

# Appendix C

## Frequently Asked FTDS Questions

Several frequently asked questions and answers about the Federal Trail Data Standards (FTDS) are listed below.

### **1. Why are you creating a new database?**

This effort does not create any new databases. For the first time, four federal land management agencies have collaborated to standardize their definitions of commonly used trail terminology.

### **2. What are your ultimate goals?**

Develop universal standards for core trail terminology and data attributes: Federal Trail Data Standards (FTDS). These standards will enable national, regional, state, and trail-level managers AND the public to use mutually understood terminology for recording, retrieving and applying spatial and tabular information.

### **3. Why are you creating more work for the field?**

The Federal Trail Data Standards Team (Team) is developing commonality amongst the four agencies. The Team is NOT creating a new database, but is merely defining and standardizing terms that we have all used for decades. Existing databases may adapt these standards throughout the four agencies. Data exchange amongst managing units will be more efficient. Most importantly, there will be less confusion on the public's part as they access information about the trails they use.

### **4. How will GIS layers fit into this data model?**

The FTDS outline common definitions, terminology, and core set of data attributes to be used by the BLM, FWS, NPS, and USFS for communicating and sharing trails information. There is no attempt here to develop data models or Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Rather, the standards will define the data that is displayed in your particular GIS.

### **5. How and who will maintain this system? How will we maintain and mesh this effort with existing databases?**

Maintenance of your particular GIS and/or database will continue as before in your unit. This is not a GIS or a data model. The standards will not lead to the creation of new databases, but allow existing data to be described in a manner that is clearly understood and utilized by the four agencies.

## Appendix C

### **6. How could such an effort foresee unique local situations?**

No attempt was made to do so. The attributes that have been defined here are those that should be common to most databases nationwide. This does not prevent any unit from identifying its own data attributes and values to reflect the trail or agency-specific situation or information need.

### **7. Are there any standards or descriptors that could be used to ground-truth road, two-track, and/or trails?**

These standards are for trails (see Federal Definition of a Trail<sup>1</sup>). While these trail data standards may have some applicability in the future development or refinement of road data standards, these standards focus on trails.

### **8. Has the FTDS Team reviewed the current Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Framework Standards as a basis for establishing these standards? Does this effort need approval by the Federal Geographic Data Committee?**

The FTDS Team worked with the FGDC to publish the FTDS as a federal trail standard.

### **9. Is this a data request?**

No, data collection and implementation schedules will be determined by each agency. The FTDS simply provide common definitions and terminology for a core set of trail information.

### **10. Do these standards deal with trail difficulty?**

No, this level of detail is beyond the scope of the FTDS (see FTDS Core Questions<sup>1</sup>), and is up to the agency and/or specific managing unit.

### **11. Do these standards deal with facilities along the trail?**

In general, the FTDS do not include standardized data definitions for facilities or “things along the trail” (i.e. constructed features, etc.). This level of detail is beyond the scope of the FTDS and more appropriate for individual agencies or entities to define, depending on their specific data needs (see FTDS Selection Criteria<sup>1</sup>). In the case of National Scenic and Historic Trails, however, basic data on National Scenic and Historic Trail-related visitor centers and visitor facility type, and National Historic Trail-related historic sites are included in the standards.

### **12. Who is the audience for this information?**

The audience that will benefit from the Federal Trail Data Standards includes:

- Federal counterparts
- Congress

## Appendix C

- Partner organizations
- General public (Media, trail users, info seekers, educators, researchers)
- Travel and Recreation Industry (service providers)
- Advisory boards
- Intra-agency Specialists (GIS, budget, facilities, resource specialists, cultural and natural, related biologists, etc.).

### **13. What units of measure shall we use? What projection shall we use?**

The FTDS will be provided in miles (and/or feet when applicable). Most FTDS will be recorded with a beginning and ending measure point, allowing total miles/feet to be available at the Federal level, per FTDS attribute and attribute list of values. Databases and GIS have the capability of quick conversion to metric, if desired. Feet and miles are still the US national standards for measurement. NAD83 is the national standard.

### **14. What is the format in which this information should be reported?**

The FTDS Team did not address database and presentation formats. The Team only addressed data standards – attribute definitions. It is up to the individual agency and/or user to decide which format to display data.

### **15. Why should we use these standards since they are not found in MAXIMO (FMSS in Park Service, FAMS in BLM, SAMMS in FWS)?**

- **BLM:** BLM is adapting these standards into FAMS.
- **FWS:** FWS has incorporated these standards into SAMMS and into the trail inventory of all National Wildlife Refuges and National Fish Hatcheries. The first inventory was conducted by the Federal Highway Administration in 2007. A second inventory was planned for 2011.
- **NPS:** NPS is adapting these standards into FMSS.
- **USFS:** USFS has incorporated the majority of these standards into Infra Trails. The remaining standards have been through internal review and are planned for incorporation into Infra Trails and/or Infra Heritage (for certain NHT data fields).

