

Rivers, Trails and Conservation
Assistance Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Parks

Supporting parks and their gateway communities

The National Park Service facilitates the implementation of
shared goals between parks and their local communities.



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.

Michigan

NPS and Its Neighbors Create New Visitor Opportunities

Touted as one of CNN Travel’s “Can’t-Miss U.S. Beaches” and “The Most Beautiful Place in America” by Good Morning America, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore features some of the most pristine and popular landscapes in Michigan. However, the national lakeshore and its gateway communities recognized the challenge for visitors to navigate the 35 miles of Lake Michigan’s eastern shoreline, numerous islands and inland lakes.

NPS-RTCA convened a planning team consisting of participants from the local gateway communities and the National Park Service to evolve a concept of a trail system as an alternative to widening major highways. In collaboration with community partners, NPS-RTCA helped develop the Sleeping Bear Dunes Heritage Trail, a 27-mile, ADA accessible, multi-use path connecting the communities of Glen Arbor and Empire with visitor destinations within the park. Additionally, NPS-RTCA helped secure transportation grants and supported the development of the trail.



Today, the trail offers an array of opportunities, from hiking and biking to cross-country skiing, opening up new recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Maine

Helping a New National Monument: Katahdin Woods and Waters

On the eve of the National Park Service’s centennial in 2016, President Barack Obama designated 87,500 acres as the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument – the first national monument to preserve the landscape and honor the history and culture of Maine’s North Woods in Penobscot County. The superintendent of the new national monument asked NPS-RTCA to assist with engaging local communities and leading various planning projects.

NPS-RTCA inventoried the existing trails, prepared field maps, and evolved a wayfinding signage strategy in support of the monument’s long-term role as an economic and tourism generator. To engage adjacent communities, NPS-RTCA hosted listening sessions where hundreds of locals shared their histories with the land. NPS-RTCA collaborated with the Millinocket Memorial Library and the Maine Folklife Center to collect these stories and create the Katahdin Story Booth, an oral history project used to teach future generations about the history of the land. Additionally, NPS-RTCA initiated the Katahdin Learning



Project, which supports local teachers by involving students in hands-on learning, including cross-country ski outings to the monument, trail clearing and other place-based education activities.

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

 nps.gov/RTCA

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