



## About RTCA



Paddling the Okanogan River on the Greater Columbia Water Trail (Photo: Sue Abbott)

# Community Assistance Arm of the National Park Service

## A Program that Shares NPS Expertise Across America

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program works with community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribes or tribal governments, and local, state, and federal government agencies to achieve community-driven goals for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation. Projects include natural area preservation, river conservation and development of recreational trails and greenways in urban, suburban and rural communities. RTCA carries out the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service in communities across America.

A network of 70 community-based planning professionals delivers the RTCA Program nationwide, helping communities achieve on-the-ground success. Through RTCA, the National Park Service offers conservation and recreation assistance to communities in every state.

We measure our success by our ability to help our local partners make their rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces a vital, life-enhancing part of their communities. With well under one percent of the National Park Service budget, RTCA each year on average helps create over 1,400 miles of trail, protect more than 700 miles of waterways, and preserve 63,700 acres of open space.

## Helping You Move Ideas into Action

By invitation, RTCA works collaboratively to assist your natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects. RTCA is not a financial grant program. We offer staff assistance in conceptual and master planning, organizational development, project coordination, facilitation, and public involvement, tailoring our assistance to meet the needs of our partners.

Whether you are a group of committed citizens launching a new project, a team of local government agencies aiming for a multi-jurisdictional effort, or a public/private committee with a community vision, RTCA can help you

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catalyze ideas into actions. Working side-by-side with grassroots groups and local governments throughout the country, the National Park Service is helping to create local, regional and state networks of parks, rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces. We invite you to discover more about how RTCA can help your community achieve its own goals.

## Other National Park Service Assistance Programs

The National Park Service can also assist community-based conservation and recreation projects through the following programs:

**Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP)** The CCSP provides matching fund amounts to facilitate joint projects of National Park Service units, other NPS programs, and their partners. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/ccsp/](http://www.nps.gov/ccsp/)

**Hydropower Recreation Assistance** Provides technical assistance on recreation access and facilities, instream flows for recreation, and riparian corridor protection to all participants in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydropower licensing and relicensing proceedings. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/hydro/](http://www.nps.gov/hydro/)

**Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** Provides 50% matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. Grants are administered through the states and are contingent on annual appropriation. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/lwcf/](http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/)

**Federal Lands to Parks** Helps state and local agencies acquire, at no cost, surplus federal land and facilities for parks and recreation. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/flp/](http://www.nps.gov/flp/)

**Cultural Resources** The NPS administers a number of very successful federal historic preservation funding programs. Information about grants, tax credits and other forms of assistance can be found by visiting [www.cr.nps.gov/helpyou.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/helpyou.htm)

# Project Innovations



Students and teachers gather at the Santa Margarita River to learn about the southwestern pond turtle. Groundwork San Diego Chollas Creek developed a Green Team with Crawford High School and the NPS California Mediterranean Network Research Learning Center (Photo: Jim Donovan)

The RTCA program stays vibrant and relevant by adapting and refocusing our efforts in response to the needs of the communities we serve. Our staff apply proven techniques, while at the same time searching for new ways to add value to projects. Recent areas of focus include:

### Connecting Communities to Parks

Trails and greenways that connect to nearby local, state and national parks are wonderful ways for a community to enjoy the resources of their neighboring parks. Parks and communities benefit from increased recreation and non-motorized opportunities and enhanced access for visitors. Collaborative projects between parks and their nearby communities may also protect clean water and natural lands, resources that have common value. RTCA is currently partnering with several communities to forge these connections to their nearby local, state and national parks.

### Engaging Youth

In response to the growing disconnect between youth and nature, RTCA is focusing on engaging youth in environmental stewardship and outdoor recreation as part of our community-based projects.

One specific example is our work in pioneering Groundwork USA, a network of independent, community-based nonprofit organizations which assist urban communities in reclaiming vacant lots, abandoned parks, and brownfield sites and engages local youth in developing leadership and job skills. RTCA has also developed a partnership agreement with the YMCA to facilitate engaging youth in active recreation. Youth also participate in planning and design in several RTCA projects.

### Healthy Recreation

Trails and greenways are a natural prescription for what the Surgeon General calls America's #2 health problem: physical inactivity. Being active in the outdoors has benefits for mind and body, and can help individuals and whole communities become healthier.

Close-to-home recreation on neighborhood trails and greenways, and in local, state and national parks is vital for improving America's public health. Through RTCA, the National Park Service has launched a nationwide initiative to encourage healthful outdoor physical activity in parks and local communities to demonstrate practical approaches for public land managers and community leaders who want to encourage active lifestyles.



# We're Here for You

If you would like more information about our program, want to discuss an idea for a project, or need more information about how to apply to our program, we are here to help you. You can also visit us on the Internet at [www.nps.gov/rtca/pwr](http://www.nps.gov/rtca/pwr).

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