

Rivers, Trails and Conservation  
Assistance Program

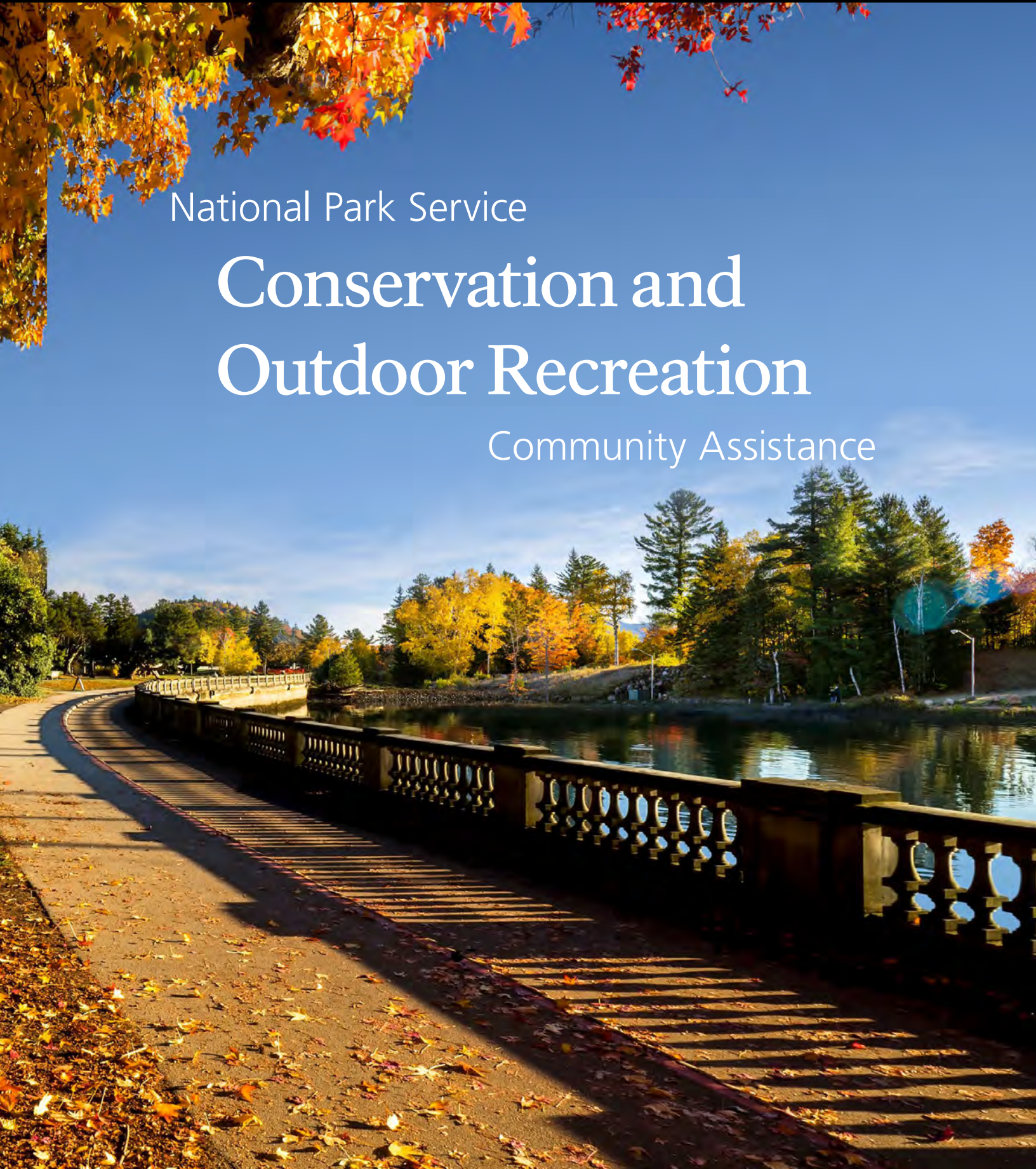
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Park Service

# Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

Community Assistance



# National Park Service

## Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

### Community Assistance

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The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) contributes to the mission of the agency by:

- Extending the benefits of parks to communities across the country
- Moving the needle on conservation and outdoor recreation

[nps.gov/RTCA](https://nps.gov/RTCA)

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## The National Park Service **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program**

### About Us

The **National Park Service**, through the **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance** program (NPS-RTCA), has supported locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States for more than 30 years. NPS-RTCA assists communities in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. Through an annual application process, community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies can apply for NPS-RTCA technical assistance.

### Our Model

Across the country, NPS-RTCA staff collaborate with project partners by pairing their professional planning, design and technical expertise with your team and knowledge experts from the community. Together, our 1 to 2 year-long partnership works to achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision. Based on the complexity of the project, we tailor our assistance to meet your needs and help you navigate a path to success. Although NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, we can help your organization identify potential funding sources for your project.

### Community Engagement

As a collaborative partner, we strive to achieve successful project outcomes by engaging communities in the visioning, planning and implementation of each project. We encourage strong community partnerships and facilitate meaningful engagement to ensure your conservation and outdoor recreation projects last into perpetuity.



## About This Publication

The *National Park Service – Conservation and Outdoor Recreation – Community Assistance* publication is designed to inform the reader about the services provided by the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program.

Following this introduction, pages 4-11 provide a general overview about what we strive to achieve in implementing conservation and outdoor recreation projects, no matter the project type or geographic location.

The following sections highlight the areas in which NPS-RTCA provides assistance. Each focus area features conservation and outdoor recreation projects that we have worked on in the past. These examples help demonstrate how NPS-RTCA collaborates with communities and land managers. The projects we highlight are organized into these five categories:

1. *Building Healthy Communities*
2. *Conserving Lands and Waters*
3. *Developing Organizational Capacity*
4. *Supporting Public Land Management Collaboration*
5. *Engaging Youth*

To learn more about NPS-RTCA and apply for assistance, visit:

[www.nps.gov/RTCA](http://www.nps.gov/RTCA)

# Creating Parks and Outdoor Recreation





# Parks

Creating a system of parks for all

The National Park Service serves as a catalyst to build a network of parks and open spaces across the nation. We work to establish new parks or rehabilitate old parks to meet the public needs of today.

Alaska

## Building a Community Park in the Bering Sea



Three-hundred miles west from Alaska’s mainland, St. Paul Island is home to the first baseball team in the state. Despite the lack of bleachers and eroding playground, the historic baseball field and surrounding area has actively been used for recreation and community gatherings since the 1880s. Inspired by their history with the sport, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island had a vision to restore the field and turn the surrounding land into a vibrant community park.

