



United States Department of Agriculture

# National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System

DISCUSSION DRAFT



February 22, 2016



Forest Service

## Chief's Message

The U.S. Forest Service manages the largest trail system in the country with unparalleled opportunities for visitors to find their own path. Trails connect people to many things; they are the way we access our public lands, the way we connect to each other, to ourselves and to our heritage through outdoor experiences, and the way we connect to the importance of conserving the land for future generations. Trails will be central to how the Forest Service manages lands in the future and it is essential that we protect, conserve, and steward the trails system as a sustainable resource.

While there are many challenges to overcome to achieve a sustainable trail system, the benefits are as limitless as the opportunities. As an agency, we have to become more open and introspective – more willing to challenge how we've always done things – finding new ways to be innovative and embrace change. With the collective energy of employees and partners we are committed to building a more sustainable future for National Forest System trails.

We have an incredible workforce of skilled, passionate and dedicated employees, partners, volunteers and friends. While we recognize this gift, we also recognize that our internal capacity keeps us from fully embracing the energy and skills of our workforce. Based on input from many trail enthusiasts (including our own Forest Service employees) from across the country, we have identified six strategies that will expand the internal capacity of people and ways of thinking, and externally expand partnerships that will lead us toward effectively managing a safe and sustainable system of trails.

1. Cultivate leadership desire for a sustainable trail system.
2. Engage in a strategic redesign of the trails program to emphasize the skill set and organization needed to manage and maintain a sustainable trail system using current and anticipated agency and partner resources.
3. Work with diverse partners to develop and share internal and external key messages that highlight the economic and health value of trails.
4. Work with individuals, communities, and partners to create a common vision and stewardship plans for a sustainable trail system.
5. Remove barriers that restrict effective partnering and trail management.
6. Provide readily available, up-to-date and credible trail information that is useful to the public, non-agency information providers, and to employees at all levels of the agency.

Our intent is to make substantial progress towards achieving a sustainable trail system in the next decade. We are ready to push beyond how we currently think about, manage and deliver trail opportunities. Join us as we take the path toward a bright future for trails.

## National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System

### Introduction

The U.S. Forest Service has a core responsibility to care for the land and serve people from urban, suburban, and rural settings by connecting them with the outdoors. Reaching those lands through a variety of well-located and cared for trails is a key way to fulfill that responsibility. However, many challenges face the agency when it comes to trails. Internally, the agency is faced with declining budgets and a general loss of technically skilled employees. Many people want more than traditional hiking experiences, others have become disconnected with nature as a result of an increased focus on technology and digital devices, and changing cultures and demographics have created less of a desire or ability to get outside. The Forest Service must embrace these changes and refocus the way it connects people to their national forests and grasslands.

*Trails connect people with each other, their community, their heritage, and their public lands through an outstanding, valued, and sustainable system of trails.*

*-Trails Connect! National Initiative launched by the Forest Service in 2014*

The Forest Service manages a world class system of over 157,000 miles of non-motorized and motorized trails, including 32,000 miles in designated wilderness, spread over 44 states and Puerto Rico – the largest managed system of trails in the country. Over 84 million people recreate on National Forest System trails annually and over 230 million people live within 100 miles of a national forest or national grassland. National Forest System trails also dovetail with the many miles of trails provided by local, state, federal, Tribal and non-government organizations. Using this incredible resource as inspiration, the Forest Service will improve how it manages and provides sustainable trails. This Strategy is a catalyst to make internal improvements and engage public and private partners over the next decade.

The Strategy identifies a set of [core values](#) that will guide the behaviors and actions of the agency and its partners. It also commits the Forest Service to six action strategies that address challenges – and achieve aspirations – in pursuit of a sustainable trail system<sup>1</sup>. These actions will be reflected in the

*The Forest Service seeks to improve how it manages and provides sustainable trails by using this Strategy as a catalyst for change over the next decade.*

agency's annual program of the work and success will be tracked by the Forest Service National Trails Board and through partner evaluation. This Strategy is aligned with the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan, the Framework for Sustainable Recreation, the USDA Diversity and Inclusion Plan, the Interagency Wilderness 2020 Vision, and Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for summary of input used to develop the elements of this Strategy.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for a description of this alignment.

