

STORIES OF PARTNERSHIP:

Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Achievements in Indigenous Communities

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior





Cover artwork by **Nicole M. Pete**

The turtle is a sacred and significant animal in Native American culture symbolizing Mother Earth, representing spirituality, wisdom, healing, and strength of heart. Nicole chose to include the turtle because of its strong cultural presence, using the scutes on the shell to encompass the many conservation and outdoor recreation projects that Indigenous communities and the National Park Service have fostered and collaborated on over the years.

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The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) has worked in partnership with Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native communities for more than 30 years on conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Consisting of staff with a broad variety of professional backgrounds, including community planning, landscape design, conservation, and natural resource management, the National Park Service brings passion and expertise to projects across the country.

In working with Tribes, NPS-RTCA helps identify what is important to community members through local engagement, events, meetings, and forums. Detailed discussions about elements that hold cultural and historical significance in the area take place during design charrettes, which are hands-on workshops where community members collaborate to establish a shared vision for their land. The visions are then flushed out in master plans which incorporate conservation principles, educational exhibits, sustainable design elements, and art that highlight the stories of each location and its people. These collaborative efforts are grounded in indigenous knowledge and wisdom borne of experience. Each project aims to support traditional Tribal customs, restore the environment, introduce stewardship, improve the health of local communities, and add impetus for economic prosperity.

The National Park Service is honored to have worked on such impactful projects with Tribes across the country and looks forward to continuing working with more Indigenous community leaders and knowledge experts in the future. These projects help maintain cultural values and protect vital natural resources so that Tribal members can enjoy healthy lifestyles and improved opportunities for recreational, vocational, and spiritual activities for generations to come.

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COLLABORATIVE SUFFICIENCY BUILDS A COMMUNITY FOREST

Developing Indian Creek Community Forest with the Kalispel Tribe



After acquiring land, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians had a vision to create a space for the community to learn, recreate, and connect with the natural environment. The Kalispel Tribe invited the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program to assist in developing a plan for Indian Creek Community Forest, a 410-acre forest about 60 miles north of Spokane, Washington.

In collaboration with the Tribe, the National Park Service facilitated community engagement events to ascertain the priorities for the land and led the group through the creation of an action plan focused on recreation, conservation, and stewardship.

Francis Cullooyah is a highly respected elder of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians in northeastern Washington State and the Tribe's cultural program director. He has been schooled in the way of building partnerships between uncommon partners. Writer David Gunter, for the Bonner County Daily Bee, described him as a person who creates a large impression, "as a man who carries a big presence in a compact body." Cullooyah is a journeyman in the art of cooperation, a tenet central to the Tribe's ongoing health and well-being.

The Story of a Landscape is the Story of a People

The Kalispels are the earliest inhabitants of the land that is now part of Pend Oreille County in Washington State. Named after the word for camas in their language, a flowering bulb that was a staple of their diet, the Kalispel thrived here for time immemorial. Then white settlers brought disease and violence, decimating the Tribe's population and taking their land. By 1875, there were only 395 Kalispel people left in the area.

The Albeni Falls Dam altered the Pend Oreille River and the Tribe's homeland forever. Constructed in the 1950s, the dam prevented native fish from migrating, devastated trout populations, and severed the nation's connection to its most important fishery.

In 1992, the Kalispel Tribe established the Kalispel Natural Resources Department with a mission "to be responsible stewards of the Kalispel Tribe, to help maintain, restore and care for our community and ecosystem." After securing management rights on 6,000-acres of wildlife habitat in Washington State and Idaho, the Tribe implemented the first of several federal wildlife mitigation projects to protect and restore wetland habitats that were permanently flooded by the dam.

Tribal elders and staff had to exercise initiative to ensure the survival of the nation's heritage—its language, history, culture, and the land that is woven as a thread through it all. That initiative was bred through human interactions and relationships, one of which Cullooyah is proud of and occasionally shares.





Ray Entz, the director of wildlife and terrestrial resources for the Kalispel Natural Resources Department, and his Swiss mountain dog in front of a sign for Indian Creek Community Forest.

A Lesson in Partnerships

On his first day in first grade, Cullooyah could only speak Salish – the native language of the Kalispel Tribe. Seated at the back of the class he could not understand anything the teacher said. He decided it wasn't for him, stood up and walked out. On his way home however, a white businessman who operated a store on Kalispel land asked him where he was going. When the first grader explained what had happened, the storekeeper struck a deal with him. If Cullooyah returned to school, he would not only walk back with him, but would also give him a candy bar. Back in class, the man spoke briefly with the teacher and then sat down behind Cullooyah. For his first 10 days of first grade, the storekeeper acted as an interpreter for him. That empathy and understanding influenced Cullooyah for life.

In 2012, the Kalispel Tribe entered a Memorandum of Agreement with the Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Bureau of Reclamation. The agreement provided nearly \$40 million over a 10-year period for the Tribe to meet the federal agencies' obligations under the Northwest Power Act and Endangered Species Act. The funding

opened opportunities to acquire land, one parcel of which is the 410-acre Indian Creek Community Forest, about 60 miles north of Spokane, Washington. In total, the Kalispel Tribe acquired 700 acres to serve as a wildlife management unit.

Ray Entz, the director of wildlife and terrestrial resources for the Kalispel Natural Resources Department, said that in one community meeting with Cullooyah, someone asked the question, "are we self-sufficient?" Cullooyah responded, "we've never been self-sufficient, but we are collaboratively sufficient." That storekeeper's investment so many years ago was still bearing fruit. The sentiment that was planted that day epitomizes the Tribe's interdependence with the local community, and the local community's interdependence with the Tribe.

"Cullooyah is the kind of person that others will seek out just to ground themselves and the work they do for the Tribe," Entz said. "You can check in with him to see if we are in the right space culturally."

Beyond the Tribe

Cullooyah's collaborative-sufficiency trickles down into Mike Lithgow's sentiments. As the information and outreach coordinator for the Kalispel Natural Resources Department, and de facto volunteer organizer for the Tribe, Lithgow said, "we have learned to embrace the community beyond the Tribe. That is central to the Tribe's philosophical underpinnings. We are reliant on surrounding communities."

The chance to buy the land for the community forest staved off any future habitat degradation. The original commercial intent had been to develop an RV park and a dude ranch area (a western-style area with horseback riding, fishing, campfires, BBQs, and more) but then the overall goal of the community forest project shifted to encourage engagement in environmental education and outdoor recreation. When the Tribe was awarded the Community Forest and Open

Space Conservation grant in 2012 from the U.S. Forest Service, they struggled to involve the public in a meaningful way. Recognizing the struggle, Lithgow and Entz searched for more robust options to engage the community. They found the National Park Service.

In 2017, the Kalispel Natural Resources Department applied for and was awarded assistance from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) to help create a plan for outdoor environmental education and recreation within Indian Creek Community Forest. In collaboration with the Tribe and local community, the National Park Service facilitated meetings to share skills and expertise, gather ideas, and help make decisions for the action plan. The National Park Service also formed an advisory committee to help implement the plan, and care for the forest in the long term.



Image courtesy of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians.



Archery is one of the many activities that Tribal members and guests can enjoy at Indian Creek Community Forest.

Next Level Sufficiency

"That took it to the next level. They [the National Park Service] really helped us engage the community in a different way. They are very good at what they do, they know how to message and communicate with the public in an entirely different way," Lithgow said.

"Once we engaged the National Park Service, we began to experience success with the project and its planning," Entz added. "The National Park Service brand was just a small part of it — the staff expertise positioned the endeavor in a different league."

When the engagement element of the project was complete, the Tribe hosted a community open house. It was the largest, most well attended open house both Lithgow and Entz had ever been involved in. More than 70 community members attended the open house to review the draft action plan that the National Park Service and Kalispel Natural Resources Department developed based on input collected from workshops.

Grassroots Engagement

Stephanie Stroud and Alex Stone led the National Park Service's participation in the project. Stroud studied landscape architecture and upon graduating she worked for companies and volunteered in designing trails before joining NPS-RTCA. Stone came into landscape architecture with a dual background in art and science.

What appealed to Stone about the position with NPS-RTCA was the emphasis on grassroots level cooperation with communities. She approaches each project by first getting to know the applicant, their dreams, and their capacity.

"Every community has its own way, its own culture, and we want to figure out how to understand the objective within that context" Stone said. "Not knowing the Tribe, we had to get a sense of how they live together, how they work together. We wanted to be respectful."

"It's kind of like dating," Stroud added. "Slow and easy, getting to know the community and the partners, you get to know what's appropriate, how to reach out. It was really cool how once we started talking to the community, ideas bubbled up. And sharing Indian fry bread tacos, just breaking bread with the community was very special."

"The Tribe has an unusual capacity to be hospitable. Having that rapport provides a tremendous amount of buoyancy to a project," Stone said. "The Kalispel Tribe just has such a strong relationship with the broader community. People just wanted to get together."

The Kalispel Tribe worked with NPS-RTCA to bring the community to the table. At the open house participants shared a family-style meal of Indian tacos.

Both Stroud and Stone agree that marks of success for any project they tackle include: the project getting funded, a strong sense of community ownership, new partnerships forming, and that authorities adopt the plan.

That strong sense of collaboration and community ownership became evident when former NPS-RTCA project partners in the region heard of Indian Creek Community Forest and offered their time and expertise. Planning staff from Spokane County's Parks, Recreation, and Golf Department offered the Indian Creek Community Forest advisory committee an educational site visit at one of their forested conservation areas in Spokane where management, recreation, education, and organizational partnerships were discussed. Additionally, the executive director and board of the Priest Community Forest Connection met and shared their expertise with staff from the Kalispel Natural Resources Department. These organizations had matured and had the capacity and appreciation for sharing their lessons and successes with the Tribe.

"When any group that we work with recognizes their accomplishments and wants to help others and has the confidence and security where they can say, 'we've been there, we can help you,' I count that as a measure of success," Stroud said.



NPS Photo

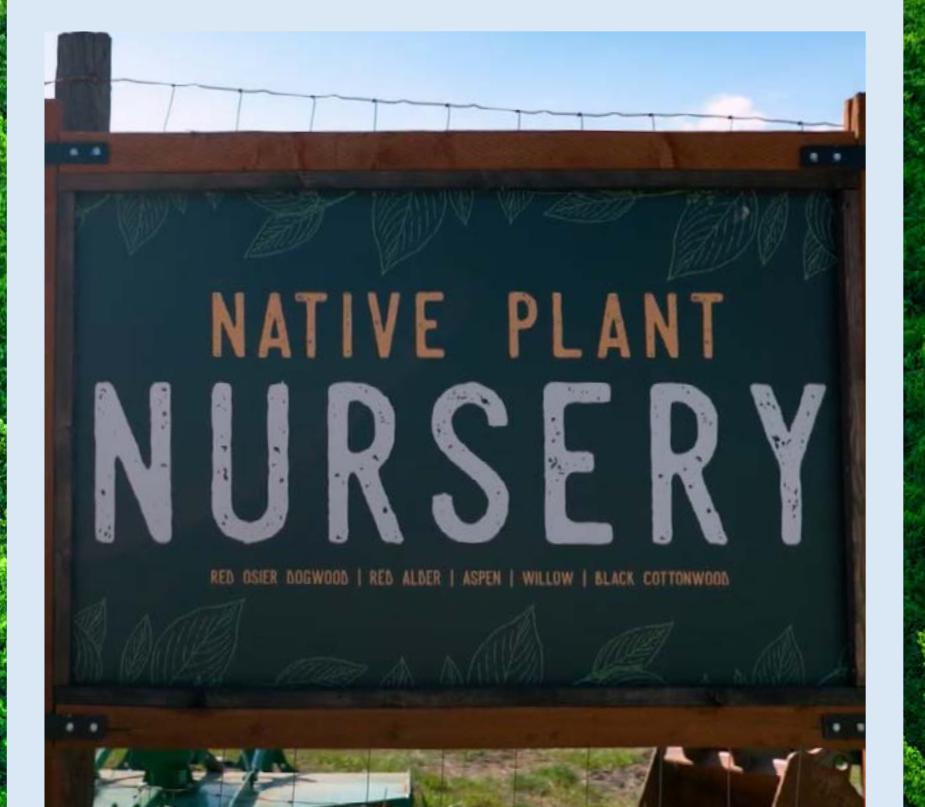
Partner's Voices

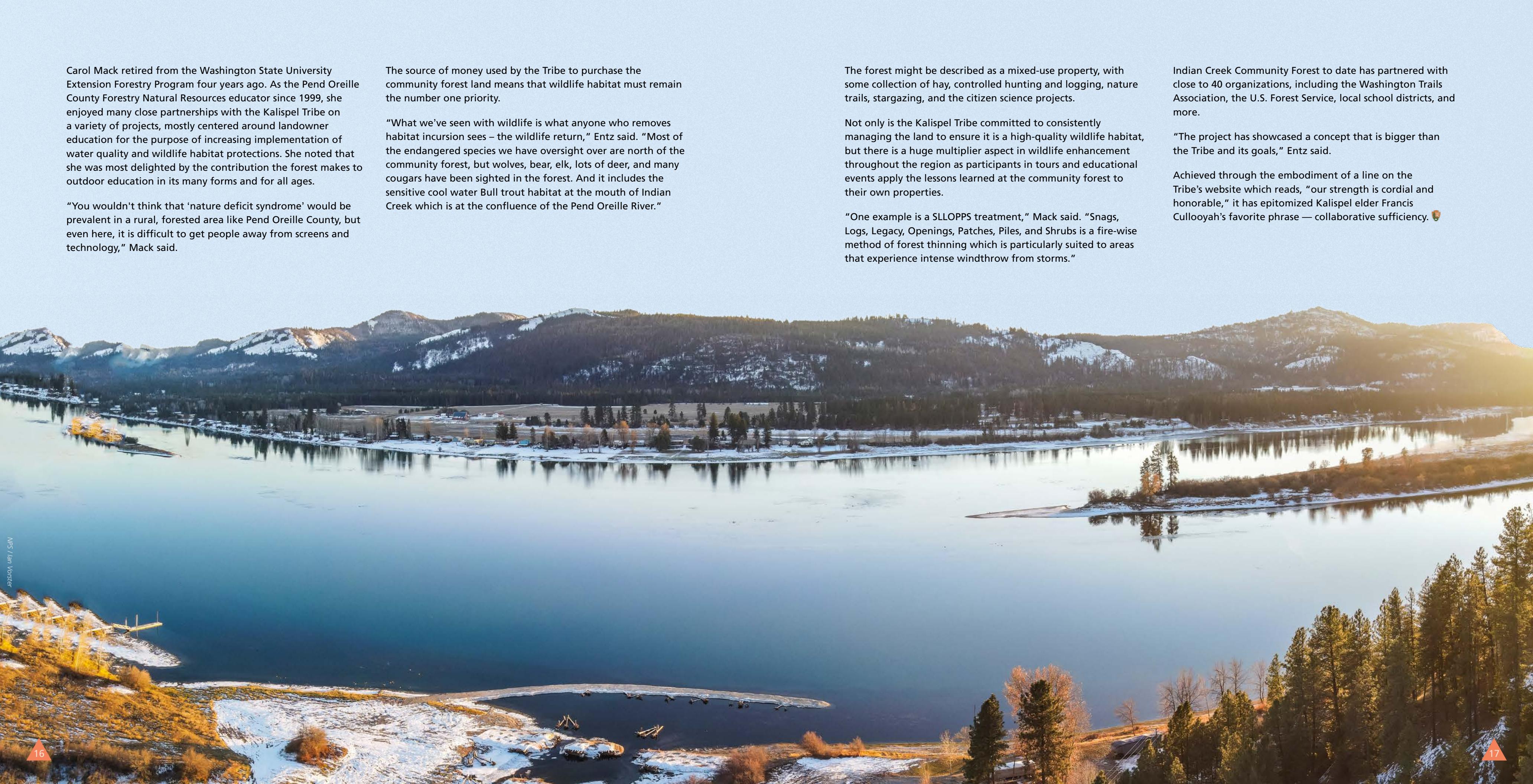
Ed Styksel is a retired wildlife biologist. He spent 29 years with the U.S. Forest Service and an additional 14 years as a private consultant. After retiring, Styksel founded a conservation-science education nonprofit organization, the Selkirk Alliance for Science. The organization's mission is to showcase the value of science for local communities by way of citizen science projects and education.

