Visual Storytelling for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

National Outdoor Recreation Conference
Rapid City, SD
7 May 2019
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The Continental Divide Trail

- Congressionally designated as a National Scenic Trail in 1978
- 3,100 miles from Mexico to Canada
- USFS is lead management agency
- Managed for “high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.”
Maps are storytelling tools

- Visualizing datasets changes the focus from the 24 inches of trail tread
- Same data, multiple uses: collaboration between federal agency and non-profit partner
- Public-facing interpretive content: ESRI Story Map
- Technical information for trail management: State of the Trail document
The CDT traverses a number of distinct ecological and geological regions on its journey across the nation, including many unique landscapes that can be found nowhere else in the United States. Many of these places are protected for conservation and recreation by federal, state, and local agencies.

Looking across miles of ancient ice flows at St. Nicholas National Monument, New Mexico.

Lone Star Geyser, one of a handful of geothermal features found in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.

Raging glaciers clip the peaks surrounding U-shaped valleys in Glacier National Park, Montana.

The CDT meanders along the Idaho-Montana border through the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and up the Bitterroot Range, where it intersects the Nez Perce Trail. Turning east, the Trail travels through the rocky peaks of the Amazonia Range and wanders around Butte, a century-old copper town. From here it heads north through many National Forests, including Lewis and Clark, and into the famous Bob Marshall Wilderness. Finally, after nearly 3,000 miles, the CDT reaches Glacier National Park. Here it passes between glacial lakes over Triple Divide Pass, into the Red Eagle Valley and through the Many Glacier Valley before it reaches the Canadian border. In Glacier, grizzly bears forage for huckleberries in a search for calories, bison graze and moose share the sky, and lady slipper flowers wait to be pollinated by hummingbirds.
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STATE OF THE TRAIL REPORT

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CDT Trailhead Inventory

CDT Parcel Inventory
CDT By the Numbers

- **1966**: The Continental Divide Trail is proposed to Congress.
- **1978**: The CDT is designated as a National Scenic Trail by the National Parks and Recreation Act, which amended the National Trails System Act.
- **1998**: First dedicated Forest Service CDT funding.
- **2009**: Continental Divide Trail Comprehensive Management Plan is amended.
- **2009**: Public Lands Omnibus bill was passed giving agencies willing seller authority to acquire lands for the CDT.
- **2012**: Continental Divide Trail Coalition formed.
- **2018**: 40th Anniversary of the Continental Divide Trail.

**Mileage by State**
- 1030 Miles in Idaho and Montana
- 492 Miles in Wyoming
- 737 Miles in Colorado
- 820 Miles in New Mexico

**Trail Completion**
- 77% Non-Motorized
- 94% Protected

**Mileage by Land Manager**
- Forest Service
- BLM
- NFS
- State
- Private

**Mileage by Trail Type**
- 26% Wilderness
- 20% Road
- 80% Trail

**Mileage Breakdown**
- 2472 Miles of Trail
- 820 Miles of Designated Wilderness
- 627 Miles of Wilderness Study Areas
- 339 Miles of Inactive/stub
- 263 Miles of BLM
- 188 Miles of Private
- 68 Miles of State
- 4 Miles of Federal

- The trail is to be managed as primarily non-motorized. Approximately 24% of the trail exists on routes open to motor vehicle use.

- Approximately 94% of the trail is located within public ownership. Land acquisitions or easements are needed to protect the remaining 6% (172 miles) of the trail corridor.
Parting of the Waters

The Continental Divide of the Americas is the principal, and largely mountainous, hydrological divide of the North and South American continents. The Continental Divide extends from the Bering Strait to the Strait of Magellan, and separates the watersheds that drain into the Pacific Ocean from those river systems that drain into the Atlantic Ocean (including those that drain into the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea) and, along the northernmost reaches of the Divide, those river systems that drain into the Arctic Ocean.