## Purpose

The National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System identifies current issues and clear actions to move from a slowly deteriorating trail system to one that is comprised of diverse and sustainable trails that individuals, communities, and employees value and have the capacity to safely steward. Trail builders, managers, partners, volunteers and friends can use this document to empower stewardship and dedication to improve a world class, diverse trail system as one of America's greatest legacies.

*National Forests and Grasslands have over 157,000 miles of trails. That is a huge resource...a huge opportunity...and a huge challenge that we cannot meet alone.*

-Forest Service Chief Thomas Tidwell

## Sustainable Trail System Defined

A sustainable trail system consists of a wide array of well-planned, designed, constructed and managed

*A sustainable trail system starts with leadership.*

-Sam Commarto, District Recreation Officer, Klamath National Forest<sup>3</sup>

trails that are supported by a mosaic of public and private interests. It inspires stewardship and invites people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to experience the outdoors while protecting and conserving cultural and natural resources.

To shift to a truly sustainable trail system, we must empower stewards, beyond ourselves, to invest in these world-class and diverse resources. As we transition from a model of "doing it all" (e.g. a trail crew on nearly every district less than a generation ago) to a model of "shared stewardship" (e.g. engaging with partners and volunteers to achieve shared objectives), we recognize a shortage of field staff capacity. This internal constraint will shift as we leverage public enthusiasm and support of caring for and safely managing and maintaining the existing and future trail system.

## Core Values

To ensure the success of this Strategy, the Forest Service and its partners of trail builders, managers, volunteers and friends adopt seven core values that guide our collective efforts. By adopting the following core values, we set the stage for achieving a sustainable trail system.

**Safety** – We value the safety of employees, volunteers, partners, and trails users, and are dedicated to performing our work safely and providing safe trail opportunities to the public.

**Sustainability** – We value the land and will provide a trail system that is ecologically viable, is relevant to a changing society, and responsive to current and potential agency, volunteer and partner resources.

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<sup>3</sup> Core team member during development of this strategy: Sam Commarto, District Recreation Officer from Region 5, Klamath National Forest, Salmon River and Scott River Ranger District.

**Workforce** – We value the strong traditions, skills, and dedication of our employees and volunteers and will foster their growth through continued training and leadership opportunities.

**Access** – We value the ability of all people to connect to the outdoors, and will provide access through a variety of trail settings and opportunities.

**Inclusion** – We value all people, regardless of age, ability, or cultural background as trail users, partners, volunteers, and friends.

**Information** – We value information that is up-to-date, accurate, widely available in multiple formats, and relevant to both trail users and those involved in sustainable trail planning, design, and maintenance.

**Relationships** - We value building relationships with other trail enthusiasts and managers. These relationships cross jurisdictional and cultural boundaries to foster partnerships, utilize diverse skill sets, and promote alternative funding sources.

## Challenges and Aspirations

Below is a graphic that depicts six primary challenges that must be addressed to expand the agency's capacity to achieve a sustainable trail system. This expansion of combined agency, partner, volunteer and resource capacity will create the space for six aspirations, which are paired with each challenge. As the aspirations are implemented through specific actions, our internal and external capacity will expand to achieve the goal of a sustainable trail system. These challenges and aspirations can be scaled to inspire action at multiple levels of the organization, as well as with partners, volunteers and friends.



Figure 1: The Forest Service has numerous challenges that result in a bottleneck of inability to maintain the current trail system. The Forest Service can, by making key adjustments, leverage opportunities to realize a sustainable trail system and increase capacity to steward and maintain it.

1. **Leader Intent:** Sustainable trail systems are not a priority across Forest Service leadership, due to factors such as competing priorities and declining budgets.

**Aspiration:** Leadership views trails as the primary means for the Forest Service and partners to develop citizen stewards and create social, environmental and economic benefits for individuals and communities.

2. **Organization and Talent:** The current capacity and skillset at the field level is limiting the Forest Service’s ability to effectively manage and maintain a sustainable trail system and to be good partners.

**Aspiration:** A combined workforce of skilled technicians and conveners-- comprised of agency personnel, partners, and volunteers-- are present, actively engaged, and committed to providing a sustainable trail system.

3. **Relevancy:** In some places, the current trail system is not meeting users' needs, especially in the face of increasing demand, changing demographics, emerging uses and rapidly shifting technology.

**Aspiration:** Sustainable trail opportunities respond to new demands and emerging issues. Trail users and partners have a strong unified voice and reflect the population demographics of our country.

