

Trail Study News

The National Park Service launches Feasibility Study

Greetings!

The National Park Service is conducting a feasibility study and environmental assessment to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of adding historic routes to the existing Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Historic Trails (NHTs). The study, which addresses 64 individual routes in more than a dozen states stretching from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast, was authorized under the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (Public Law 111-11) signed by President Barack Obama on March 30, 2009.

Some of the routes to be studied include the Cherokee Trail from Tahlequah, Oklahoma, to Fort Bridger, Wyoming; the Naches Pass Trail in Washington; the 1856-57 Handcart Route from Iowa City to Council Bluffs, Iowa; and a 20-mile southern alternative route of the Pony Express Trail from Wathena to Troy, Kansas.

The Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Historic Trails opened the West to settlement and represent one of the largest overland migrations on North American soil. The lure of gold, the promise of fertile land, the



Pristine sections such as this in Eastern Oregon remain virtually unspoiled and give us a glimpse of what the emigrants witnessed on their way west.

adventure and a new place to call home beckoned all those willing to take the chance. These trails fostered both commerce and communication, which helped bridge the gap between the East and the West binding a nation once torn by civil war.

If included, the routes would add thousands of additional miles to these existing national historic trails.

What is a National Historic Trail?

A national historic trail is an extended trail that follows as closely as possible the original routes of travel associated with important historic events.

Examples of other national historic trails include the Lewis and Clark, Santa Fe, Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo), and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. Designations are continuous from end to end, but may include sections of land areas, land or water segments, or other associated sites.

Some historic sites and trail segments are in private ownership, while others are in public ownership. Participation in national historic trail programs is voluntary, and private landowners along the trail retain all legal rights to their property. Public land managers likewise retain all management authority over national historic trails on their lands.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first edition of the Trail Study News for the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express National Historic Trails Feasibility Study Update and Revision/Environmental Assessment.

I invite you to learn about and participate in this planning process. Staff from the National Trails Intermountain Region offices in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Salt Lake City, Utah will lead the effort. It will be conducted in consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, American Indian nations, interested organizations, landowners, and other individuals. The additional routes under study affect areas and interests in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Iowa.

Your participation is important and you will have opportunities during the planning process to provide your thoughts on this important project. To those old trail friends, I'm grateful for your continued support and interest in the trails. To those of you who are learning about the trails and this process for the first time, my staff and I look forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts and concerns.

Sincerely,



Aaron Mahr Yáñez
Superintendent
National Trails Intermountain Region

Some planning questions to consider include:

1. What do you know about the study routes, their location, uses and places of interest?
2. Are there opportunities for the public to enjoy and visit parts of these routes?
3. How do you currently use these routes?
4. Do you think the routes are historically and nationally significant? Why or why not?
5. How might designation of these routes as NHTs affect you and your community?

What is a Feasibility Study?

Completion of a feasibility study by the National Park Service will meet the intent of legislation passed by Congress to consider adding these proposed routes to the National Trails System.

Associated with the feasibility study is an environmental assessment, which identifies, evaluates, and documents the potential effects of designating the routes as a national historic trail.

The feasibility study will consider several important questions with input from the general public.

To qualify for designation as a national historic trail, a trail must meet all three of the following criteria, which are taken from the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543):

i) It 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.

ii) It must be nationally significant. 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.

iii) It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation.

The feasibility study will make a recommendation on national significance that will be sent to the National Park System Advisory Board for concurrence. Congress will make the final decision on whether to add the study segments to the National Trails System.