NPS-RTCA collaborated with the community, neighboring school and tribal government to gather ideas for the underutilized space. Following a site visit and design charrette, NPS-RTCA developed a concept plan that laid out the project’s goals, design guidelines, resource and funding opportunities, topography and implementation phases that the tribal government can refer to as they move forward in restoring the baseball field and creating an outdoor recreation space.

Today, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Tribal Government has started to develop St. Paul Community Park – a safe and resilient recreation area that will promote community health and strengthen the sense of place of the island in the middle of the Bering Sea.

California

## Collaborating With the Mountain Maidu Tribe in Developing a Park

After more than a century of displacement, the Mountain Maidu people have returned to their homeland – Tasmam Koyóm (the Maidu name for Humbug Valley) – a 2,300-acre alpine valley in California’s Sierra Nevada.

With a vision to develop a cultural park dedicated to education, healing and traditional ecosystem management, the Maidu Summit Consortium requested assistance from NPS-RTCA. In collaboration with the American Society of Landscape Architects, NPS-RTCA supported the Mountain Maidu tribe in developing conceptual plans for a park entry site to welcome visitors, identified public access opportunities to a trail network while protecting special cultural sites that only tribal members can access, and developed a 40-acre visitor zone that includes improvements to the Yellow Creek Campground.

Today, the Mountain Maidu tribe continues to work on developing the Tasmam Koyóm Maidu Cultural Park where they will be able to share their history and heritage with visitors and care for the land.



# Trails

Creating a network of trails for public health and enjoyment

The National Park Service collaborates with partners to create a system of local, regional and national trails to provide access to outdoor recreation opportunities and improve community health.



NPS / STEPHAN NORFIELD

Washington and Oregon

## A Bi-state 354-Mile Trail Network

The Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan is a community-driven strategy for a trails network through Columbia and Walla Walla counties in Washington, and northeastern Umatilla County in Oregon. The idea for the plan started when communities across the Blue Mountain region recognized the potential of the beautiful landscape to enhance economies, health and the overall quality of life for small towns in the valley.

Collaborating with more than 30 local, regional, state and federal partners, NPS-RTCA facilitated planning workshops to gather ideas and recommendations from the local communities for the trail network. Additionally, NPS-RTCA identified existing and potential trail connections between towns as a means to increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities. More than 600 people participated in the workshops and their visions were used to create the final concept plan for the proposed 354-mile trail network.



Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan

In 2018, the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan was finalized and shared with the public. The plan, which received the Governor's Award for Excellence, features the proposed trail network, next steps and funding sources that has since spurred partners to action with implementing the plan.

New York

## From Rails to Trails

About 100 miles north of New York City, lies Kingston, the major city of Ulster County, which is located at the base of the Catskills where idle railroads once twisted in and out of the city and through the mountain range. Though the municipality and its surrounding area have long been tourist destinations, residents of the area recognized the need for a community recreation space. The community sought to convert abandoned railroad corridors into an interconnected trail network throughout the county.

NPS-RTCA collaborated with the county officials and community groups to link Kingston to the wider trail network. Additionally, NPS-RTCA devised community engagement strategies and assisted in establishing a management plan for incomplete sections of the trail.

In 2017, the Governor of New York established a goal and provided funding to develop the 750-mile Empire State Trail. Ulster County agreed to link their Rails to Trails project with this larger effort by adding 20 new trail miles to connect the county to the Empire State Trail.





# Water Trails

Creating public access to explore our nation's waterways

The National Park Service provides planning assistance to improve public access and enjoyment of close-to-home rivers and waterways.



Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky

## Tennessee RiverLine: A Multi-state Strategy

Spanning four states, nine major dams and 652 miles, the Tennessee River flows between Knoxville, Tennessee and Paducah, Kentucky. However, despite its length, many communities rooted along the river have historically been disconnected from the waterway.

The vision for the Tennessee RiverLine began with landscape architect students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In collaboration with the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley Authority, NPS-RTCA identified new project partners and funding resources, as well as assisted with the development of a strategic plan for their vision. NPS-RTCA and the university organized partnership forums, leadership retreats and public workshops to collect river recreation concepts from 5 pilot communities. The concepts led to the establishment of the Tennessee RiverTowns Program which is galvanizing 15 communities in creating new river access and infrastructure that will connect their residents to the river.



### Ohio

## Cuyahoga River Access

The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio was once known for catching fire in 1969. However, according to USA Today, it is now recognized as the number one destination for urban kayakers. More than 50 years later, the efforts from Cuyahoga Valley National Park, local governments and river management partners throughout the watershed have improved water quality, built stewardship and increased outdoor recreation opportunities.

Working in collaboration with the park and regional community partners, NPS-RTCA mapped the river, identified hazards and determined access points along the 90-mile waterway. To promote paddling resources, NPS-RTCA held community engagement events, created a website, developed a social media presence and assisted in the formation of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail Partners – a grassroots collaboration of more than 25 organizations, agencies and communities. The water trail partners produced a brochure map, installed signage and got the Cuyahoga River designated as a state water trail shortly after the 50th anniversary of the last river fire.



Today, as Ohio's 13th State Designated Water Trail, the Cuyahoga River is welcoming back visitors and wildlife – boosting tourism and economic development for communities along the trail.



# Accessibility

Developing access to the nation's lands and waters

## Designing the Anza Cultural History Park

The Anza Cultural History Park is a new park in Tucson, Arizona. Adjacent to the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, the park is designed to be accessible and enjoyed by everyone, including persons with disabilities of sight, hearing or mobility.

NPS-RTCA collaborated with the school, the Anza Society International, and interpreters from Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and Tumacácori National Historical Park, on design concepts and infrastructure improvements for the park. The park, which is centered around the historic Anza Expedition of 1776 that led more than 240 men, women and children from Mexico to San Francisco, features newly installed accessible amenities which assist all users in accessing the various recreational opportunities.

In addition to telling the story of the expedition, the park serves as a fully accessible outdoor classroom for students and staff. Consisting of short trails and seating areas, the park is an educational and relaxing space that accommodates users of all abilities with text in English, Spanish, Braille and American Sign Language.