4. **Unsustainable Trail System:** The Forest Service has a legacy of many trails that were not sustainably designed and are currently not used for their designated purpose. In addition, there has been a proliferation of unauthorized or user-created trails. These trails are a disproportionate drain on agency resources, pose safety concerns and are impacting ecosystem resiliency.

**Aspiration:** Trails are sustainably designed, well-maintained, and managed and used for their intended purpose.

5. **Agency Processes and Culture:** Layers of law, regulation, and policy have created onerous processes that are barriers to easy mechanisms for building mutually beneficial relationships with diverse volunteers and partners.

**Aspiration:** The Forest Service has easy methods to enable partnerships and volunteer efforts, and readily uses non-traditional funding sources and resources to provide and manage a system of sustainable trails.

6. **Information and Data:** Trail information is incomplete, not consistently available or easily accessed and does not fully meet the needs of the public or of Forest Service field personnel and managers.

**Aspiration:** Trail information is available, useful, used by many, and continuously maintained.

## Strategies and Initial Actions

A sustainable trail system is realized as internal and external capacity increases. Each of the following action strategies address capacity by promoting aspects of the trail program that most benefit the public and by focusing the internal requirements needed to effectively manage a sustainable system of trails. There is an expectation of progress toward these strategies and an acknowledgement that all actions cannot be accomplished simultaneously.

These action items<sup>4</sup> ensure the agency is stepping forward with a partnership approach to address the recent GAO report<sup>5</sup>. The Forest Service will incorporate these initial actions into the annual program of work through 2020.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C for action item summary

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix D for crosswalk with Forest Service response to GAO National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System  
Discussion Draft – February 22, 2016

1. **Leader Intent:** Cultivate leadership desire for a sustainable trail system.
  - 1.1. Establish a field Trails Advisory Group to provide advice and timely input to the Chief of the Forest Service on emerging trail issues.
  - 1.2. Actively engage internal (line officers, program managers, technicians) and external (partner, volunteers and friends) stakeholders in learning sessions to gain leader commitment for a sustainable trail system.
  - 1.3. Engage a multi-party partner group that is comprised of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide input on the implementation of this Strategy.
  
2. **Organization and Talent:** Engage in a strategic redesign of the trails program to emphasize the skill set and organization needed to manage and maintain a sustainable trail system using current and anticipated agency and partner resources.
  - 2.1. Create advancement opportunities for trail program managers, trail technicians, and returning temporary employees.
  - 2.2. Evaluate and reorganize the trails program at all levels to enable both an increase in physical field capacity and a shift towards collaborative and inclusive trail management.
  - 2.3. Identify essential skills and core competency levels for technical trail management and partnership facilitation for employees and volunteers.
  - 2.4. Champion a collaborative approach to develop training curriculum for practitioners, managers, and volunteers that includes three basic elements: trail program and information management; trail maintenance and field skills, including traditional skills and techniques; and volunteer/partner management and coordination.
  
3. **Relevancy:** Work with diverse individuals, communities, and partners to develop and share key messages that highlight the economic and health value of trails.
  - 3.1. Work with partners and foundations to deepen the connections of youth with trails using existing and successful programs like “Discover the Forest” and “Every Kid in a Park.” This effort will focus on securing transportation from urban, suburban, and rural places to forest places.
  - 3.2. Explore methods to increase integration of 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, Job Corps and similar youth and veteran programs for trail maintenance.
  - 3.3. Work actively with the National Forest Foundation to better incorporate and highlight trails in the “It’s all Yours” campaign.
  - 3.4. Work actively with other government agencies and partners to develop and implement a communications plan that identifies the tangible economic, health and wellness benefits of trails to encourage broader use and community investment.
  - 3.5. Encourage assessments with partners across jurisdictional and cultural boundaries that evaluate community trail needs, new and emerging uses, and resource protection needs across local geographic areas.



