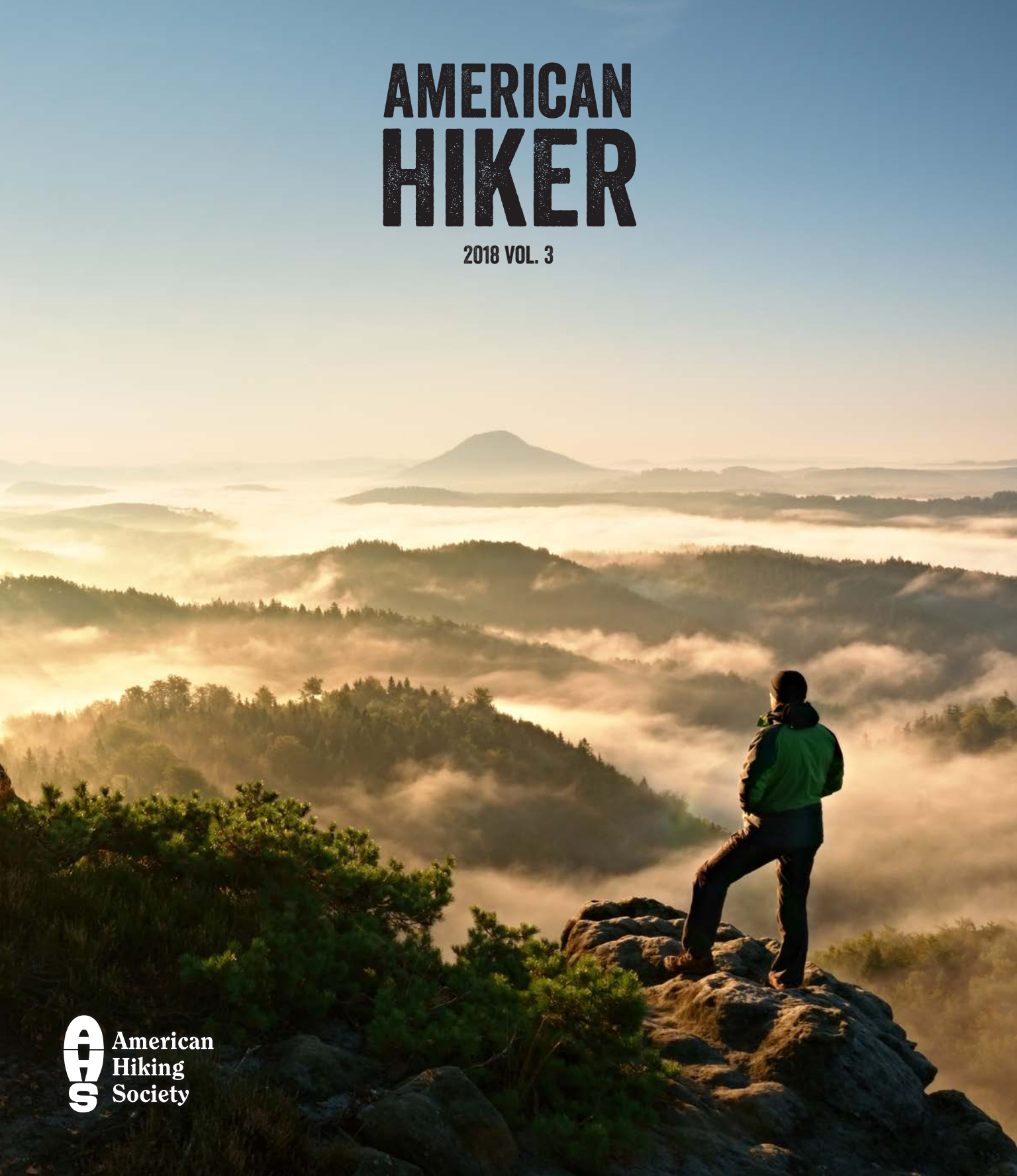


AMERICAN HIKER

2018 VOL. 3





October 2, 2018 marks the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System.

With the passage of the National Trails System Act in 1968, America was given a gift – the creation and protection of some of Americans’ favorite places to discover the great outdoors. Trails that celebrate outdoor adventure, such as the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trails, and trails that allow us to walk through history, such as the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail.