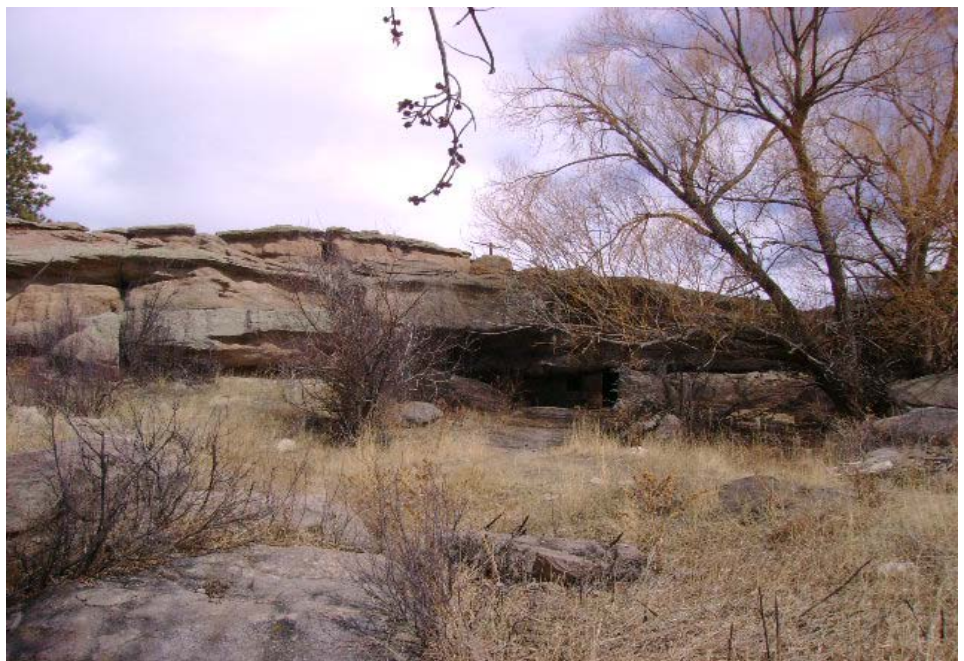


Photo courtesy of Bruce Watson and Camille Bradford

Fur trapper and adventurer Rufus B. Sage visited this cave along the Cherokee Trail in Colorado on September 13, 1842. Sage describes his experience: "Night finds us at Blackfoot-camp, snugly chambered in a spacious cave, to avoid the disagreeable effects of a snow-storm that comes upon the reluctant prairie with all the withering keenness of winter."



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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Together with their partners, staff at the National Trails Intermountain Region offices in Santa Fe and Salt Lake City administers 9 of the 19 national historic trails in the National Trails System.

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

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Get Involved in Your Trail History!

There are many ways for you to learn more about these trails and to get involved with the planning process.

- Attend a feasibility study scoping meeting
- Review the draft study
- Tour a trail-related historic site or museum
- Visit a trail-related route or walk in a trace
- Join a trail association

To submit comments or learn more about this planning project, go to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/FourtrailFS>

You may also submit comments to Gretchen Ward via email at gretchen_ward@nps.gov or via regular mail at P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, NM, 87504. The deadline for comments is July 30th, 2011.

The National Park Service to hold public scoping meetings

Public meetings will be held at the following locations:

April 18 – Denver, Colorado

Four Mile Historic Park

6-8 pm – 715 South Forest Street

April 19 – Casper, Wyoming

Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo - Arena Building

5:30-7:30 pm – 1700 Fairgrounds Rd.

May 9 – Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Cherokee Nation Complex – Tribal Council Chambers

3-5 pm - 17675 South Muskogee

May 10 – McPherson, Kansas

The McPherson Public Library

2-4 pm – 214 West Marlin

May 11 – Topeka, Kansas

Kansas Museum of History

10 am-Noon – 6425 SW 6th Avenue

May 11 – Independence, Missouri

National Frontier Trails Museum

6:30-8:30 pm – 318 West Pacific

May 12 – Lincoln, Nebraska

Nebraska History Museum –

Blackman Auditorium

6-8 pm – 15th & P Streets

May 13 – Des Moines, Iowa

State Historical Building of Iowa

3-5 pm – 600 East Locust Street

May 31 – Salt Lake City, Utah

The City Library

10 am-Noon – 210 East 400 South

May 31 – Rock Springs, Wyoming

Rock Springs Historical Museum

6:30-8:30 pm – 201 B Street

June 1 – Boise, Idaho

Idaho History Center

6-8 pm – 2205 Old Penitentiary Road

June 2 – Walla Walla, Washington

Fort Walla Walla Museum at Fort

Walla Walla Park

6-8 pm – 755 Myra Road

June 3 – Vancouver, Washington

Fort Vancouver National Site -

Red Cross Building

6-8 pm – 605 Barnes Street

June 4 – The Dalles, Oregon

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center

10 am-Noon – 5000 Discovery Drive

June 14 – Carson City, Nevada

Carson City Library

5:30-7:30 pm – 900 North Roop St.

June 15 – Sacramento, California

Sutter's Fort State Historic Park –

Distillery Building

5:30-7:30 pm – 2701 L Street