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American Trails
Understanding The National Recreation Trails (NRT) Program
Thursday, June 10, 2021
10:00AM – 11:00AM Pacific

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>> Thank you everyone for joining us for the webinar and Understanding the National Recreation Trails Program (known as NRTs). My name is Candace Gallagher and I'm the director of operations and webinar coordinator for American trails. This is our 122nd webinar in the American trails advancing trails webinar series. This is being recorded, it offers learning credits and includes real-time closed captioning in English. A link will follow along in the chat box if you don't already see it there. Attendees will receive a closed caption transcript and a link to the recording in my follow-up email. Feel free to reach out with any questions. We are saving time for attending questions at the end of the webinar so you are welcome to send your questions at any time during today's presentations via the questions box. Thank you to our webinar partners that include the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service both of whom are presenters for this webinar and partners in the NRT program. As well as the Bureau of land management and the Federal Highway administration. We have Peter Bonsall who is National Trails Program Specialist with the National Park Service. We have Brenda Yankoviak who is National Trail Program Manager with the US Forest Service we also have Matt Able who is the Assistant National Trail Program Manager with the US Forest Service as well as Mike Passo, Executive Director of American Trails. I will now hand controls off to Brenda to start today's presentation.

>> BRENDA: Thanks Candace. Thank you for having us here. We will be presenting an overview of the national recreation trail program. We will not be ordering glasses today. We will be talking about why the national recreation trails were established come some criteria how to make them eligible and some of the nuts in both of the program such as how to designate a trail through the park service or Forest Service process. We will address a few frequent asked questions and they will have plenty of time for question and answer at the end of the presentation. Next slide please. Before we talk about the details of the National Recreation Trails program, I will refer it to the NRT program. We will look at how and why we got to have an NRT program to begin with. Like many other landmark conservation laws, the national trails system act of 1968 so during this time in the 1960s early 70s, there was a lot of concern over our increasing water and air pollution, population spread and development into previously rural and undeveloped areas. At the same time, increasing urbanization and people being cut off from nature. This was a big concern of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration during this time. The importance of providing access to the outdoors for people for their mental health and physical

health benefits. Section 4 of the national trails system act is what establishes the category known as the national recreation trails or NRT. There's also a couple of trails designated under this act that are couple mentoring to the NRT program and as the congressionally designated national scenic trails a national historic trails. So, there's a couple of distinctions between the national scenic and a national historic trail and the NRT. National historic trails are designated by Congress where as NRT's are administratively designated. The secretary of the interior or secretary of agriculture that has been delegated down to the Forest Service to the regional foresters to designate those NRT's. The other important distinction between these categories of trails is that the national scenic and historic trails are intended, they are long distance multijurisdictional trails intended to highlight and provide access to these nationally significant and iconic landscapes where as NRT's are intended to elevate and promote the more local and regionally significant trails. Before I move on to the next slide. I want to provide one bit of trivia to route your friends October 2, 1968 was a big day for conservation. President Johnson signed the national trail systems act into law and the same day he did a wild and scenic Rivers act which is very couple battery type of law promoting conservation of a free-flowing rivers and then also the redwoods national Park in California was established as well as the state and wilderness. Just wanted to let you all know that. Next slide please. A little bit more about why we have National Recreation Trails's. There intended to be trails for all locations across the country, all abilities, all use types. Many trails are open to motorized use or nonmotorized use. That's another contrast with the national scenic and historic trails which the law is says is intended for nonmotorized use. Again, it's really about connecting people to the outdoors for those mental and physical health benefits. Another purpose of the national recreation trail is to promote the use an existing and regionally significant trails and in a shared stewardship model. One unique piece of the National Recreation Trail act before stewardship was a term the National Recreation Trail act the act itself so the agencies are going to be working with partners and volunteers in maintenance and where appropriate management of this national trail system. You can see that in practice here just in this webinar that we have the park service, forest service working in collaboration with American trails and even talking about the NRT program. We work closely together in overseeing the program. Some of the goals of the NRT program is to promote the use and care of the existing trails. Also, to be stimulating development of new trails in the area to promote access to the outdoors for all the benefits that recreation provides. Economic development is a big piece, as well. National recreation trails is not just your general forced trailer park service trail, these are intended to be trails that provide superhigh quality recreation opportunities for really neat vistas or some unique or regionally or locally significant type of recreation opportunity. These should be maintained to a higher level of maintenance than the general forced trail. Healthy recreation opportunities which again we talked about the benefits trails provide their mentally and physically. Again, I would adhere, I would say another goal of the program is to be promoting stewardship, shared stewardship of our public lands and the NRT's particularly engaging with volunteers and across agencies to provide a well-managed program that maximizes the benefits to the public. Next slide please. And at some, in summary of my section national recreation trails are intended to represent all user types and abilities, different terrain and a setting and be, very from a less than one mile up to 1500 miles. They are generally on the

shorter end where as the contrast to that national scenic and historic trails are usually 1000 miles or more. The NRT system has grown from being just the first three established trails in the late 60s and early 70s, to now over 1300 NRT's across all 50 states including DC and Puerto Rico. That is the end of my section, I will pass it off to Peter.

>> PETER: Thank you, Brenda. Trail eligibility. Thank you for the recap of what NRT's are. Maybe you are on this webinar thinking about maybe I have an NRT in my community. For those of you who consider who are considering an NRT, first off trail eligibility. You have to be a trail. In this context we define a trail as a travel weight established either through construction or use and is passable by at least one or more of the following but not limited to, as Brenda said, pretty much all trail uses. Foot traffic, equestrian, watercraft, cross-country skis, wheelchairs, in-line skates, ATVs, snowmobiles, four-wheel-drive. Really any form of transportation can be used on a trail. One thing to consider is a road or a shoulder of the road is not considered a trail. So keep that in mind just for safety aspects for when people walk in the middle of the street on a NRT. That's the definition of a trail in this context. Next slide. The trail must be open to the public. It has no gaps and be designed, constructed and maintained according to best management practices. As Brenda said, these are high-caliber trails that should be held to higher standards and best practices that example if I they are great trails for the community. They should demonstrate state-of-the-art design and management are especially encouraged for those thinking to apply for NRT designation. A couple other things, the trail is in compliance with applicable land-use plans and environment of loss. If you've already established a trail you have a good idea what this entails but just ensure that it meets the environment of environmental assessment. So the trail has to be in existence and will be available for public use for at least 10 years. The physically the trail has to be built and maintained, you cannot be in the process of building the trail and apply for designation. It has to be fully constructed, have no gaps and be open for public use for at least 10 years. Next slide. Big important thing is landowner consent. We don't recognize any NRT without landowners that are involved in the trail. Sometimes a trail can be under federal, state or county land, all one trail but all those parties would have to sign off and support that this trail is going to be designated. Next slide. This is specific to the application process at least on the Department of Interior side. Any trails that are in state or local government or private land, anything other than federal land, must have a letter from their state trail administrator which you can find that contact information and the resources we provide after this presentation. Next slide.

>> MIKE: I think I'm up, thanks Peter and Brenda for the overview. I'm gonna talk about the benefits of the NRT program. Why is it important to you as a trail organization to get your trail into the NRT program? I am the director of American trails and we are the primary nonprofit partner although there are many, we manage the NRT database and manage the program from nonprofit side of things. One of our primary goals is to build the benefits of the NRT program. We are actively working on it trying to figure that out. I break down the benefits of the program into three categories. Currently, it's recognition, legitimacy and then partnership development. The way that you will see these benefits is the first of all, the NRT database. The NRT database

is a searchable map currently that allows you to search for any NRT and as Brenda and Peter said, there are a lot of them. There is over 1300 of them right now in all 50 states including DC and Puerto Rico. And I think even some of the Pacific islands. I did want to take a few moments to give you an idea of what the searchable database looks like. So this is the entry to the database. The searchable database. There are many ways, you can zoom in on the map. Maybe you live in the Pacific Northwest like I do and you could zoom in on where you live and choose a trail that is close to you. And to get the basic information or you could choose to go into more details and you can find out whether there is a current ambassador for that trail. That is located right up here. The name, a bunch of photos, some of the basic information. This is everything that is basically and that database including what uses are allowed, if there is center line data for the trail that would show up here in the NRT details. This one only has the trailhead located which is one of the reasons we decided to create ambassadors for the NRT program to fill in the details of this information, possibly get center line data so people can use GPS to locate the trail. Driving directions, who manages the trail, where it is, longitude and latitude, brief description. Some of them are more robust, some of them are 70s and 80s trails and don't have as robust of a description. A little bit of information about what type of trail it is, primary surface, secondary surface, how wide it is. Our goal is to give it some accessibility information to the extent that we know it. Who do you contact if you want to find out about closures or whether the trail is open? This is our best information of who is currently managing the trail. And then additional photos if you're looking for more details. There's also opportunities here for you to submit a photo. If you're on the trail and you took a great photo you could go ahead and upload that to American trails by clicking the submit photo. If you want to submit a review this will help people understand what is the quality of this trail. If it was done in the 80s but it's getting pretty overgrown now you can do a review or suggest an edit to the trail. It tells us more information so it's a little bit of an opportunity for outsourcing trail information. You can also, if you don't do it by map you can scroll down and if you know the name of the trail that you're looking for like South Bay or you want to find trails that are longer than 30 miles or you want to find snow trails or you want to find any motorized trails in your area or any forest service trails or park service trails you can choose managing agency. Then you can do a database should search. Myself Bay search did not work very well. Let's go back and say we want to find forest service trails in South Dakota . We can search the database and we will get a list of all the trails on a forest service land in South Dakota, right now that is three. You can see little basic details if you click on them you can go into much further detail, find the photos and things like that. So that is the basics of the database. We are looking in the future to build upon this database and we are going to work with the Park service and other federal land management agencies to update the application process. That is going to be happening this year. Hopefully, we will Atmore robust application processes and forms for you to use online that should make the process a little smoother and be a little better at prompting you for things you need to do as part of this process. Were actually going to go through the application process later in the slideshow. Another benefit is signage. Right now, through generous sponsorship by the Park service and other federal land management agencies we have free plastic signs that any trail that is currently designated as an NRT can get. They have to contact American trails and let us know and we have got a bunch waiting in the wings I can

send them out. We also have a relatively low cost metal signs, signs that may be last a little longer, those are available on American trails website. In the future, we are hoping to develop a signage program that provides not only a whole series of free signs like full on signs with the posts in the ground, everything, that matches the land management agencies signage protocols but also can provide sponsorship to give ongoing support and maintenance. We are working with smart outdoor on that smart assigned technology. They have a really cool program that's just getting up and running and we would really like to integrate that with the NRT feature. So if your trail is an NRT and does not have the real robust signage system this is a smart assigned program that can give you hot spots every mile with signage information and links through an app to local services like repair or hotel or anything like that. It also adds safety because you can very easily, quickly contact emergency support. So it's a really great potential and hopefully will be integrating that in the future. Then American trails also runs the NRT photo contest. This has been a great thing in the past. We have been doing it since 2004 and there is really great photos out there right now. Like top-notch photos. It's a great way for you to really highlight the aesthetics of your trail. Actually I think I have a link here to the photo contest page. You can go on to this page and look for the winning photos from last contest was 2020 and we have a whole set of winning photos you can scroll through. We do press releases on the winners and let the local trail advocates no that you have a great trail. You can see it through these great photos. The other thing that you can do if you want to see all of the entries you can click right here and go to a Flickr gallery and you can download those for free and is just a great way to find great trail photos especially in your area. It's a great way to highlight your own trail program. It's always a little awkward to come back to the presentation. The deadline for that is December 16th of every year. Keep that in mind if you have some great photos to submit, spread the word to your volunteers we would love as many photos as we can get. And then I mentioned this a little bit this is a new program for American trails. We discovered as we were really diving in to that NRT database and the new map, that came about a couple years ago, other than that it used to be a database like the Excel spreadsheet but without mapping was key. We also discovered that we didn't really have great information about all the trails. It was very hit or miss. This program has been in existence for many years and until recently we did not have it really good, consistent information like photos, descriptions. So we needed to, we also did not know where the trails were. Some of them from the 80s may not even exist and we do not really know that, yet. We felt like we could find people on the ground that love these trails in a regional area and we initially were hoping maybe we could get one person that could take Wisconsin and Minnesota as a region and then one person that could take Indiana and Illinois as a region but we ended up getting over 300 people all over. We have people in all 50 states and DC, currently. It kind of blew up, it's become a very popular program. These people love these NRT's. We go out and we are testing them, we train them for safety and consistently consistency and data gathering. If there active, we give them T-shirts, a set of brochures to spread the word about the NRT program . And then they go and they contact the land manager of the NRT and touch base with them. Do you know that your trail is an NRT, it has changed since you applied 20 years ago? How has it changed? Do you have a centerline of data that we could upload so people could find your trail better? It's one-on-one interaction between the ambassador and the trail manager. We could use

that interaction to update the database more fully. We could get photos, better information about the trails. And then, if there is not centerline data currently the ambassadors can go and walk the trail and get some centerline data and send it back to American trails to make that database more robust. So that is the current state of affairs. We would love to integrate our ambassadors with any existing volunteer programs in the future. I think a goal of ours even though it is not currently in that situation in the future we would like to maybe have the ambassadors if it's appropriate help manage coordinate with any volunteer programs that are currently happening but is always going to be coordination with the land manager. So not just going to go out and do a bunch of stuff, try and brush the trail without talking to the land managers. So that would be our next step for the ambassador program but that's down the trail a little ways. The other thing were working on, or working with outer spatial to create an app that streamlines ambassador tasks and connects the land managers with data about their NRT. You can go to outer spatial right now and see the NRT that we've uploaded data. We've worked on improving the data and getting to the point where it's more robust on their platform. Our goal is an investor can analyze, look at outer spatial and feed comments that the ambassadors made or even a user has made about the trail and get some outreach in that way and get some good feedback as a land manager. Those two elements are going to be coming out in the future. And then kind of the final benefit that I think is a little less tangible, there are currently no direct funding for NRT's. However, becoming an NRT raises the profile. It's like the good housekeeping seal of approval of your trail. That really can improve your fundraising opportunities. A great example of that, many states have recreational trail program funding criteria and many of them include if you're part of the national trails system you get a higher ranking in their funding opportunities. So right off the bat you tell the NRT program you're putting in a project you rework a section of trail, it's a part of the national recreational trails program, that gives you a leg up. In many states. It's a state-by-state thing but it can help. Just basically is a stamp of approval for trail quality and I think I have heard many times that organizations and friends of such and such trail find it easier to get foundations support for their trails and even a local business support if there is that stamp of approval and the NRT signs are out there saying this is a super high quality trail that we can be proud of as a community and as a group. So definitely don't forget to mention that. If you are looking for funding opportunities. In the future, American trails has started the process of building a trail fund. We are excited, we can't announce it yet but we got some support from some major sponsors that are going to start us down that road. We hope that part of that trail fund program will be specifically providing funding for maintenance and support of NRT's. We hope to build that in the future. And I think now I'm turning it over to Matt. To talk about how you actually become an NRT.

>> MATT: Thanks Mike, how did you become an NRT? Basically if your trail is on Forest Service land is one process and if it's on anything else is another process. I'm specifically going to go over the Forrester process. Next slide please. If your trail is on lands administered by the term of agriculture which is primarily US forest service lands they have the authority to designate a trail as an NRT. What that means is that we do not have to go through Congress or anything like that if the local population or group or advocacy organization wants to elevate a

certain trail they can nominate it for NRT designation. This includes national forests, grasslands and national recreation areas that can all be done through this process. So let's go to the next slide all run to the criteria of how you apply. So here is the rough outline there are seven steps to the process. I want to go over sort of each one a little bit more in detail but it is not too cumbersome of a process. It gets approved, recommended, up through the ranks. Recommended by the district ranger or some Forest supervisor or regional trails coordinator and that is approved by the regional Forester. That the approval process. Step two, a sickly just providing all the information. Name, location, map, vicinity, all that stuff. The nuts and bolts of it. The history of the trail in step three, that's a critical piece to tell the story of why this trail is important, why it should get that seal of approval as an NRT. I've seen some compelling letters about why a trail should be recommended for NRT approval. A lot of times it does have to do with a long history whether that is a significant part of American history or local history or whatever that may be. The fourth piece is the construction of the trail and the trail management objectives. So basically, the TML is how the trail is managed and what is managed for. It also describes the environment and the cultural features, things of that nature. The fifth component is the management direction. Covers things such as protection, safety, maintenance, rules and regulations, signage, associated facilities all of the pieces that are in place already governing the trail, so to speak. Assessment of impacts of the trail and associated resources as a result of designation. So if you get an NRT designation there's typically the pros and maybe some cons depending on who you're talking to and how you are looking at it. We want people who are nominating to think through that process of what would be the benefits to getting an NRT designation? Is the trail suited for it? Maybe you want to be a designated trail but was never really that sustainable and now if we start to bring more people to it because of NRT designation we want to note that that is a potential con that is out there. Last step is a statement of the trail or trail system that will be available for public use and enjoyment for at least 10 consecutive years. I've seen other trail programs or trail funding avenues different things that talk about in perpetuity and things like that and this one is sort of proof or a commitment that if we designate this trail it will be available to public use for at least 10 consecutive years. And that is a brief summary of the forest service process. You put all that into a package. There's a form available that guides you through all that and the different components and what you need to put into it and then you submit that through your local forest service office and they will work it through the nomination process. So that is it for the Forest Service side. I'm going to head over to Peter for the Department of the Interior side.

>> PETER: Think that. There's two different processes based on where your trail is and who manages the land. This section will be discussing the deferment of the interior process. If your trail is on federal, state or local land, any other land than Forest Service it will go through the Department of Interior process. The deferment of interior has the authority to designate NRT's on all lands other than those administered by the deferment of agriculture. Proposed NRT's on a federal, state and local lands other than the Forest Service are nominated and approved following a public application process with specific criteria. Which we will go over that in the next slide. You have an existing trail, you want to apply for National Recreation Trail status and you are not on the Forest Service land you will go through this following process. As I mentioned, there's a

public application to be can be found on American trails website and the resources after this webinar. That application the first seven steps here are kind of the information we ask for in the abdication. Basic trail information, name of the trail, location, long description, short description, directions to the trail, use, any fees, trail width and length, like Mike had shown on the database page that comes straight from the application. We like to see a very descriptive details of the trail when applying. Provide the contact information. This is the primary trail manager who will be the point of contact on the trail going forward and usually the person to work with with the application of there's any questions. If you, you have to have a letter of a landowner consent. Any lands as we mentioned previously any lands that the trail is on you need a written letter of consent and support from that land manager just to make sure that they are aware of this trail has been nominated for NRT designation and there's no red flags down the line with the land manager like he wasn't aware or why are these people on my land? You have to have that landowner consent. Also if any portion of the trail is on nonfederal land you need to have a letter of State trail support. You can find that information after the webinar. That takes up number four. Number five, we do ask for high-quality trail photos with ideally a caption and a credit. As Mike said these photos can be used to promote these trails and a lot of times we use them to highlight the newly decimated trails and we want to provide a compelling image to track people there. A trail map is very important , it helps with our review process and make sure we are crossing the T's and dotting the I's, where your trail goes and allows us to address any locational questions. We have additional supporting materials. This can be additional photos, I have seen people if they're doing a promotional on the NRT though upload a flyer from the event. A lot of times will get other supporting materials can be the partner letters of support so if you are NRT or national Park unit, the Park unit applied by the local community maybe is a nonprofit or an outdoor recreation shop or something that they want to provide that letter of support as well saying, this trail is not just applying in a vacuum like they have community support as well. So really the additional support materials are anything that helps elevate your trail to why it is a board and help us understand the impact and importance in your community. The final thing you have to upload is a signed signature page. The trail manager will sign off saying that the trail eligibility and all the things we talked about earlier, pretty much cited often confirming that this trail was built and open for public access. All land managers, land owners have consent. It was built to best invite mental practices those kind of things. It spelled out in the document. It's pretty much signed off in Saint this trail is a legitimate meets the criteria. So once that application is submitted it comes to a review team. It's primarily National Park Service staff with some other other agency staff like say a nominated trail is on official wildlife service , a representative would have to review that. But it's usually an interagency process. We go through your application, double check everything, we will reach out with any questions, confirmation if any more photos or a map, really anything to signify that the NRT meets the mandatory criteria and it's a good application. Once we approve that, sometimes we defer it or deny it, unfortunately. If it gets deferred we work with you throughout the year to say this is good but it could be great, try to work with trail stuff or your own organization to beef up the application. So, if it does get deferred status, we work with the but assuming everything meets the criteria, it's a great trail, we approve it and start the internal process to move it up the ranks through the Department of

Interior to get them to recognize and signed off by the secretary of the interior. Which luckily, just happened last week with 10 new national recreation trails. If you not heard the news, feel free to check out the ten new trails that have been added to the system as of last week. Two last things to keep in mind. There is a deadline for this application process it is November 1. Your initial ideally fully fleshed out application gets into the system by November 1, that is when our team starts reviewing everything and will get back to you with questions. November 1, is the deadline for new application. The second note is we cannot really touch on this but we can in FAQs, there's a subset called the national water trails which are part of the National Recreation Trail system they just happen to be moderate. Do you use boots or a boat to travel this trail is what we say. National water trails as a slightly different application question which focuses more on best management practices. So, if you are applying it to be a water trail keep in mind there are a few additional questions as the highlight the best manager practices as far as recreation, safety, conservation, education and outreach, those kinds of things. Just keep that in mind if you are a potential water trail. Next slide please. So that wraps up the two application processes. As Mike alluded to the benefits to applying it to the NRT program this is some of the background. We do get a couple frequent asked questions which it's best to bring up now. Again, we do have time for questions afterwards but just a couple of things to keep in mind and this may seem redundant but we want to get it across. NRT's are recognized by the federal government with consent of any federal, state, tribal, local, nonprofit or private entity having jurisdiction over the lands of the NRT traverses. I know that's incredibly important to us. So, all potential trails must apply for the distinction of an NRT. You cannot just get it signed and slap it on your trail head and say you are an NRT. Yet to go to the process to apply for distinction. Upon designation as an NRT all management responsibilities remain with the existing land management entity. Even though this program is by the federal government there's no additional federal oversight on your trail. Everything, management, Access, volunteers all of that still remains with the managing trail organization. Finally, touching on national water trails, as I mentioned this is a subset of the NRT program and these are water-based recreation trails. These are established, the subcategory was established in 2012 under the secretarial order 3319. That legitimized the national water trails as part of the national recreation trail system. These are a couple frequent asked questions if you are thinking about that during the presentation. But I believe we will take it to the question and answer section. Next slide please.

>> CANDACE: Thank you so much Peter and Matt. Brenda had to leave early I'm going to bring back the slides to show my resources slide and once this pops up on your end attendees will receive this clickable PDF it will be my follow-up along with the links in the closed captioning transcript. I'm and add more resources I know we are getting emails regarding to NRT signage and I'm going to include a link to the PowerPoint presentation so you have the snapshot of what this program entails whether you are a current NRT or looking at designated or hopefully getting designation for your NRT. And a couple of their links I will also include. We will go into Q&A now. You are welcome to submit questions. If you have anything, if we don't get to all the questions during the live Q&A we can answer after the webinar in writing. We will send a document with all the Q&A to all the attendees. We will have that available for attendees to

download. At the very top of the screen that link is the link to this webinar's webpage. First question I have, this is a clarification on the funding, what does the program fund? Mike, you are talk about that. Can you explain that in a summary again?

>> MIKE: The program does not actually, have any funds associated with it. When you apply and become an NRT you don't automatically get any funding with that. But I was talking about is using that designation, that stamp of approval, in RTP funding applications or really any foundations for future funding support that you try to go after. It adds the legitimacy to your trail to make you more successful and going after funds. I think the most direct opportunity is the recreational trails program. In many states, you have extra points or emphasis if you designate that your part of the national trail system which is what NRT's are. And then I had mentioned that American trails is working on starting up a trail fund. I'm not sure if that is where the question is oriented. That is something that is coming down the road. I hope we don't know what it will look like exactly but we hope to provide NRT findings through that as well as additional funding and a be focused on maintenance and construction of trails. Mostly, looking at solving the trail maintenance backlog. City, state, county and federal lands. I think that is where is going to focus most of his energy. Again, that does not exist quite yet but we are working hard on making that happen.

>> CANDACE: Great, thank you so much Mike. We're getting a few questions in regards to the 10 years that you had brought up. First question, doesn't need to be 10 years for the trail to be opened before designation or after designation to make can you clarify the tenant years?

>> PETER: That is what Matt kind of alluded to say your trail needs to be maintained and open for public access. Tenant years is a little arbitrary, we prefer to be open and existing forever but since your trail has been designated NRT it's already existing, there's no gaps, has been used and maintained so is just reassuring that that trail is going to be open and maintained that you don't just get NRT designation and let it fall by the wayside. We want to keep that status as a high-caliber trail ongoing and ideally into perpetuity but we have to listed as 10 years.

>> CANDACE: Michael asks that trails that are closed seasonally are they still eligible?

>> PETER: Yes.

>> CANDACE: Sandra is asking can NRT trails crossroads?

>> MATT: Yes, they can. We can assess if it crosses the road, it can be on the shoulder but that road crossing if it is safe and accessible like there's a crosswalk, some kind of rumble strips that are placed on the side so that people know, as long as that is recognized as part of the trail. It is probably part of the trail best management practices and part of the management planning that is just across the road then yes, that is possible. As long as it's incredibly safe, there is good signage saying the trail is that way. Across the road kind of thing.

>> CANDACE: Great, another question from Sandra, once an application has been submitted how long does it take to get a designation determination?

>> PETER: I can speak for the Department of Interior side. New evocations come in November 1 and then our team gets together from about November to February to do our due diligence review. So, the program management side I will make sure the criterias are met if there's anything else I need I will work with whoever the applicant is and then we usually have a review thing where local, someone in the general local area that has knowledge of the trail talks through us more and gives recommendations on how to improve the application and how to move forward. That occurs from about November to February. And then, start doing administrative process with the intention that recognition is done by national trails day which is always the first Friday in June. So that's why I alluded to the new 10 trails that we got last week. So very long story short November 2 ideally June. Were at the mercy of the administrations. So, keep that in mind. November to June. I'm not sure the timeline for forest service.

>> MATT: Our process is not quite as formalized. We don't have a set cycle that applications must be in by this date. On the Forest Service side is driven by the local level. So, it's when that gets put into the district level and works its way up. I was part of the Palmetto trail that just got NRT designation last fall and that process took quite a while because there's a lot of back-and-forth to get our maps and information and everything up to the standard, we wanted it before we sent it up for final approval. So, it really depends on how high quality of a product or application you start with. I would say, in theory, 4 to 6 months is probably what it takes from beginning to end but again with administrative things that go on and sometimes it can take a little longer. I think Palmetto took a little while because we really wanted to make sure we were telling the story and all the details how the divalent before we set it up for final approval. Even the process we actually set it up for approval, for review before the regional Forster wanted to (Word?).

>> CANDACE: Go ahead Mike.

>> MIKE: I want to give a quick clear flirtation two questions ago and I think maybe it's for both of you. I keep getting questions about where there's a trail that was to be an NRT and it comes up to a road and then maybe it goes down the road hundred yards and then continues on the other side, does that kind of road section like a small section that on a road kick you out of the process or do each have different?

>> PETER: If there is a sidewalk it's fine, if there's a bike lane there's fine but nothing on the shoulder. It's all part of that continuity of a trail. It technically that would be a trail gap if there's no safe accessible way to continue. Any non-pedestrian or official bicycle lane or something like that is not going to be considered but that does allude to something that maybe this is a question that's worth pointing out. Say you have 100-mile trail in a perfect world that would be awesome if the trail was in perfect condition but say it's a scenario like Mike described, 50 miles into it

there's a break in the trail where you would have to walk on a road, that would make the entire 100-mile trail not eligible. But you can do segment of your trail. That is totally fine. That first 50 miles is a great trail and then it just kind of ends at the trailhead along the road you can designate that part. It does not have to be the entire trailer trail system. It can be just one little, or any length trail as long as it meets the criteria. If it's worthy of designation. It can also be a trail system. We just had one designated two years ago, a state park in Colorado that the entire state park trail system it is all continuous connected looping trail. That NRT was designated as the state park trail loop kind of thing. So, all the trails met the criteria, they all connect, there's no gaps, good for all trail users so that the scenario where the entire trail system was designated and then there has been other examples where they just want to do this little two-mile segment because that's what was important.

>> MIKE: Good point. Matt, I was wondering from the Forest Service perspective there is a lot of "roads", logging roads, do you have a criteria for when a trail joins the road and what defines a road or is that?

>> MATT: That what was going through my mind on this discussion. I know some of the NRT's I've dealt with have a road blocks but they are shorter distance and they are gravel roads or logging roads or even Forest Service system roads but low traffic. I know from some of the ones I've dealt with, our goal annually is to try to give as much off the gravel roads as we can. I know from the first service review side of things if having a section on one of those roads would necessarily kick it out. I agree with Peter, if you're trying to walk on the shoulder of a road, paved road, high-traffic road, you have to go down U.S. 80 for like half a mile, that's a trail break. But I think if you are on a Forest Service land on Forest Service roads, gravel roads, slow traffic situations, I don't think they would necessarily kick you out. I don't know for a fact that and think about all the examples in NRT's I've dealt with on the forest side they were like short road sections they were low traffic roads.

>> CANDACE: Lawrence is asking if there's an application fee?

>> MATT: No.

>> CANDACE: Great. Next question is from Julia, if the trail is owned by city parks department would we still need to get estate trail administrator letter?

>> PETER: Yes. Anything that is not on federal land needs that state trail administrator that's mostly for their awareness and approval. So, yes, anything under the federal state letter.

>> CANDACE: Clarification on the water trails. So, they can be designated as national recreation trail's as well as national water trails, correct? Can they be visited as either or both?

>> PETER: They are one and the same. So, there's national recreation trail program and a subset

of that is a cold and national water trails. So, if designated there is a different signage for that so I'm not sure we have a picture on any of the slides but it has the same review criteria with the additional of some other ones like best manager practices. National water trails are still part of the national recreation trail system. So that 1300 trail count that we acknowledge, that includes water trails, as well.

>> CANDACE: Okay. Lawrence is asking what roles can a 501(c)(3) nonprofit can play in applying for or supporting applications in the NRT program?

>> PETER: You are just as eligible to apply as anyone else. A lot of these applications sometimes they come from land management agencies, we had one in Fort Laramie national historic site that was applied for by someone at the park. But a lot of times, it is a trail nonprofit that does the application. They are the main, they will put the trail manager contact in their but they are eligible. Nonprofit are just as eligible to apply as anyone else. As long as they meet all the criteria and then also a lot of times nonprofits can supply that supporting material. So, say, for example, park service unit applies for designation but there is a friends group of the park service unit that supports it as well. So, there is really just because 501(c)(3) nonprofit there is nothing stopping from you from applying or supporting anyone is applying.

>> CANDACE: Lisa is asking, sorry go ahead Matt.

>> MATT: And my experience I've seen a lot of these applications driven by more of the support groups in the 501(c)(3) type organizations more than the agency.

>> CANDACE: Great. Go ahead Peter, sorry.

>> PETER: Trail applications that you come in art from nonprofits, a decent amount. It's really a mixed bag but every year we get probably at least and a half are coming from nonprofits.

>> CANDACE: Great. Lisa is asking what are some ways as an at NRT they can maximize this hugely important designation? Do you have any guidance?

>> MIKE: I could have been there. I think to some degree utilizing those benefits I think are the best way to do it. Contacting American trails or the Park service or the Forest Service and working with them to make that information as robust as possible. We would be happy to join in on any press releases that you do locally. We will provide support and comments" and do everything we can to really highlight that this is a nationally recognized trail that your community should be incredibly proud of. If you do that effectively and we try to do that to the degree we can at the national organization but really, it's the local people that can get this done effectively. Reaching out to your local paper, reaching out to local magazines or TV stations or interviews or things like that. We were involved a recent designation from two years ago, not this last one, the Chippewa Valley trail in Wisconsin and they did a really great job of reaching out

and getting articles in magazines and really developing that community pride in the trail. By putting up those NRT signs, they are free, which you can get off the American trails website. Just put those all over. Every time the public has an opportunity to drive by or see that trail connection, they put in NRT sign and let it know it's a high-value asset that they should be proud of.

>> PETER: Is something in addition to that. Mike mentioned signage. If you are a designated national recreation trail you do have the rights to use the national recreation trail logo on any educational or promotional materials as long as it is not for sale. So, any noncommercial product. That little on the top right of your screen, that JPEG or that image of the logo, you can use that. At your trailhead if you have you can use that there or if you have a brochure or anything like that. So, if you have permission to use that just for your trail as long as it is on promotional, educational, noncommercial materials. And you can contact Candace Gallagher at American trails if you need that.

>> CANDACE: Great, thank you so much. Another Peter is asking about in regards to the US to Forest Service authority to designate new NRT's has been delegated and re-delegated from the secretary of agriculture to the US Forest Service achievement to the regional Forster's and possibly even further in some cases, does that risk diluting or lessening the perceived value or standing of NRT's and the entire national trail system?

>> MATT: I'm aware the authority has been delegated down. I'm not sure and necessarily dilutes the NRT program or the designation so much. It's not as if we are designating hundreds of them, I still think there is a lot of thought that goes into these designations and as I mentioned before even though the designation has gone down to regional Forster's I'm not personally aware of any designations going beyond that. Even in the last one I was involved in they make sure that the Washington office was on board before they wanted to move forward. There was a full review by the department not just the trail team but the higher ups of the department at agriculture above the trail team to make sure they reported it before the regional forest supported it. I understand the thought process behind the question but if I felt like every forest supervisor and district ranger was going around designating every trail as a NRT I could see that happening but at this point it is not that case at all. I think Peter might be able, he probably knows better than I do. The Forest Service is not designating a lot of these. The extension to the Palmetto trail that was completed last year was one of the first Forest Service trails to get an NRT designation in quite some time. Possible but I don't think that is really the case at this time.

