



Trails, Greenways and Parks Build Healthy Communities

Close-to-home recreation on neighborhood trails and greenways, in communities and National Parks, is vital for improving America's public health. The National Park Service is ideally positioned to respond to this urgent need to increase Americans' level of physical activity.

Through its Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), the National Park Service helps local groups plan and develop new trails, greenways, and open space that are close to home and encourage regular physical activity.

The Need

Recreation opportunities in parks and along rivers, trails and greenways are ideally suited for meeting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's new physical activity recommendations. Walking, for example, is one of the easiest, least expensive and most widely available ways to reap meaningful health benefits. Despite the known benefits of physical activity, over two-thirds of American adults don't get enough physical activity to provide these health

benefits, and nearly 25% have reported no leisure time physical activity. The National Park Service can address these needs through technical assistance from the RTCA program and because of its outstanding recreational resources and the significant influence that park visits can have on changing daily behavior.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed new recommendations to encourage Americans to be physically active.

One of these is to promote the development of trails and greenways that are pleasant, safe and close-to-home, connecting neighborhoods with schools, shopping and workplaces.

The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program may be able to help create places in your community for outdoor physical activity. Visit our website for more information.

The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program

The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) works collaboratively, by invitation, with partners on a wide variety of conservation and recreation projects. These partners include nonprofit organizations, community groups, tribes or tribal governments, and local, state, or federal government agencies.

RTCA often acts as a catalyst to help assemble the necessary pieces to achieve on-the-ground conservation success. RTCA helps identify what types of aid a partner needs and either supplies or locates sources for the assistance. RTCA helps partners navigate the planning process, converting ideas into actions, and often provides assistance in conceptual planning, organizational development and capacity building.

Apply for assistance by August 1st.

Successful Paths To A More Active And Healthy America

IN NATIONAL PARKS: MINUTE MAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Battle Road Trail is a multi-use 5.5-mile pedestrian and bicycle trail that runs through Minute Man National Historical Park connecting historic sites in Lexington and Concord, MA. The Battle Road Trail removes visitors from a heavily trafficked road and provides ample parking and interpretive exhibits. It has improved safety for visitors, provided new interpretive opportunities, and created new physical activity opportunities by foot, bicycle or wheelchair.



IN COMMUNITIES: ARKANSAS RIVER TRAIL “MEDICAL MILE”

Physicians at Heart Clinic Arkansas have teamed up with the City of Little Rock, Arkansas Departments of Health, Parks and Tourism, National Park Service, and US Army Corps of Engineers to help reduce the state’s staggering rates of heart disease and obesity with the construction of the 24-mile Arkansas River Trail. A key feature of the trail is the “Medical Mile,” an outdoor linear health museum that uses a variety of artistic and architectural expressions to promote the health benefits of physical activity, and other wellness themes.

THROUGH STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIP: HEALTHY MAINE WALKS COALITION

The Healthy Maine Walks Coalition, which includes Maine Bureau of Health, Cardiovascular Health Program, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and National Park Service, supports the development and use of trails to encourage healthy activity throughout Maine. The Coalition’s website (www.healthymainewalks.org) lists walking routes, explains the health benefits of walking, and provides guidelines and organizational support for trailbuilding. The Bureau of Health also developed ancillary materials and PSAs encouraging people to find walks on the web.



Parks & Communities Taking Action

Build trails for transportation connecting work, schools, parks, shops and community centers and linking them to transit stops.

Convene broad coalitions to plan new opportunities for outdoor recreation such as trails and greenways along rivers.

Establish Safe Routes to Schools programs, including walking school busses, and conduct sidewalk surveys.

Work with doctors and health practitioners to prescribe physical activity for clients.

Create bicycle and pedestrian committees and walking clubs and host local events.

Promote guided bike tours and connections to shops and rental outlets.