"Indian Creek Community Forest was an excellent opportunity to do some citizen science," Styksel said. "We helped the Tribe with a BioBlitz effort, in which the public was invited, along with the Tribe's experts and other field inventory experts. And then the group split up to search for and identify plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. It was just an excellent opportunity and location to educate people."

Citizen Science — the collection of data relating to the natural world by members of the public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists — is now an ongoing activity at the community forest. Schools are responsible for aquatic monitoring and volunteers from as far as Idaho have been trained. After introducing air monitoring to the mix, the Tribe partnered with the Selkirk Alliance for Science to expand the program to 12 additional air quality stations in the Pacific Northwest. "It all started with the Tribe's forward community thinking," Styksel said.

An aerial view of the Pend Oreille River, the Kalispel plant nursery, and the pond. Tribal members cannot eat the fish out of the river because of toxic chemicals, so they stock the pond with healthy trout.





Carol Mack retired from the Washington State University Extension Forestry Program four years ago. As the Pend Oreille County Forestry Natural Resources educator since 1999, she enjoyed many close partnerships with the Kalispel Tribe on a variety of projects, mostly centered around landowner education for the purpose of increasing implementation of water quality and wildlife habitat protections. She noted that she was most delighted by the contribution the forest makes to outdoor education in its many forms and for all ages.

"You wouldn't think that 'nature deficit syndrome' would be prevalent in a rural, forested area like Pend Oreille County, but even here, it is difficult to get people away from screens and technology," Mack said.

The source of money used by the Tribe to purchase the community forest land means that wildlife habitat must remain the number one priority.

"What we've seen with wildlife is what anyone who removes habitat incursion sees – the wildlife return," Entz said. "Most of the endangered species we have oversight over are north of the community forest, but wolves, bear, elk, lots of deer, and many cougars have been sighted in the forest. And it includes the sensitive cool water Bull trout habitat at the mouth of Indian Creek which is at the confluence of the Pend Oreille River."

The forest might be described as a mixed-use property, with some collection of hay, controlled hunting and logging, nature trails, stargazing, and the citizen science projects.

Not only is the Kalispel Tribe committed to consistently managing the land to ensure it is a high-quality wildlife habitat, but there is a huge multiplier aspect in wildlife enhancement throughout the region as participants in tours and educational events apply the lessons learned at the community forest to their own properties.

"One example is a SLLOPPS treatment," Mack said. "Snags, Logs, Legacy, Openings, Patches, Piles, and Shrubs is a fire-wise method of forest thinning which is particularly suited to areas that experience intense windthrow from storms."

Indian Creek Community Forest to date has partnered with close to 40 organizations, including the Washington Trails Association, the U.S. Forest Service, local school districts, and more.

"The project has showcased a concept that is bigger than the Tribe and its goals," Entz said.

Achieved through the embodiment of a line on the Tribe's website which reads, "our strength is cordial and honorable," it has epitomized Kalispel elder Francis Cullooyah's favorite phrase — collaborative sufficiency. 

ALASKA

With millions of acres of diverse and vital wilderness and a human history reaching back 14,000 years, Alaska Native communities and cultures are integral to its vast landscape.

On December 18, 1971, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) which recognized and settled long-contested rights of Alaska Natives by granting them the right to approximately 44 million acres of federal land. Known as one of the largest land settlements of its kind, the act transferred the land titles to 13 regional corporations (known as Alaska Native Regional Corporations) and over 200 village corporations.

For that reason, the names of Alaska Native Tribal entities often include "Corporation," "Village of," or "Native Village of." Generally, however, the Tribal entity cannot be considered as identical to the city, town, or census-designated place in which the Tribe is located, as some residents may be non-Tribal members and a separate city government may exist.



Restoration of Moose Creek for the Chickaloon Native Village

Sutton, Alaska

The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council governs the Chickaloon Native Village, an Ahtna Athabascan Tribe in southcentral Alaska, just 90 minutes from Anchorage. In Ahtna, their name is Nay'dini'aa Na' meaning "the river with the two logs across it." Since elders reestablished the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council in 1973, their mission has been to restore the Tribe's identity and traditions that were lost due to colonization. One aspect of this restoration included returning Moose Creek to its natural state. The creek was once home to all five species of Alaskan salmon, making it a vital component to the Chickaloon Native Village Tribal citizens who gathered food and fished there for generations.

In the 1920s, coal mines and a railroad were constructed through Moose Creek, diverting its natural path. During construction, the creek was modified with human-made waterfalls, which formed barriers and blocked access to upstream habitat for spawning salmon. Tribal Elders noticed

the decrease in salmon and so, in 2003, the Chickaloon Village Traditional requested assistance from the National Park Service to restore the creek. Together, they worked in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Tribal members to reconstruct the creek's original channel morphology and gradient. The reconstruction consisted of two phases over the span of two years and was completed in 2006, giving salmon access to historic spawning and rearing areas, which led to an increase in salmon counts. The project was guided by information shared about the area's natural history from Tribal Elders and data collection about salmon through surveys.

Today, Moose Creek is once again home to a restored ecosystem with a thriving salmon population, demonstrating how successful partnerships can support local initiatives, enhance natural resource stewardship, and provide opportunities for cultural and environmental education.

Dog Mushing and Ski Trail to Improve Youth Mental Health

Minto, Alaska

The Native Village of Minto lies about 140 miles northwest of Fairbanks, along the west bank of the Tolvana River. The village, which was formed around 1903, was originally located along the Tanana River, but in 1971 it was relocated to its present location due to repeated flooding and erosion. The land was traditionally used for fishing, hunting, trapping, and camping – elements which are still integral to the life and culture of the village.

Hoping to provide more opportunities for residents to live an active and healthy lifestyle during the winter as well as improve youth mental health and build camaraderie among students, the Minto Public School invited the National Park Service to help them create a trail for use of both recreation

and competitive racing in mushing and skiing. The community project was supported by multiple associations including the Minto Village Council and Minto Dog Mushers Association. The trail would provide immediate access to a trailhead for skiing and mushing activities. Located at the center of town and near the community park, it could also be used for hosting events. Additionally, the trail would be used for tourism ventures which would eliminate the need for visitors to use vehicles to reach the trails currently located outside the village boundaries, thus reducing safety concerns.

The National Park Service helped with trail planning, identified potential development issues that could arise due to permafrost, and worked with partners to ensure course safety.



Reawakening *Tladje't*: Coming Together to Create a Dena'ina Cultural Education Trail

Wasilla, Alaska

Tladje't is the site of the oldest known Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina village with significance to the people of Knik, Eklutna, and Chickaloon Tribes in southcentral Alaska. It was a hub for some of the most important trails in the region, including the Iditarod Trail. Known by many today as Scout Ridge, the area is presently part of the expansive Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge that is owned and managed by the Alaska State Department of Natural Resources. Encompassing 28,000 acres of coastal and freshwater wetlands, tidal sloughs, waterways, and upland forests, the refuge supports an array of wildlife including anadromous fish and migratory birds. Located adjacent to the growing community of Wasilla, and 50 miles north of Anchorage, it is a well-loved and highly visited public space for people to walk, hike, snowshoe, ski, birdwatch, fish, and ride ATVs.

Scout Ridge Trail is a rudimentary, roughly 1-mile loop trail that runs along a bluff overlooking Cottonwood Creek and the Knik Arm, a shallow glacial estuary. Despite its immense cultural significance, there is currently no visible acknowledgment of the first people of the land, the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina.

*Reawakening *Tladje't** is a collaborative project led by the nonprofit Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats, Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, Knik Tribal Council, Native Village of Eklutna, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Anchorage Museum, and the Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The project has also received support from the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation and the Rasmuson Foundation. With technical assistance from the National Park Service, the partners will work together to develop a master site plan for a cultural education trail at Scout Ridge that will commemorate *Tladje't* and find ways to carry its stories forward.

The National Park Service has helped the group establish a mission, vision, and goals to guide the development of a Dena'ina cultural education trail that is beautiful, durable, and adaptable to change over time. These goals include creating multigenerational and immersive educational opportunities for Indigenous youth, students in the local public school district, families, and visitors from near and far — highlighting stories and traditional practices that provide a meaningful window into a place that people have called home for millennia — and making improvements to the trail to enhance accessibility, visitor experience, safety, and protection of sensitive cultural and natural sites. The partners are focused on inspiring pride in Indigenous youth, educating visitors about the land's history and Dena'ina values, and creating spaces for reflection and healing within the cherished ecosystem.

The National Park Service has been invited to convene project partners, facilitate a collaborative planning process, and engage with nearby landowners and relevant stakeholders. Taking the time to build strong, enduring relationships has been the project's foremost focus. Recently, the project partners collaborated with a local Indigenous-owned communications and storytelling firm to help create culturally relevant storytelling and messaging for the project. This will ensure that the story is told thoughtfully, from a Dena'ina perspective, and with all the necessary permissions from Tribal partners when they are ready to begin interfacing with the public. A collaborative and inclusive site planning process is well underway. Working groups are developing recommendations for interpretation, educational programming, and trail improvements. All are motivated to honor and celebrate the Alaska Native partners and descendants of *Tladje't* who wish to share the stories and lessons of this place for the benefit of the whole community.



Preservation of a Heritage that Dates Back Millennia

Nome, Alaska

Nome Eskimo Community (NEC) was formed in 1939 under the Indian Reorganization Act, although its members have roots in Nome, Alaska that trace back over millennia. Initially, the Nome Eskimo Community primarily operated as the Tribal governing body for the area, but today they provide social services and programs to help improve the quality of life of their Tribal members.

Recognizing a need to improve active transportation (walking and bicycling) and park amenities, the City of Nome collaborated with the NEC, Kawerak, Inc., Bering Straits Native Corporation, Norton Sound Health Corporation, and other organizations to begin the Nome Pathways and Parks Plan Project. The goal of the project was to develop and identify pathways and greenbelt areas to safely connect residents with recreational and community amenities year-round. The

project would also serve to increase economic development opportunities through tourism and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the area.

The National Park Service assisted the partners by facilitating meetings, developing a community and stakeholder engagement strategy, providing technical resources, and sharing expertise in trail layout and design. The National Park Service also helped the partners identify goals and objectives, which included the provision of safe routes to schools and playgrounds, elimination of bike and pedestrian casualties, creation of access to trails that lead out of town, and development of visitor friendly amenities such as campgrounds. Parks that incorporated historic, cultural, and ecosystem experiences were also included, as was the integration of public art to celebrate the area.

Community Park in the Bering Sea

St. Paul, Alaska

Home to the Aleut people, St. Paul Island is 40.32 square miles of land set in the middle of the Bering Sea, hundreds of miles away from the closest Alaskan shore. Located between the United States and Russia, the island's history is fraught with strife, slavery, and epidemics. But the Aleut people have risen above those thanks to their spirit of resilience and survival. The Aleut Community of St. Paul Island's mission is to ensure optimal quality of life for Tribal members and to maintain a connection to their roots and history. They want to work towards a vision for the future of empowered, healthy families that contribute to a thriving culture and sustainable community.

This vision led to a project focused on restoring the island's historic baseball field and transforming an eroding playground into a space that honors the island's history and promotes new recreational opportunities for community members. Baseball has been an important part of the Aleut's culture and way of life—ever since 1868, when the island became home to Alaska's

first baseball team. The field has been actively used since then, despite the poor infrastructure and lack of amenities such as bleachers.

The National Park Service collaborated with the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government, neighboring school, and Tribal members to gather ideas for the underutilized space. Following a site visit and design charrette, the National Park Service developed a concept plan that laid out the project's goals, design guidelines, resource and funding opportunities, and implementation phases that the Tribal government can refer to as they move forward in restoring the baseball field and creating an inviting outdoor recreation space.

With the concept plan in hand, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island set a multi-year timeline to begin implementing the project. The momentum provided by the National Park Service gave life to a project that lives on to this day.





A Trail That Connects Native Culture with a National Symbol

Haines, Alaska

The banks of the Chilkat River border the length of an ancient village called Klukwan. Klukwan is a name that originated from the Tlingit phrase "Tlakw Aan" which means "Eternal Village." The village is located in remote southeastern Alaska, adjacent to the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve. The Tribe is federally recognized as the Chilkat Indian Village and takes pride in their preservation of the Tlingit language, rituals, stories, and subsistence activities, all of which have ensured the continued longevity of their culture.

The Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, was created by the State of Alaska in 1982. The preserve was established to protect one of the world's largest concentrations of Bald Eagles and their critical habitat which sustains the natural salmon runs. The preserve consists of 48,000 acres of river bottom land of the Chilkat, Kleheni, and Tsirku rivers and draws tourists from around the world to photograph the magnificent birds.

Onlookers, however, had little space to do so and were risking their safety by walking along the Haines Highway. The Tribe searched for trail alternatives to provide visitors with a safe way of viewing the birds, as well as to better share their culture and local history with others. A 1.5-mile trail was proposed between existing cultural and natural history facilities within the Chilkat Indian Village to the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve.

The National Park Service helped the Tribe create plans, source funding, and market the trail to prospective users. The riverside trail makes eagle viewing and photography much easier and safer for visitors. It continues onto Klukwan, ending at the Jilkaat Kwaan Cultural Heritage Center, which highlights the village's culture as well as the traditional skills and knowledge associated with their subsistence style living. The heritage center also offers more information about the eagles, teaches participants how to prepare salmon in traditional ways, and showcases local art and artifacts.

A Trail to Success for the Chenega Corporation and the Chenega IRA Council

Evans Island, Alaska

The people of the Chenega Tribe have inhabited Prince William Sound for thousands of years. They are a part of the Alutiiq Tribal family, and their native language is a dialect of Alutiiq called Suqcestun. For centuries, the Tribe lived on Chenega Island until a tsunami destroyed their village in 1964, killing 26 people — over one third of the population at the time. The Tribe relocated to nearby communities in Alaska until they established a new village on Evans Island in Prince William Sound 20 years later.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 granted the Tribal members title to more than 70,000 acres of land, which helped them establish a new village not too far from their original home. It also made it possible for the Tribe to establish the Chenega Corporation. Following a massive Exxon oil spill that led to the destruction of the Tribe's fishing grounds, the Chenega Corporation sold a portion of their land to the U.S. Forest Service and the state of Alaska. This made it possible for the corporation to launch into a business development plan focused on federal government services contracting. Today, the

Tribe focusses on the protection of its land and the success of the Chenega Corporation, which ranks as one of the top 10 most successful Alaskan-owned businesses.

