and providing a positive economic impact to our state," said **Matthew Ballard**, Executive Director. The Hatfield-McCoy is a 400-mile system of trails weaving through eight counties in southern West Virginia which hosts a wide variety of trails, both motorized and nonmotorized.



# National Recreation Trails

## Blackstone River Bikeway promotes trail of history

### *Ranger walks entire trail route*

National Park Service Ranger **Daniel Wegner** began a walk from Worcester, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island on September 28 to kick-off the Blackstone River Valley Tourism Collaborative's Footsteps in History weekend. "I want to open a few doors and encourage people to come out to experience five centuries of architecture and cultural landscapes that are preserved in the Blackstone River Valley," Ranger Dan explained.

### *Economic benefits seen for NRT designation*

The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce sought designation of the Blackstone River Bikeway as a National Recreation Trail, which was accomplished in 2005. According to the Chamber, "The revitalization this trail has created has been phenomenal. This little river was involved in the beginning of the American Industrial Revolution in the 1870s, and today the river is once again the center of attention. Although portions of the Bikeway are still under design and construction, we are seeking NRT designation of the completed nine miles. We feel the designation will go a long way in helping move the project to final completion." The Chamber also created a website for it at [www.blackstoneriverbikeway.com](http://www.blackstoneriverbikeway.com).

### *State seeks to streamline approvals for MA trail*

Massachusetts could have required each section of the bikeway to leap through a complex regulatory hoop known as an Environmental Impact Review (EIR) before allowing construction to begin.

However, **Stephen Pritchard**, secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, granted transportation officials' petition to waive the EIR for Phase 1. The ruling will require only one comprehensive environmental review for the entire project, rather than one for each phase of construction.

"Strict compliance with the requirement to complete the EIR prior to

initiating construction would result in undue hardship to the proponent because it would unnecessarily delay implementation of a segment of this long-awaited project," Pritchard said in the ruling.

The impact of the project on the environment will be "insignificant," the ruling says. The bikeway will also bring substantial health benefits— even for people who don't use it, the ruling says, because it will serve to promote alternatives to automobile transportation, improving air quality through reduced exhaust emissions.

## Artist selected for Schuylkill River Water Trail project

Earlier this year, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area and RiverPlace Development Corporation were awarded a \$50,000 Art & Community Landscapes grant to support a public art project along the Schuylkill River Water Trail in Berks County, PA. Recently a panel of representatives from the private and public sectors, using public input, selected an artist for the site.

The artist, **Stacy Levy**, is a sculptor from Pennsylvania. She strives to tell the story of a site through her work and focuses on the intersection of ecological and cultural influences. Details of the art project are yet to be determined.

Art & Community Landscapes (ACL) is a partnership of the National Park Service, National Endowment for the Arts, and New England Foundation for the Arts that supports site-based art as a catalyst for increased environmental awareness and stewardship. Last year the partnership expanded to include American Trails, USDA Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

The ACL program supports site-specific art projects that may include temporary or permanent art installations, exhibitions, interpretive media, festivals, or other works that relate to the site and its community. This year, for the first time, the ACL program offered a grant opportunity solely for National Recreation Trails.



*Future trail bridge near Blackstone, MA*

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**NRT NEWS** is the publication for managers and supporters of National Recreation Trails, published by American Trails in partnership with the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program. If you have an interesting story about your NRT, good photos to share, or volunteers to praise, please let us know. Thanks! —Stuart Macdonald, NRT NEWS editor.

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# In the News

## Tunnel Hill State Trail supports health goals

### *Trails provide healthy recreation as well as tourism*

The popular Tunnel Hill bicycle trail in Southern Illinois was designated this year as a National Recreation Trail. The designation comes as health advocates recognize Americans are increasingly turning to nearby trails for walking and bicycling as means for improving health.

“Recreational trails are America’s new front porch,” said **Joel Brunsvold**, Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. “People get back to nature when they are on the trails, but they also have a chance to interact with the neighbors they meet along the way.”