Learn more about this milestone event at [Trails50.org](https://trails50.org)

LEGISLATION UPDATE

Racing towards the midterm elections and the end of the congressional session, Congress has a lot of work to do before the end of the year.

Permanently Reauthorize the LWCF

At the top of the list is a permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) before it expires on September 30. AHS members and supporters have made their voices heard by sending their Member of Congress postcards and emails urging them to #SaveLWCF and the hundreds of trails it has built. Congress still needs to hear from you! [Take action now to ask Congress to reauthorize the LWCF.](#)

Pass Trails Funding Legislation

In a positive development, both the House and Senate have passed, with wide bipartisan support, annual [funding bills](#) for the Department of the Interior

and Forest Service that preserve funding for hiking trails. Both bills now must be reconciled to address any differences and should arrive on the President's desk to sign into law in September.

Enact the North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act

As we approach the [50th Anniversary of the National Trails Systems Act](#) in October, we have another reason to celebrate! Thanks to the leadership of Representative Rick Nolan (D) of Minnesota and bipartisan support, the North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act unanimously [passed](#) the House of Representatives. This legislation would achieve the goal of the National Trails System to have a complete and connected system of trails. The bill would realize the original vision of the North Country Trail by rerouting a portion of it and connecting it to the Appalachian Trail in Vermont. AHS, the North Country Trail Association, and the Partnership for the National Trails System are working to move the bill in the Senate.



A FORESIGHT TO PROTECT

By Michael Lanza

Raw wilderness stretching farther than I could imagine to every horizon. Peaks scraping at the sky, their summits reached only under human power, with substantial labor and sweat. Forests as pristine as the day before Columbus landed in the New World.

That's how I imagined the mountains where I first discovered hiking, in my early twenties. Over time, I learned how divorced from reality my vision was. Those mountains where I began hiking, New Hampshire's White Mountains, had been stripped nearly bare of trees in the previous century, and only reforested and ultimately protected, with an extensive trail system, thanks to the foresight of conservationists and a series of laws aimed at protecting those lands and many others spanning the country.

I still embraced that historically distorted view of America's wild lands when I first backpacked through the major national parks of the West: Yosemite, Grand Teton, Glacier, Olympic, Grand Canyon, and others. While those places enjoy the strictest protections under U.S. law, many of them also carry a history and occasionally bear the scars of a past littered with exploitative mining and timber harvesting and the pollution, erosion, and other damage that accompany those activities.

Here's the truth I've learned over more than three decades of hiking and backpacking across the United States: Our public lands and trail systems exist entirely because of the political and conservation work of many dedicated people. If you want to know what some of our parks might look like without the protection of our laws and the labor of thousands upon thousands of volunteers, visit an open-pit mine in Appalachia or a Rocky Mountains ghost town abandoned because its water source was poisoned by the local mine.



That's why I support organizations like AHS and volunteer my time to help maintain the local trail system where I live. It's why I serve on the board of a conservation group in the state where I live and as an ambassador for AHS. Every time I head out into mountains somewhere in America with a pack on my back, I think about how many people have given so much of themselves so that we all can enjoy that experience.

Volunteer and support an organization you believe in. I guarantee it will be one of the most satisfying ways you'll ever spend your personal time.

American Hiking Society ambassador and writer-photographer Michael Lanza is the creator of The Big Outside, where he blogs about his outdoor adventures, many with his family. His book *Before They're Gone—A Family's Year-Long Quest to Explore America's Most Endangered National Parks*, winner of a National Outdoor Book Award honorable mention, chronicles his family's wilderness adventures in national parks imperiled by climate change. Follow Michael's blog on [Facebook](#), on Twitter @MichaelALanza, and on Instagram @TheBigOutside.

“Looking back at 1968 and the passage of the National Trails System Act, it is almost incomprehensible today that the federal government would step forward to protect two long-distance hiking trails, the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail. It was just not in the American cultural tradition. That Congress would pass such legislation was simply mind-boggling. No one could have predicted it. But once the legislation was in place, the public surged to protect and expand the existing system. No group was more important than American Hiking Society (AHS) in publicizing the need for more hiking trails. From 1976 onward, AHS has worked with the public to protect and expand the national system that began in 1968.”

Tom Johnson
Former AHS Board Member
Historian and Hiker



50 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

“In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established...”