Hoping to increase the recreational, social, and educational opportunities in the village, the Tribe proposed the Chenega Bay to Iktua Bay Trail project - a route between the village and the outer coast of the island. The project was mired for more than a decade in the startup phase before the Tribe requested assistance from the National Park Service in 2008. Over the course of two years, the National Park Service facilitated community meetings, which helped define the Tribe's goals and objectives for the trail. Most Tribal members wanted a trail that could be used year-round and provide various recreational opportunities such as camping, skiing, and riding ATVs while protecting their land and resources. The National Park Service compiled all the information gathered from the community meetings and field visits into a comprehensive trail report which outlined a conceptual trail and possible construction methods as well as estimated costs and next steps for the Chenega Tribe.



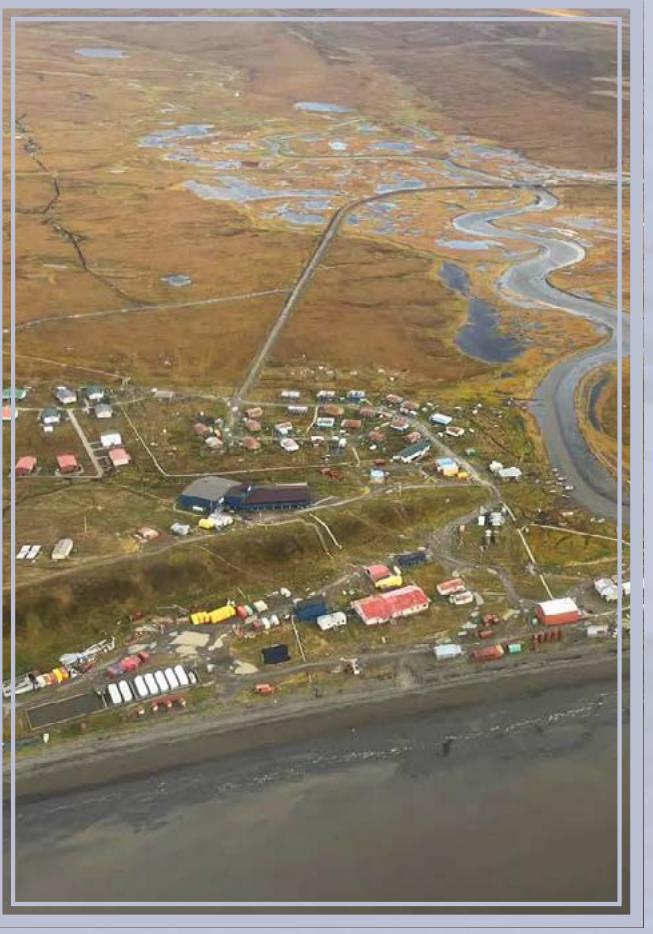
Connecting Cultural Heritage, Recreation, and Community Well-Being

Iliamna, Alaska

The village of Kokhanok is a remote community on the south shore of Lake Iliamna that is home to less than 200 residents who are predominantly Alaska Native. The Kokhanok Village Council represents the village, which has a rich cultural history. Subsistence still plays a major role in the lives of residents who harvest fish, caribou, moose, and other wildlife. The village is close-knit with many events geared toward community building, connecting with youth, and teaching traditional skills such as basket weaving.

In collaboration with the National Park Service, the Kokhanok Village Council led an ATV trail project for the community. The National Park Service helped engage the community and Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in the project to help plan the trail. The National Park Service also provided expertise and support with obtaining permits and authorizations as well as trail layout logistics.





Connecting Remote Villages

Tununak, Alaska

Tununak is a small village situated on Nelson Island, Alaska, in the Bering Sea. The population has been growing steadily ever since it first appeared on the U.S. census in 1880 with a population of eight. It has increased in size over the last decade, with the 2020 census listing the population as 411. There is a bilingual school in the village and the students are all Alaskan natives, the majority of whom speak Yup'ik at home, keeping the language alive.

The Native Village of Tununak wanted to create a five-mile trail that would connect Tununak with neighboring Toksook Bay Village, providing access to the regional health clinic, airport, recreational opportunities, and subsistence resources. They had initial funding from the Denali Commission of \$2.7 million dollars. They also wanted to train a local trail crew to construct and maintain their own ATV trails.

The National Park Service assisted with the project by providing trail construction expertise and facilitating the planning process. This included the provision of logistical support for ordering trail materials and teaching the trail crew ATV Trail installation methods. Another outcome of the partnership was a trail plan that listed detailed information about the trail sections. The trail has since been completed and in 2021 Toksook Bay received funding to extend the trail to the other two villages on the island.

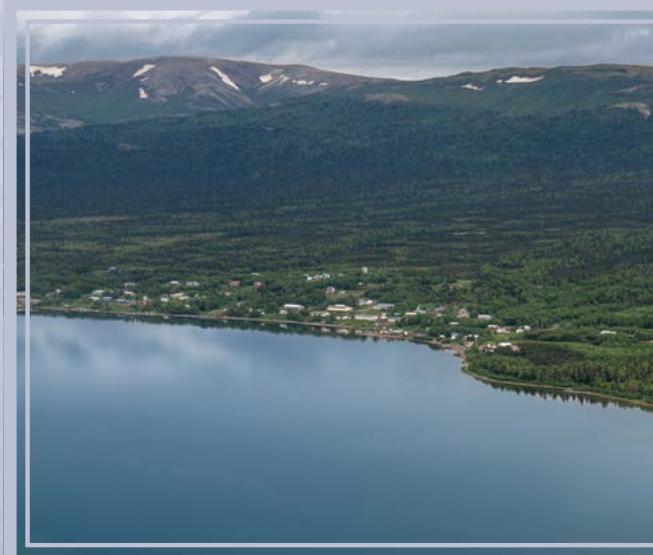


Protecting a Watershed to Support a Subsistence Lifestyle

Nondalton, Alaska

Nondalton is home to the Nondalton Tribal Council and is considered an Athabascan Indian Village. The name, which means "lake after lake," comes from the town's geography as it is situated along a line of lakes known as the Lake Clark watershed. The village, which can only be accessed via airplane or boat, relies on subsistence hunting and fishing.

The Nondalton Tribal Council helped residents to explore strategies to increase awareness and promote stewardship of the Lake Clark watershed. This includes its associated natural, cultural, and subsistence resources. The National Park Service collaborated with the Tribal council in facilitating the development of a network of stewards among other villages and stakeholders. In 2006, the Nondalton Tribal Council produced a long-range environmental plan to highlight community concerns about waste management, water contaminants, water and air quality, and the development of resources and the economy. It identified goals related to each of these, prioritized them, and provided desired outcomes.



Building a Community Trails Plan Through Recreation Planning

McGrath, Alaska

Established in 1976, MTNT, Ltd. is an Alaska Native Village Corporation that is a consolidation of four Alaska village corporations—McGrath, Takotna, Nikolai, and Telida. The headquarters are in McGrath, just west of Denali, and the shareholders are primarily made up of descendants of the Athabascan people.

Despite living in the remote Alaskan wilderness, there are few hiking opportunities for McGrath residents. After the City of McGrath put out a survey asking what would make the town a better place to live, the community expressed the need for having more outdoor recreation opportunities and spaces. With support from MTNT, Ltd. Native Corporation, Doyon Limited Native Corporation, and private landowners, the city asked the National Park Service for help in establishing a vision for a rural trail system.

The National Park Service facilitated a planning process to establish the McGrath Community Trails Plan. It established a vision for the rural trail system to enhance quality of life, improve access to recreation and subsistence resources, and spur economic opportunities for the city. The trail plan identified 13 trails in the McGrath area which were prioritized based on six criteria, including: year-round diverse recreation, scenic value, access for subsistence resources, connections and loops, easy opportunities and cost, and health and education opportunities. While the plan largely covers the improvement of existing trails, it also includes the breaking of new ground for a few routes. Additionally, the National Park Service helped complete an assessment of existing conditions, gathered basic GPS data, and created a trails plan that included the vision and goals, ranking criteria, cost estimates, information on the proposed trails, and trail management objectives.

Newly Developed ATV Trail Technique Garners National Conservation Attention

Hooper Bay, Alaska

Hooper Bay is located on the southwest coast of Alaska, within the polar climate zone. With a population of nearly 1,400 residents, most of which are Alaska Native, the village relies heavily on subsistence hunting and gathering from the surrounding area. Unfortunately, the use of ATVs (the primary mode of transportation due to the lack of road infrastructure) caused severe damage to the environment.

Tribal elders of Yup'ik descent noticed negative impacts from the constant use of ATVs for hunting and gathering. They marked a decrease in one of their primary food sources, the Black Brant Goose, as well as the degradation of the lowland tundra and vegetation. Seeing these impacts, the elders understood that their native way of life was threatened and sought counsel with the Alaska Native Village Corporation from Hooper Bay, the Sea Lion Corporation. Together, they began searching for solutions. They reached out to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) who helped the village host a community planning session to determine new trail routes and identify which unmanaged and dispersed trails to decommission. The NRCS also provided funding and engineering design expertise.

The National Park Service was brought into the partnership due to their recognized expertise and experience with newly developed ATV trail hardening methods, including the use of porous pavement. In collaboration with NRCS and the Sea Lion Corporation, the National Park Service helped direct on-the-ground installation of the trail. To fuel the local economy, residents were hired to build the trail. The project was so successful that the village agreed to extend the trail approximately eight miles. The idea spread statewide and inspired a standard structure for the use of rural ATVs. The project also received national recognition and was one of 21 recipients of the Department of the Interior's Cooperative Conservation Award in 2008.



A Park and Playground for the Generations that Follow

Newhalen, Alaska

Newhalen traces its roots back to 1890 when the census listed a 16-person Yup'ik village at the mouth of the Newhalen River. Nurilang is the traditional name for the village that was established there because of the abundance of fish and game in the area. Today, Newhalen is home to Dena'Ina, Yup'ik, and Sugpiag people, the majority of whom practice a subsistence and fishing lifestyle.

Set in a beautiful, yet wild, location, Newhalen is unsafe at times for young children. With no designated places to play, children used to play near motorways, which resulted in tragic accidents. The city was determined to do something to protect and provide for their youth. The solution was to build the Newhalen Park and Playground, a project officially supported by the City

Council in 2015. The city park and playground would provide a safe space for children to play as well as amenities for families and the community to enjoy.

The National Park Service was asked to provide expertise and facilitate the planning process. In collaboration with the city, the National Park Service engaged the community in the planning process and developed a concept plan for two park sites and a path to connect them. The concept plan provided information on existing conditions, planning considerations, design concepts and guidelines, and financial aid. The comprehensive plan for the project was delivered to the city which helped them receive a grant.





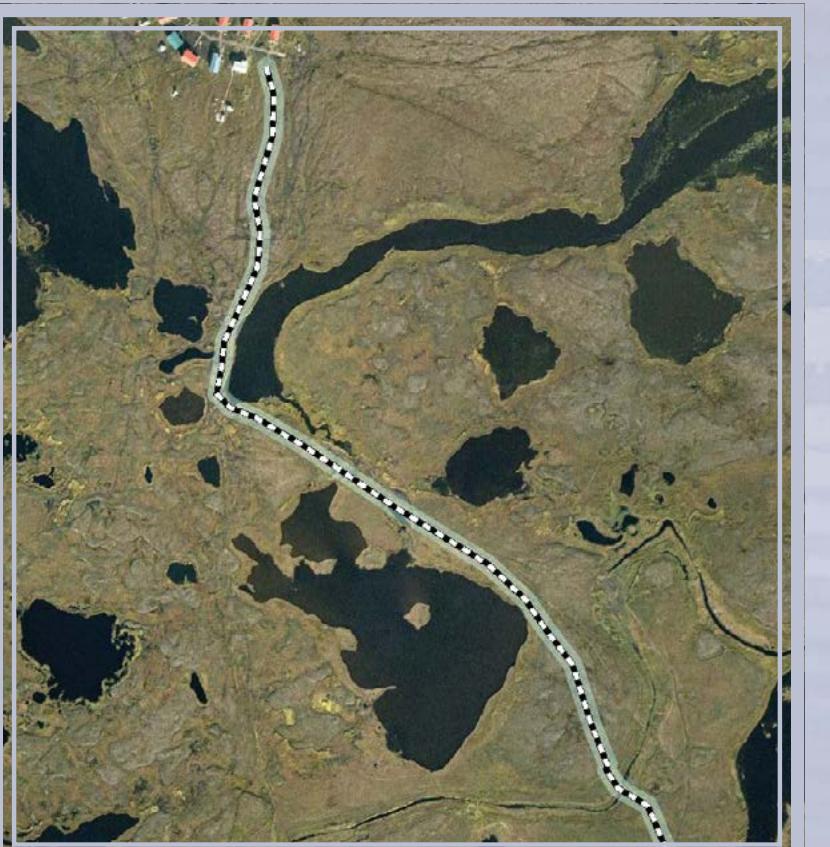
The Preservation of a Subsistence Culture for the Kongiganak Traditional Council

Kongiganak, Alaska

Kongiganak is a traditional Yup'ik Eskimo village located in southwestern Alaska, on the eastern shore of the Kongiganak River. The village has a school, small airport, two churches, and a few businesses and is only accessible by boat or plane since there are no roads or cars. The primary forms of transportation are ATVs in the summer and snow machines in the winter. Residents rely on fishing and subsistence resources, since the difficulty in importing major supplies results in high prices.

Before ATVs were introduced to Kongiganak and other nearby villages, subsistence activities involved walking and/or taking sled-dogs to get to the areas where people hunted and gathered berries and various plants to make teas or use as food. The wetland and permafrost tundra experienced little to no change to the landscape as a result of the low impact access methods. However, with the introduction of ATVs, fish camps and subsistence hunting and gathering areas began to deteriorate due to the impact of the vehicle on fragile tundra soils.

The Kongiganak Tribal Council and members of the community determined that the installation of a hardened surface on prioritized main trail routes could potentially reduce the negative impacts of ATVs and improve surrounding habitat conditions. The ATV trail project sought to form a local trail crew to manage and construct trails; protect the wetlands, migratory birds, and subsistence food resources; and provide economic value by reducing fuel costs by use of the hardened trail. The Kongiganak Traditional Council and Qemirtalek Coast Corporation requested help from the National Park Service in determining the feasibility of the project and developing a trail plan with construction guidelines and cost estimates. The National Park Service provided technical expertise and facilitated the planning process which led to a trail plan and engineering plans.



A map outlining a route for a hardened ATV trail.



Community Walkway at the Edge of the Arctic Ocean

Utqiagvik, Alaska

Utqiagvik, Alaska is home to the traditional Iñupiat Government. Utqiagvik is a coastal town perched at the edge of the Arctic Ocean. Situated 320 miles north of the Arctic Circle, it is the northernmost city in the United States. The city was formerly known as Barrow, but in 2016 the community voted to restore it to its original Indigenous name. Derived from the Iñupiat word utqiq, Utqiagvik refers to a place for gathering wild roots. Archaeological sites have revealed that the area was settled by the Iñupiat as far back as 500 A.D., making it one of the oldest permanent settlements in the country. In the late 1800s, the town had a whaling station, and to this day many residents rely on whales, seals, fish, caribou, and other animals as subsistence food sources.