The Tunnel Hill State Trail extends from downtown Harrisburg to Karnak. The 45-mile trail, located on a former railroad right-of-way, connects numerous communities and provides a link to a larger trail network, including the Trail of Tears National Historic

Trail and Harrisburg’s bike trail. This trail not only offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking, and fishing, but trail users can also observe the wildlife habitat of the Cache River State Natural Area.

“Southern Illinois is a treasure of Illinois,” said Brunsvold. “This trail is integral to the expansion of tourism in the region, which is having a tremendous economic impact.”

Illinois has approximately 1000 miles of trail frequented by bicyclists and hikers. Surveys show approximately 45% of all adults in the state bicycle for recreation. Recreational trails are credited with spurring economic development as they add to quality of life.

“Time Magazine is focusing attention on American’s fitness levels,” said **Dick Westfall**, IDNR Trail Planning staff. “The bottom line is that it’s cheaper to go to a neighborhood trail than join a health club, and I think it’s more fun as well. As we look to increase their fitness levels and overall health, the roll of trails is very important. It’s fortunate that community and state leaders are answering the need for trail development in Illinois.”



**On the Tunnel Hill Trail in Illinois**

## Chinook Trail designated as new NRT on USDA lands

### *Trail will encircle the Columbia River Gorge*

A 29-mile segment of the Chinook Trail was designated as a National Recreation Trail by the U. S. Secretary of Agriculture. This section, called the Silver Star Segment, runs through the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Washington. The trail is envisioned as a 300-mile loop through Oregon and Washington encircling the Columbia River Gorge.

Taking responsibility for the care and maintenance of the trail system by the users is an integral part of current and future management of the trail. The Chinook Trail Association (CTA) is a citizens’ organization dedicated to planning, developing, and maintaining the trail. Each year, hundreds of volunteers join CTA work parties.

An editorial in *The Columbian* of Clark County, Washington, praised the trail concept and its supporters: “If there were a prize for the nongovernment, nonprofit, do-good group that takes the long-range view, the Vancouver-based Chinook Trail Association would be a leading contender.”

Life-long hiking companions **Don Cannard** and **Ed Robertson** originated the concept of the Chinook Trail in 1986. Standing on the summit of Silver Star Mountain, they dreamed of a trail continuing east along the Columbia River Gorge.

Originally, the trail was only going to go through Washington, but then the Forest Service suggested a bi-state loop going through Oregon and Washington. Others agreed enthusiastically, and in 1988, the Chinook Trail Association was born.

More information is available from the Chinook Trail Association, P O Box 997, Vancouver WA 98666. Phone (360) 906-6769 or visit the group’s website at [www.chinooktrail.org](http://www.chinooktrail.org).

“Outdoor enthusiasts and recreational visitors alike can enjoy the Prairie Wind Trail. Trails such as this one promote tourism and healthy recreation. Earning the distinction of being part of the National Trail System is good for the trail itself and the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge.”

– U.S. Senator Tim Johnson, South Dakota

## Find the right trails training on the online NTP calendar

Looking for a class or workshop for trails and greenways skills? The most comprehensive calendar on the Web for trail-related training and education is hosted by [www.AmericanTrails.org](http://www.AmericanTrails.org). The calendar can also be accessed at [www.NTTP.net](http://www.NTTP.net). You'll also find details on courses provided by many agencies and organizations, and links to more resources.

The National Trails Training Partnership can also promote your own trails training opportunities of every kind on the online calendar. Just add this email address to your mailing list to publicize your events: [nttp@AmericanTrails.org](mailto:nttp@AmericanTrails.org).

## Trailbuilders Conference a great way to learn new skills

The next Trailbuilders Conference will be held February 14-16, 2006 in Reno, Nevada. Organized by the Professional Trailbuilders Association, and planned and hosted by professional trail contractors, this is the only national conference focusing entirely on trail design, construction, and maintenance.

On-site demonstrations of trail building equipment, in-depth seminars, and real-world problem solving are regular features. Reno is a great location with bargain rates, and the conference is held there every year. For details visit [www.trailbuilders.org](http://www.trailbuilders.org).



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## Learn more about the National Recreation Trails Program

American Trails serves as the lead nonprofit in collaboration with federal agencies and partner groups.

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Current NRT program information can be found at: [www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails](http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails)

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