National Trails System Act—1968

October 2, 1968: National Trails System Act (NTSA) is signed by President Johnson, establishing three different types of trails: National Scenic Trails, National Recreation Trails, and Connecting and Side Trails. NTSA also established the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

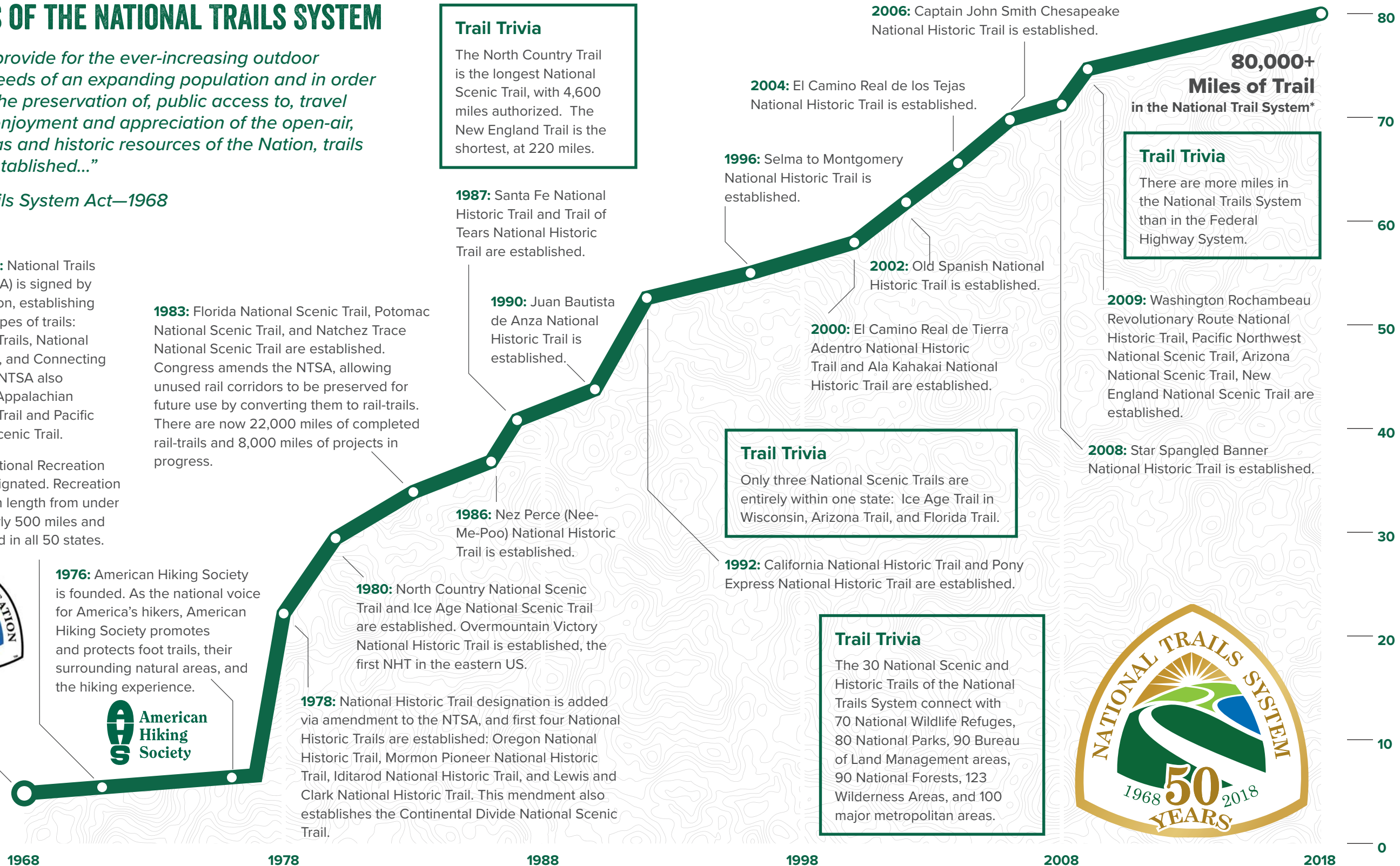
1971: First National Recreation Trails are designated. Recreation Trails range in length from under a mile to nearly 500 miles and are now found in all 50 states.