While working on creating a community walkway, the community sought assistance on how to apply for federal and state transportation funding. The National Park Service provided advice on how to promote the community's walkway project with funding organizations and helped them apply for funding. The outcomes of the project included a document detailing available funding sources and types, which also included project eligibility requirements. Today, the walkway contributes to tourism opportunities such as the chance to experience 24-hours of daylight and to dip your toes in the Arctic Ocean.



SQUEAKY AXELS AND ALL

Transforming **Sky Chief Park** into a recreational, educational, and cultural space
for the **Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians**

Faced with a depressed economy while living in an area of great natural beauty in the Midwest, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa* Indians knew that Sky Chief Park held so much more potential than it was realizing. The Tribe's Natural Resource Department wanted to steward it in perpetuity while offering compatible outdoor recreation and nature-based education for Tribal citizens and guests, but they lacked the know-how to achieve what might serve the Tribe best.

After searching extensively throughout the Midwest for a suitable outdoor design agency, landscape firm, or recreational planner, they could not find the right fit until they learned of the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. In collaboration with the Tribe, the National Park Service helped the community of Belcourt, North Dakota develop an updated master site plan which included extensive entrepreneurial activities that will cater for the all-season park, recreational area, and interpretive center.

Turtle Island is both a Native American name for the North American continent and the name of an area of North Dakota that lies just 180 miles from the continent's geographic center. The location serves as the center of identity for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (TMBCI). Proud of their heritage as a resourceful Tribe, their legacy includes legendary Chiefs, warriors, buffalo hunters, traders, trappers, voyagers, and the Red River Cart.

*Chippewa is an anglicized version of the name Ojibwe.

The Red River Cart

The Red River Cart is a symbol of the Chippewa Indians and the Métis people's industrious and adaptable nature. (According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, Métis are people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, and one of the three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada.)

Chippewa Indians have a long history of business association and intermarriage with non-Indians going back to the 17th century. This made possible the North American fur trade. By 1800, the Tribe had gained fame for their Red River Carts, which were designed to transport additional hides and buffalo meat. These carts were named after the Red River Valley, where the Tribe had established their settlement. In his 1871 book, "Red River," Hudson's Bay Company trader and journalist Joseph James Hargrave provided a detailed description of these remarkable carts.

"They are constructed entirely of wood, without any iron whatever, the axels and rims of the wheels forming no exception to the rule. Although this might at first sight appear a disadvantage, as denoting a want of strength, yet it is really the reverse, because in the country traversed by these vehicles, wood is abundant and always to be obtained in quantities sufficient to mend any breakages which might take place."



A Red River Cart

Image courtesy of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History



Chippewa Indians with Red River Carts in 1873.

Image courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada

Each cart could be loaded with 500 pounds and the wiry little ponies that pulled them could cover up to 60 miles a day, "in a measured, but by no means hurried, jog trot." In comparison, the common rate of progress made by heavier ox carts was about 20 miles a day.

Because grease collects grit, which then acts like sandpaper, the axels would squeak horrendously. This resulted in the cart's nickname: the "North West fiddle." And of course, it wasn't long before the blend of French, Scottish, Irish, and Indian tunes around campfires gave birth to an actual fiddle tune, which came to be known as the Red River Jig. Today, both the cart and the jig are integral to Chippewa and Métis culture.

Trains of the two-wheeled carts served as the freightliners of the 1800s. They connected the northwest's major cities before the railroads. And whenever a river had to be crossed, a cart's wheels could quickly be removed to be used as floats for the cart itself.

Extreme hardship, poverty, disease, epidemics, and cultural destruction marked the early reservation era of the Chippewa, but because of the Tribe's heritage of resourceful self-sufficiency, they made a way.

Today the Tribe's website notes that the proud, hardworking Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians were raised with a solid work ethic and a fierce will to better their condition. The Red River Cart—squeaky axels and all—epitomizes this enduring resilience and ingenuity.



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Steve Collins of the forestry division for the Bureau of Indian Affairs clears brush along a trail.

NPS / Ian Vorster

Reigniting Resourcefulness

Staying true to their legacy, the Tribe's Natural Resource Department asked the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) for their support to improve a cherished park.

Sky Chief Park—also known as “Ogimaa Giizhig,” the Ojibwe/Chippewa name for the park, and “li syel chef parc” in Michif, the language of the Métis people—is a flagship for the greater Turtle Mountain region. Set in a world of timbered hillsides, rolling prairies, sparkling water, edible and medicinal plants, and wildlife, the Tribe's Natural Resource Department wants to steward it in perpetuity while offering compatible outdoor recreation and nature-based education for Tribal citizens and visitors. They searched extensively throughout the Midwest for a suitable outdoor design agency, landscape firm, or recreational planner but could not find the right fit until they learned about the National Park Service's conservation and outdoor recreation assistance program – NPS-RTCA.

Jeff Desjarlais, Jr., is the program director for the TMBCI Natural Resource Department. Part French Canadian and part Chippewa, he goes by JJ to everyone he works with.

“A few years ago, we had envisioned a big plan for Sky Chief Park, but at the time we didn't know who we would go to,” JJ said. “Would it be a company that specialized in parks and recreation? We couldn't find anyone who could handle a project like this and who also had experience working with a Tribe.”

Steve Collins, a team member, and the fire management officer for the forestry division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, added, “I even bought a few books on the subject. We were trying to move forward in a hodge-podge sort of way, until we connected with the National Park Service by accident. So, we were excited. We had never even thought about the things they've introduced us to.”

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Two NPS-RTCA project managers, Kat Shiffler, a landscape architect, and Barrett Steenrod, a community planner, worked collaboratively with partners. After hammering out a mission statement in the office, they toured the park extensively in side-by-side all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and on foot. In places, Collins had to cut through the brush to clear a path for Shiffler and Steenrod to follow. Throughout the site visit, they discussed potential campsites, plants of interest, the best trail topography, and then noted their decisions down in collaboration with the Sky Chief Park team. That boots-on-the-ground effort also included a drone-in-the-air view to select the best route through heavy brush. And then they again reconvened in the office to fine tune their ideas.

In collaboration with the Sky Chief Park team, Shiffler and Steenrod surveyed the potential for an RV/camping area, collected GPS data, and designed and evolved a conceptual plan for the campground. Data was also collected to identify trees in the campground area to be protected in the long-term. Shiffler and Steenrod will help create a concept design for the site that is informed by the data to minimize ecological harm.

The degree to which Shiffler and Steenrod provided advice and ideas can be better understood with the following anecdote. In the lobby of the hotel in which the NPS-RTCA team was staying during the visit, Steenrod noticed a large birch bark scroll. Inspired by its significance to the Tribe, he suggested that the Sky Chief Park team scribe a communal mural-like birch bark scroll on a fence to screen the facility buildings from a nearby picnic area.

Years ago, a birch bark scroll was a mnemonic device, or learning tool, to help memorize what was important to Tribal members. Commonly, mnemonics are often verbal but sometimes can be visual objects used to help a person remember something. These writings enabled the memorization of complex ideas and passed along history and notable stories to succeeding generations. Topics included astronomy, rituals, maps, family lineage, songs, and migration routes. According to Minnesota Public Radio, "the scrolls commonly disappeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period when Tribes were losing their land; when their children were being sent to boarding schools; and when their religious practices were a federal crime — which lasted until the 1970s."



Barett Steenrod and Kat Shiffler of the National Park Service (left) scope the park area alongside Jeff Desjarlais, Jr., the program director for the TMBCI Natural Resource (right). NPS / Ian Vosler

Community Engagement

The TMBCI Natural Resource Department, in collaboration with the National Park Service, engaged local communities through meetings to help evolve a vision for the park.

The TMBCI Natural Resource Department also conducted extensive community surveys which overwhelmingly showed that around 80% of visitors to the park were locals. Additionally, the surveys showed that community members wanted the park to be an economic driver for the Tribe, so the planning team developed strategies for how the park could generate revenue. Schiffler and Steenrod were then able to assist JJ and his team in identifying how to improve current recreational opportunities and where to introduce new outdoor activities.



The park is extremely popular with the local community and is used as a space for hosting winter fishing derbies, canoe races, swimming, camping, and summer fishing.

Images courtesy of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



Sky Chief Park will serve as a regional, day-use and overnight park emphasizing high-quality front-and backcountry hiking experiences, fishing, camping, water sports, as well as other forms of seasonal outdoor recreation. Park facilities and programs are actively managed by the TMBCI Natural Resource Department for public access and enjoyment while also ensuring the well-being of the landscape's plants and animals through the conservation of natural and cultural heritage values in perpetuity.

Sometimes vision and mission statements precede engagement and sometimes they do not. In this case, both the vision and mission statements were developed somewhat concurrently with the community engagement phase which all helped to ensure the work was focused.



The National Park Service team listens as representatives from TMBCI discuss their vision for Sky Chief Park.

When Shiffler and Steenrod visited Sky Chief Park for the second time, they noticed how much had changed since the initial community meetings. A lumbermill, which had already been established before NPS-RTCA's involvement with the project, was being used to process all the timber cleared away from campsites and trails, for fire management and related conservation purposes. Overnight cabins, signage, tent lean-to shelters and platforms, picnic tables, and even bluebird nest boxes had been built. Additionally, the mill required the Tribe's Natural Resource Department to hire and train a team to run it. Personnel will be required for all the associated programs, from archery to fishing derbies, hunting, camping, reservations, canoeing, and more.

Together, the TMBCI Natural Resource Department and the National Park Service helped make these successes possible by identifying and analyzing the key issues and opportunities. NPS-RTCA co-created the community engagement strategy to engage Sky Chief Park users in the vision casting and design process for the park; developed concept plans for trails, parks, and local natural resources; identified trail accessibility improvements throughout the park; and prioritized and planned for the thoughtful placement of a variety of campsites and cabins and other assorted improvements or amenities. Shepherding the project home, the development of a sustainable organizational framework in this case includes a draft of a park management plan that covers planning, design, operation, and stewardship of Sky Chief Park.

Jeff Desjarlais, Jr., also known as JJ to anyone he works with, is the program director for the TMBCI Natural Resource Department. Here he explains the workings of the lumbermill he established.



NPS / Ian Vorster



NPS / Ian Vorster



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"This is honestly a dream come true for us, in two ways. The first was to be able to succeed with our application to the National Park Service, and the second is to be able to tap into their knowledge and experience, which makes so much more possible for us," said Susan Delorme, a park ranger for Sky Chief Park. Before joining Sky Chief Park, Delorme had served as a teacher and then as a ranger at Lake Metigoshe State Park. As a park ranger for Sky Chief Park, she has trained and employed four additional rangers and expects the program to grow exponentially over the next two years.

Part of the NPS-RTCA planning process was to also travel to Lake Metigoshe State Park with JJ and Delorme to meet with their staff and talk through the good, bad, and the ugly of the state park's layout and design.

"We looked at their RV area, trails, and infrastructure and then discussed what they wanted to emulate, avoid, and adapt to be a unique version of a park grounded in Chippewa and Métis aesthetics and values," Shiffler said.

At the start of each day, the little office in front of TMBCI's Natural Resource Department building plays host to the entire team, from director to laborer. Donuts might be provided but freshly brewed coffee is always available. For about half an hour the banter, carried by thick Métis accents, takes one back to the days when the idea of the Red River Cart and its unique characteristics was born to a land and people around a campfire.

JJ summarizes the potential impact of Sky Chief Park. "It's going to be beautiful. The Tribe is going to take pride in it. It will serve as a mental, physical, and emotional feature, which will ground

the people and reconnect them to the land. I can only say thank you to the National Park Service for what they have done for us."

Squeaky axels and all, Sky Chief Park will serve as a recreational, educational, and cultural space for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians and will lead the community's well-being into the first half of the 21st Century. 

CONTIGUOUS U.S.

The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program has partnered with Native American Tribes and Indigenous communities for more than 30 years. Contributing to the mission of the National Park Service, our program has extended the benefits of parks to Tribal communities across the country.

By assigning staff with expertise in landscape design, outdoor recreation, green infrastructure, and natural resource management to projects, the National Park Service has helped develop and restore parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats well beyond national park boundaries. In the process, project managers have helped Tribal partners create outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that have engaged youth in conservation and the outdoors. National Park Service project managers complement the vast traditional knowledge of

Tribal communities with their own planning, design, and technical experience. Together, they work towards achieving each Tribe's vision for their landscape. Local engagement and enthusiasm are at the core of community-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Conscious of that principle, National Park Service project managers have listened to the many ideas offered by Tribal communities across the nation and have tailored their assistance to meet Tribal needs to help them navigate their own richly storied paths to success.







Lee Vining, California

A Strong Partnership Builds the Foundation for a Tribal Heritage Park

The Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe is the southernmost band of the Numu People. They have called the Mono Lake-Yosemite region home for thousands of years. Typically, the Tribe migrated throughout the region as they followed available game, harvesting plants along the way. Although not yet federally recognized, the Tribe has been working on cultural preservation for the last two decades and consults with Yosemite National Park on a variety of projects.

Cultural preservation is an important goal for the protection of Tribal resources, traditional perspectives, and the maintenance of the Kootzaduka'a language. To better facilitate the aims of the Tribe, a nonprofit organization, the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Indian Community Cultural Preservation Association, was established. It is active in all aspects of documenting, preserving, and revitalizing the Tribe's cultural heritage with various projects.

Despite being an under-resourced and small Tribe, they had a strong vision: to develop a Tribal heritage park and interpretive river trail near the northwestern shore of Mono Lake. To help turn the vision into a reality, the Tribe collaborated with the National Park Service, which led Tribal

volunteers through the process of developing a concept plan. As part of the planning process, the National Park Service documented the Tribe's vision and goals, conducted an inventory and analyzed existing conditions, created a conceptual site plan and a project timeline, and identified cost estimates and management strategies. The concept plan will be a blueprint for the park and river trail that will reflect and celebrate the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a community's priorities.

Despite the pandemic limiting opportunities for in-person meetings, the National Park Service was still able to establish a strong partnership with the Tribe by building trust. In the early stages of the project, the National Park Service facilitated a virtual Tribal workshop which started an iterative process to facilitate productive conversations and critical reflections. The National Park Service also partnered with Cal Poly Pomona's College of Environmental Design to create a capstone project for the college's landscape architecture graduate program. In addition to developing a concept plan, the project process involved encouraging the Tribal team to professionally engage and articulate their goals to land trusts, agencies, and private parties.

Building a Cultural Park with the Mountain Maidu Tribe Dedicated to Healing, Education, and Traditional Ecosystem Management

Chester, California

Tásmam Koyóm is the Maidu name for what settlers would later call Humbug Valley in Plumas County, California. The Maidu people are dispersed into many bands that live among and identify with separate valleys, foothills, and mountains in northeastern Central California. Humbug Valley was an important Tribal population center within the ancestral lands of the Mountain Maidu for many generations. The valley consists of approximately 2,325 acres, which includes most of the Tásmam Koyóm alpine valley and some adjacent hillside forest land. Tásmam Koyóm was returned to the Maidu Summit Consortium in 2019, thanks to a land transfer by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. The transfer was the culmination of a process that began in 2003 – the same year that the Maidu Summit Consortium was founded.