- 3.6. Work actively with Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly! and other partners to develop and disseminate collaborative engagement tools that encourage stewardship and outdoor ethics, and promote citizen science.
    - 3.7. Use the 50th anniversaries of the National Trails System Act and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as a catalyst for distributing high-quality messaging about the national trail system.
4. **Sustainable Systems:** Work with individuals, communities, and partners to create a common vision of a sustainable trail system.
  - 4.1. Invite national/regional/local trails groups to create a shared understanding of how to better balance their desire for more opportunities with the need for a sustainable trail system.
  - 4.2. Conduct an assessment of economic and ecological sustainability for all new trail proposals.
  - 4.3. Invite the non-government organization (NGO) community to orchestrate the establishment of a national trail endowment.
  - 4.4. Identify a sustainable trail system on each Forest Service unit and realign or decommission trails that are ecologically unsustainable.
  - 4.5. Establish a 5-year plan to maintain sixty percent of trails with assistance from partners and volunteers.
5. **Agency Processes and Culture:** Remove barriers that restrict effective partnering and trail management.
  - 5.1. Actively participate in efforts to remove barriers to processes and perceptions that impede effective partnering and use of non-allocated funding sources.
  - 5.2. Champion the role of the Agency as a chief steward of the traditional tools and techniques of trail construction.
  - 5.3. Encourage innovative solutions that respect agency policy and utilize partners to leverage stewardship toward a sustainable trail system.
  - 5.4. Support the development of Recreation Special Uses and Grants and Agreements training for line officers.
6. **Information:** Provide readily available, up-to-date and credible trail information that is useful to the public, non-agency information providers, and to employees at all levels of the agency.
  - 6.1. With partners and trail users, champion an integrated approach to collect and share data that better serves the public.
  - 6.2. Update and streamline agency trail databases and requirements to efficiently meet public, partner and agency trail information needs.
  - 6.3. Implement and achieve minimum standards of trail information that should be available on each forest (e.g. accurate and accessible geo-referenced trail data).

## Closing

The opportunity to build on past successes, integrate new partnerships and establish contemporary standards for the Forest Service trail system is now. By engaging with internal and external collaborators, building on shared values, acknowledging current challenges, and embracing expectations of change, a sustainable trail program and trail system can be realized. While the challenges are big, the opportunities to restore the greatest trail system in the world are bigger. When people care, are passionate and have dedication, their creativity and ingenuity always outweigh the obstacles in front of them. We invite you to join us however you can, whether on the trail or in a meeting room, offering sweat or offering funding, battling mosquitos or battling policy. We cannot and will not lose this incredible legacy that feeds our hearts, minds, souls, and communities. We know that we do not have all the answers, but together we have found a starting point. Let's go!

## Appendix A: Summary of Input into Strategy

Appendix A provides a summary of input from the meetings and dialogue that contributed to the National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System.

<b>Meeting Title &amp; Intent</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b><i>Trails Connect!</i></b> Initiating a national dialogue on the importance of trails	June 06, 2014	Washington DC	National Forest Service, interagency, and partner leadership/representatives	Themes: Enhance Trail Opportunities for All; Underscore the Benefits of Trails; Inspiring and Fostering Citizen Stewardship
<b><i>Trails Connect!</i></b> Review of the National Trails System	May 20, 2015	Portland, Oregon (International Trail Symposium)	Multi-agency and partner representatives and trail enthusiasts	The National Trail System: Sustain, Support, Inspire
<b>National Trails Collaborative Discussion:</b> Exploring a common understanding of issues and solutions	June 06, 2015	Davis, California	National and regional Forest Service, interagency, and partner leadership/representatives	Topics: Shared vision of a sustainable trails system; guiding principles (later incorporated into the Strategy as Core Values); identification of barriers, and potential actions to address barriers
<b><i>Trails Connect!</i></b> : The National Trails System & the Next 50 Years	July 01, 2015	Franklin, Tennessee (National Scenic & Historic Trails Conference)	National Scenic & Historic agency and NGO representatives	The National Trail System: Sustain, Support, Inspire, Communicate & Celebrate

<b>Meeting Title &amp; Intent</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Focus Group</b> (Line Officers): To gather input and feedback on strategic direction for trails	October 20, 2015	Virtual	Forest Service decision makers from multiple levels of the agency and across several regions	Dialogue in response to four topics: Concerns, Sustainability, Wish List, and Future
<b>Focus Group</b> (Recreation Managers): To gather input and feedback on strategic direction for trails	October 21, 2015	Virtual	Forest Service recreation managers from several regions	Dialogue in response to four topics: Concerns, Sustainability, Wish List, and Future
<b>Focus Group</b> (Natural Resource Specialists): To gather input and feedback on strategic direction for trails.	October 22, 2015	Virtual	Forest Service natural resource specialists from multiple levels of the agency and across several regions	Dialogue in response to four topics: Concerns, Sustainability, Wish List, and Future
<b>Trails Strategy Think Tank:</b> To identify critical success factors and identify measurable actions	October 23, 2015	Portland, Oregon	Forest Service national, regional, forest and district-level recreation/trails leaders and representatives	Identifying short/long term actions and goals identified around six focus areas: Leadership, Skills and Expertise, Understanding Our Visitor Benefits, Collaborative Engagement/Planning, Expand Capacity, Information

