

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Trails System Office

How to Certify Your National Historic Trail Property



Tracing Our Past

Wagon wheels, hooves, boots, and moccasins long ago wore a tangle of trails across America and deep into her national identity. Many of these historic routes have been recognized by Congress as National Historic Trails.

National Historic Trails cross thousands of miles of public and private property. Along those miles are physical traces of trail history, such as wagon ruts, graves, inscriptions, and campsites -- and places that tell about that history, such as museums and visitor centers. Many such traces and places are found on state lands, in nature preserves, in city parks, on ranches, and even in suburban back yards.

Those important pieces of trail history can be publicly commemorated and protected through the National Park Service site certification program.



Wagon ruts on the Santa Fe National Historic Trail.

Across America



Mormon pioneers in Echo Canyon, Utah.

As an owner or manager of a *certified* trail site, segment, museum, or visitor center located near a congressionally designated National Historic Trail, you can request guidance from National Park Service experts in many specialties. In addition, all trails partners may apply for Challenge Cost Share matching funds to help protect a trail property, make it accessible, research its history, or tell its story.

Partners in Time

Certification is a partnership that helps landowners protect and preserve their historic trail properties, and share them with others.

The certification process begins when a landowner or manager invites National Park Service trails staff to evaluate a property's historical significance and condition. If the site has played a role in trail history *and* the owner will allow at least occasional public access, the partners together prepare a certification agreement. The owner/manager can establish visiting times, say where visitors may go on the property, and set other reasonable conditions.

Next, the partners might begin planning for site protection and any other needs, such as walkways, signs, and exhibits.

The partnership allows plenty of room for choice and flexibility. For example, one owner might choose to install exhibits and sidewalks and open his property to daily visitation. Another might prefer to keep her land undeveloped and limit visits to an occasional school group or researcher. The needs of both owners can be met.

Owners retain all legal rights to their property, and can end the partnership at any time.

Many different kinds of properties can be certified. Some of our certification partners include:



The National Frontier Trails Center in Independence, Mo., an interpretive and research center for the Oregon, California, and Santa Fe National Historic Trails.



Fort Henrietta Park, a city park at Echo, Ore., commemorating the lower Umatilla River crossing of the Oregon Trail.



The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument in Kearney, Neb., a monument and trail interpretive center built over an interstate highway.



Autograph Rock, a rock formation on private property in Oklahoma, where Santa Fe Trail travelers paused to inscribe their names and hometowns.

Most states have tort claim laws that protect landowners who allow public recreational use of their properties. The National Park Service can help you find out about applicable laws in your state.

Why Certify Your Site?

The National Park Service offers many benefits to its certification partners:

Technical Assistance. National Park Service experts in history, archeology, interpretation, exhibit design, landscape architecture, and many other fields can show you how to research and share the story of your certified property.

Protection and Site Development Guidance. As the nation's leading conservation agency, the National Park Service can advise you on protecting your site, preserving its historic qualities, and managing visitor use. We can also help with site planning and design, and aid in producing interpretive story panels for your certified site.

Project Funding and Assistance. The National Park Service can provide federal funds for eligible projects through its Challenge Cost Share Program, which can match up to 50% of project costs. We can also help you find funding from other sources.

Recognition. The National Park Service can provide official National Historic Trail signs and logos for display at certified sites. Visitors recognize those signs and logos, and through them know right away that a site is historically important.

Getting Started

Learn more about these National Historic Trails at www.nps.gov

/oreg	Oregon
/safe	Santa Fe
/cali	California
/trte	Trail of Tears
/poex	Pony Express
/mopi	Mormon Pioneer
/elca	El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro

To start the certification process for eligible properties along any of the trails listed above, contact us at:

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