Triple Divide Peak in Glacier National Park, Montana, is the point where two of the principal continental divides in North America converge, the primary Continental Divide and the Northern or Laurentian Divide. From this point, waters flow to the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean via the Gulf of Mexico, and the Arctic Ocean via Hudson Bay. Most geographers, geologists, meteorologists, and oceanographers consider this point the hydrological apex of North America, as Hudson Bay is generally considered part of the Arctic.
NATIVE LAND OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL

Chiricahua Apache
- Territory: 57,227mi²
- CDT Length: 596mi
- States: NM

Pueblos
- Territory: 8,300mi²
- CDT Length: 72mi
- States: NM

Western Apache
- Territory: 36,509mi²
- CDT Length: 10mi
- States: NM

Zuni
- Territory: 15,694mi²
- CDT Length: 115mi
- States: NM

Ute
- Territory: 192,487mi²
- CDT Length: 1,046mi
- States: NM, CO, WY

Cheyenne
- Territory: 312,183mi²
- CDT Length: 795mi
- States: CO, WY

Shoshone-Bannock
- Territory: 101,107mi²
- CDT Length: 702mi
- States: WY, ID, MT

Apsaalooké (Crow)
- Territory: 132,151mi²
- CDT Length: 314mi
- States: WY

Lemhi Shoshone
- Territory: 56,474mi²
- CDT Length: 24mi
- States: ID, MT

Eastern Shoshone
- Territory: 71,124mi²
- CDT Length: 666mi
- States: CO, WY, ID, MT

Salish Kootenai
- Territory: 21,271mi²
- CDT Length: 374mi
- States: MT

Niitsitapi (Blackfoot)
- Territory: 100,566mi²
- CDT Length: 543mi
- States: MT

Tsuu T’ina
- Territory: 69,454mi²
- CDT Length: 2mi
- States: MT

Ktunaxa
- Territory: 107,221mi²
- CDT Length: 339mi
- States: MT
MAJOR ECOREGIONS OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL

- Apache Highlands
  - CDT length: 94mi
- Arizona-New Mexico Mountains
  - CDT length: 567mi
- Southern Rockies
  - CDT length: 929mi
- Wyoming Basins
  - CDT length: 182mi
- Utah-Wyoming Rockies
  - CDT length: 321mi
- Middle Rockies
  - CDT length: 660mi
- Northern/Canadian Rockies
  - CDT length: 308mi

Significant Neighboring Ecoregions:
- Chihuahuan Desert
- Colorado Plateau
- Fescue-Mixed Grass Prairie
MAJOR WILDFIRES IN CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL HISTORY

- **Silver Fire**
  - Date Started: Jun 7 2013
  - Acres Burned: 137,884
  - CDT Affected: 15.7mi

- **Lake Creek Fire**
  - Date Started: Jul 11 1988
  - Acres Burned: 564,643
  - CDT Affected: 53.2mi

- **Mussigbrod Fire Complex**
  - Date Started: Jul 31 2000
  - Acres Burned: 64,077
  - CDT Affected: 15.4mi

- **North Fork Fire**
  - Date Started: Jul 22 1988
  - Acres Burned: 565,116
  - CDT Affected: 22.6mi

- **Canyon Creek Fire**
  - Date Started: Jun 25 1988
  - Acres Burned: 167,875
  - CDT Affected: 12.1mi

- **Fool Creek Fire**
  - Date Started: Jun 28 2007
  - Acres Burned: 53,912
  - CDT Affected: 15.5mi
Why Story Maps?

Layers of History
on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
Creating the narrative

• How to tell a story about a 3,100-mile long line?
A new dimension
European settlers in the 17th and early 18th centuries encountered the Continental Divide as a deadly obstacle on their journeys to the west. Many of their migration routes are now preserved as National Historic Trails.
One Step on the CDT: South Pass, Wyoming

Watersheds
Headwaters of the Colorado River and the Missouri River

Native Lands
Ancestral territory of the Eastern Shoshone, Shoshone/Bannock, Cheyenne, and Crow

National Historic Trails
Oregon Trail, California Trail, Pony Express Trail, Mormon Pioneer Trail

Land Management
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)