<b>Meeting Title &amp; Intent</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<p><b>National Trails Summit:</b> To collectively move forward and generate ideas for achieving a sustainable trail system</p>	<p>November 19, 2015</p>	<p>Washington DC</p>	<p>Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, Forest Service leadership/representatives from all levels of the agency, state and federal agency and national trail partner leaders/ representatives</p>	<p>Top participant Challenges, Root Whys, Bold Actions, and field-level input around five themes: Capacity, Sustainability, Education/Outreach, Support/Value, and Equity</p>

## **Appendix B: Alignment with National Initiatives**

### **USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY 2015-2020**

The foundation of the 2015-2020 USDA Forest Strategic Plan is the safety of employees, visitors, and neighboring communities. The Strategic Plan will guide the agency's efforts through 2020. Strategic plan goals include: sustaining the nation's forests and grasslands, delivering benefits to the public, applying knowledge globally, and excelling as a high-performing agency. Attaining a sustainable trail system supports several of the Strategic Plan goals, particularly delivering benefits to the public and excelling as a high-performing agency.

The foundation of the Trails Strategy is also the safety of employees, visitors, and volunteers who perform work on system trails. In addition, delivery of tangible health and economic benefits to the public will be made possible through implementation of this Strategy. Health benefits include physical exercise, personal renewal and self-discovery through trail stewardship and volunteerism. Tangible economic benefits of a sustainable trail system start with creating trail maintenance jobs through agreements and special programs that teach new skills to youth and veterans. Well-designed sustainable trails also benefit private industry by fostering new trail access opportunities through outfitter and guide businesses, recreation events, and increased tourism to nearby communities.

The Strategic Plan goal of a excelling as a high-performing agency will also be furthered through the implementation of this Strategy. Several actions in the Trails Strategy focus on expanding capacity through reorganizing the trails program to emphasize a field presence, addressing agency cultural barriers that foster a shift in the cultural paradigm from being doers of work to conveners of work; of which all contribute to a high-performing agency.

### **USDA Diversity and Inclusion Plan**

The USDA Diversity and Inclusion Plan is guiding the Forest Service's efforts to develop a diverse organization where all employees are empowered to reach their full potential through a "Cultural Transformation." The USDA Plan addresses three themes centered on workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and sustainability.

One of the foundational principles of this Strategy is inclusion. Valuing all people, regardless of age, ability, or cultural background as trail users, partners, volunteers and friends has been the lens through which each action strategy has been developed. This value of inclusion will be held throughout the implementation of the Trails Strategy and will contribute to achieving a sustainable trail system that is relevant to all users.

### **Forest Service Framework for Sustainable Recreation**

The goals of the Framework for Sustainable Recreation are to:

- Provide a diverse range of quality natural and cultural resource based recreation opportunities in partnership with people and communities
- Protect the natural, cultural, and scenic environment for present and future generations to enjoy
- Partner with public and private recreation benefit providers
- Perform and plan by implementing systems and processes to ensure: effective decisions, sound investments and accountability, collaborative approaches to integrated solutions across the landscape, and the enhanced professionalism of our workforce.

The challenges, aspirations, and action strategies outlined in the Trails Strategy focus the elements described in the Framework down from general recreation to the specific challenges of trail management. Both the Trails Strategy and the Framework for Sustainable Recreation lead the agency toward sustainability through an integrated partnership approach.

### **Interagency Wilderness 2020 Vision**

The promise of the Interagency Wilderness 2020 Vision is to protect the special places where citizens of this country can forever find solitude and a refuge from the sights and sounds of civilization and where the presence of human intervention is scarce. The three themes of the 2020 Vision are to: protect wilderness resources, connect people to their wilderness heritage, and to foster excellence in wilderness leadership and coordination. Many of the themes of the 2020 Vision parallel the challenges and aspirations identified in the Trails Strategy. Because of the parallel nature of these two strategic documents, there are countless opportunities to learn from the successful implementation of each.