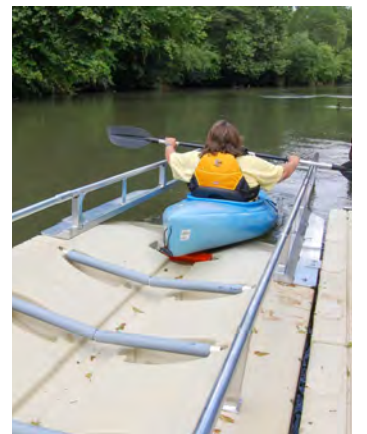


## South Carolina

### Accessible Recreation on the Saluda River Blueway

Historically a vital piece of South Carolina's textile industry, the Saluda River has made a new name for itself as a beacon for accessibility in outdoor recreation. Floating docks, compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for accessibility, make it possible for everyone to enjoy up to 48 miles of paddling on the river.

The project debuted in 2009 when Anderson County's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, set out to put an EZ Dock accessible boat launch at a riverside park. The county requested assistance from NPS-RTCA to assist with mapping the river and access points, develop a paddle guide, and work with local partners and power companies who were invested in the river. The collaboration resulted in the Saluda River Blueway, an accessible river trail that gained monumental support from communities along the river.



Today, a yearly River Rally, put on by local organizations attracts more than 350 paddlers which has helped spark the county's tourism economy. The Saluda River Blueway gained national recognition in 2015 as the only rural project to be featured by the Americans with Disabilities Act's 25th Anniversary Legacy Tour – inspiring the community to continue expanding opportunities for accessible recreation.



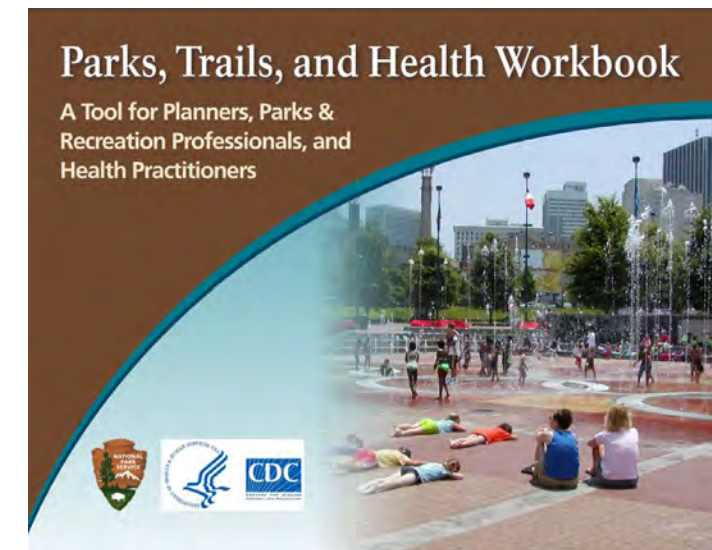
# Health

The National Park Service supports communities that lack access to outdoor recreation opportunities by developing programs and parks that aim to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of their residents.

Developing outdoor recreation strategies that support community health goals



## Incorporating Health Needs in Outdoor Recreation Planning



Building healthy communities by conserving areas and expanding access to outdoor recreation opportunities is what many NPS-RTCA projects are about. The *Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook: A Tool for Planners, Parks & Recreation Professionals, and Health Practitioners* is a resource to assess the local and regional health needs of residents. Using the workbook to complete health assessments, project planners can develop strategies that will help improve the health of residents through close-to-home parks, trails and conservation areas.

The workbook was developed through a collaboration between NPS-RTCA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – used early in the planning process, the assessment can help guide public discussions about how to achieve community health goals. The outcome is to assist communities in expanding outdoor recreation opportunities and designing parks to promote physical activity, support mental health, foster social interactions and provide environmental benefits.

### Washington

## Developing a Program That Prescribes Parks

Whatcom County is one of the most physically active and healthiest counties in Washington state, yet not all residents are aware of the positive impacts of spending time outdoors, nor share the same access to recreation opportunities that could benefit their physical, mental and social health.

Recreation Northwest collaborated with NPS-RTCA to develop a community program that would get more people outside and active in their parks and trails. NPS-RTCA engaged residents, healthcare providers, and park and land managers in assessing local health needs, evolving a community vision, and inventorying parks and outdoor recreation opportunities.



Guided by public input, NPS-RTCA and Recreation Northwest developed Parkscriptions, a program that encourages health care providers to prescribe time in nature to their patients. With support from NPS-RTCA, an interactive mobile platform with a map of Whatcom County public parks and trails was developed with more than a dozen health care providers participating. Today, doctors have the information they need to prescribe close-to-home outdoor activities to their patients.

# Heritage

Helping communities preserve cultural connections to lands and waters

The National Park Service collaborates with communities to preserve their lands and waters, create spaces that commemorate their heritage and invite others to learn about their history and culture.



## Alabama

### Africatown: From Environmental Injustice to Healing

In 1860, the Clotilda was the last known slave ship to reach U.S. shores near Mobile, Alabama – 52 years after the United States had banned the import of slaves. On board the ship were captives from the Tarkbar Tribe who went on to establish Africatown, where the native language and cultural traditions from their home in West Africa still remain today.

For decades, the community fished, swam and gathered at the creeks that connect to the Mobile–Tensaw River Delta, until the area transformed into an industrial zone and the water was blocked and polluted by factories. Seeking to reconnect the community to their waterways, the Mobile County Training School Alumni Association asked NPS-RTCA to help Africatown create a water trail and expand access to outdoor recreation opportunities.



In collaboration with landscape architecture students from Mississippi State University, NPS-RTCA worked with residents to design access points and develop a waterfront plan that includes piers, picnic areas and parks. NPS-RTCA engaged the Africatown community in efforts to build support for the plan, identify potential funding sources and strategies for the Africatown Connections Blueway, a water and walking trail network that will highlight cultural and historic sites and connect to the proposed Africatown USA State Park.

## Illinois

### Honoring Indigenous Heritage in Chicago

Nestled between the Des Plaines and Chicago rivers, 4000N (formerly known as the Northwest Portage Walking Museum) is a 9-mile, art-lined trail that commemorates the rich heritage of Indigenous people.

The project started out as a broad idea to link Chicago's two landmark rivers, but quickly turned into a community-led and multi-faceted vision to connect residents to the city's cultural history and river recreation opportunities. Eager to turn their vision into a reality, the Metropolitan Planning Council asked NPS-RTCA to help partners develop strategic goals, facilitate conversations with stakeholders and local government entities, and identify potential funding opportunities.

