

National Trails System Definitions

National Recreation Trail:

Established and designated by either the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture, trails may be so designated within parks, forests, recreation areas, or where lands administered by these Secretaries are involved, subject to the consent of the Federal agency, State, political subdivision, or other appropriate administering agency having jurisdiction over the lands involved, upon finding that:

- (1) such trails are reasonably accessible to urban areas, and, or (2) such trails meet the criteria established in the National Trails System Act and such supplementary criteria as they may prescribe
- (3) where no Federal land acquisition is involved
- (4) where designated on privately owned lands, the written consent of the owner of the property involved

National Scenic Trail:

Authorized and designated only by an act of Congress, extended trails which will be so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historical, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. National scenic trails may be located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation.

National Historic Trail:

Authorized and designated only by Congress, extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance. Their purpose is to

identify and protect historic routes and their historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. Only those selected land and water based components of a historic trail which are on federally-owned lands and which meet all three of the following criteria (established by statute) are included as Federal protection components:

(1) Must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally accurately follow the historic route, but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variations offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site. Trail segments no longer possible to travel by trail due to subsequent development as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked onsite as segments which link to the historical trail.

(2) Must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of native Americans may be included.

(3) Must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.