1976: American Hiking Society is founded. As the national voice for America’s hikers, American Hiking Society promotes and protects foot trails, their surrounding natural areas, and the hiking experience.



Data provided by Partnership for the National Trails System



Trail Trivia
The North Country Trail is the longest National Scenic Trail, with 4,600 miles authorized. The New England Trail is the shortest, at 220 miles.

1987: Santa Fe National Historic Trail and Trail of Tears National Historic Trail are established.

1990: Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail is established.

1986: Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail is established.

1980: North Country National Scenic Trail and Ice Age National Scenic Trail are established. Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is established, the first NHT in the eastern US.

1978: National Historic Trail designation is added via amendment to the NTSA, and first four National Historic Trails are established: Oregon National Historic Trail, Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, Iditarod National Historic Trail, and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. This amendment also establishes the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Trail Trivia
Only three National Scenic Trails are entirely within one state: Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin, Arizona Trail, and Florida Trail.

1992: California National Historic Trail and Pony Express National Historic Trail are established.

Trail Trivia
The 30 National Scenic and Historic Trails of the National Trails System connect with 70 National Wildlife Refuges, 80 National Parks, 90 Bureau of Land Management areas, 90 National Forests, 123 Wilderness Areas, and 100 major metropolitan areas.

Trail Trivia
There are more miles in the National Trails System than in the Federal Highway System.



Miles of Trail in the National Trail System (thousands)
*National Scenic, Historic, and Recreation Trails



“I seek the trail, whether in my community or long-distance ones in the National Trail System, to challenge and feel my body move, to create mental peace from an urban life, to fill my spiritual self, to commune with family, friends and other women, and to explore and share adventures with my children. American Hiking Society’s advocacy and stewardship for the hiking experience, whether in our communities or on vast federal lands such as the National Trail System, is instrumental for protecting wild spaces today, tomorrow and for generations to come.”

Jennifer Chambers
Former AHS Board Chair
Author, Teacher, Mom & Outdoor Adventurer



Jennifer Chambers (left) pictured with Melissa Avery (current AHS Board Member)

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY® 2018 OVERVIEW

TOGETHER WE IMPROVED 3,954 MILES OF TRAIL

June 2, 2018

For 25 years, National Trails Day® has united the trails community on the first Saturday of June with the goal of connecting more people to trails and public lands. To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System, American Hiking Society wanted to do more this year, so we set a goal to improve 2,802 miles of trail, the distance across the U.S. And you rallied in a big way to improve almost 4,000 miles of trails from coast to coast in one day!



108,947
People
Participated



24,192
Stewardship
Volunteers



\$2.7 MILLION
Volunteer
Labor Value



1,203
Events
in All 50 States



312
Stewardship
Projects



3.74 BILLION
Media Impressions

Advocating for Trail Funding

In an effort to further incorporate public participation in advocacy around trails issues, American Hiking Society offered National Trails Day® participants the opportunity to send their Member of Congress a postcard showing their love of trails and asking for their support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).*

Following National Trails Day®, American Hiking delivered hundreds of completed postcards from event

participants directly to the offices of Members of Congress and participated in a bipartisan rally elevating the voices of hikers and our members.



“Happy National Trails Day®! Went back to Cooper Canyon Falls today with the Latino Outdoors family. It was a beautiful day to be outside. Thank you American Hiking Society for helping me host this event. It’s an opportunity to share how important trails are for all communities.”

-Maricela “Marci” Rosales, CA
AHS NextGen Trail Leader

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®
reached
10,348,237
People on Social Media



“I joined Ranger Dakota and five other community members for the National Trails Day® Hike at T.O. Fuller State Park... I was shocked to find out that I was standing in the first state park east of the mighty Mississippi to be open to African Americans. The day was full of sweat, wonder, and education as we came across armadillo tracks, a snake sunbathing, and an excavated native site - Chucalissa Indian Village. The village was absolutely breathtaking and full of unique artifacts.”

-Ron Griswell, TN
AHS NextGen Trail Leader



“Ready to clean! We’ve already found trash bags full of diapers and bottles. Leave No Trace, people!”

-Dakota Jackson, MA
AHS NextGen Trail Leader



“We cleaned our local trail for National Trails Day®. We found three grocery bags full of trash in 1 mile of trail!”