After gathering community ideas, Indigenous artist Santiago X, proposed building two effigy mounds – one at each river site to resemble a serpent. NPS-RTCA facilitated a steering committee consisting of members from the American Indian Center, the Portage Park Neighborhood Association and Chicago Public Art Group in securing resources to build the first mound as well as permits to use county land.

On Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2019, nearly 400 people gathered at Schiller Park, along the Des Plaines River, for the unveiling of the Serpent Mound which was built with native plants and soil. Once the Coil Mound is installed, they will serve as anchors for the interactive walking museum trail and honor the city's history and Indigenous people.





# Natural Disasters

## Assisting communities with natural disaster recovery

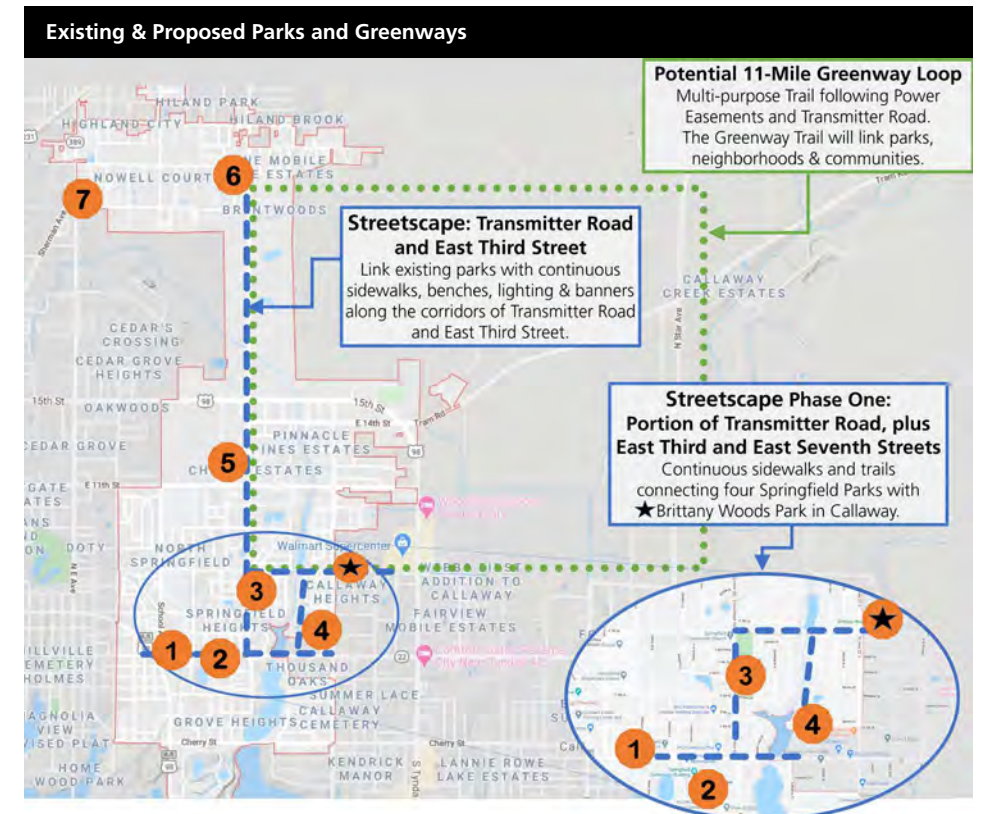
The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program assists communities in restoring their conservation areas, parks and outdoor recreation resources following a natural disaster. We help communities develop community resiliency strategies to better thrive after severe storms and fires.

### Florida

NPS-RTCA helped 9 cities and counties with restoration plans and designs for parks damaged by Hurricane Michael. In Springfield, Florida, NPS-RTCA worked on recovery projects for 7 parks, 2 streetscapes and a multi-purpose trail.

1. Henry Brooks Memorial Park
  2. Buddy McLemore Park
  3. Garden Walk Park
  4. Sports Complex
  5. Nature Park at new City Complex
  6. Neighborhood Park
  7. Douglas Ave. Dog Park
- Potential 11-Mile Greenway Loop
  - Streetscape: East 3rd/ Transmitter Rd.

Prepared with assistance from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program March 2020



## Assisting Communities After Natural Disasters

As environmental conditions increase the intensity and frequency of hurricanes, floods and wildfires, NPS-RTCA has extended our services to communities who are recovering from natural disasters. In recent years, NPS-RTCA has helped 29 communities across the country in restoring 58 parks and outdoor recreation facilities as well as in evolving community resiliency strategies. NPS-RTCA, in collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, continues to adapt our recovery work with a focus on sustainability and resiliency.

Today, NPS-RTCA is often asked to assist with conservation projects that help communities better adapt to natural disasters. In the Lower 9th Ward, a neighborhood in New Orleans that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, NPS-RTCA partnered with the city and the Sankofa Community Development Corporation in transforming a 40-acre vacant site into a wetland park that will improve neighborhood resiliency to heat, flooding and future hurricanes.

The NPS-RTCA model of community assistance is not that of a “traditional consultant” – our projects can take two to four years to complete. NPS-RTCA aligns the planning, design and technical expertise of our staff with the skills and knowledge of community and land management partners to achieve successful conservation, community resilience and outdoor recreation outcomes.

### NPS-RTCA natural disaster recovery projects include:

- Evolving community resiliency strategies
- Implementing phytoremediation strategies to remove, contain and control contaminants to improve water quality and protect public health
- Developing county-wide recreation economy strategies around conservation and outdoor recreation
- Planning and designing greenways and parks
- Reassessing destroyed parks and developing master plans to guide restoration efforts that meet the demographic characteristics of a community
- Reestablishing local and regional trail networks
- Developing vegetation plans that use hurricane-resilient and water-absorbing plants and trees
- Engaging communities in the development of natural disaster recovery plans
- Facilitating regional tourism strategies

# Underutilized Spaces

Reimagining underutilized spaces for community use

The National Park Service works with local governments and nonprofits to repurpose vacant and abandoned lands as parks, community gardens and shared open spaces that help improve the quality of life of residents.



## Massachusetts

### From Blighted Lands to Community Parks and Trails



Abandoned mill sites and pollution caused public disinterest which led to the degradation of the Spicket River, its waters and surrounding lands that were once part of a flourishing textile industry in Lawrence, Massachusetts. In the decades after the mills closed, the city experienced high rates of poverty, unemployment and foreclosure.

