

CDT History & Background

Thirty-seven years ago Congress devised the framework for developing a nationwide system of trails in America by passing the National Trails System Act. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) was designated a part of this system in 1978 due to its magnificent and unique character. Today, the CDT is the backbone of this system of nineteen Congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails.

Upon completion the CDT will thread together 25 National Forests, 21 Wilderness areas, 3 National Parks, 1 National Monument and 8 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource areas. The Trail will stretch 3,100 miles and travel from Canada to Mexico through some of the most beautiful country in the world.

The CDT, also known as the "King of Trails", represents the most scenic, challenging and culturally diverse trail in America. Traveling along this corridor is the ultimate journey for any outdoors person. The protection of this precious resource is also an important aspect of the CDT for many people.

Limited budgets precluded the federal agencies from allocating sufficient resources to complete the Trail. Seventeen years after its designation, the CDT was still suffering from minimal coordination amongst these agencies. Public involvement was virtually nonexistent because few people were aware of the Trail. Unfortunately, while progress on the Trail was stalled, the demand for the experience that the CDT offers grew exponentially as opportunities for the ideal route were slipping away.

It was the formation of the CDTA in 1995 that finally created public and private enthusiasm for the CDT. Within two years CDTA-coordinated volunteers had inventoried the condition and status of all 3,100-miles and thousands of volunteer hours had been dedicated to trail improvements.

In 1999, the CDTA initiated and coordinated the development of the CDT Strategic Completion Plan. For the first time, federal land management agencies had identified the full scope of work necessary to complete the Trail across their jurisdictions. Based on the Strategic Completion Plan we have determined it will cost over \$21 million to complete the CDT.

The Continental Divide Trail Alliance

The Continental Divide Trail Alliance was formed in 1995 to work with the federal land managers in the completion, management and protection of the Trail. The CDTA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with nearly two thousand members nationwide. Increasing pressures from development, rising land costs, popularization of the West, and decreases in federal funding threatened the completion of the Trail. It was imperative that the CDTA be established to increase the public's awareness and involvement in completing and protecting one of the most unique and scenic trails in the world.

To date, the CDTA has been successful in coordinating over \$5.2 million in volunteer labor, improving and completing hundreds of miles of the CDT, building positive relationships with the federal land managers and local clubs, organizing the first border-to-border survey of the Trail, implementing an Adopt-A-Trail program, and convincing Congress to appropriate nearly \$6.5 million for the CDT in the Forest Service budget.

Your Role in this Monumental Endeavor

By signing up to be a part of this historic undertaking you are making a significant contribution to the completion of this national treasure. We greatly appreciate your commitment and desire to put your "sweat equity" into the CDT. Dedicating some of your valuable time to work on the Trail is one of the most significant contributions you will ever make to the future generations that will enjoy your legacy.

Volunteering is a great way to meet people; people that recognize the importance of giving back, and of becoming stewards of our public lands. Thousands of volunteers are already making a difference on the CDT, but we need your help, too.


We all *must* play a role in determining the destiny of the CDT. We look forward to seeing you on the Trail and hope you, your friends and family will join us on many projects in the future.


U.S. Forest Service


When Congress designated the CDT, they made the Forest Service the lead agency responsible for the overall coordination and management of the Trail in consultation with the National Park Service and BLM. The job of the Forest Service is to help people share and enjoy the forests, while conserving the environment for generations yet to come. In 1999, the CDTA and these agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding designating the CDTA as the leading nongovernmental partner for the completion and management of the CDT.


2008 CDTA Volunteer Accomplishments

 The CDT is now 71% (2,173 miles) complete!

 269 miles of the Trail were built and improved in 2008.

 Volunteers contributed 22,436 volunteer hours, donating over \$439,000 in volunteer labor.

 34 projects were led by official CDTA crew leaders.

 Our volunteer crew chefs cooked a total of 3,429 meals on 32 projects.

THE TRAIL UNITES US



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ALLIANCE**

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