With the vision to develop a cultural park dedicated to education, healing, and traditional ecosystem management, the Maidu Summit Consortium asked the National Park Service for help. In collaboration with the American Society of Landscape Architects, the National Park Service designed conceptual plans

for improvements to Yellow Creek Campground and the surrounding Humbug Valley that illustrate a vision for the development of the Tásmam Koyóm Maidu Cultural Park. The National Park Service also facilitated a collaborative conceptual design planning process to identify improvements and illustrate design concepts to enhance campground facilities, located at the southern end of the site. Additionally, the conceptual plans highlighted a non-motorized trail system that will provide connectivity to key park sites and destinations while limiting public access to the park's most sensitive locations that only Tribal members can access.

The Maidu Summit Consortium envisioned opening the park to the public so that they could learn about and honor the site's past, present, and future. The National Park Service created an entry site plan that highlighted site features and recommendations for the Maidu Summit Consortium to implement. From the moment Tribal members and visitors enter the park, they will feel the spirit of renewal and regeneration of the land.





Partnership with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Produces Design Concepts for the Waniyetu Wowapi Art Park

Eagle Butte, South Dakota

The Oceti Sakowin are an alliance of Tribes that consist of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota, each with a slightly different language dialect. The Lakota have seven distinct bands, four of which are located on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

The Lakota phrase "Waniyetu Wowapi" translates to "Winter Count," a practice of recording Tribal events through art on animal hide. In keeping with the tradition, the Cheyenne River Youth Project developed the Waniyetu Wowapi Art Park in Eagle Butte to provide youth and community members with an opportunity to express themselves and explore their native connection to art. With the vision to further develop the 5-acre park, the Cheyenne River Youth Project asked the National Park Service for help in making the space more accessible while incorporating opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The National Park Service partnered with the North Dakota State University Landscape Architecture Program to create six different designs for the park. The designs featured facilities

and outdoor recreation opportunities. The National Park Service also mapped a trail system within the art park that was recently constructed by volunteer groups. The trail, which has benches along it, winds through the park allowing visitors to wander and contemplate the art.

The park hosts RedCan Graffiti Jams, where both native and non-native artists are invited to create large-scale murals alongside guest performances and youth art activities. The summer 2021 event ended with the Cheyenne River Youth Project breaking ground on a new youth arts center located in the middle of the park. The Waniyetu Wowapi Art Park is a central part of the Cheyenne River Sioux community and is therefore well supported by Tribal leadership. Thanks to that, there have been no significant challenges other than ongoing funding, but the RedCan Graffiti Jams have gained recognition for the park and the Cheyenne River Youth Project.



Images courtesy of LakotaYouth.org



The Guardians of a Historic Location

Village of Santee, Nebraska

As highlighted by the Nebraska Indian Community College, the Santee were known as the "frontier guardians of the Sioux Nation." The Tribe's homelands ranged from the Santee's home in what is currently Minnesota, across the Plains to the northern Rocky Mountains in Montana and south through the northwestern part of Nebraska. The people were a woodlands Tribe, living in semi-permanent villages and engaging in some farming.

The Santee Sioux Office of Environmental Protection asked the National Park Service for assistance in leading a design process for a new park that is connected to existing trails at the site of a historic artesian well in the middle of the town. The Tribe imagined it might serve as a gathering place for students and a hub for an already existing trail network.

The Tribe's Office of Environmental Protection was interested in how to best protect and restore the area surrounding the spring to showcase the value of groundwater and its water quality as a central focus of the park. The Tribe sought to design a park that highlighted the historical significance of the site while also sensitively stewarding and protecting it from any potential abuse. The National Park Service created a concept design for the new park site that included a boardwalk, fishing areas, and other recreational and educational activities. The design also accounted for flood cycles.

Creation of a Greenway for the Cherokee Nation

Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Upon settling in Indian Territory, or present-day Oklahoma, after the Indian Removal Act, the Cherokee Nation established a new government in what is now the city of Tahlequah. There, the Cherokee adopted a constitution on September 6, 1839, 68 years prior to Oklahoma's statehood.

The Cherokee Nation's 7,000 square-mile reservation in northeastern Oklahoma is made up of diverse ecosystems. As with any treasured landscape, it is recognized as priceless and deserving of protection and preservation. For years, the cultural aspects of the area have been well kept secrets, but the Cherokee Nation and the Northeast Oklahoma Regional Alliance (NORA) now want to share them with the rest of the country. NORA is a group of business, community, education, and economic development leaders who are dedicated to the growth, prosperity, and vitality of the region.

The partnership with the Cherokee Nation first started in 2012 when the Tribe asked the National Park Service to assist them in building a coalition and developing a master plan that would enhance Sallisaw Creek and its surrounding woodland habitat within the reservation.

Facing mounting challenges and an aging supporter base, the coalition recognized the need to revisit and redefine the project's vision for future generations, which led them to again

seek support from the National Park Service in 2021. While the project's foundation centered around celebrating the Cherokee Nation's cultural and traditional spaces, the community engagement sessions introduced a host of innovative elements. Notably, the group emphasized the importance of supporting sustainable growth and development in the region while addressing climate change concerns, such as flooding and rising temperatures.

Today, the purpose of the coalition, which includes NORA, is to advocate for the conservation and preservation of natural, historical, and cultural places and resources in the Ozark Plateau. Partners hope to harness the potential of the coalition and partnership building to drive collaborative regional efforts. These efforts will not only raise awareness about the history and culture of the Cherokee Nation but will also actively engage individuals with the outdoors through recreational experiences.

The group is actively reestablishing the invigorated vision within their master planning documents. The inclusion of a trail alignment within the greenway has proven to be a promising focus, driving and sustaining momentum for the Greenway of the Cherokee Ozarks project as it propels into the future.





Development of a Concept Plan for a Sustainable Equestrian Trail Network

Fort Totten, North Dakota

The Dakota People of the Spirit Lake Nation have a special relationship with horses. As a Plains Indian Tribe, they became expert horsemen, and this tradition continues today. The vision of the Spirit Lake Nation was to develop a properly planned, sustainable equestrian trail system that would provide riders with the best opportunity to ride on a dedicated trail system near their homes. The Tribe also hoped to open the trails to the public to provide recreational opportunities and to promote tourism and associated economic opportunities on the reservation.

Together with the Spirit Lake Nation, the National Park Service collaborated with the North Dakota State University Landscape Architecture Program and North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department to develop a concept plan for nearly 800 acres of Tribal lands. This concept plan served as an introduction to a larger 2,000-acre development plan.

During site visits, it became evident that the property was secluded and had been used to dump trash, hunt, ride ATVs, and other activities. Much of the site had little to no access other than a few low-use dirt roads. These roads are used as access for cell towers located in three locations on the site. Through the information gathering process, the National Park Service and the landscape architecture students also learned that Tribal members were interested in incorporating equestrian trails, campgrounds, parking facilities, stables, overlook areas, and bunkhouses into the master plan. The Tribe wanted the equestrian facility to create jobs, income, and most importantly, to provide a safe place for kids to gather, learn to ride, and take care of horses.

Because the land was rugged, unused, and was made up of many small parcels that had been inherited by Tribal members, the National Park Service project manager facilitated an outreach strategy to engage Tribal landowners in the planning process and acquire permission to incorporate their lands as part of the overall concept plan.

An Outreach Strategy for Indigenous Groups Across the Southwest

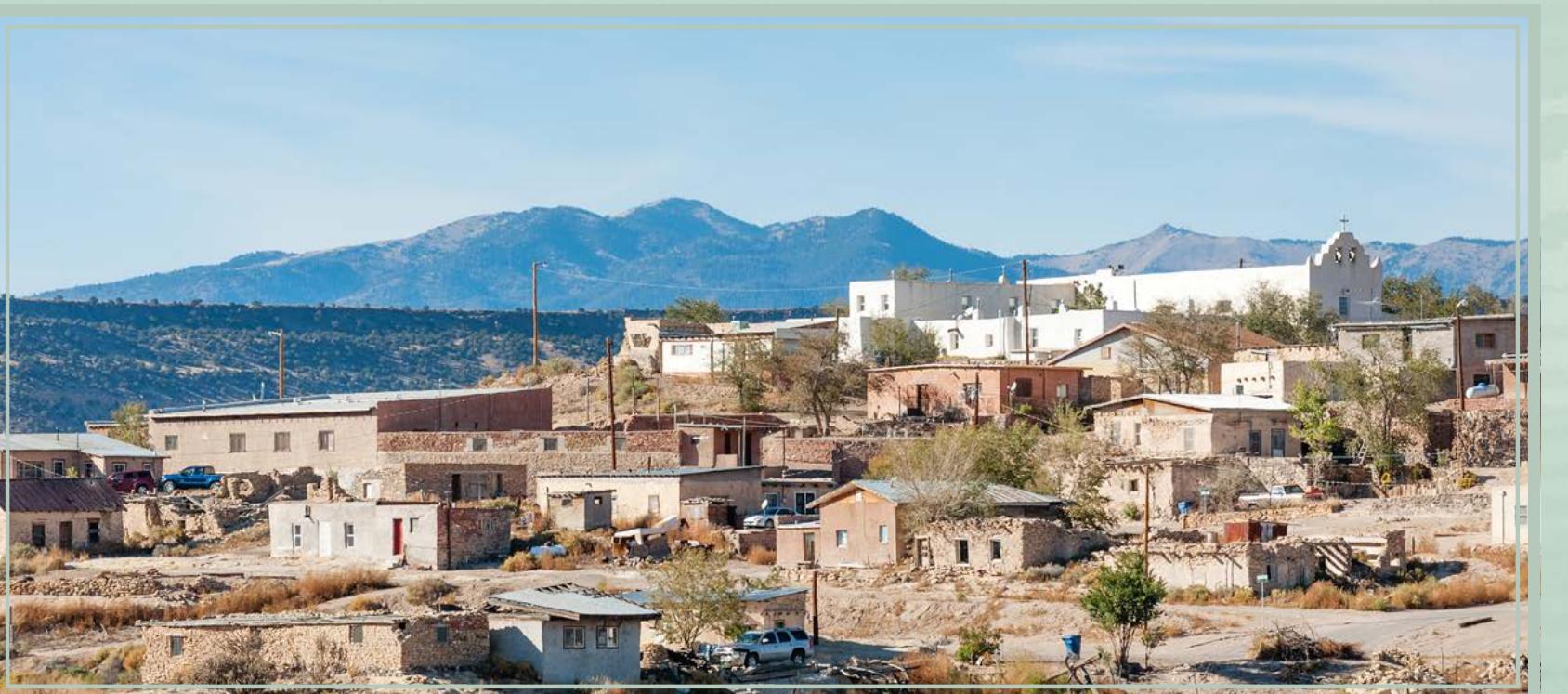
Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Colorado

The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program has a long history of collaborating with Indigenous communities on conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the country. Recognizing an opportunity to learn and strengthen connections with Tribes in their region, the team serving the southwest prioritized the development of an Indigenous outreach strategy. To bolster this effort, they recruited two Indigenous interns who worked together to create an outreach and engagement strategy that will guide the team towards fostering respectful, mindful, and relevant relationships with Indigenous communities in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Colorado.

To develop the strategy, the interns practiced active listening and conducted interviews with a wide range of Tribal community members and representatives from various Indigenous groups across the southwest region. These groups included the Laguneros (also known as the Irritilas), Coahuiltecan, Zacatecas, Tohono O'odham Nation, Tepehuán, Guachichil-Chichimeca, Navajo (also known as Diné), Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, Alabama-Coushatta, Zuni, Cheyenne, and Arapaho.

The purpose was to identify key themes and strategies to bridge the gap between National Park Service practices and the specific needs of native communities. The interviews revealed significant learning requirements, including the necessity to comprehend basic traditional history, to become familiar with common Indigenous terms and expressions, and to engage in decolonizing practices by shedding stigmas and behaviors that create distance between staff and communities.

While recognizing the diverse nature of native communities, the team considered these efforts as a crucial step in the right direction towards diversifying their community engagement and project planning. The interviews form the cornerstone of the Indigenous Outreach Strategy, igniting a transformative journey for the southwest team as it explored how the National Park Service could expand and enhance its relationships with Indigenous communities in the region.



Trails Inventory Lays Foundation for Penatuhkah Comanche Trails Partnership

Coleman, Brown, and Comanche counties of Texas

In their native language, the Comanche Nation are known as "Nʉmʉʉ" or "The People." Also called "Lords of the Plains," they were once a part of the Shoshone Tribe. In the late 1600s, they left their Shoshone kinsmen to migrate across the Plains, through Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas, and into present day southwest Oklahoma, where they settled.

With official support from the Comanche Nation, the Penatuhkah Comanche Trails Partnership (PCTP), a coalition of partners based in central Texas, asked the National Park Service for support in developing a landscape conservation plan focused on bringing people together across geographies, cultures, and economic sectors for the protection and interpretation of their traditional lands. Located in the homeland of the Penatuhkah band of the Comanche Nation from 1750 to 1875, the Penatuhkah Comanche Trails Partnership covers about 15,000 square miles. The Comanche Nation looked forward to "reigniting the interest of people about the Tribal homelands in Texas and to contribute to a partnership and program of education and tourism that would benefit both the Comanche Nation and the people in the Penatuhkah homelands."

At the start of the project, the National Park Service recognized two primary challenges. The first was to identify historically sacred sites and resources of the Comanche as well as pinpoint those stories of the Tribe that had been told from the typical non-Comanche, non-Indigenous, white settler point of view. The second was that the Penatuhkah Comanche Trails Partnership did not have the capacity or resources to lead the project. In particular, PCTP, although it included official representatives from the Comanche Nation, did not have a clear distinction of roles and duties, nor had a vision and mission development process been undertaken. The National Park Service facilitated a collaboration assessment process to help the Penatuhkah Comanche Trails Partnership identify areas of focus for their organizational development. This included the development of a mission statement and a list of goals, strategies, and activities which were highlighted in a work plan.

The work plan has made it possible to improve access to, and conserve historic trails and cultural sites in the area. The partnership's primary focus was on restoring and maintaining the Penatuhkah Trail, a historic trail that was used by the Comanche people and later by settlers in the region. Recognized as an important part of the cultural heritage of the area, PCTP's efforts will help ensure that it is preserved for future generations.



Enhancement of a Recreation Center for a Woodland Tribe

Shawnee, Oklahoma

Today, the Absentee Shawnee Tribe is located in the heart of central Oklahoma. Before being removed from their traditional homelands, they lived in northeastern states with a particularly large population in Ohio. Considered a "Woodland Tribe," they have strong connections to their cultural traditions and value celebrating their heritage through ceremonies and dances, Tribal rites, and by speaking in the Algonquian dialect of the Shawnee language. In the early 2000s, the Tribe formed the Cultural Preservation Department to further their goal of maintaining, preserving, and protecting their traditions, language, and ancestral homelands.