In 2000, Groundwork Lawrence, the first nonprofit that NPS-RTCA helped establish with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization, facilitated a community planning effort that became the Spicket River Greenway. Today, the Spicket River Greenway consists of 3.5 miles of new and restored parks and trails that connect multiple neighborhoods, schools and community centers. Groundwork Lawrence continues to work on strategies to restore the river and create public access.

The partnership between Groundwork and the City of Lawrence resulted in neighborhood revitalization and access to outdoor recreation opportunities. The success of the Spicket River Greenway is a living testament to the power of shared vision and collaborative leadership between community partners.

## Oregon

### Transforming a Neighborhood Park

From a filled-in swimming pool in the 1960s, to a revitalized park, Oregon's DC Latourette Park has been transformed into a valued community space.

In 2016, Girl Scouts of Troop 45064 hosted an event at the park to learn about how the neighborhood wanted to improve the blighted property which consisted of an asphalt area with a chain-link fence. The event led to the formation of the DC Latourette Park Core Team, who alongside the City of Oregon City and McLoughlin Neighborhood Association requested assistance from NPS-RTCA.

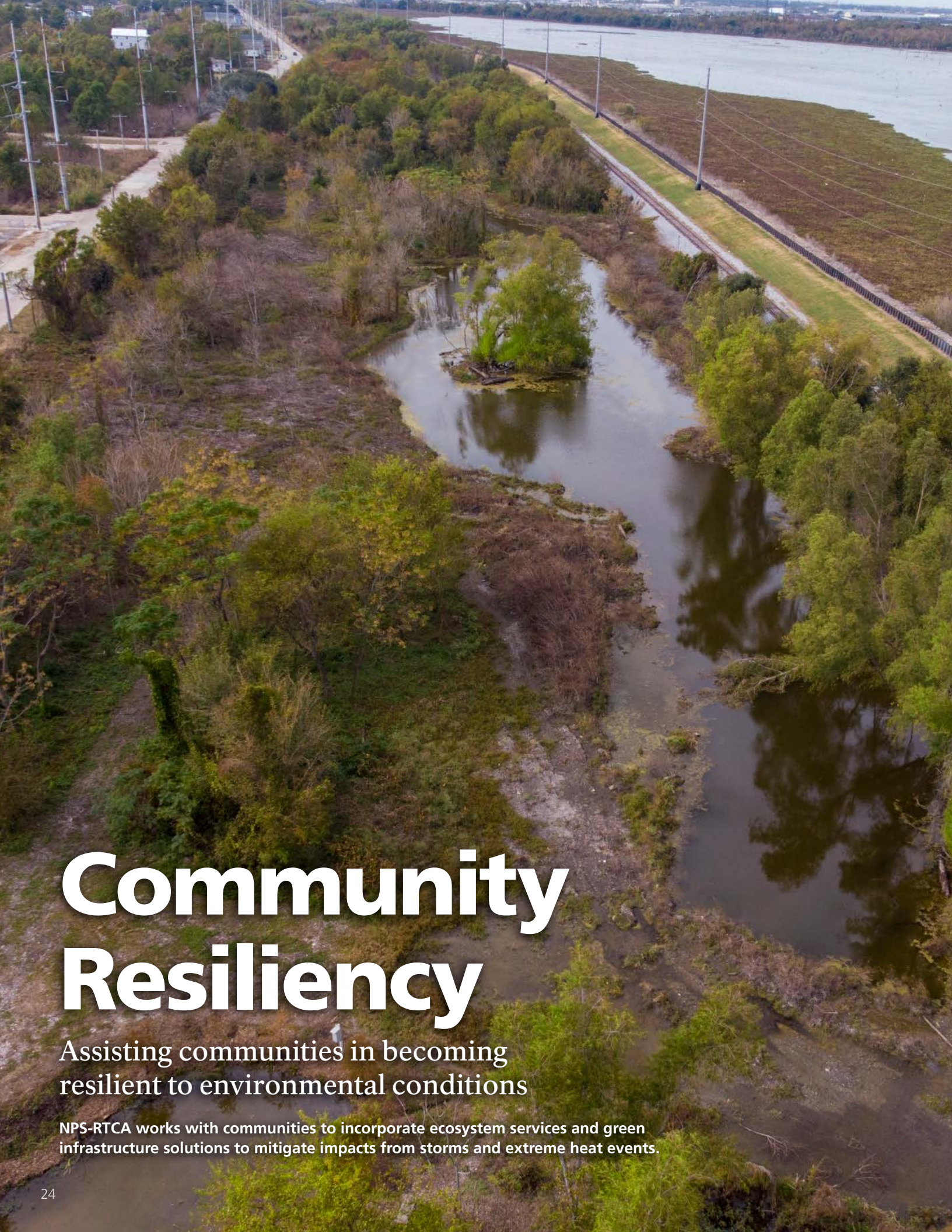
To further scope how the community wanted to revitalize the area, NPS-RTCA conducted online surveys, facilitated stakeholder meetings and coordinated an open house for the general public. This public input led to the creation of the DC Latourette Park Revitalization Plan which included modern play concepts like swings and slides combined with rocks, logs and wood chips to encourage children to get more in touch with the natural heritage of the area.

With the revitalization plan in hand, the community was able to rip out the asphalt and transform the area into a neighborhood resource. Today, the newly renovated park features a rain garden which helps with local flooding and has something for all ages to enjoy.



# Conserving Lands and Waters





# Community Resiliency

Assisting communities in becoming resilient to environmental conditions

NPS-RTCA works with communities to incorporate ecosystem services and green infrastructure solutions to mitigate impacts from storms and extreme heat events.

## Louisiana

### Building Community Resiliency in New Orleans

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst storms in U.S. history, devastated the Lower 9th Ward, a neighborhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. Today, less than 5,000 of its original 14,000 residents remain in the predominantly African American community. Blighted properties, overgrown lots and vacant buildings are scattered throughout the area which continues to be impacted by seasonal flooding.

As part of a larger neighborhood revitalization effort, a local nonprofit organization, the Sankofa Community Development Corporation (Sankofa CDC), collaborated with NPS-RTCA, the City of New Orleans, and the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans in developing plans for the Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail. This planning project is transforming a 40-acre vacant site into a conservation and recreation area that integrates nature-based community resiliency solutions to improve protection from future hurricanes and flooding in the Lower 9th Ward.

In partnership with Sankofa CDC, NPS-RTCA facilitated a master plan and design process which included extensive community outreach efforts to build project support among residents and neighborhood organizations. NPS-RTCA developed a master plan which incorporates a

10-acre wetland pond that will function as a stormwater filtration and absorption system while providing recreation opportunities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Other elements of the plan include nature trails, picnic areas, interpretive signage, outdoor recreation facilities, and a bicycle trail system that will connect the Lower 9th Ward to adjoining neighborhoods.

