

***MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT
THE NEW JERSEY TRAILS SYSTEM ACT***

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DESIGNATION OF TRAILS TO THE STATE TRAILS SYSTEM

The New Jersey Trails System Act provided the legislative mandate to establish a State Trails System, and included the Appalachian Trail as the first trail in the system. The Trails System Rules include the process for designating trails and trail systems to a State Trails System and the standardized criteria to determine which trails are eligible. In addition to characteristics of the trail itself, the land on which the trail is located must be in some form of public ownership. This can include land within an existing park, land acquired specifically for a trail, or private land for which a scenic easement or conservation restriction is held by the public agency. To be eligible for designation to the State Trails System, a written cooperative agreement between the public agency and the Department of Environmental Protection must be signed. Briefly, the procedures include the following:

1. Any agency or individual may submit to the NJDEP a proposal for designation of a trail. That proposal includes the evaluation of the criteria for determining eligibility of the trail, a justification of proposed uses upon designation, and a map for locating the trail.
2. The Division of Parks and Forestry, with the New Jersey Trails Council, reviews the documentation and makes a recommendation to the commissioner to either designate or not to designate the trail. Trail classifications are also recommended at this time.
3. The commissioner reviews all documentation and either proposes designation as an amendment to the rules, requests that the division reconsider its recommendation and resubmit it, or rejects designation.
4. As part of the rule amendment process, the proposed amendments are published in the New Jersey Register. Public comments are solicited for the proposed rule amendment and subsequent trail designation.
5. If proposed rule amendments are received favorably, negative comments are determined to not outweigh the significance of other designation criteria, or no comments received, the commissioner may approve the rule amendment, and the trails become officially designated to the system.

Once a trail is designated, the managing agency will be requested to post state trail system signs at trailheads or juncture points. Any existing trail markers can remain. The trail or trail system should be maintained in a manner for which it was designated. The New Jersey Trails Program and Trails Council will work with managing agencies to resolve problems, which may occur affecting the trails.

If for some reason a designation must be repealed, e.g., due to misuse or environmental deterioration, the division makes a site inspection of the trail and determines if mitigation is possible. If mitigation is not possible, the division, with the advice of the Trails Council, makes a recommendation for repeal to the commissioner. If the commissioner agrees with the recommendation, then trail repeal is proposed as an amendment to the Trails System Rules.

Requirements for submitting an application for designating a trail or trail system are included in Appendix 5.

NEW JERSEY TRAILS SYSTEM REGULATIONS

The New Jersey Trails System Act (N.J.S.A. 13:8-30 et seq., P.L. 1974, c. 159) gives authority to the commissioner of NJDEP to "adopt and promulgate pursuant to law, rules and regulations governing the use, protection, management, development and administration of the trails system ..." Also in the statute, the Legislature declares that the policy of the state is to provide the means to establish a statewide system of trails. The purpose of the policy is to provide for outdoor recreation needs, to promote access to, travel within, and enjoyment of the outdoor and remote areas throughout the state. In keeping with the policy, the rules have been adopted to implement the provisions of the statute by establishing standards, procedures and practices necessary to maintain the trails system (Appendix 6).

The burdens associated with dense population and rapid development have caused an acute strain on our natural, cultural and recreational resources. The need to provide easily accessible outdoor recreational opportunities available to the state's residents and visitors while protecting open space has become critical.

These circumstances have made implementation of these rules timely and necessary.

The criteria and guidelines for determining eligibility for designation to the trails system are established in the rules. The rules also detail the requirements for each of the three classes of trails listed in the act: scenic, recreation and connecting. The methods and responsibilities for consistent management and maintenance are defined. In addition, the New Jersey Trails Council is formally established to advise the department on matters concerning trail designation and management of the system.

To be designated to the trails system, the department, with advice from the council, will review proposals submitted by federal, state and local governments, private organizations and citizens. Upon a favorable review of the proposal, a recommendation with a classification

will be submitted to the commissioner for final designation through the regulatory process.

The rule also provides for an assessment to be performed for any capital construction project funded by the department that would affect a designated trail. Based on the assessment, the commissioner of NJDEP would have the authority to disapprove use of a trail for a project if the project permanently affects the trail right-of-way and no satisfactory remediation or mitigation is possible.

MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR DESIGNATED TRAILS

Upon designation to the State Trails System, the administering agency, in coordination with the Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Trails Council, will prepare a management plan for the specific trail or specific trail system. A management plan for a designated trail is necessary in order to provide the administering agency with a set of management guidelines and techniques that protect and enhance the trail and its surrounding corridor. The management plan identifies the major tasks to be accomplished for a particular trail based on the designation classification, goals, and objectives for preserving the trail.

