

Rivers, Trails and Conservation
Assistance Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Youth Program Development

Engaging the next generation in America's great outdoors

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



NPS-RTCA

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

About Us

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

Our Model

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

Community Engagement

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

Alaska

Developing an Outdoor School

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

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



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

Maine

Connecting Maine's Youth to the Outdoors

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

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

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

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



Frequently Asked Questions

Who are we?

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

Does NPS-RTCA provide funding?

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

What kind of projects does NPS-RTCA support?

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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