Through grants and volunteer support, 8-acres of habitat have already been restored and invasive vegetation were removed and replaced with native trees and flora that capture rainfall, absorb groundwater and cool the area's extreme heat temperatures. With a restored ecosystem, the wetland park now attracts native and migratory birds as well as other wildlife.

The project has also spurred local economic development opportunities with the launch of the Sankofa CDC Workforce Development Program. Capitalizing on the park as an outdoor classroom, the program provides individuals with valuable hands-on job training and education in horticulture and green infrastructure topics such as stormwater systems and rain gardens. The paid three-month training program helps participants prepare for the state licensing exam as a pathway to a career in horticulture and landscaping.

#### Expansion Potential:

Extend multi-use trail west toward Corps of Engineers Parcel and go south along the Industrial Canal to connect Sankofa Wetland Park to more of the neighborhood

#### Observation deck on earth mound

- Water view
- Shade structures & benches
- ADA-accessible spiral ramp

#### Picnic area

- Save colonnade of trees
- Shade structures
- Picnic tables & grills
- Fishing pier



#### Cluster of live oak trees

- Rest area
- Shade structure

#### Amphitheatre

- Community events

#### Legend

- 40' shade tree (135)
- 20' understory tree (84)
- Wetland massing
- Existing natural buffer: buffer railroad tracks (25' min.)
- Picnic areas: shade structures, tables, grills
- Nature play area: natural materials, shade structures, benches
- Learning gardens/ interpretive areas
- Stormwater detention pond & wetland habitat edges (9.49 acres)
- Kayak & paddle boat dock (2)
- Fishing pier (6)
- Multi-use trail: 10' hard surface for walking, biking & maintenance (1.3 miles)
- Interpretive trail loops: 5' soft surface for walking (0.75 miles)

#### Expansion Potential:

Extend multi-use trail east toward St. Bernard Parish

# Land and Habitat Conservation

Developing local and regional conservation strategies

The National Park Service works with partners to expand conservation networks, develop land protection strategies and restore damaged ecosystems.



Texas

## North Beach Eco Park

Migratory birds aren't the only ones flocking to Corpus Christi, Texas. With a goal to expand recreational and educational opportunities, the city recently began implementing plans for a 30-acre eco and birding park in North Beach that will cater to both their human and avian visitors.

In 2019, the city requested NPS-RTCA to assist with the park's design and organizational development for community partners. In collaboration with the American Society of Landscape Architects, NPS-RTCA held public meetings to identify community ideas and generate feasible designs for a migratory bird habitat with resources for recreation enthusiasts. Three park designs were developed from community input, resulting in a master plan for a park that will be home to healthy wetlands and wildlife, as well as trails, boardwalks, observation decks, interpretive signs and educational resources for outdoor programming.



Utah

## Restoring the Jordan River and the Big Bend Habitat

In collaboration with local partners, the City of West Jordan in Utah had a vision to restore a section of the Jordan River where an abandoned steel mill once operated. The natural course of the river was dredged, realigned and hardened to support the mill. Over time, invasive plant species pushed out the natural riparian vegetation and industrial contaminants accumulated in the waterway.

NPS-RTCA collaborated with the city, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission, and 15 other partners to develop strategies for restoring the river and adjacent lands which became the Big Bend Habitat Restoration project. To help make the project a reality, NPS-RTCA facilitated community engagement to gain public support for river restoration and researched funding opportunities.

Today, the partnership is working on rehabilitating the river to its natural meandering flow, restoring the natural riparian vegetation and wetlands, developing 70 acres of habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, and creating outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy.



## Reestablishing Moose Creek's Fisheries

Before coal mines and a railroad were constructed through Moose Creek in the 1920s, the creek was a winding and slow meandering stream supporting various Alaska salmon species. During construction, the creek was modified with human-made waterfalls which became barriers to the fisheries along the rerouted waterway and ultimately led to migrating salmon losing access to their upstream habitat.

In 2003, the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council requested assistance from NPS-RTCA to develop a partnership approach for restoring Moose Creek to its natural course. NPS-RTCA engaged local and agency partners in developing a strategy for restoring the creek. With support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, community volunteers and other funders, the creek was reconstructed to its original channel morphology and gradient, giving salmon access to historic spawning and rearing areas. Learning about the area's natural history from tribal elders and collecting data about salmon through survey work aided with the restoration efforts and educational outreach.



Today, Moose Creek is once again home to salmon populations, proving how successful partnerships can support local initiatives, enhance natural resource stewardship, and provide outstanding opportunities for cultural and environmental education.

## Montana

### Restoring a Creek in Downtown Bozeman

What began as an urgent need to rehabilitate the decaying Bogert Park in Bozeman, Montana, soon evolved to include the restoration of Bozeman Creek. When the City of Bozeman requested assistance from NPS-RTCA, it quickly became apparent that the scope of the problem extended beyond the park's borders. Long ago, the creek

had been narrowed and straightened to handle storm water runoff. As a result, the runoff flushed the creek of its fisheries habitat, reduced the riparian vegetation and led to invasive species taking root.

With help from NPS-RTCA, the city and the Bozeman Creek Enhancement Committee engaged neighborhood associations and individual landowners in the process of restoring the park, along with six miles of impaired creek. Over six years, this collaboration resulted in the reconstruction of the creek's channel to slow its flow and filter stormwater runoff. The community stabilized the banks with native plants to create a meandering stream and strengthen the riparian zone. The restoration work also enhanced conditions for aquatic species by including deep pools to help fish survive winters, boulders for safe resting sites, and gravel to support spawning conditions.

Today, Bogert Park and the natural flowing Bozeman Creek provide residents with opportunities to fish and enjoy the natural setting within the heart of the city.



# River Restoration

Restoring rivers to their natural systems

The National Park Service facilitates the collaboration of technical experts to implement strategies that restore rivers and riparian areas.





# Developing Organizational Capacity



# Collaboration Services

Bringing interested parties together to implement shared goals

The National Park Service facilitates collaboration in the planning and implementation of conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

## Connecticut

### Facilitating a Collaborative Process for the Naugatuck River Greenway

Just 30 years ago, Connecticut’s Naugatuck River was so badly riddled with decades of chemical, industrial and physical waste that the river was declared “dead” – void of any living organism. After many years of restoration efforts by communities along its banks, the river has become a centerpiece of the state’s recreation, transportation, economic development and riparian habitat.