In 2013, the Tribe collaborated with the National Park Service to develop a recreation and outdoor enhancement site master plan for the Horseshoe Bend Community Recreation Center.

The Tribe wished to enhance the natural environment of the recreation center and provide safe outdoor activities such as fitness, environmental education, nature interpretation, camping, and agriculture/gardening. These activities would not only promote healthier lifestyles, but they would also increase conservation skills and knowledge in the community, especially for younger generations.

The National Park Service assisted the project through the formation of project plans, facilitation of community outreach, and investigation into possible funding sources. Additionally, the National Park Service helped with the development of partnerships that helped the Tribe brainstorm ideas and identify priorities for the master site plan.

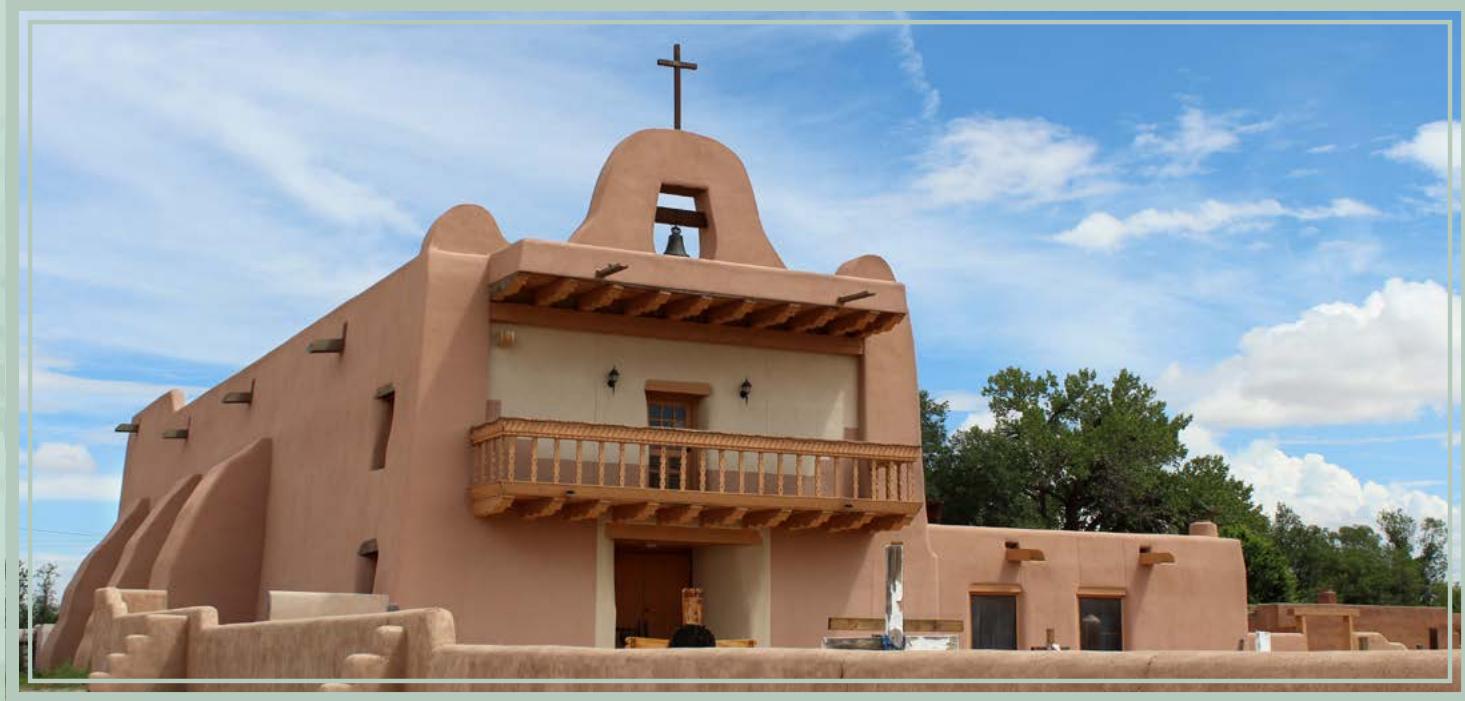


A Plan to Create River Access for the Yankton Sioux Tribe

Wagner, South Dakota

The Yankton Sioux Tribe, also known as Ihaŋktonwaŋ Dakota Oyate, which translates to "People of the End Village," has relied on fishing for generations—which requires access to the Missouri River and other water bodies. The name comes from the time when the Tribe lived at the end of Spirit Lake, just north of Lake Mille Lacs. Hoping to once again have access the Missouri River, the Tribe invited the National Park Service to help them develop a plan for a park and river access that can be used for camping, gathering areas, and fishing.

The National Park Service facilitated the design and community engagement process that resulted in identifying challenges and coming up with solutions. The most significant challenge for this project was creating access to the river. Realizing that the riverbank was 15-feet higher than the water's edge, the community identified that a long boat ramp would be needed. The National Park Service shared design ideas with the Tribe and identified best construction practices.



Carving Out Something of Beauty

Santa Fe, New Mexico

North of Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Pueblo de San Ildefonso people call more than 39,000 acres of land their home. Although their Tribal name is in Spanish, in which “pueblo” means “town,” they also identify their location by the tewa name of “Po-woh-ge-oweenge,” which translates to “Where the Water Cuts Through.” After a prolonged drought, the Tribe moved from what is today known as Bandelier into the valleys of the Rio Grande around 1300 A.D. It is also said that their people originally came from the Mesa Verde complex in Southern Colorado. The Tribe is known as a people of craft—from painters, jewelry makers, and weavers to carvers, seamstresses, and, most well-known, potters. They make beautiful and unique pottery with their famous black on black design, alongside other red and polychrome pottery. These crafts, alongside the natural beauty and resources of the area, are big drawcards for tourists.

With a vision to balance care for the mind, body, and spirit, the Tribe’s Health and Human Services Department adopted a program from New Mexico’s Department of Health – the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities (HKHC) Initiative. The program aims to promote a walkable, bikeable community by building new and improving existing environments.

With support from HKHC, the Tribe created the San Ildefonso Pueblo Trails project, which included 12 miles of proposed trails that would increase residents’ access to outdoor recreation opportunities, improving their physical and spiritual health and providing spaces for local families and tourists to connect with the natural environment. The National Park Service assisted the Tribe in multiple areas including public engagement, branding, and planning assistance. Additionally, the National Park Service facilitated trail committee meetings, completed site plans, produced visual illustrations, and created a recreation plan.

The outcomes of the project were a draft Outdoor Recreation Plan that highlighted the more than 12-miles of proposed trails, recommendations for lake rehabilitation, and standards for various types of signage. The plan helped the Tribe garner funding support to implement the projects. An award of \$20,000 from the Department of Energy’s Office of Legacy Management helped with sign design, fabrication, and installation; and an award of \$43,000 from the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corp helped fund an opportunity for a Pueblo youth crew to work half of the summer at the Pueblo and half the summer at Bandelier National Monument where they helped advance trail work.

Superior Shore Trail Plan to Improve Community Well-Being

Brimley, Michigan

The Bay Mills Indian Community is made up of Ojibwe people who have lived in the area for hundreds of years. The community was established in 1860, and they adopted their own constitution in 1937. The Bay Mills Indian Community became one of the four founding members of the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc. (ITCM) in 1966. The ITCM represents 12 federally recognized Tribes in Michigan and was established to promote the common welfare of the members and to improve relations between the Tribes and state and federal governments.

Since 1977, the Bay Mills Indian Community has been following a comprehensive plan that covers a 30-year period as a long-range road map consistent with the community’s mission, vision, values, and goals. The plan is proactive in co-creating a shared future, instead of being reactive to emergent issues and trends.

In line with their comprehensive plans, the Superior Shore Trail Plan highlights a 9-mile multi-use trail from Brimley State Park to Iroquois Lighthouse that provides a facility to help improve the health and well-being of Bay Mills Indian Community residents. The National Park Service helped evolve the project by creating a work plan and public involvement strategy. The National Park Service also helped facilitate public meetings to build support for the project and arranged stakeholder meetings to determine a trail maintenance strategy.



A Plan to Promote the Outdoors, Health, Wellness, and Prosperity for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe

Northeastern South Dakota

The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe describe themselves as two combined bands and two sub-divisions of the Isanti or Santee Dakota (Sioux) people. The Tribe is located on the Lake Traverse Reservation that extends across seven counties in North and South Dakota.

Inspired by two different events in Lakota culture, the annual bison hunt and the Tribe’s fishing culture, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe identified outdoor recreation and

conservation projects for their reservation. The National Park Service collaborated with the Tribal community to develop plans which incorporated a small marina, cabins, campground, and lodge at Enemy Swim Lake to promote health and wellness for the Tribe. Staying true to the inspiration for the projects, the National Park Service highlighted areas around the prairie field for bison to graze. The site by the lake has since been developed into a wooded and wetland ecological area.



A Tribal Park and Open Space Concept Plan with the Burns Paiute Tribe

Burns, Oregon

The Burns Paiute Tribe, primarily comprised of the descendants of the Wadatika Band of Northern Paiutes, owns 770 acres of land north of Burns, a remote city of just under 3,000 people that is located almost a 3-hour drive from any other city or town in either Oregon or Idaho. After acquiring an additional 10 acres of land, the Tribe wanted to expand the use of the area for visitors and Tribal members. They envisioned a park that could maintain their cultural values, protect their vital natural resources, and provide community members with ample vocational and recreational activities. However, the site's remoteness caused considerable challenges in terms of sourcing the right expertise to complete a planning and design project with the Tribe's stated objectives.

After being invited to assist the Tribe with their project, the National Park Service engaged the Oregon chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects and students from the University of Oregon's Department of Landscape Architecture in developing a Tribal Park and Open Space Concept Plan. Project partners will take all the ideas collected from the community engagement events and will develop a master plan that will help guide the Tribe in designing a park that highlights their story and helps improve community and economic health.



To Share a Landscape Story

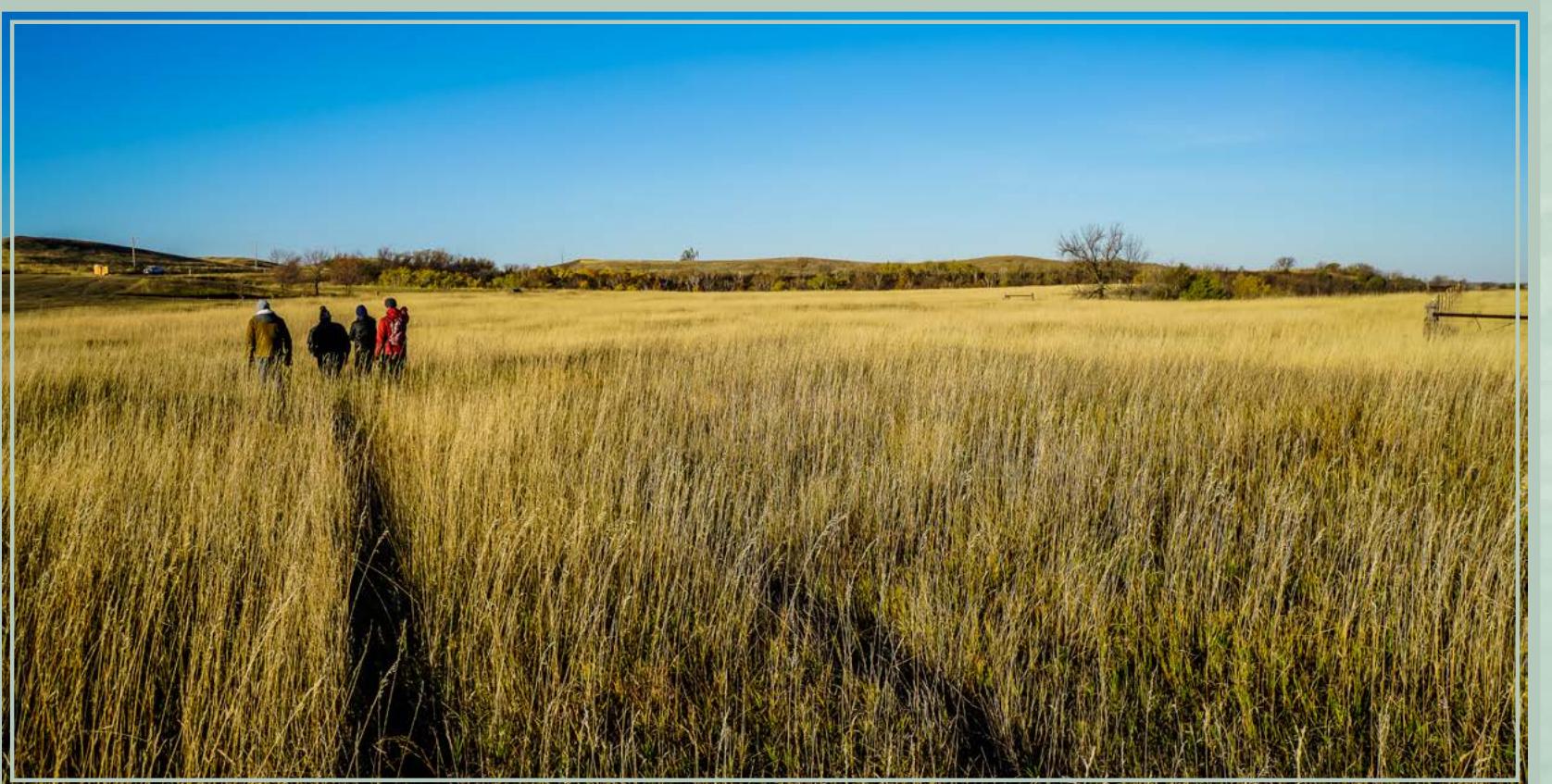
New Town, North Dakota

The creation of MHA Nation Tribal Park represents a historic expansion of the Fort Berthold Reservation, the first in over 160 years. Initially spanning more than 12 million acres, the territory of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) Nation, also known as the Three Affiliated Tribes, was drastically reduced to less than 3 million acres by 1892 due to successive federal policies. However, in a landmark move in 2021, the MHA Nation acquired a 2,106-acre ranch along the Little Missouri River. The vision for the ranch is to create a public park where they could share their landscape, heritage, ecology, and living culture with the world.

The park's development, led by the MHA Nation's Parks and Reserve Department, with assistance from the National Park Service, includes the crafting of a comprehensive master plan. The plan encompasses the layout of a trail system, a conceptual visitor center design, a recreational use plan, and management guidance. The establishment of an Advisory Council and the formation of strategic partnerships with neighboring lands, underlines the project's inclusive and collaborative approach.

A haven for diverse wildlife, including white-tailed deer, pronghorn, elk, and moose, the park prioritizes wildlife conservation. After consulting with wildlife crossing specialists, the park's proposal focuses on ensuring safe wildlife movement, especially concerning a major state highway that bisects the park. Their efforts aim to mitigate the impact of human presence on these natural habitats.

The MHA Nation Tribal Park is a testament to the Three Affiliated Tribes' commitment to the preservation of their rich cultural heritage and their stunning natural landscape. It proposes new opportunities for stewardship, education, and recreation, and will strive to be a source of inspiration and enjoyment for both Tribal members and visitors. The park is more than a scenic area; it's a dynamic space where cultural resource preservation meets the joys of outdoor recreation, a place where MHA Nation can share their own landscape story.