The management plan includes the following components:

Introduction

- Trail's location and history.
- Classification and use.
- Goals and objectives for management.
- Justification for designation (if not included in separate document designating the trail).

Requirements for Management and Development

- Identification of the agencies or groups responsible for overall administration, development, maintenance, emergency response, and enforcement.
- Identification of trail boundaries and any existing or potential encroachments on trails.
- Identification of any trail interruptions or obstructions that prohibit continuity. These can include trail segments not under ownership or without an easement, missing bridges over roads or streams, or gates, fences, and debris that may obstruct access.
- Development necessary to either maintain

or enhance the existing condition of the trail surface, access, signage, parking and other ancillary facilities.

- If necessary, mitigation measures to be applied to correct degradation of a trail.
- Identification of significant natural or cultural resources within or next to trail corridor, which must be protected. This must also include needed protection measures.
- Funding sources and existing and potential use of volunteers for development and maintenance.
- Acquisition or easement needs, if necessary, to gain trail continuity, add buffer protection, or improve access.
- Public interaction and education needs, including the role of volunteers and a method for publicizing the trail through brochures, maps, etc.

Appendix

- Summary of the trail environment describing what is encountered along the trail.
- Maps indicating trail route, parking areas, connecting trails, etc. to correspond with the written plan.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON TRAIL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Requests are frequently made of the State Trails Program to provide information or guidance on trail design and construction. Knowing how to design and construct trails and install informative signs contributes to trails that provide a high quality and safe experience for users, last a relatively long time, and are assets to their surrounding environments and adjacent properties.

There are numerous sources of information available already from the federal government, non-profit organizations and trail clubs. The following listing includes some commonly available publications, which address both general and specialized trail planning, design and/or construction. It is not all-inclusive, but does provide a good starting point for learning about techniques and practices used today.

The following sources are listed alphabetically by title and not subject matter:

Bicycle Compatible Roadways and Bikeways: Planning and Design Guidelines. 1995. RBA Group for the New Jersey Department of Transportation, CN-600, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0600. This study includes design treatments for bicycle compatible roadways, factors to consider when designating bikeways on highways, and design guidelines for bicycle facilities.

Conflicts on Multiple-Use Trails: Synthesis of the Literature and State of the Practice. 1994. 68 pages. Roger L. Moore, North Carolina State University, sponsored by Federal Highway Administration, Intermodal Division (HEP-50), 400 Seventh St. SW, Washington, DC 20590. As previously stated, this work compiles the literature on solutions to multiple use conflicts, including management and design techniques.

Directory of Technical Assistance Materials for Trails Development and Maintenance. 1990. 43 pages. American Hiking Society, P.O. Box 20160, Washington, D.C., 20041. This is a bibliography

of sources for planning and constructing trails for hiking and many other types of uses. It also provides sources of information on administration and management, fund raising, volunteering, and visual aids.

Mountain Bike Trails: Techniques for Design, Construction and Maintenance. (no date given). Michael McCoy and Mary Alice Stoner, Bikecentennial, P.O. Box 8308, Missoula, Montana, 59807. This publication contains design guidelines for mountain bike trails that can be located on a variety of terrains and surfaces.

Off-Highway Motorcycle and ATV Trails; Guidelines for Design, Construction, Maintenance and User Satisfaction. 1994. American Motorcycle Association, P.O. Box 6114, Westerville, Ohio, 43081. A general guide for motorized trail construction over a variety of terrains. Also includes guidance on trail designs and techniques that do not work.

Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas. 1994. U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Although this guide covers all types of outdoor recreational facilities accessible for the disabled, there is information on trail design in chapter 6, "Developed Outdoor Recreation Facilities."

Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits. (no date given). Suzanne Trapp, Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman, College of Natural Resources, UWSP, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 54481. A guide for designing interpretive trails, with information on types of interpretive signage, design, exhibits and materials to use; also includes information on trail layout and design.

Trails for the Twenty-First Century, Planning, Design, and Management Manual for Multi-Use Trails. 1993. Edited by Karen-Lee Ryan,

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 1400 16th Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20036. This provides many guidelines for planning a multi-use trail, surfacing for different uses, bridges, types of signs, parking area design, and trail furniture, among other design features. It also offers suggestions for trail management and marketing.

Trail Maintenance Manual. 1984. New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, 232 Madison Avenue, # 908, New York, New York, 10016. A pocket-sized manual for individuals doing hiking trail construction. It includes useful information on items such as equipment needs, clearing standards, types and methods of blazing, and erosion control.

Trails Management Handbook. 1987. U.S. Forest Service, Washington D.C. An all-purpose reference document for all types of trails and uses, from hiking to snowmobile. Chapters include information of earthwork, drainage, surfacing, and materials, among other types of construction information.