Eleven towns, spanning along 44 miles of the Naugatuck River from Torrington to Derby, had visions of recreation opportunities along the water. In 2012, the communities invited NPS-RTCA to help them organize their efforts to create a greenway through all 11 towns on the restored river corridor.

The greenway project, set to be completed in 2030, is a massive undertaking, and one that requires incredible collaboration. NPS-RTCA has been assisting with coordination efforts, creating the Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee, organizing partners and rallying communities to the river with a major bicycling event and promotional materials. Town by town, the greenway is reuniting residents with the river and giving the communities new life.



## California

### The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership

The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership is a unique large landscape partnership between local communities, county governments, and state and federal agencies from California’s rural Eastern Sierra region. Working together, the partnership aims to improve recreation opportunities and restore ecosystems to their natural resiliency and functions.

The partnership is developing and implementing strategies related to sustainable recreation and tourism, community resiliency, and is supporting visitor services. Through collaboration and the leveraging of resources, the partnership is working to achieve their shared goals. NPS-RTCA supports the partnership and coordinates with leaders from the six National Park Service units that are located within the Eastern Sierra landscape.

The region is largely dependent on natural resources, recreation and tourism to sustain the local economy. The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership opens up channels for communication and action for recreational and economic opportunities throughout the region.



# Organizational Development

## Strengthening the capacity of organizations

The National Park Service assists partners with organizational development that builds their capacity to manage conservation and outdoor recreation outcomes.



NPS / STEPHAN NOFIELD



## Recreate Responsibly: Messaging in Response to COVID-19

The Recreate Responsibly Coalition formed out of an emergency need brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The coalition is a national partnership of nonprofits, outdoor recreation businesses and land managers working to establish and coordinate messages about safely enjoying the outdoors during the pandemic, protecting our public lands and growing the recreation economy.

As the pandemic continued into the fall of 2020, the leaders of Recreate Responsibly recognized the need to provide structure to the coalition and evolve a strategic plan to guide its future. After forming a steering committee, the leaders requested assistance from NPS-RTCA to guide the planning process. NPS-RTCA served as facilitator throughout the six-month process, meeting with the steering committee on a biweekly basis and with program managers in between meetings to track progress, troubleshoot issues as they arose and strategize about next steps.



The completed Recreate Responsibly 2021 Strategic Plan provides strategies and guidance for organizational structure, administration and the implementation of their vision.

## Latino Outdoors: Building a National Network

Latino Outdoors is on a mission to make the outdoors a place where all Latinx communities can enjoy nature as safe and welcoming — a place where nature is a setting for sharing and celebrating stories, knowledge and culture, developing leadership and stewardship, and engaging communities in volunteer work and transformational experiences.



While the organization is based in southern California, their vision and volunteer network stretch across the country. In 2017, Latino Outdoors requested assistance from NPS-RTCA to help facilitate ideas to expand their network and develop a multi-year strategic plan to build organizational capacity, outreach and program delivery.

Through a series of facilitated conversations focused on the history, success and goals of Latino Outdoors, NPS-RTCA helped put forth a plan that contained culturally relevant outdoor connections and best practices. Just one year after completing the plan, Latino Outdoors' outdoor and stewardship programming grew by 65%, along with significant increases in volunteer leadership and strategic partnerships across the nation.





# Supporting Public Land Management Collaboration

# National Parks

Supporting parks and their gateway communities

The National Park Service facilitates the implementation of shared goals between parks and their local communities.



## Michigan

### NPS and Its Neighbors Create New Visitor Opportunities

Touted as one of CNN Travel's "Can't-Miss U.S. Beaches" and "The Most Beautiful Place in America" by Good Morning America, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore features some of the most pristine and popular landscapes in Michigan. However, the national lakeshore and its gateway communities recognized the challenge for visitors to navigate the 35 miles of Lake Michigan's eastern shoreline, numerous islands and inland lakes.

NPS-RTCA convened a planning team consisting of participants from the local gateway communities and the National Park Service to evolve a concept of a trail system as an alternative to widening major highways. In collaboration with community partners, NPS-RTCA helped develop the Sleeping Bear Dunes Heritage Trail, a 27-mile, ADA accessible, multi-use path connecting the communities of Glen Arbor and Empire with visitor destinations within the park. Additionally, NPS-RTCA helped secure transportation grants and supported the development of the trail.



Today, the trail offers an array of opportunities, from hiking and biking to cross-country skiing, opening up new recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

## Maine

### Helping a New National Monument: Katahdin Woods and Waters

On the eve of the National Park Service's centennial in 2016, President Barack Obama designated 87,500 acres as the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument – the first national monument to preserve the landscape and honor the history and culture of Maine's North Woods in Penobscot County. The superintendent of the new national monument asked NPS-RTCA to assist with engaging local communities and leading various planning projects.

NPS-RTCA inventoried the existing trails, prepared field maps, and evolved a wayfinding signage strategy in support of the monument's long-term role as an economic and tourism generator. To engage adjacent communities, NPS-RTCA hosted listening sessions where hundreds of locals shared their histories with the land. NPS-RTCA collaborated with the Millinocket Memorial Library and the Maine Folklife Center to collect these stories and create the Katahdin Story Booth, an oral history project used to teach future generations about the history of the land. Additionally, NPS-RTCA initiated the Katahdin Learning



Project, which supports local teachers by involving students in hands-on learning, including cross-country ski outings to the monument, trail clearing and other place-based education activities.

# State and Federal Lands

## A large landscape approach to working together

The National Park Service collaborates with tribal governments and state and federal land managers on conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

NPS / STEPHAN NOFIELD

### Utah

## Lions Park: A Gateway to Natural Wonders

A small town of only 5,000 people, Moab, Utah is surrounded by miles of mountain biking trails and spectacular natural areas, including city, county, and state parks, as well as two iconic national parks – Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. With its strategic location, comes 2.5 million visitors per year which causes an influx of traffic that places a significant strain on natural resources and the visitor experience.

The community of Moab requested assistance from NPS-RTCA to help revitalize Lions Park, the central hub for all roadways, and make it a welcoming gateway to the city. In the planning process, the community and its regional park partners realized that Lions Park would make an excellent trail hub connecting to the region's mountain biking trails as well as state and national parks. NPS-RTCA assisted the community in developing a steering committee of 15 partners, guided the development of design concepts and identified grant funding oppor-



tunities to implement their vision. Additionally, NPS-RTCA organized public meetings to obtain community input and support.