-Carrie, ID



“Don’t trash the desert!”
-Jackie Spicer, NV

Thank You 2018 National Trails Day® Sponsors and Partners



* Federal funding was not used for National Trails Day® advocacy efforts

Do you think you can hike 50 miles by October 2, the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System?

Challenge on!



1. Become an AHS TrailBlazer and create a Hike 50 challenge page at AmericanHiking.org/trailblazer!

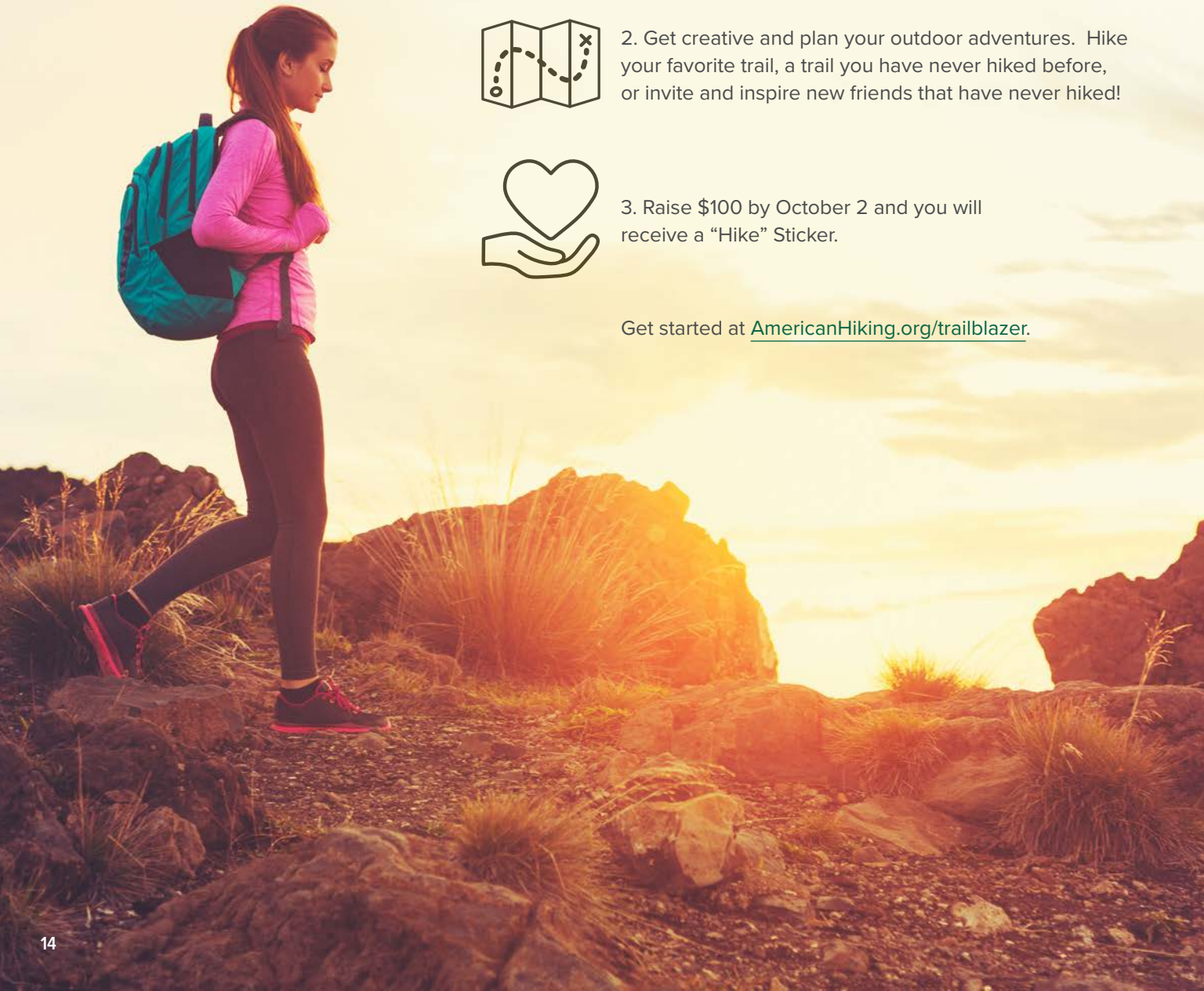


2. Get creative and plan your outdoor adventures. Hike your favorite trail, a trail you have never hiked before, or invite and inspire new friends that have never hiked!