### **Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities**

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities highlights the physical and mental benefits of being physically active. It calls to action the American public to be more physically active and calls the nation to action to support walking and walkability (walkability is defined as "communities [that] are created or enhanced to make it safe and easy to walk and that pedestrian activity is encouraged for all people").

The call to action adopts five goals that promote walking and walkable communities: make walking a national priority; design communities that make it safe and easy to walk for people of all ages and abilities; promote programs and policies to support walking where people live, learn, work, and play; provide information to encourage walking and improve walkability; and fill surveillance, research, and evaluation gaps related to walking and walkability.

The action strategies outlined in the Trails Strategy are the perfect complement to the Surgeon General's call to action goals. The call to action provides a tangible connection between the benefits of physically active and healthy individuals and communities and the national trails system.

## Appendix C: Action Summary Table/Estimated Sequence and Timeframes

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
<b>1. Leader Intent:</b> Cultivate leadership desire for a sustainable trail system.	1.1 Establish a field Trails Advisory Group to provide advice and timely input to the Chief on emerging trail issues.	FS Washington Office (WO), National Trails Board, FS Wilderness Advisory Group (for advice)	Begin in 2016
	1.2 Actively engage internal (line officers, program managers, technicians) and external (partner, volunteers and friends) stakeholders in learning sessions to gain leader commitment for a sustainable trails system.	Partners, FS Executives and WO Leadership, Trails Strategy Steering Team	Begin in 2016, then annually in conjunction with Hike the Hill (February) and National Trails Day events (June)



Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
	1.3 Engage a multi-party partner group that is comprised of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide input on the implementation of the Trails Strategy.	Partners, FS WO Leadership	National Public Lands Day, September 2016
<b>2. Organization and Talent:</b> Engage in a strategic redesign of the trails program to emphasize the skill set and organization needed to manage and maintain a sustainable trails system utilizing current and anticipated agency and partner resources.	2.1 Create advancement opportunities for trail program managers, trail technicians, and returning temporary employees.	FS WO Leadership, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS National Trails Board, Trails Advisory Group, FS Human Resources Department	Begin in 2017
	2.2 Evaluate and reorganize the trails program at all levels to enable both an increase in physical field capacity and a shift towards collaborative and inclusive trail management.	FS WO Leadership, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS National Trails Board, FS Forest Supervisors, FS Trail Managers, Partners, Volunteers	Begin in 2017

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
	2.3 Identify essential skills and core competency levels for technical trail management and partnership facilitation for employees and volunteers.	FS WO Trails/Volunteer/Partner Leadership, FS National Trails Board, FS Technology and Development Center, Carhart Wilderness Training Center, and identified FS field staff	National Get Outdoors Day June 2017
	2.4 Champion a collaborative approach to develop training curriculum for practitioners, managers, and volunteers that includes three basic elements: trail program and information management; trail maintenance and field skills, including traditional skills and techniques; and volunteer/partner management and coordination.	NGO & Agency Partners, FS WO Leadership, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS National Trails Board, FS Technology & Development Center, Carhart Wilderness Training Center	

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
<p><b>3. Relevancy:</b> Work with diverse individuals, communities, and partners to develop and share key messages that highlight the economic and health value of trails.</p>	<p>3.1 Work with partners and foundations to deepen the connections of youth with trails using existing and successful programs like “Discover the Forest” and “Every Kid in a Park.” This effort will focus on securing transportation from urban, suburban, and rural places to forest places.</p>	<p>Partners, National Foundations</p>	<p>Begin in 2016</p>
	<p>3.2 Explore methods to increase integration of 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, Job Corps and similar youth and veteran programs for trail maintenance.</p>	<p>Partners, FS Recreation/Trail Managers, FS Forest Supervisors, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS WO Leadership</p>	<p>Begin in 2016</p>
	<p>3.3 Work actively with the National Forest Foundation to better incorporate and highlight trails in the “It’s all Yours” campaign.</p>	<p>National Forest Foundation, FS National Partnership Office, FS Region 2 Partnership Office, FS WO Leadership</p>	<p>National Public Lands Day September 2016</p>