Lions Park was redesigned and now features ample space for parking, restrooms, a transit bus stop, and a bridge over the Colorado River that links trail users to the area's parks. Today, Lions Park offers safe, non-motorized transportation to and from Moab, the area's natural wonders and its many recreational opportunities.

### Alaska

## Alaska's Statewide Trails Investment Strategy

The nonprofit organization, Alaska Trails, recognized that Alaska's rich natural environment could help improve the health of residents, increase quality of life and further advance the state's recreation economy. To evolve their vision, Alaska Trails requested assistance from NPS-RTCA and 41 other public and nonprofit organizations. Together, the partnership developed the Statewide Trails Investment Strategy, a comprehensive strategic plan focused on ways to build on and expand trail infrastructure to help the state make the most of its outdoor recreation economy.

NPS-RTCA worked with Alaska Trails to evolve a statewide planning process. The planning team facilitated the participation of local communities, organizations and land management agencies, including the National Park Service. Together, NPS-RTCA helped partners navigate technical and land use issues.

The Statewide Trails Investment Strategy has been crucial in guiding state legislation, developing bond bills, and establishing community priorities and investments. There are numerous projects underway such as the Ant-



ler Ridge Trail which will link Healy, Alaska and Denali National Park to a larger system of trails. Already, \$1 million dollars has been invested in the development and infrastructure of the Antler Ridge Trail concept.

With the Statewide Trails Investment Strategy, the network of public and nonprofit partners has a shared path forward and a strategy that can evolve with changing conditions and new visions.

# Engaging Youth



# Youth Program Development

Engaging the next generation in America's great outdoors

The National Park Service helps nonprofit organizations with developing stewardship, environmental education and outdoor skills building programs for youth.



## Alaska

### Developing an Outdoor School

Anchorage Outdoor School is a program that cultivates lifelong stewardship of public lands in Alaska through outdoor education for fifth graders in the Anchorage School District. The program engages students in hands-on and place-based curricula in STEM education while reaping the mental and physical benefits of learning outdoors.

Anchorage Outdoor School began in 2018, when the school district and their nonprofit partners requested assistance from NPS-RTCA to develop a new, partnership-driven outdoor education program. Together, the partners designed and implemented an education program at the Chugach National Forest's Portage Valley Learning Center which is renowned for its salmon runs, mountain clear streams, lakes, glaciers and evergreen forests. There, students learned side-by-side with natural resource professionals from various land management agencies and organizations.



After the pilot program, NPS-RTCA assisted with business planning and developed strategies for sustainable operations that resulted in a community public-private partnership operated by the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area and an advisory board of education and conservation entities.

## Maine

### Connecting Maine's Youth to the Outdoors

The stages of grief don't usually include creating a statewide organization that provides high schoolers with outdoor skills and access to the wildlands of Maine. However, for Carol and Bob Leone, providing teenagers with access to outdoor recreation opportunities has been central to their healing.

After losing their 15-year-old daughter, Sara, in a car accident in 2005, the Leone's founded Teens to Trails so they could offer others the kinds of outdoor experiences that Sara had once enjoyed with young people her age. Teens to Trails seeks to connect teens with Maine's spectacular wild places through adventure activities and play, establishing outing clubs at high schools and partnering with universities for outdoor programming.

The Leone's reached out to NPS-RTCA early on for assistance to engage community members and school leaders in growing and developing their idea. NPS-RTCA guided the development of their concept and helped establish the new nonprofit. Teens to Trails reconnected with NPS-RTCA in 2018 to envision a network for helping

other states develop similar successful programs. Today, Teens to Trails has established outing clubs for nearly 40 high schools, engaging hundreds of students, and they have their sights set on expanding to twice as many schools that do not yet have outdoor programming.





# Youth Stewardship

Engaging local youth in the planning and development of conservation and outdoor recreation projects

The National Park Service works to involve youth in the planning of conservation and outdoor recreation projects as part of the community engagement process.



## Bridge to Backman Community Open Space

Salt Lake City Parks and Public Lands Parcel 592 N Riverside Drive (~1550 W 700 N)

### Proposed Site Improvements



## Utah

### Bridging the Gap at Backman Elementary School

Educators often employ a metaphor about “building bridges” when identifying what they need to strengthen their schools and better connect with the communities they serve. At Backman Elementary School in Salt Lake City, Utah, school officials were being quite literal: they needed to build a bridge.

Home to a vibrant community, Backman Elementary is uniquely situated next to the Jordan River. However, for many students, the walk to school was along a busy highway with no sidewalk. At the request of the school, NPS-RTCA facilitated a series of meetings with community leaders, teachers and students to plan a nature area for outdoor education and a safe pedestrian bridge to connect the school to the local neighborhoods.

Moving forward, NPS staff from Timpanogos Cave National Monument will provide educational programming, participate in Backman’s Career and College Night to promote NPS careers, and keep creating opportunities for youth to get on the water through a partnership with the Wilderness Inquiry.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## ***Who are we?***

The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA) assists communities, public land managers and nonprofit organizations with conservation and outdoor recreation projects. NPS-RTCA provides professional planning, design and technical expertise to help achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision.

## ***Does NPS-RTCA provide funding?***

No. NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, but we can help you identify potential funding sources for your project.

## ***What kind of projects does NPS-RTCA support?***

This publication highlights the variety of projects that NPS-RTCA supports. Our program staff support locally-led projects that develop or restore parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as create outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.

## ***Are NPS-RTCA staff contractors?***

The NPS-RTCA model is to combine the skills of our staff with those of your organization. It's a partnership – we work alongside your team and local knowledge experts to assist with the work that you are leading.

## ***How much time do NPS-RTCA staff spend on each project?***

Typically, NPS-RTCA staff collaborate with communities for 1 to 2 years on conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Depending on the complexity of the project and our staffing capacity, the time frame may be extended.

## ***Who can apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?***

NPS-RTCA provides services to established community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies.

## ***How can you apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?***

NPS-RTCA support is provided when we are invited to assist you on a conservation or outdoor recreation project. We encourage you to contact us to discuss your project before applying. The application is available on our website: [www.nps.gov/RTCA](http://www.nps.gov/RTCA)

Contact us: [nps\\_rtca@nps.gov](mailto:nps_rtca@nps.gov)

 [nps.gov/RTCA](http://nps.gov/RTCA)

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