

Submitted by S. Kay Gandy, Ed. D.

Title: *The American Trail System*

Overview: In the 1920s, citizens on both coasts began putting together the groundwork for the National Trail Systems. The National Trail System Act of 1968 designated the Appalachian and the Pacific Crest as the first two National Scenic Trails. Later, the National Historic Trails and the National Recreation Trails were designated.

Connections to the Curriculum:

Geography, Science, History, Art, Reading

Connections to the National Geography Standards:

Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process and report information from a spatial perspective.

Standard 3: How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

Standard 14: How human actions modify the physical environment

Time:

Several class periods

Materials Required:

- Internet connection
- Printer
- Display board

Objectives:

The student will:

- research a trail system
- create a display board of the trail system
- generate a map of the trail system
- develop a commercial advertising the trail system

Geographic Skills:

- Acquiring geographic information
- Organizing geographic information
- Answering geographic questions

Suggested Procedures:

Opening: Divide students into groups and assign a trail to research. Students will be required to answer questions about the trail, and produce a map of the trail (either digital or drawn). Each group will design a display board featuring facts about the trail and a map of the trail.

1. What is the name of the trail?
2. Which states does the trail cross?

3. Does the trail journey north/south or east/west?
4. Does the trail cross any private land?
5. Is the trail complete? If not, how much of the trail is complete? What is the projected completion date?
6. Who envisioned the trail?
7. What types of recreation are allowed on the trail (EX: hiking, mountain biking, ATV riding, horse-back riding)?
8. Is there a map available for the trail?
9. What organizations manage the trail?

Development: Have each group create a commercial advertising their trail. Groups may use display boards in the commercial. Some trail descriptions are included below.

The Arizona Trail: Envisioned by schoolteacher Dale Shewalter, the Arizona Trail will encompass 790 miles from Mexico to Utah when completed. The trail was designed for hikers, equestrians, mountain bicyclists and cross-country skiers. Multiple agencies are working together to create this border-to-border trail through Arizona's unique landscapes. <http://www.aztrail.org>

The Appalachian Trail: A continental-scale wilderness pathway set aside by the Congress and the National Park Service for foot travel only. Following the ridgeline of eastern America's Appalachian mountain chain, the trail winds 2,169 miles from northern Georgia to north central Maine. It passes through fourteen states, eight national forests, six national parks, and numerous state and local parks. <http://trailplace.com>

The Continental Divide Trail: Benton Mackaye, founder of the Appalachian Trail, envisioned the idea of the Continental Divide Trail and proposed the concept to Congress in 1966. In 1978, the trail was designated a National Scenic Trail and encompassed 3100 miles through five states and 12 designated Wilderness Areas. Climbing and descending the peaks of the Rocky Mountains from Canada to Mexico, the trail is designed for equestrians and hikers. <http://cdtrail.org>

The Great Western Trail: The concept of the Great Western Trail originated around a campfire in Utah in 1985. The proposed trail will connect Mexico with Canada through Arizona, Utah, Idaho, and Montana. The trail routes accommodate a variety of trail users, both motorized and non-motorized. This multiple-use trail is to be a corridor across National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, National Park, state, and private lands. There will be separate sections open to motorized vehicles, horses, and mountain bikes, as well as to hikers. <http://gwt.org>

The North Country National Scenic Trail: A premier footpath that will stretch more than 4,000 miles to link communities and wilderness areas across seven northern states. When completed it will be the longest hiking trail in the United States. <http://www.northcountrytrail.org>

The Pacific Crest Trail: Hikers and equestrians can enjoy this 2,650 mile trail from Mexico to Canada through three western states. Trail pioneers Clinton Clarke and Warren Rogers lobbied the federal government to secure this border-to-border trail.

Designated as one of the first scenic trails in the National Trails System, the Pacific Crest Trail crosses California, Oregon, and Washington through deserts, glaciers, and historic mining sites. <http://www.pcta.org>

The East Coast Greenway: Linking East Coast cities from Maine to Florida, this 2600 mile trail will be the nation's first long-distance, city-to-city, multi-modal transportation corridor for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians, and other non-motorized users. Designated as an "urban alternative to the Appalachian Trail," the Greenway will connect existing and planned trails to form a continuous, safe, green route between cities. <http://www.greenway.org>

The Paiute ATV Trail: A loop trail with no beginning and no end that passes through several towns. The 275 mile long trail takes about 25 hours of riding time to complete. <http://www.marysvale.org>

The Pacific Northwest Trail: Conceived by Ron Strickland, this 1200 mile long trail runs from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean. It crosses three National Parks and seven National Forests. <http://www.pnt.org>

The American Discovery Trail: This non-motorized trail reaches across America from coast to coast through 6,300+ miles. When completed, this trail will stretch from Delaware to California connecting five National Scenic Trails, ten National Historic Trails, and 23 national Recreation Trails. It passes through metropolitan areas, 14 National Parks and 16 National forests. <http://discoverytrail.org>

Closing: Lead a class discussion in the uses of public lands. Discuss controversies of land use with such issues as motorized vs. non-motorized forms of recreation. Which trails researched allow only hiking? Why would some areas only allow hiking? What are some other issues that land management agencies might face?

Suggested Student Assessment: The groups will be assessed through observation and participation. The completed display board and the commercial for the trail system will contribute to the grade.

- _____ project participation
- _____ questions answered
- _____ facts about trail system
- _____ map of trail system
- _____ commercial for trail system

Extending the Lesson: Have students research trails available in their own state. Plan a class hike on a nearby trail. Contact local organizations to adopt a trail.

Related Links:

Public Lands Information Center <http://www.publiclands.org/>

Leave No Trace (outdoor ethics) <http://www.lnt.org/>

Trails and Trips <http://www.trails.com/explore/>

Trailsource <http://www.trailsource.com/>

National Recreation Trails <http://gorp.com/gorp/activity/hiking/natrectr.htm>

National Historic Trails http://gorp.com/gorp/resource/us_trail/historic.htm

National Scenic Trails http://gorp.com/gorp/resource/us_trail/nattrail.htm