Supporting the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska in Designing a Tribal National Park

White Cloud, Kansas

Also known as the Ioway or Báxoje, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska became a federally recognized Tribe in 1937. The Tribe's reservation is located along the confluence of the Nímaha (Big Nemaha River) and Nyisoji (Missouri River) on the lands now known as Kansas and Nebraska.

In 2020, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska established the Ioway Tribal National Park to protect and preserve the cultural, historical, and natural places of the Ioway. The Leary Site National Historic Landmark is found within the park's boundaries. The site, which has burial mounds believed to have been constructed by the Oneota Tribe, was a campsite on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The park surrounds a historic artesian well and is in the middle of heavily farmed land and associated agricultural communities. Land management for conservation therefore held the potential for conflict, but a visitor use management framework was designed that leans on regenerative agriculture – an Indigenous practice focused on farming and ranching that is in harmony with nature. Regenerative agriculture improves biodiversity and reclaims land while supporting livestock and crop production. The Tribe is building a model that leans on silviculture, agroforestry, and diverse agriculture methods focused on conservation.

The National Park Service assisted the Tribe with GIS mapping that assessed the current topographic and ecological conditions of the area which led to general recommendations for a trail route and design. Additionally, the National Park Service facilitated a two-day design charette in collaboration with the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska to learn about what Tribal members envisioned for the area. The National Park Service will take all the ideas collected from the community engagement events and will develop a master plan that will help guide the Tribe in designing a park that highlights their story and helps improve community and economic health.

Community Engagement Aids in the Development of a Trail System for the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's Reservation, Washington

The Port Gamble S'Klallam were originally known as the Nux Sklai Yem—or the Strong People. Living in seasonal and permanent villages, the Port Gamble S'Klallam occupied the shores of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet, and Puget Sound, for thousands of years before the arrival of European settlers.

Noticing a rise in health problems related to the sedentary lifestyle of today, the Tribe wanted to develop trails on their reservation—mostly for Tribal members to enjoy. As part of community meetings facilitated by the National Park Service, Tribal members identified health challenges they face including obesity and anxiety and noted that outdoor recreation opportunities would serve as motivation to be active. When the local family doctor, for example, wanted to prescribe walking as a form of exercise, he said that he couldn't do so because the Tribe lacked access to nearby trails and because many Tribal members felt unsafe in the forest. The doctor also couldn't prescribe a walk along the road because when patients were offered a ride, they would become embarrassed when they had to explain the reason they were declining the lift.

Through the planning process, the National Park Service helped the Tribe identify three trail routes on the reservation to meet the fitness, safety, and recreation needs of the community. The trails range from one to four miles and are located in different areas of the reservation so that residents can choose whether they want to walk or jog on an asphalt path, travel to and from local areas such as the grocery store or the beach, or meander through the forest. In collaboration with the National Park Service, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Trails Committee developed a detailed concept plan for a trail system on the reservation that highlights the trail routes, construction phases, maintenance guidelines, and interpretive opportunities.





City of Durant Master Trails Plan Offers Opportunities for Connection

Durant, Oklahoma

Consisting of more than 200,000 members, the Choctaw Nation is the third-largest Indian nation in the United States. The Choctaw were the first Tribe to experience removal and were forced to embark on the long journey from Mississippi to Oklahoma, a harsh trek that killed many along the way and is now commemorated as the Trail of Tears. Today, the Choctaw Nation's reservation covers nearly 11,000 square miles in southeastern Oklahoma, a region which includes mountains, rivers, lakes, and woodlands. The Choctaw Nation's vision, "living out the Chahta Spirit of faith, family, and culture," is evident as it continues to focus on the provision of opportunities for growth and prosperity.

The City of Durant, Oklahoma, in partnership with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and Eastern Oklahoma Medical Center, asked the National Park Service to assist them with designing and developing an extensive master trail system to connect destinations within the City of Durant and provide quality of life improvements for citizens of all ages. The partnership formed

a Durant Community Trails Committee which the National Park Service led through an outreach and engagement process, helping them connect with a broad section of the community, including underrepresented neighborhoods. The National Park Service then guided the committee's partner organizations, in addition to others identified through the engagement process, through a trail planning process to identify priority trail corridors and key destinations.

A primary challenge was to engage with, and eventually connect by trail, all the neighborhoods and segments within the community, including the Choctaw Nation and the economically challenged neighborhoods within the city. It was an ambitious citywide trail system. The National Park Service overcame this by building trust through extensive outreach and engagement activities that reached diverse voices in the community. Additionally, the National Park Service connected the committee with partners that could help fund the trail development and stewardship.

Creation of a River Access Plan for the Nooksack Tribe

Whatcom County, Washington

Just 12 miles south of the Canadian border, the Nooksack have lived, fished, hunted, and gathered for generations in their traditional lands from the base of Mount Baker down the Nooksack River to its entrance into Bellingham Bay. The Tribe's name translates to "always bracken fern roots," which illustrates their close ties to the land and the resources that continue to provide strength for the people today.

The Nooksack Tribe, in partnership with the American Rivers, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Whatcom Land Trust, and American Whitewater, asked the National Park Service for assistance in developing a water access plan to increase recreation opportunities on the North Fork of the Nooksack River. The Tribe wanted sustainable and safe public recreation access in addition to natural resource management areas to protect, restore, and enhance the adjacent riparian forest and natural river systems. The Tribe is passionate about protecting the river and hopes that the habitat and water quality can gradually improve so that salmon can once again fill the streams.

The National Park Service collaborated with the project partners, land managers, recreation user groups, and nonprofit organizations to develop a recreation plan for the Upper Nooksack River and its tributaries. The plan documented current use, identified issues and needs, and recommended strategies to provide high quality recreational experiences with embedded conservation goals.



THE TIME BALL

Counting the days to groundbreaking for the **Heritage Connectivity Trails**

Washington State's Yakima Valley is a patchwork quilt of reservation land, agriculture, towns, small cities, irrigation canals, railway corridors, highways (including federal highways), schools, and county and city roads. As the landscape developed into the 21st Century and neighborhoods and schools were built, the lack of any central planning agency or master design began to hammer the most vulnerable—pedestrians and cyclists. The highway with the highest fatalities in the state transects it, with a single location on it being known as ground zero for crashes.

Located in the Yakama Indian Reservation, the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program assisted the Tribe in creating a concept plan for a 150-mile trail system that will provide safe walking and bicycling paths between schools and neighborhoods while linking each with points of historical and cultural importance to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.



HollyAnna Littlebull, the former traffic safety coordinator at the Yakama Nation Department of Natural Resources, points out the plant used to make time balls and demonstrates how to crush and roll the weed into a cord.

Long before long ago, goes the Yakama Nation legend that the Tribe's oral history was carried from generation to generation by the Grandfather Stories. And then, just long ago, the "time ball" came into existence. Kept by women as a calendar of sorts, a time ball is a ball of twine used to mark family stories from the matriarch's perspective.

To craft one, young wives would crush a species of hemp weed beneath their feet and then roll the fibers between their hands to produce a cord. Knots were then tied into the cord to mark the most significant events in their lives. Courtship, for example would produce a knot. Other knots would follow for marriage, when their children were born, and so on. As the woman aged, the little ball of hemp grew. It came to be known as ititamat or counting-the-days ball, now also known as a time ball. When the woman passed on, her counting-the-days hemp ball of knots was buried with her.



A Modern Time Ball

The Yakima Valley is a patchwork quilt of reservation land, agriculture, towns, small cities, irrigation canals, railway corridors, highways (including federal highways), schools, and county and city roads. As Theresa Morrow wrote for the Seattle Times, "It's hot. It's dry. It's the land of vineyards, pepper farms, hops, and peppermint fields that fill the air with a smell strong enough to make Mr. Wrigley's checkbook throb."

As the landscape developed into the 21st Century and neighborhoods and schools were built, the lack of any central planning agency or master design began to hammer the most vulnerable—pedestrians and cyclists. A data visualization map of crashes in the Yakima Valley tells the traumatic story.

In a manner of speaking, HollyAnna Littlebull, the former traffic safety coordinator at the Yakama Nation Department of Natural Resources, is creating a time ball to honor all the Tribal and non-Tribal members lost in vehicle crashes in the valley. The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program has helped her by connecting 18 cultural points of importance—heritage knots in a cord that charts the path—with a pedestrian-safe route called the Heritage Connectivity Trails.

The points of interest include a viewpoint of Mt. Adams or Pahto as the Tribe calls it – it is one of the five sacred mountains in Yakama lore. Additional points of interest include the Yakama Nation Cultural Center, Charles Pond Fisheries, a Healing Forest alongside the Tribal correctional facility, Heritage University, a Buddhist temple that is older than the State of Washington, Fort Simcoe Historical State Park, and a former polo field on the outskirts of White Swan. Each of these has deep connections with the Yakama Nation.

Julie Fonseca de Borges, a community planner with the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program, calls Littlebull, "a whirlwind-force-of-life for the Heritage Connectivity Trails." Littlebull, who brought to her role a resume that includes being a police officer, emergency medical responder, search and rescue crew member, and urban and rural firefighter, embodied the entire vision of the Heritage Connectivity Trails project.

"She personifies the fact that this is a salient, comprehensive effort that can be supported by the community as a whole," Fonseca de Borges said. And that's important in a region that has so many potentially conflicting pursuits.

The City of Toppenish goes by the slogan, "Where the West Still Lives." For Toppenish, the "West" is a complex layer of histories, traditions, economies, and cultures.





Roads throughout the Yakima Valley are dotted with memorials and shrines to loved ones lost in crashes like this one at the intersection of Highway 97 and Lateral A. Pieces of car wreckage often share the space.

Ground Zero for Fatalities

Sitting in her truck at the intersection of Larue Road and Highway 97, Littlebull notes, "this is ground zero for fatalities." Highway 97 is the most crash-prone highway according to the Washington State Department of Transportation. Semi-trucks routinely cross over into the opposite lane to make the turn into Larue Road, which makes the intersection rank highly in the overall number of crashes in the state.

Driving on, Littlebull identifies the little things that contribute to the many crashes and pedestrian fatalities. "Because there's a new school at Branch Road, students walk down the road to get home because they missed the bus. And some have been run over. Or if a dog is unchained and it barks at a pedestrian who shies away from it, she steps into the road without looking and gets hit by a speeding car... this is a 50 mph zone, but people drive much faster because it's long and straight and they tend to miss the stop sign."

Littlebull points out how the lack of pedestrian crossings between warehouses and local stores also results in crashes. "A Hispanic farm laborer was run over here," she said. And the

lack of a pedestrian bridge over the freeway results in regular fatalities, from drunk people laying down in the middle of the road to take a nap, to kids cutting through the chain-link barrier fence along the highway to dart through the traffic—jumping over concrete dividers called Jersey barriers along the way. "They shouldn't have to do that just to get to school and back home again each day."

With several new schools and multiple irrigation canals, road and rail intersections, the need for improved design and protected pedestrian corridors quickly becomes obvious.

Fonseca de Borges, along with Alex Stone, a National Park Service community planner, and Littlebull began to work on the priorities and storyboards. Together they worked in consensus with partners to pinpoint locations for destination markers that would encourage pedestrians to follow the planned safe walking routes. They also identified cultural waypoints that would acknowledge the harsh history of the area, but also celebrate the vibrancy of the interconnected communities in the lower Yakima Valley.



A truck hauling a trailer crosses into the opposite lane to make the turn from Highway 97 S. into Lateral A.

The Master Plan

For the first phase of the project, Fonseca de Borges had to define a "satellite view" concept plan that would inform a formal master plan for the project. The aim was to facilitate partner conversations that would result in a shared understanding of the issues and broaden support for the effort.

"For the Heritage Connectivity Trails project, the overwhelming priority was to provide pedestrians with those safe walking corridors. For that reason, what might have been a potentially contentious challenge for other projects was a simple task for this one because every demographic and ethnicity from Native American school kids to Hispanic agriculture laborers have been lost in vehicle collisions," Fonseca de Borges said.

The Washington State Department of Transportation supported the effort to not only build new roads, but also to factor in sidewalks or walking egresses with them. "It's not just about updating or maintaining a road," Fonseca de Borges added. "They're now thinking about planning for and building pedestrian access, something that will be a part of the 'complete streets initiative.' That's a major celebration point."

What transpired was a map overlay of sorts that is one part protection, one part historic, and one part restorative. Leaning on Fonseca de Borges' project management and leadership skillset, work plans were developed with structures baked in to meet milestones.



NPS / Ian Vorster



An intersection of drainage ditches, irrigation canals, farm boundaries, and a road creates a minefield of obstacles for pedestrians. At other locations, paved highways and rails are added to the mix of possible catalysts.



NPS / Ian Vorster

Smart Mobility Solutions

Littlebull connected with the University of Washington's Smart Transportation Applications and Research Laboratory. Through its spin-off company AIWayson, what is known as a Mobile Unit for Sensing Traffic (MUST) device was installed at the US 97 and Lateral A intersection.

MUST is a cutting-edge technology for smart infrastructure system support that uses artificial intelligence, computer vision, and edge computing technologies to inform options for safer and more efficient transportation solutions. The Yakama Nation is working with AIWayson to deploy devices on all roadways and at other intersections for data collection and real-time warning of dangerous events. The devices collect speed, ambient and road temperature, and precipitation and log it all according to time, date, and incident.

A visual rendering of what the proposed bike and pedestrian lanes could look like throughout the Yakama Indian Reservation.



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"Walking is a huge component of the Yakama Nation's heritage. And it's integral to the community identity. It is also an economic necessity to be able to safely walk to places. To be able to work on this project that literally is trying to save lives and prevent serious injuries is a huge statement, but it's also a way of instilling culture—a practice that is linked to health of the community in terms of individual body health, in terms of storytelling, in terms of keeping people connected," Fonseca de Borges said. The Heritage Connectivity Trails embodies that and more.

Image courtesy of Union Pacific



HollyAnna Littlebull about to board a diesel locomotive so that she can obtain a firsthand perspective of the challenges a driver is faced with when people walk along the lines. Pedestrians often opt to do this because there is nowhere else to walk.

Partnerships Produce Traction

The National Park Service brand garners good will beyond measure thanks to the expertise of its workforce, which ultimately translates into successful grant applications. Recently, the Washington State Department of Transportation, working with the Yakama Nation, was awarded a \$1 million Federal RAISE grant for the Heritage Connectivity Trails project. The money will be used to complete a feasibility study, preliminary design, and environmental review in the most needed areas covering 23 miles of walking paths. To borrow from Morrow's article, "that's enough to make Mr. Wrigley's checkbook wriggle."

"If we can break ground on the Heritage Connectivity Trails before I retire, I would be happy," Littlebull said. That would qualify for the final knot in her professional time ball. 

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HAWAII



For Native Hawaiians, caring for the land is embraced and practiced in the cultural value of *aloha ʻāina*. Aloha ʻāina is a concept developed in Hawaiʻi regarding the stewardship of land and natural resources, with values deeply rooted in Hawaiian culture and tradition. In the mother tongue, ʻāina refers to that which feeds, that being the land and its produce, as well as the sea and all the things from it that we can collect and harvest to sustain ourselves with. Aloha, a word often reduced to a simple greeting, is a word which propounds a deep sense of connection and acknowledgement of presence.

