A story from the trails community:
The National *Strategy* for a Sustainable Trail System
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The National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System

Presentation Highlights
At a Glance

- The Trails Case
- A story of inclusiveness
- A need for change
- Strategic intent
- Action
- Success Stories

Tonto National Forest, Arizona (Photo by Simon Cox)
• Trails are something everyone has in common.
• Trails benefit people, families, and communities.
• Trails connect people to the land.
The Hard Truths

Unmaintained Trail Obstacles

Mud  Blowdown  Brush  Erosion  Structures
The Hard Truths

Impediments to Travel

• Competing priorities
• Declining budgets
• Internal data systems
The Hard Truths

Barriers to Progress

- Workforce capacity
- Permitting/outfitted services
- Difficulty partnering
• Accurate trail system data
• Changing demands/trends
• Communication networks
The Hard Truths

*Drains on Agency Resources*

- Skillsets/training
- Retention/advancement
- Legacy/user trails
The Hard Truths

Lost connections

• Changing demographics
• Diversity
• Collaborative planning
• Public trail information
A Need for Change - establishing Shared Stewardship

* Including nongovernmental organizations

Pine Strawberry Fuel Reduction, Inc., Tonto National Forest (Photo by Alan Levine)

Friends of Sandia, Cibola National Forest and Grasslands (Photo by Sally Lowder)
Path to the Trail Strategy -
Building a common bridge for everyone.

- GAO Report
- Trails Connect!
- Trails Think Tank
- Trails Summit
- Focus Sessions
- National Trail Strategy
GAO Audit Report
Identifying the Gap

GAO Process

• Review ✔
• Analyze
• Interview

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Arizona (Photo by Stephen Campbell)
GAO Audit Report

Identifying the Gap

GAO Process

• Review
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Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Arizona (Photo by Stephen Campbell)
GAO Audit Report
*Identifying the Gap*

**GAO Process**

- Review ✓
- Analyze ✓
- Interview ✓
GAO Audit Report

Findings

- 157,000 miles of USFS managed trails
  - 25% meeting standard and 37% maintained

- Internal and external resources
  - $80 million allocated annually and $26 million in volunteer contributions

- Estimated backlog
  - $314 million backlog and $210 million in annual maintenance and improvement
Trails Connect!

Determine Solid Ground

- What is?
- What should be?
- What could be?
- What will be?
Trails Think Tank
Building Solid Foundations

- Common understanding
- Define a sustainable system
- Seek out core values
- Identify barriers
- Develop actions
Trail Partner Summit
Alignment of Resources

- Direct input from partners and volunteers
- Identify challenges
- Identify strategies for ensuring equity
- Sharing the heavy lifting
Focus Sessions
Leveling and Refining

• Refine and adjust
• Focus on inclusiveness from all levels and organizations
• Reality check!
National Trail Strategy

The Completed Bridge

- Solid foundations
- Aligned supports
- Future guidance
Strategic Intent
Growing Grassroots Change

Adapted from a diagram developed by Blake Leath (c) Copyright 1992-2016 Leath Group, LLC. Permission granted by leathgroup.com.
Aspirations of Trail Management in the Forest Service

- High priority
- Combined workforce
- Trails are valued by diverse users
- Sustainable trail systems
- Innovation is supported
- Trail information is used by many
Leader Intent

Cultivate leadership desire for and commitment to a sustainable trail system.
Leverage an expanded and combined workforce to increase stewardship capacity.
United States Department of Agriculture

Connect with diverse communities and trail users.

Relevancy
Collaboratively create and achieve a common vision.
Agency Processes and Culture

Maximize opportunities for effective partnering and trail stewardship
Information

Provide readily available, up-to-date, and credible trail information.
Finding Success Across the Country

Alaska – Dave Zastrow - Recruiting local youth from Eyak Village
Finding Success Across the Country

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California – Garret Villanueva - “Generation Green”, “Car-less California”
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Illinois – *Jean Keenan* - “Veterans Trek”
New Mexico – *Kerry Wood* – Friends of Sandia Mountains
North Carolina – *Patrick Scott* – building access trails into communities
Wyoming – *Tim Farris* – Jackson Collaborative Trail Assessment
Jackson Trails Assessment
An inclusive Approach to Trail System Management

External Process
• Trails charrette
• Public open houses
• User group meetings

Internal Process
• System status
• Scientific review
• New trail review Process
Community Engagement – Trails Charrette

1. Invited representatives
2. Ten Trail System Tasks and nine geographic regions
3. Determine current realities and future focus together
4. Learn user group desires
Internal Assessment Process

Establish and Define

- Existing Trail System, Trail System Tasks and Goals
- Current and Past Use Levels
- Forest Plan direction
- Maintenance Levels
- Quantify and Appraise System
- Flow Chart for new trail proposals

Scientific Review

- Recreation Ecology
- Recreation Management
- Wildlife tracking data and habitat analysis
Jackson Trail Assessment - Results

- **Validated** existing trail system data
- **Enhanced** community understanding and involvement
- **Increased** volunteerism & support
- **Enhanced** personal connections
- **Enhanced** Forest Service understanding
- **Established** a holistic framework
Key Messages

• Trails are important.
• Change is happening.
• Grassroots change is supported by leadership.
• Communities and individuals are included in the change.
• Scalable actions will close the gap.
Resources

Presenter Contact Information

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National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System Web site: