

MANN GULCH TRAIL #258

National Recreation Trail Application



Submitted By:

CR Anderson Middle School Mann Gulch Club

With Support From:

Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest

Gates of the Mountains Boat Club

Wild Montana



Mann Gulch - National Recreation Trail Application

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C.R. Anderson Middle School
1200 Knight Street
Helena, Montana 59602

To whom it may concern,

This letter is intended to inform you about the work from a club at our school as well as introduce the application which you will find attached for placing the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail on the National Recreation Trail Registry.

We are a group of 8th graders at C.R. Anderson Middle School. We have been working on an application for the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail to put it on the national recreation trail registry for the 75th Anniversary of Mann Gulch. We have all volunteered for the project. We have met one to two times a week since the beginning of the school year. Some things that we have done for this club are visiting Mann Gulch and hiking the trail, writing a narrative of the history of Mann Gulch, and interviewing the chief archeologist of the Helena National Forest.

If the Mann Gulch trail gets nationally designated, the trail will be better protected and be used much more often. "National Recreation Trails are existing land-based and **water-based** trails that provide close to home recreation opportunities on Federal, State and local lands." (nps.gov)

The Mann Gulch Trail helps to connect people to the events of August 5, 1949. Our work will help connect future generations because the trail will be designated on maps making it easier to find and making it a point of interest. The trail is the same one that James Harrison, a Mann Gulch firefighter, used to fight the fire, a direct connection to the events of that day. It makes one realize the rugged nature of the terrain. At the top of the trail there is a sign with a map of events of the day. Those include where all 13 men bravely fell and the location of the attempt at an escape fire by the foreman in 1949. From this view, you can see straight across to Mann Gulch and are standing near where the fire began from a lightning strike.

We believe this designation is an important addition to the history of the area. We hope you will give your earnest consideration to our application.

Sincerely,

<i>Ryan Driscoll</i>	<i>Melissa Klatt</i>	<i>Savannah Savage</i>	<i>Lynsey Renney</i>
<i>Shyloh Smith</i>	<i>Cayden Jones</i>	<i>Mr. Thomas</i>	<i>Zuriah</i>
<i>Braeden Burke</i>	<i>ZAILA CARLSON</i>	<i>A. B. McMahon</i>	
<i>Grace Shanks</i>	<i>Gabriel Mattern</i>	<i>Oliver Kamp</i>	

Gabriel Mattern	Oliver Kamp	Grace Shanks	Ryan Driscoll
Shyloh Smith	Kadence Gallegos	Zuriah Elkins	Melissa Klatt
Braeden Burke	Zaila Carlson	Lynsey Renney	Cayden Jones
Savannah Savage	Daimion Rumbold	Mr. McMahon	Mrs. Thomas

Mann Gulch - National Recreation Trail Application

This application is to be completed by the party proposing NRT designation in coordination with the local District or Forest. This document is intended as both a guide to information needed for NRT consideration as well as the application to be reviewed and approved by the Regional Forester.

1. Name and location of proposed trail, including map indicating trail and vicinity.

Proposed National Recreation Trail Name: Mann Gulch Trail

Forest System Trail #: 258

Trail Map: See appendix

Location Map: See appendix

2. History/background.

Summary of history including construction date, concept, development, partnership(s), cooperating agency(s), historical use(s), local or political issue(s), and events associated with the trail as applicable.

The Mann Gulch Trail has existed since at least 1942. However, the trail was not officially recognized in Forest Service records until 1964, around the same time it became part of the newly designated Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area.

The Mann Gulch Trail was utilized by James Harrison in 1949 to respond to the Mann Gulch fire. This fire started the night of August 4th due to a lightning strike. The first official report came from the Colorado Mountain lookout. However, James Harrison, the Meriwether guard, found the fire in the late morning and attempted to contact the Canyon Ferry ranger station but radio issues delayed the report. Harrison then went to begin fighting the fire himself. At 1:30, a plane with smokejumpers was deployed from Missoula to fight the fire. They arrived around 3:00 and jumped onto a site at the head of Mann Gulch. The gear was scattered during the jump. The men gathered the gear and ate dinner. Dodge heard voices and went to find James Harrison leaving his second in command to start the men toward the river.

When Dodge and Harrison rejoined the men, they continued hiking on the North side of the gulch. Within a few minutes however, Dodge realized the fire had jumped onto the side they were on and ordered the men to turn and retreat. As they broke out of the trees into grass, the fire began to blow up. 300 yards after turning around, the men were ordered to drop their tools hoping to make the ridgetop. Only another 200 yards later, the foreman Dodge, realizing they were never making the ridge, started what today is known as an escape fire. Not knowing the technique, the rest of the crew thought he was crazy for starting another fire and kept running. Dodge survived in his fire ring. The

two youngest smokejumpers using the escape fire on their flank went straight up to the ridge and over the other side to a patch of rocky ground. Here they took refuge until the fire had passed. The rest of the crew ran scattered across the hillside and were felled by the flames or by smoke inhalation afterwards. 13 of the 16 men perished.

James Harrison's story was unique. He had to hike the 1500-foot Mann Gulch Trail two times on this hot August day. Harrison's first trip up the trail was ordered by Ranger Jansson to check for smoke from the previous days' thunderstorm. He did see a fire was burning on top of the ridge between Meriwether and Man Gulch. This was around 10:45 am. He walked back down the trail to radio both Missoula and Canyon Ferry. Unsuccessful in his attempts to make contact, he left a note saying "gone to fight the fire, Jim" then he hiked back up the trail. He arrived on the fire at approximately 1:00 with tools in hand and created a fire line trying to protect the Meriwether side of the gulch. He remained working until Dodge contacted him at around 5:15 where he became part of the ill-fated Mann Gulch crew. James Harrison became a guard at the behest of his mother who felt smoke jumping was simply too dangerous. Harrison was not to survive his final race with fire that day.

The Mann Gulch fire changed many ways firefighting was approached. Based on Dodge's escape fire where he burnt out an area and laid face down to survive, the idea for a safety zone was born. These safety zones are pre-burned areas, larger than a football field, where crews could retreat if a fire started burning too hot. In addition, crews are given an individual fire shelter where a firefighter could be protected from radiant heat and smoke. Firefighters now live and train together and know the ins and outs of fire behavior in multiple terrains. The location for hiking to attack the fire would have been the rim top from the beginning and lookouts are established to know changes in fire behavior during any procedure performed to fight a fire. All crews have better radio communications, which was an issue throughout the day in reporting this fire and because the Mann Gulch radio broke in the initial drop. The crews now are trained to follow orders and stay together even if they are badly framed. In addition, fire is studied extensively at locations such as the Missoula Intermountain Research Station.

The Mann Gulch Trail continues to connect future generations to the events of August 5, 1949. There have been meet-ups held on August 5th in remembrance of the event. There is a tour of the Gate of the Mountains via boat, and it stops at the campground and picnic area where the trail begins as well as at the base of Mann Gulch to describe the events of the day. When you get off the tour boat at the picnic area, you will see a memorial to the fallen firefighters as well as a cabin where a Mann Gulch firefighter lived and worked in 1949. The trail is the same trail that James Harrison used to fight the fire, a direct connection to the events of that day. It makes one realize the rugged nature of the terrain. At the top of the trail there is a sign with a map of events of the day. Those include where all 13 men bravely fell and the location of the attempt at an escape fire by the foreman in 1949. From this view, you can see straight across to Mann Gulch and are standing near where the fire began from a lightning strike. Future generations could

read books to connect them to the trail including Young Men and Fire and A Great Day to Fight Fire. Our work will help connect future generations because the trail will be designated as a National Recreation Trail on the maps making it easier to find this trail and making it a point of interest.

3. Description of the trail, trail management objective, and associated setting, including cultural features.

Trail Management Objective- type of use(s), seasons of use, prohibited uses, etc.

The Mann Gulch Trail is a hiker/pedestrian trail from Meriwether to the top and around the rim. It is not open to wheeled vehicles, motorized vehicles or snow mobiles.

The Mann Gulch Trail is open year-round, but winter access is a challenge since the river freezes in places and alternate access points from the north are closed.

List of pertinent features associated with the trail, that would add to or detract from the trail experience, as applicable.

Wildlife habitat: Bighorn Sheep, Bald Eagles, Deer, Bats

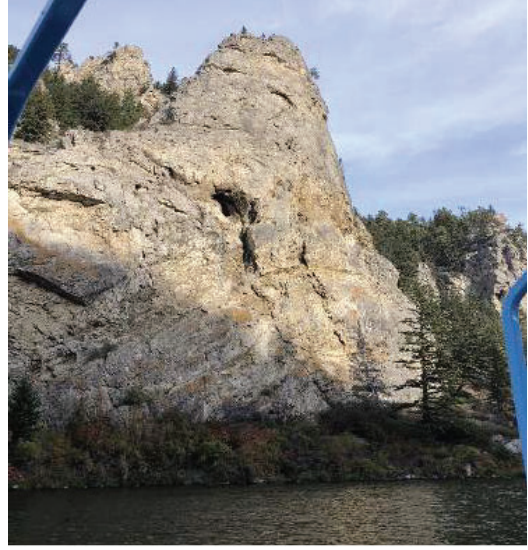
Natural Features: Devils Kitchen, Gates of the Mountains (geographic feature), American Canyon, Rock that looks like a wave, Salt and minerals in dirt, Limestone rock formations, Mann Gulch, Missouri River

Plant life: Ponderosa pine (smells like vanilla)

Cultural Features: Part of Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area, Smokejumpers Memorial, Native American Pictographs, Area traveled by Lewis & Clark Expedition



Mann Gulch



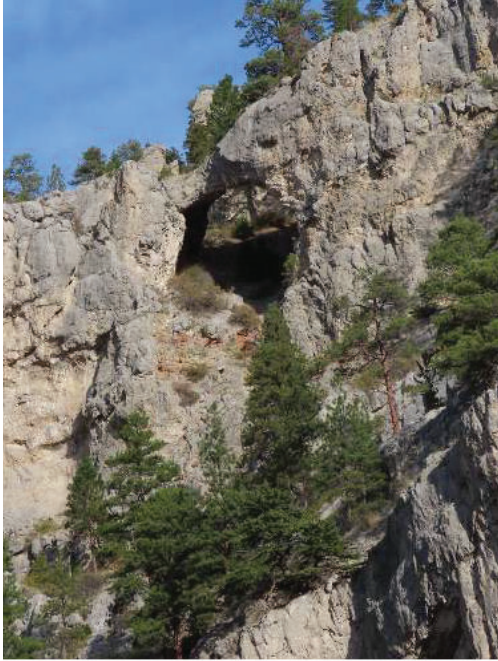
Limestone rock formation



Bighorn Sheep



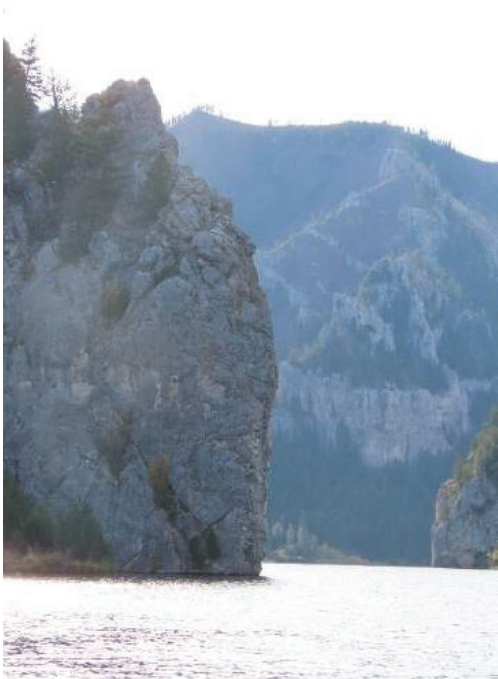
Bald Eagle



Bat cave



Ponderosa pine (smells like vanilla)



Gates of the Mountains



Missouri River overlook



Pictograph



Devils Kitchen



Smokejumpers Memorial



James Harrison's cross

Associated recreation facilities: campgrounds, side trail, connector trails, water access, special features, and drinking water.

Developed Recreation Sites: Coulter Campground, Meriwether Picnic Area

Associated Infrastructure: Large picnic pavilion, picnic tables, pit toilets, administrative cabin, boat launch, potable water, grills

Trails: #257 (Missouri River Canyon), #253 (Meriwether Canyon), #258 (Mann Gulch)



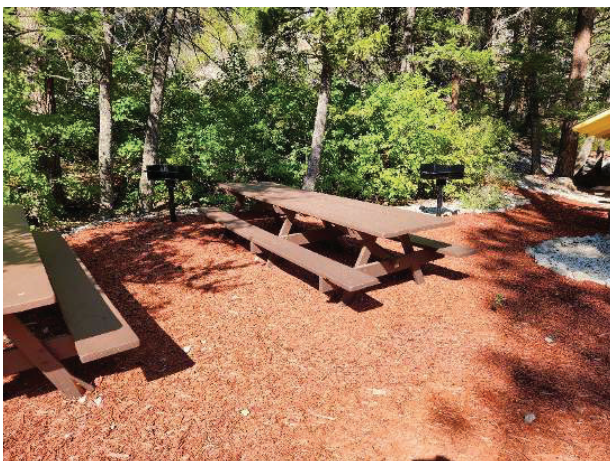
Administrative Cabin



Coulter Campground



Picnic area pavilion



Picnic tables and bbqs



Pit toilets



Boat launch/dock at Meriwether Picnic Area

ALL PHOTOS ABOVE TAKEN BY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DURING SEPT. 29 FIELD TRIP

4. Management direction covering such items as resource protection, safety, maintenance, rules and regulations, signing, and associated recreation facilities.

Maintenance: Include maintenance plan, standards, and identify partnership(s), cooperative agreement(s), and affiliated club(s).

There is annual maintenance on the trail that checks for erosion and downed trees at the beginning and end of the season. Montana Conservation Corps usually comes in and helps if anything big happens such as forest fires, landslides, or high erosion. The National Smokejumper Association helps maintain the trail by donating money and camping out for trail work. The Last Chance Back Country Horsemen have packed in materials for new crosses and supplies.

Rules and Regulations: specific to trail or trail management.

The Mann Gulch Trail is a hiker/pedestrian trail from Meriwether to the top and around the rim. It is not open to wheeled vehicles, motorized vehicles or snow mobiles.

Much of the trail is in the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area and thus is subject to the provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act. There is a party size limit of 15 people and 20 head of stock in the Wilderness Area. The trail is also managed in accordance with the Mann Gulch Historic Preservation Plan.

Resource Protection: needs and methods.

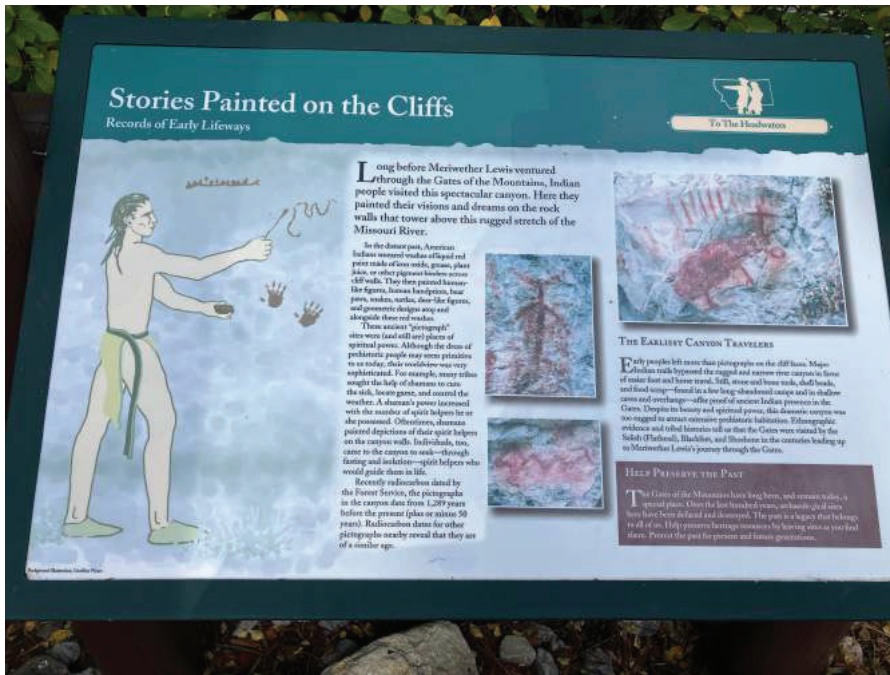
Users should remember that it is a historic area and looks nearly the same as the year of the Mann Gulch fire. No new trails are allowed to be built beyond what is currently there. Users should follow the Leave No Trace Principles to respect the natural environment. No trinkets should be left. Nothing should be removed from the area-artifacts should not be collected. People should notify the Forest Service if they find anything new.

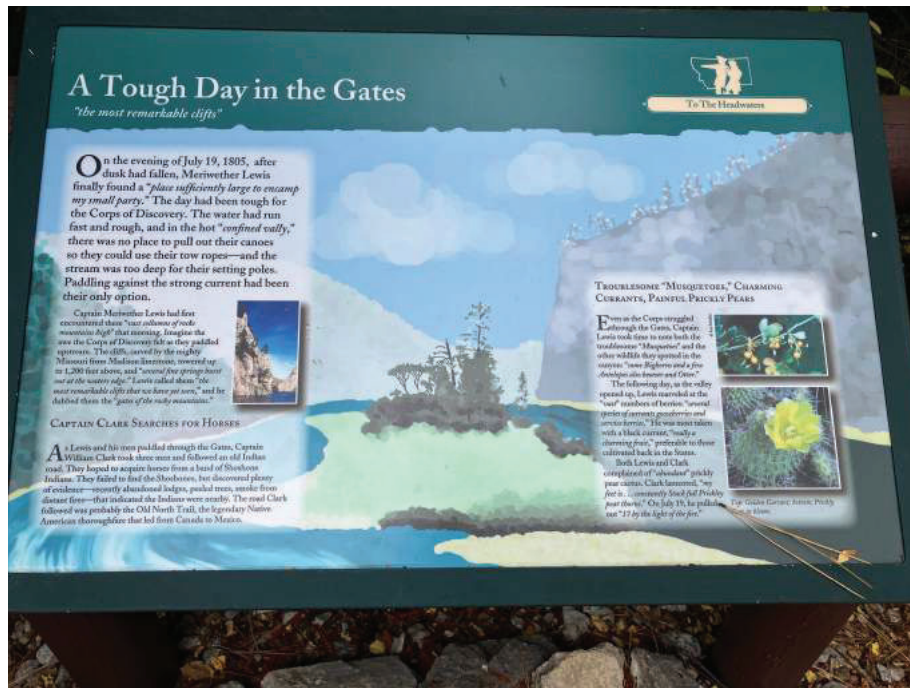
Signs: sign plan, pictures, consistency, ROS class, specifics as appropriate.

The trail has good signs and will not need improvements unless they get vandalized or unless more recognition is wanted. All trail junctions are well marked. Additional interpretive signage exists at the trailhead and at the overlook. Landmarks and boundaries, like Devils Kitchen and the wilderness boundary, are also marked.

Interpretive signs:







Trail Signs:





ALL PHOTOS ABOVE TAKEN BY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DURING SEPT. 29 FIELD TRIP

5. Assessment of impacts on the trail and associated resources as a result of designation.

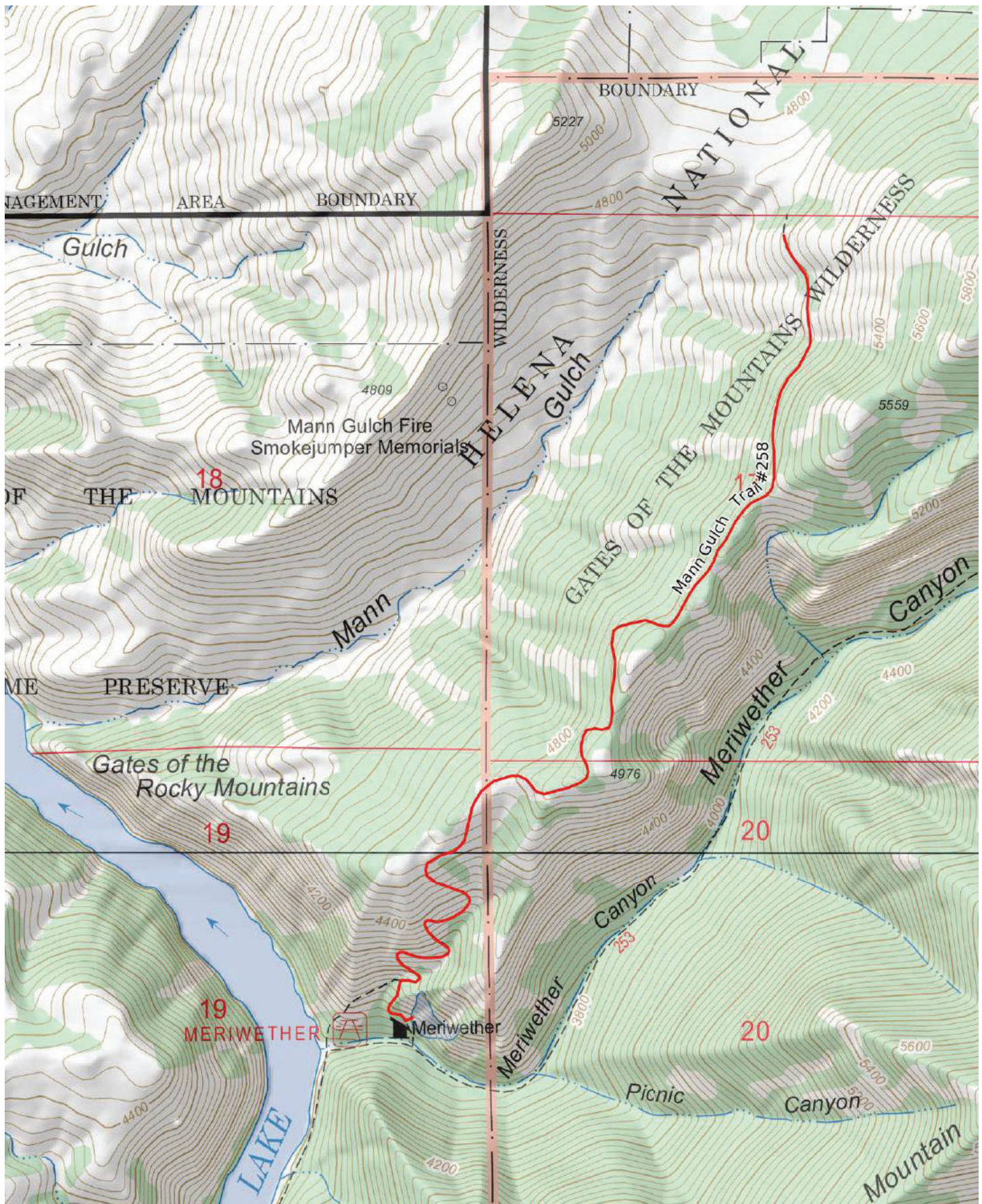
What management actions may be necessary to accommodate increasing use levels?

Not much. The hope is to maintain the primitive nature of the trail. Tracking group sizes might be a change. There could be an interpretive plan analyzing how people currently use the trail to help upcoming visitor usage.

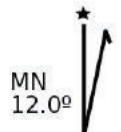
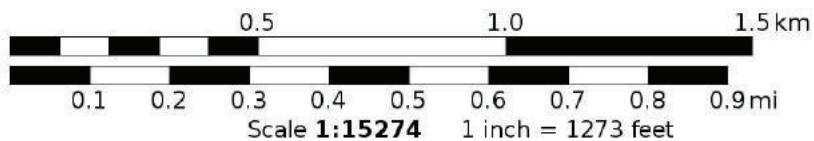
Describe the resources available to manage and maintain the trail once designated as an NRT

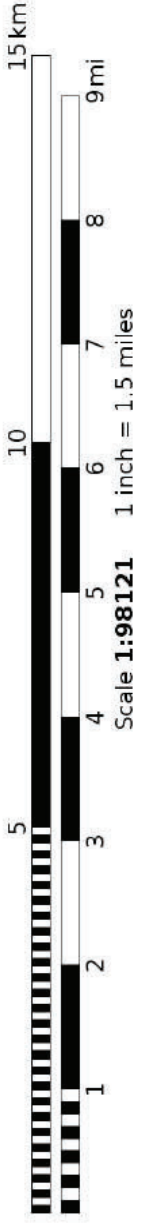
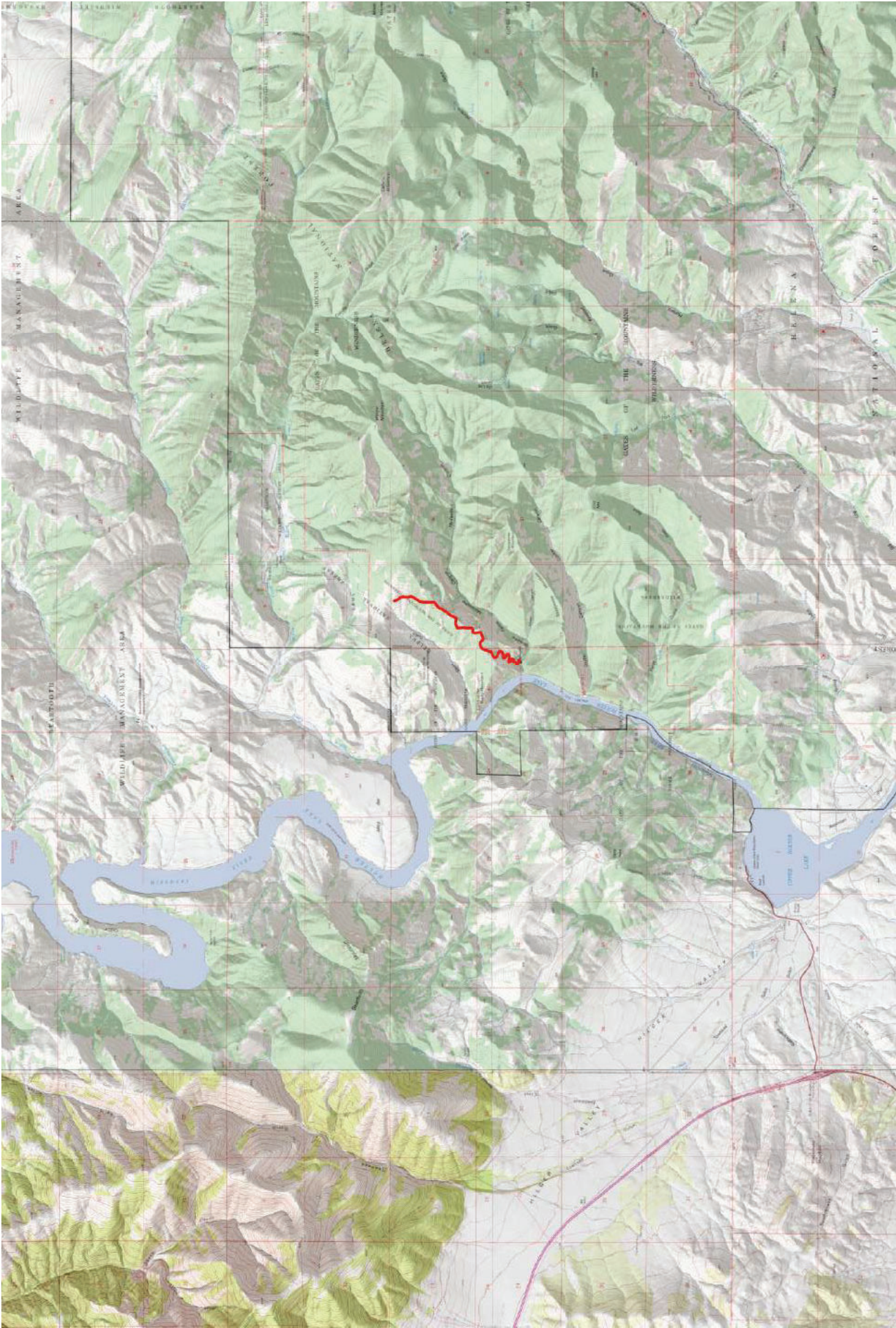
Appendix.

- Trail Map (from question 1)
- Location Map (from question 1)
- Letter of Support: Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks
- Letter of Support: Gates of the Mountains Foundation Board
- Letter of Support: Mike Kaiser, Helena Ranger District Ranger
- Letter of Support: National Smokejumpers Association
- Letter of Support: Rotary Club of Helena
- Letter of Support: Jim McGrane (longtime tour boat captain)



Mercator Projection
WGS84
UTM Zone 12T
 CALTOPO





Mercator Projection
WGS84
UTM Zone 12T




Alex Kunkel
Area Wildlife Biologist
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Spring Rd
Great Falls, MT 59405

11/30/2023

Sonny Mazzullo
Wild Montana
80 S Warren St.
Helena, Mt 59601

Mr. Mazzullo,

We are happy to hear that the students at CR Anderson Middle School have taken an interest in the Mann Gulch Trail located in the Helena National Forest. Fish, Wildlife & Parks is always happy when children take a proactive interest in nature and outdoor recreation.

As you know, I am the managing biologist of the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area (BTWMA). This FWP property is adjacent to the USFS land on which Mann Gulch and the trail named after it reside. It is not uncommon for people to travel between BTWMA and USFS land; this includes people traveling to and from Mann Gulch. FWP strongly believes in and supports the access to public lands for all people to enjoy.

FWP manages our lands with the primary purpose of supporting wildlife populations. As such, the BTWMA is closed to the public from December 1st to May 15th each year to allow migratory elk a place to winter without pressure from human activities or creating depredation issues on private farms and ranches. Aside from this seasonal closure, the BTWMA will continue to be available to the public in perpetuity. Outdoor recreationists will continue to be able to cross freely between BTWMA and USFS lands without other restrictions from FWP.

As a neighboring landowner and supporter of the outdoors, FWP happily supports CR Anderson Middle School's application for National Recreation Trail designation for the Mann Gulch Trail.

Sincerely,

Alex Kunkel

December 13, 2023

National Park Service
NRT Program Coordinator
Montana Region

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the Gates of the Mountains Foundation Board, take pleasure in writing a letter in support of the application for the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail being submitted to the National Recreation Trail Registry by the C.R. Anderson Middle School 8th graders.

The Foundation oversees the operation of the boat tours and marina at the Gates of the Mountains. If the Mann Gulch trail gets nationally designated, the trail will be better protected and maintained. This in turn will enhance the experience of visitors and be used more often. It will also become a point of interest and link the history of Mann Gulch for visitors and locals alike.

In conclusion, we fully support the efforts of the C.R. Anderson Middle School 8th graders as they seek this important trail designation and believe it will be an important addition to the history of the area.

Sincerely,

Dave Anderson

Sande Wilson

Thurston Dotson

Jim Duffy

Jim McGrane

Robert Much

Chuck Doering

December 18, 2023

Helena National Forest

www.fs.usda.gov

2880 Skyway Dr, Helena, MT 59602

(406) 449-5201

To Whom it May Concern:

As the acting District Ranger for Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, I am writing to offer my full support for the Mann Gulch overlook trail to be adopted into the National Recreation Trails registry. Mann Gulch overlook Trail #258 is a popular trail that brings one into the Gates of The Mountains Wilderness area overlooking the site of the 1949 wildfire that took the lives of 13 brave smokejumpers. The tragic events that took place on that day nearly 75 years ago continue to be teaching lessons nationwide for all wildland forest fire fighters.

This historic trail is well known and used by people from all walks of life that are curious about the events that unfolded on that fateful 5th day in August of 1949. The trail itself was used by the Meriwether Forest Service guard James Harrison and numerous rescue crews the day of the fire. Walking this trail gives visitors the chance to walk in the footsteps of the folks who fought the fire nearly 75 years ago. The view of the crosses across the sweeping canyon from the overlook helps people understand how the fire progressed and overtook the 13 men within the rugged and remote Mann Gulch.

By adding this section of trail to the National Recreation Trails registry we will ensure that we leave behind a legacy for all. I would especially like to thank the C.R. Anderson middle school students who worked so hard to make this vision a reality. We kindly ask you to consider adopting this historically important trail into the National registry.

Sincerely,

Mike Kaiser (Acting District Ranger)





www.smokejumpers.com

Robert A. McKean
5465 Aspen Meadow Ln
Morgan, UT 84050

January 1, 2024

National Trail Recreation Designation Program
United States Department of Agriculture

Dear USDA National Trail Recreation Designation Program Representative:

This is to inform you that the National Smokejumper Association strongly supports the effort of C.R. Anderson Middle School students who request that the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail formally included in the National Recreation Trail Registry.

The Mann Gulch Trail helps to connect people to the events of August 5, 1949, in which the Mann Gulch Fire exploded trapping a crew of smokejumpers. On that day, 13 brave men—12 active smokejumpers and one inactive smokejumper—lost their lives fighting the fire. The Mann Gulch Fire was a landmark event in the history of fighting wildfire and, especially, smokejumping! The fire was investigated and reinvestigated and resulted in the institution of wildfire safety protocols including the 10 Standard Fire Fighting Orders which remain germane today. More importantly, the loss of these brave men was an incalculable tragedy for them and their loved ones.

The Mann Gulch Trail is the same one that James Harrison, a Mann Gulch firefighter, used to fight the fire and, thus, a direct connection to the events of that day. It makes one realize the rugged nature of the terrain. At the top of the trail there is a sign with a map of events of the day. Those include where all 13 men bravely fell and the location of the attempt at an escape fire by the foreman in 1949. From this view, you can see straight across to Mann Gulch and are standing near where the fire began from a lightning strike.

Thank you for considering the request of the involved students from the C.R. Anderson Middle School.

Respectfully,
Robert A McKean MSO'67
President

Rotary
Rotary Club of Helena



Dear Braden, Grace, Shyloh. And Zaila,

The Rotary Club of Helena is thrilled to hear you will be taking on the task of applying to place the historic Mann Gulch Trail on the National Recreation Trails registry.

As you well know, the Mann Gulch fire played a very important role in wildland firefighting history, as well as Montana's history. The various trails leading to Mann Gulch each provide their own perspective of the gulch, the surrounding landscape, and the fire these men faced. Designating the Mann Gulch Trail as a National Recreation Trail will enhance the historical importance of the trail and promote its recreational value to the surrounding communities.

The Rotary Club of Helena, committed to community service within the greater Helena community, whole-heartedly supports the designation of the Mann Gulch Trail as a National Recreation Trail, as proposed by the students of C.R. Anderson Middle School in Helena, MT.

If there is anything our club can do to help further this submission, please do not hesitate to reach out. In addition, we would love to have you attend a Rotary Club meeting one day to present your project and outcomes.

Good luck!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Thomas".

Shawn Thomas
President, 2023-2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly McDermott".

Kelly McDermott
President, 2024-2025

Rotary Club of Helena
PO Box 333, Helena MT 59624
helenarotary.org

December 14, 2023

National Park Service
NRT Program Coordinator
Montana Region

To Whom It May Concern:

Montana is referenced as "*The Last Best Place*." Nothing in this beautiful state is more fitting of that reference than the Gates of the Mountains Canyon along the Missouri River. After reading several books on wildfires, a group of CR Anderson Middle School 8th graders and several teachers visited the Gates of the Mountains and the site of the historic 1949 Mann Gulch fire. During their studies the thought arose regarding the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail becoming part of the National Recreation Trail Registry.

The Mann Gulch Fire changed strategies, techniques, and procedures involving wildland fires across the world. This fire is part of leadership studies at a number of colleges, universities, and military training facilities across the USA and Canada. Songs have been written, movies have been made, and several nationally recognized books written addressing this tragic event. The Overlook Trail that takes visitors from Merriweather picnic area allows visitors to hike to the Mann Gulch site and pay respects to the thirteen firefighters that lost their lives during that August 5, 1949 fire. This fire is one of the worst fire events in the history of the National Forest Service.

The location of the Mann Gulch fire was added as a historical district to the United States National Register of Historic Places on May 19, 1999. I feel the Mann Gulch Overlook Trail is most fitting to be added to National Recreation Trail Registry.

Sincerely,



James C. McGrane
4105 Cougar Drive
Helena, Montana 59602
ismcgrane@bresnan.net