>> CANDACE: Okay. Peter is also asking what's once the NRT is established how can one be unestablished?

>> PETER: That's a simple process. Pretty much just right to myself or American trails acknowledging that this trail is a torn apart, we don't have the means to fix it up, we want to be de-designated. If you're the land owner or trail manager and you make that decision you let us

know and we will pretty much undesignated. We take it off the database so no one can find it, we archive it, put RN on the does it administered of site and then asked that we take your signage down.

>> CANDACE: Okay great. I do welcome if anyone has any additional questions, I am looking through here to see if there are any relevant to this conversation. Just a reminder, if you have any to come to mind after this webinar is over you can email American trails, myself, you will get the emails from all the presenters and you're welcome to email them directly, as well.

>> MIKE: I saw one that I thought was a good question. If you designated a national recreation trail do need to go through a full application for designated water?

>> PETER: No, it's two different applications. I'm sorry I didn't get too much into the water application today. Most of it is the same questions is just a different form. So, because the national water trail program came about in 2012, we had to go through the whole federal registrar to this process to establish an allocation process for that. So, we had the opportunity to include some different questions or additional questions. But, no, you do not have to apply for both. It's either one or the other.

>> MIKE: So, let's say there's a water trail that is designated and NRT before 2012 before the water trail application was official. They get water trail signs as an existing NRT?

>> PETER: I would have to follow up on that. We have had a similar question come up recently about that. So, I would have to discuss that with my colleagues about what that process would be.

>> CANDACE: Great. I know there were questions before it is not come up for this webinar itself but in regards to the application process, is there a PDF or just the questions that will be asked in advance so those interested in applying for designation are able to see them and prepare as well as do they have to complete the application process and when it's sitting or are they able to come back to it?

>> PETER: When you go to the application page on American trails it gives you a view checklist or something like that. That gives you all the questions that are going to be asked in the application. And then, when you go to actually apply you will be given a user account and everything and you can log back in anytime and make changes. So, you can start filling in information as you go, putting in resources kind of thing, but keep in mind that ever first deadline for bringing in new trails but even pass then if I reach out to you and say I did a better map, you can still could go in and upload those resources. It's not a sit down do it all kind of thing. Your application should be as thorough and complete by that November 1 deadline.

>> MATT: I will add in preparation for this webinar I realized that the Forest Service

information is pretty lacking. It's available out there and on to work with American trails to update some of that information. And get our application form available on there and that will guide you to the whole process. I will add in my previous experience working with these it was a little bit of a back-and-forth process. They submitted a package and we provided feedback and said we need a better map work can be added to this information and then the organization that was helping pull that application together provided the information and we added it to the package. What we want is a complete application as we can get when you submit your application there is still an opportunity to improve things after the fact if we realize there are some gaps.

>> CANDACE: Great. Laura has a follow-up question in regards to the national water trail status just to clarify. So, it sounds like if the trail is a water trail you can no longer apply for NRT status you must apply for the national water trail status, is this the case?

>> PETER: It depends on how you want your trail to be recognized. It is a true national water trail it would make sense to apply for national water trail but if you want to apply to just be national recreation trail that's fine. It's the same benefits. You get the same recognition. You get access to trail signage, use the logo, all that kind of stuff. And if you there can be just a water trail that wants to be a national recreation trail that's fine. We had that happened a couple years ago. They just wanted to be a regular national recreation trail, fine. If you want to be recognized as a national water trail then you should do that application process but it's really just a naming difference. Different signage that you get along with your trail. Same benefits, pretty much the same process, same review process, same engagement kind of thing. Same criteria. If your trail is all in water, I would suggest national water trail and if your trail is all on land, I would suggest national recreation trail.

>> CANDACE: Great, Robert is asking a local citizen initiate the application?

>> PETER: Yes.

>> MIKE: They are obviously going to have to work at their local land management in the process but they can definitely initiate.

>> CANDACE: Great, I really appreciate your guises time in answering all these questions. If anyone has any additional questions feel free to reach out to us. We will send all Q&A to attendees in a follow-up email so you have that as a resource. We will add it to the webinar's webpage as well. I want to thank again the partners of this webinar that include National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Federal Highway Administration. I apologize my screen is a little delayed. If you are enjoying these webinars please consider donating as little as five dollars by texting IM for trails 244 – 321. Your donation goes to the trail fund as Mike mentioned earlier, the program of American trails which enables us to build a fund dedicated to maintaining and enhancing America's trails through maintenance,

research and stewardship training projects. We hope you join us for future webinars offered in our advancing trails webinar series. These are the upcoming webinars on this slide you can register for now, they are all free. Including learning credits. If you Mr. live webinars they are available and can be downloaded anytime. Thank you everyone for attending and thank you to Matt, Mike, Peter as well as Brenda for presenting. I hope you all enjoyed the rest of your day and happy trails.