### **16. Why is financial data addressed in these standards? Isn't this an unnecessary duplication of databases?**

The FTDS define four very general categories of Annual/Cyclic Operations and Maintenance, Deferred Maintenance, and Capital Improvement Costs to facilitate apples-to-apples summation of costs between agencies and for long-distance trails crossing multiple agency boundaries (see FTDS Core Questions 11 and 12<sup>1</sup>). The FTDS do not address financial details of trail assessment and condition surveys. It is up to the managing unit to compute and store its own detailed trail maintenance and construction costs.

## Appendix C

### 17. Why is it necessary to collect and assess detailed trails data in a multi-agency setting?

Each agency determines the specifics and extent of its data needs. This effort is in keeping with a government-wide effort to store, classify, and efficiently share important data that is useful to the general public.

### 18. How do we implement these standards?

Implementation is up to the individual agencies. The FTDS should be incorporated as each agency data management system is developed or refined.

### 19. How do these standards deal with “segmentation” of trails (especially long-distance trails)?

- a. Trail Segment:** “Trail segment”, as used in the FTDS attribute definitions, is used as an informal term to identify that portion of trail that corresponds to the attribute “answer” or value selected for that attribute. It is not used in the FTDS definitions to identify or indicate officially recognized portions of trail, but rather to define the portion or entire section of trail to which a particular attribute value corresponds. The “segment” identified depends on the question being asked, or the data attribute and attribute value being recorded.

For example, the data attribute State may be recorded for Trail ABC as “Montana” from mile 0.0 to mile 24.55, Idaho from mile 24.55 to mile 54.70, and Utah from mile 54.70 to mile 61.22. In this case, the attribute State is recorded by using three different attribute values that correspond to three different “segments” of trail. Another example for the attribute State could be recorded as “Florida” for Trail QRS which lies entirely within the state of Florida, from mile 0.0 to mile 9.75. Hence the reference to “trail or trail segment” in several FTDS attribute definitions.

For those same trails, the data attribute Trail Class may be recorded for Trail ABC as Trail Class 3 from mile 0.0 to mile 35.50, and as Trail Class 2 from mile 35.50 to mile 54.70. Trail Class may be recorded for Trail QRS as Trail Class 4 from mile 0.0 to mile 1.74, and as Trail Class 3 from mile 1.74 to mile 9.75. Again, in these examples the “segment” refers only to the portion of trail where the recorded attribute value is applicable.

In these examples, there is no correlation between the informally identified “segments” recorded for State and the “segments” recorded for Trail Class, as the attribute values usually change at locations independent of other data attributes.

- b. GIS Segmentation:** Resolution of detailed spatial segmentation at the agency or trail-specific level is currently possible within various agency databases, depending on database capabilities, protocols, and data structure.

In the case of the USFS' Infra Trails, for example, all FTDS attributes are recorded as linear events, each with its own beginning and ending measure point (i.e. length). Most of these can also be displayed spatially by trail or identified

## Appendix C

attribute segment. Depending on the question being asked, a lump sum total can be queried to answer the question (i.e. Miles of Trail Class 2), or a "slice" or snapshot taken at any given point on a trail to display the entire combination of attributes and values recorded for that location (i.e. Attributes values for Trail Class, Managed Use, and Designed Use at mile 6.5). While the intent of the FTDS is not to go to this level of trail-specific detail, this example is provided to illustrate the possibility of incorporating the FTDS and the utility of identifying data attributes by informal or dynamic "segments".

### 20. What does “No Overlap Allowed” and “Allow Multiple Entries” on the List of Values (LOV) table mean?

The “Overlap Allowed” is used to indicate whether, for any one data attribute along a particular portion of trail, more than one value or LOV code can be concurrently assigned that attribute.

- **No Overlap Allowed:** Only one attribute value or LOV code may be recorded at any given location along the trail or trail segment. Multiple segments may be identified, each with the appropriately corresponding LOV.
- **Overlap Allowed:** More than one attribute value or LOV code may be recorded, if applicable, at any given location along the trail or trail segment. Multiple segments may be identified, each with the appropriately corresponding LOV(s).

The following data attributes may be recorded with more than one attribute code identified for the same location: Land Use Plan, Managed Use, National Trail Designation, Prohibited Use, NHRP Criteria, Prohibited Use, Shared System, Special Mgmt Area, Type of Route, and Visitor Facility Type.

- **Example:** For any particular stretch of trail, that portion of trail is physically located in only one County at that location, while that same location on the trail may have one or more Prohibited Uses. Therefore, there is no overlap allowed for the data attribute for County – only one County may be recorded for that specific location (either the trail segment, or the entire trail if applicable). The data attribute for Prohibited Use, however, does allow the entry of multiple values, if more than one actively Prohibited Use is defined for any given stretch of trail. In this case, only one County (i.e. Mineral County) could be recorded in any single location, but all Prohibited Uses would be recorded for that same location (i.e. ATV, Motorcycle).

The Beginning Measure Point (BMP) and Ending Measure Point (EMP) would not necessarily be the same for these two data attributes. For example, the trail may be in Mineral County from BMP 0.00 to EMP 6.42 (recorded in miles), while the Prohibited Uses of Motorcycle and ATV may extend for the entire length of the trail from BMP 0.00 to EMP 16.75.

---

<sup>1</sup> Refer to corresponding sections of the Federal Trail Data Standards and associated reference material.