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
	<p>3.4 Work actively with other government agencies and partners to develop and implement a communications plan that identifies the tangible economic, health and wellness benefits of trails to encourage broader use and community investment.</p>	<p>Partners, FS WO Leadership, FS National Partnership Office, FS Research &amp; Design, FS Regional Recreation Directors</p>	<p>National Public Lands Day September 2016 or National Trails Day June 2017 then continue with annual presentations and regular partnership communication</p>
	<p>3.5 Encourage assessments with partners across jurisdictional and cultural boundaries that evaluate community trail needs, new and emerging uses, and resource protection needs across local geographic areas.</p>	<p>Partners, FS Regional Executive Leadership, FS Forest Supervisors, field staff</p>	<p>Begin in 2017. Deliver messages at annual National Trails Day (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in June)</p>

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
	3.6 Work actively with partners to develop and disseminate collaborative engagement tools that encourage stewardship and outdoor ethics, and promote citizen science.	National Forest Foundation, partners such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!, FS Citizen Science Working Group, FS Trails Advisory Group	25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Forest Foundation, October 2017
	3.7 Use the 50th anniversaries of the National Trails System Act and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as a catalyst for distributing high-quality messaging about the national trail system.	FS WO Leadership, FS Office of Communications, FS National Trails Board	50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Trails System Act & National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act October 2018
<b>4. Sustainable Systems:</b> Work with individuals, communities, and partners to create a common vision and stewardship plans for a sustainable trail system.	4.1 Invite national/regional/local trails groups to create a shared understanding of how to better balance their desire for more opportunities with the need for a sustainable trail system.	Partners, FS WO Leadership, FS Regional Recreation Directors	(continue and build upon previous and planned efforts)

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
	4.2 Conduct an assessment of economic and ecological sustainability for all new trail proposals.	FS National Trails Board, FS Trails Advisory Group, FS Recreation and Trail Managers	Begin in 2017
	4.3 Invite the non-government organization (NGO) community to orchestrate the establishment of a national trail endowment.	NGO Partners, FS WO Leadership	Begin November 2016
	4.4 Identify a sustainable trail system on each unit and realign or decommission trails that are ecologically unsustainable.	Forest Supervisors, recreation and trail managers, Partners	
	4.5 Establish a 5-year plan to maintain sixty percent of trails with assistance from partners and volunteers.	Partners, FS Forest Supervisors, FS Recreation and Trail Managers	Begin in 2017 with a target accomplishment by 2021

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
<b>5. Agency Processes and Culture:</b> Remove barriers that restrict effective partnering and trail management.	5.1 Actively participate in a movement to remove barriers to processes and perceptions that impede effective partnering and use of non-allocated funding sources.	FS WO Leadership, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS Forest Supervisors	Begin in 2016
	5.2 Champion the role of the Agency as a chief steward of the traditional tools and techniques of trail construction.	FS Line Officers, FS National Trails Board, FS Recreation Specialists, FS Wilderness Program Managers, FS Trails Managers, FS Technology & Development Center, Carhart Wilderness Training Center	
	5.3 Encourage innovative solutions that respect agency policy and utilize partners to leverage stewardship toward a sustainable trails system.	FS WO Leadership, FS National Partnership Office, FS Grants and Agreements Specialists, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS Forest Supervisors	

Strategy	Action	Key Contacts and Resources	Timeframe (estimated)
	5.4 Support the development of Recreation Special Uses and Grants and Agreements training for line officers.	FS National Partnership Office, FS Regional Recreation Directors, FS Regional Trails Coordinators, FS Recreation Specialists, FS Grants and Agreements Specialists	Begin in 2017
<b>6. Information:</b> Provide readily available, up-to-date and credible trail information that is useful to the public, non-agency information providers, and to employees at all levels of the agency.	6.1 With partners and trail uses, champion an integrated approach to collect and share data that better serves the public.	Partners, FS Information Management, FS field personnel, and FS system analysts	Begin in 2016
	6.2 Update and streamline agency trail databases and requirements to efficiently meet public, partner and agency trail information needs.	FS National Trail Board, FS field technicians and unit-level trail managers, FS Information Management, FS National Trail Technical Team	Beginning in 2016 through 2020 as development resources and funding allow
	6.3 Implement and achieve minimum standards of trail information that should be available on each forest (e.g. accurate and accessible geo-referenced trail data).	FS National Trail Board, FS Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, FS Trail Managers	Begin in 2016



## **Appendix D: Alignment with GAO Recommendations and Agency Statement of Action (to be added)**

A table establishing the alignment between strategy actions and the GAO Trail Maintenance Report Recommendations and agency Statement of Actions will be included in final document.