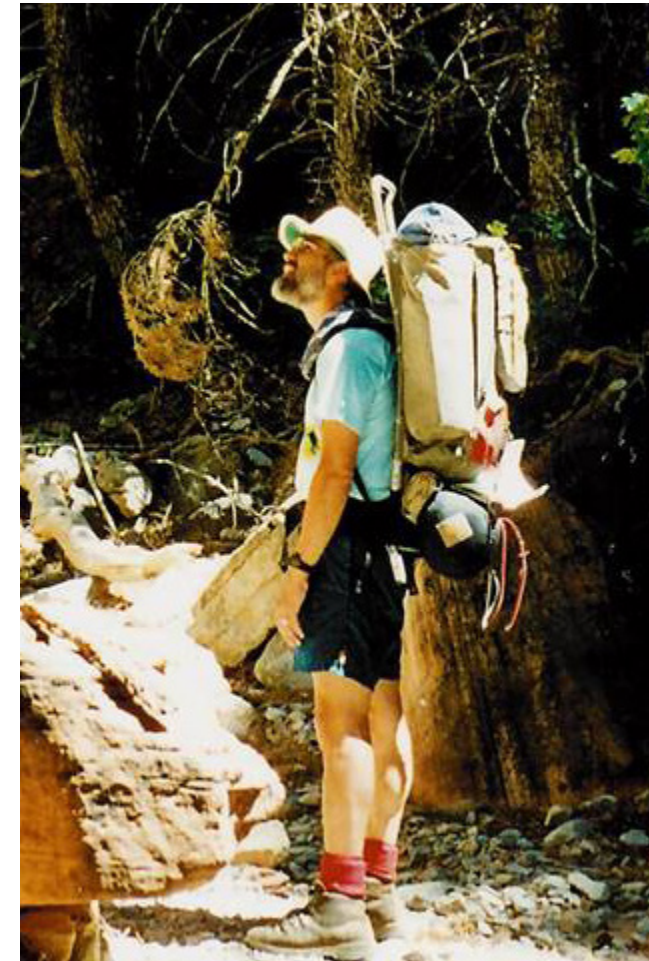


3. Raise \$100 by October 2 and you will receive a "Hike" Sticker.

Get started at AmericanHiking.org/trailblazer.



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Jack backpacking in Zion National Park in the 1990's
📷 Jack Hess

This marks a special year for the trails we all love—the 50th Anniversary of the National Trail System, the fabled Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails among them. Many decades ago, I section hiked a major portion of the Appalachian Trail with my Scout unit and a group of friends. A goal to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail never came to fruition, but my experiences instilled a deep respect for America's trails.

We can take great pride as Americans in our trails and public lands. But for these treasures to be passed onto the next generation of Americans, they need protection. That's what makes this year's midterm elections so critical. There's so much at stake.

This month, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the most important funding source for trails, is due to expire. We need members of Congress who will uphold the legacy left by their predecessors in 1968 and indefinitely extend the life of the LWCF, which, by the way, doesn't cost the American taxpayer a dime. We need members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, who will help the current Administration appreciate the incalculable value of protected public lands, who will see past the false rhetoric that reducing protections opens up the lands to the public. Loss of those protections does exactly the opposite -- it closes to hikers, hunters, anglers, and climbers those beautiful lands owned by the American people and opens them up instead to mining and drilling, with dubious economic benefit. As Chair of the Board, I want to extend my thanks to you, our American Hiking members, for joining us in these critical battles to protect, preserve, and promote the places you love to hike.

Here's to the next 50 years of the National Trail System!



Jack Hess
Jack Hess
Board Chair



PROTECTING THE PLACES YOU LOVE TO HIKE

ADVOCACY | STEWARDSHIP & VOLUNTEERISM | EDUCATION & OUTREACH

THANK YOU AHS SPONSORS



Adventure Medical Kits • Astral • FalconGuides • Granite Gear • Icard Merrill • Klean Kanteen • LEKI
Menasha Ridge Press • ThermoRest • Wildland Trekking Company • Your True Nature

FEDERAL PARTNERS