To live with the value of *aloha ʻāina* is to exist as a part of the ʻāina; to have the understanding that all things within and around this world are part of an interconnected fabric that makes up our realm, or honua. Aloha ʻāina is to live with this understanding and apply that knowledge in ones work and lifestyle. These values apply to everything from the use and management of parcels of land, the establishment of fisheries, and even the acquisition resources and infrastructure needed to build communities. In ancient Hawaiʻi, the aliʻi (Chiefs) lived by this value in their work and responsibilities. Today, *aloha ʻāina* returns through the work and dedication of communities who choose to perpetuate this cultural tradition for the health and betterment of all.

Stewardship with a Purpose: Mālama Hulē'ia Wetland Restoration

Lihue, Kauai, Hawai'i

Indigenous Hawaiians call themselves Kānaka Maoli. According to the National Historic Preservation Act, a Native Hawaiian is "any individual who is a descendant of the aboriginal people who, prior to 1778, occupied and exercised sovereignty in the area that now constitutes the State of Hawai'i." They are descendants of the early Polynesians who arrived in the islands more than 1,600 years ago.

The Fisheries Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration records that there used to be close to 500 fishponds that were stewarded by Hawaiian communities for their aquacultural resources. The fishponds were part of an integrated agricultural and ecosystem management regime known as the ahupua'a system. Unfortunately, centralized

governance, time, natural disasters, development, and cultural-economic changes led to only four working fishponds by the early 2000s. Six hundred years of native Hawaiian culture, legend, and innovation swirl in the brackish, teeming waters of one of these today—the Alakoko Fishpond.

The pond acts as a vital habitat for endangered and endemic species as well as a sustainable food source for the community. The Kaua'i community, Mālama Hulē'ia (a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring the Hawaiian habitat), and the Trust for Public Land collaborated with the National Park Service to protect Alakoko Fishpond as a cultural kīpuka (oasis), a working fishpond, and one of the most cherished pieces of Kaua'i's storied history.



The National Park Service helped facilitate stakeholder and landowner outreach and partnership agreements, led planning and permitting processes, and identified funding sources for the partners. The project resulted in the removal of invasive species and restoration of the native vegetation which led to an improved ecosystem that supports a healthy habitat for native fish, seaweed, and endangered Hawaiian water birds. From the start, the project was rooted in native Hawaiian knowledge which meant a local Hawaiian practitioner was engaged in the process to introduce the concepts of a traditional fishpond to the community. Many of the freshwater springs, streams, and their tributaries were connected, and the ecological function of the system was restored.

Alakoko Fishpond is adjacent to the Hulē'ia National Wildlife Refuge which focuses on the protection of endangered waterbirds and fish, as well as the habitat that primarily supports those species. Part of the effort is to remove invasive mangrove growth. Today, the fishpond acts as a natural sediment catchment, minimizing soil erosion and runoff that can pollute nearshore waters. Alakoko Fishpond is also a habitat and nursery for spawning and juvenile fish along with native and endangered wetland and migratory seabirds that take refuge, nest, and feed on the property.

Through community input, the National Park Service created a restoration plan that blends the science of wildlife protection with traditional Hawaiian values. In addition to highlighting stewardship for the fishpond, the plan assessed and helped strengthen the organization's capacity to carry out the next 10-year vision and related goals for the Alakoko Fishpond.

Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh Complex: Restoration of a Celebrated Sacred Place

Kailua, Oahu, Hawai‘i

Sacred to Hawaiians, Kawainui Marsh is the largest remaining emergent wetland in the state. Designated as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance for its historical, biological, and cultural significance, the marsh provides primary habitat for four of Hawai‘i’s endemic and endangered waterbirds, including the Hawaiian coot and Hawaiian moorhen. The wetland, which encompasses nearly 830 acres of land, contains archaeological and cultural resources such as ancient walled taro water gardens (*lo‘i kalo*) where fish were cultivated. Kawainui Marsh also stores surface water, providing flood protection for urbanized areas of Kailua.

A cohort of local nonprofit organizations and state agencies known as Ho`olaulima la Kawainui asked the National Park Service for assistance to restore the Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh Complex. Because the marsh complex is Hawai‘i’s largest wetland, and the state owns most of the property surrounding it, there were state, county, and city jurisdictional issues to contend with. Careful coordination and liaison with all relevant parties was required, which included state parks, other nonprofits organizations, education groups, the state division of forestry and wildlife, and a civic group.



The start of the project was marked with a certain amount of distrust between groups, but the National Park Service hosted nine community engagement and listening events, and all the organizations and entities were able to commit to a master plan for the marsh. Additionally, the National Park Service assisted the cohort as they developed and implemented a public outreach strategy to obtain input on an interpretative plan that addressed outreach and education programs as well as youth involvement strategies. The fear that the public would flood the local community’s backyard has been allayed and different groups and partners have committed to caring for the site through traditional Hawaiian practices.

The Hawai‘i State Park System governs the upland habitat and wetland area and has been able to remove many invasive species and reintroduce native plants. And thanks to taro farmers, traditional agriculture practices, and the Hawai‘i State Park System, the area has become a spiritual Hawaiian site. Known as *wahi pana*, or sacred and celebrated places, the Kawainui-Hāmākua Marsh Complex is now being cared for in the appropriate cultural context.

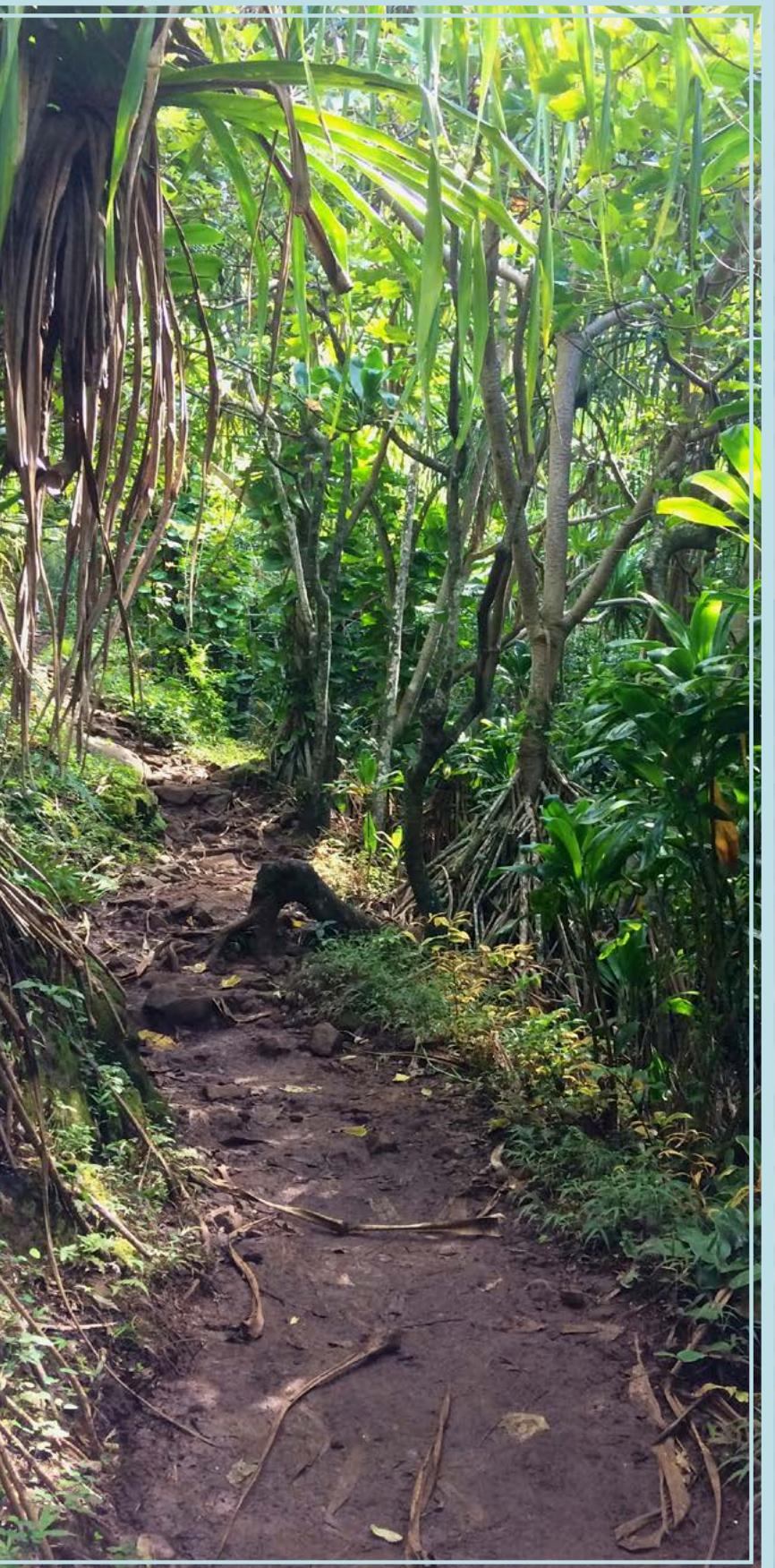
Pu‘uanahulu a me Pu‘uwa‘awa‘a: Protection of Native Hawaiian Trails

Kona, Hawai‘i

When the National Park Service was engaged to develop a report to assist the documentation efforts of a regional trail network, partners learned about the Hawaiian Highways Act of 1892. Because Hawai‘i was a sovereign state before its incorporation into the United States, the precedence of the act was accepted. In October of 1892, Queen Lili‘uokalani approved the law that determined that the ownership of all public highways and the land, real estate, and property of the same, shall be in the Hawaiian Government in fee simple. The definition of “public highway” included all existing trails at the time.

The project therefore centered on the reopening of ancient trails and had to include the development of guidelines for the protection, management, interpretation, and use of historic Hawaiian trails from the native Hawaiian perspective. In a sense then, the 1892 act established the fact that any ancient trails—whether or not they currently exist or are in use, and whether or not they run over privately owned land—now reside in the public domain as a public trust. It recognizes right of way for native Hawaiian entities.

The National Park Service helped develop the regional trail network strategy which included guidelines for the protection, management, interpretation, and use of historic trails from the native Hawaiian perspective.



Mālama Niuli'i: Creation of a Community Gathering Place

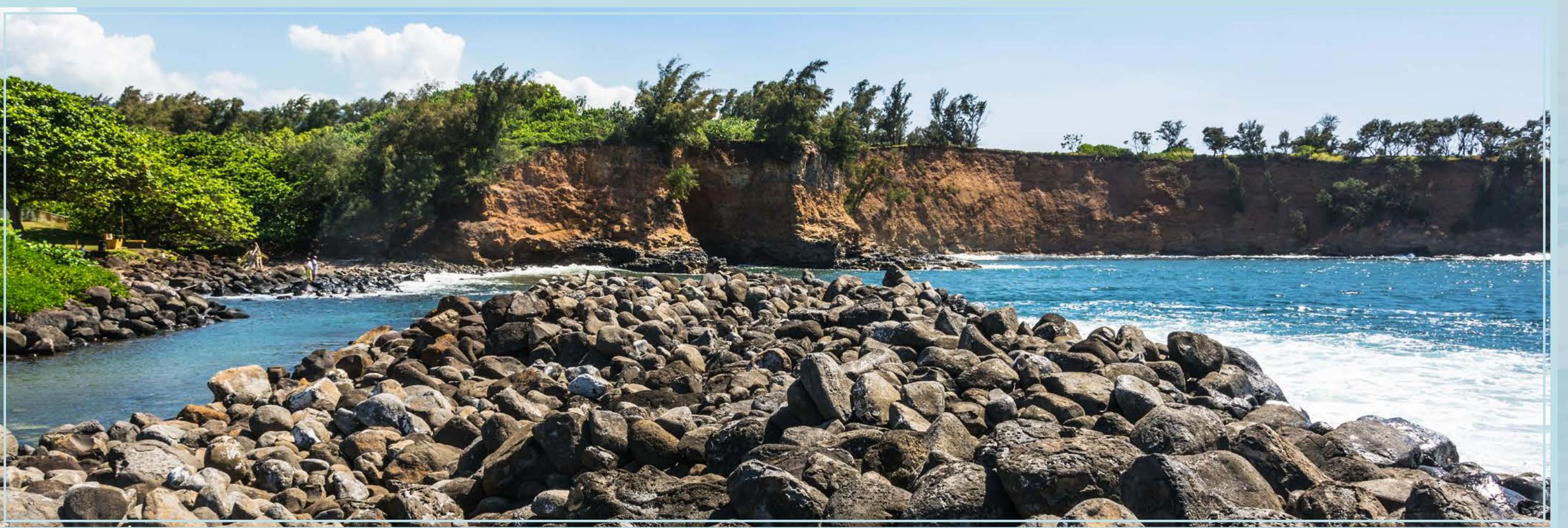
Niuli'i, North Kohala, Hawai'i

The Kohala Center (TKC) is an independent, community-based nonprofit organization focused on research, education, and conservation. Through research and ancestral knowledge, TKC works to shift communities in Hawai'i to a model where they can be self-reliant in the areas of energy, food, and ecosystem health. In January 2016, The Kohala Center was given kuleana (responsibility) to mālama 'āina (care for the land) in Niuli'i, Kohala.

The property extends for close to a mile down the coast from Kēōkea Park to Neue Bay. It includes both coastal conservation and agricultural lands and was slated for open-space preservation. The donors entrusted TKC and the community with the opportunity to protect, heal, and learn from the land. Along with that responsibility, the center developed a vision for its properties which would create a new gathering place that the community could utilize for learning, cultural practices, agriculture, and conservation.

In collaboration with The Kohala Center, the National Park Service worked with cultural practitioners and Hawaiian organizations to develop preservation and restoration plans for an ancient Hala* forest in Niuli'i. The forest holds cultural significance and is important for the perpetuation of cultural practices. The National Park Service also identified stakeholders and led community outreach efforts to engage locals in the process as well as assess their needs and wants for the space.

Because of the relative remoteness of the site and the fact that it was essentially a degraded and underutilized lot, none of the project partners lived in the area. Outreach efforts showed the desire to reintroduce traditional weaving from an ancient Hala grove, so partners approached a local school as well as cultural practitioners and senior elders in the area. In doing so, The Kohala Center established a community that is now committed to a restoration and preservation plan for the site.



*Hala is the Hawaiian name for Pandanus, the genus of tropical trees and shrubs

ABOUT NPS-RTCA

The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers 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.

NPS-RTCA does not provide financial assistance or monetary grants. As a collaborative partner, we provide professional services to help you achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation project vision. Through an application process, community groups, nonprofit organizations, Tribal governments, national parks, and local, state, and federal agencies can apply for NPS-RTCA technical assistance.

Across the country, NPS-RTCA staff pair their professional planning, design, and technical expertise with your team and knowledge experts from the community. Together, our 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.

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.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is NPS-RTCA?

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?

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

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

nps.gov/RTCA



The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) has worked in partnership with Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native communities for more than 30 years on conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

Consisting of staff with a broad variety of professional backgrounds, including community planning, landscape design, conservation, and natural resource management, the National Park Service brings passion and expertise to projects across the country.



Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

nps.gov/RTCA