


A NEW TOOL FOR THE TOOL BOX

***YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HELP THE FOREST SERVICE MEET
SOME NEW LEGISLATIVE DIRECTION***



HR 845

Public law 114 - 245

- ▶ National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act
 - ▶ Became law Nov. 28, 2016

An Act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a strategy to significantly increase the role of Volunteers and Partners in National Forest System trail maintenance

Congress Finds:

- ▶ NFS features a world-class system of trails that provides opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, hunting mountain bicycling and **motorized vehicles**
- ▶ FS can only maintain 25% of the system to Agency Standards
- ▶ The lack of maintenance on NFS trails **threatens access to public lands**, and increases future maintenance costs
- ▶ Budget limitations require solutions
- ▶ Volunteers, partners, and outfitters and guides play an important role in trail maintenance
- ▶ A comprehensive strategy is needed to ensure that volunteers and partners are used effectively

Definitions

- ▶ Partner – A non-federal entity that engages in a partnership
- ▶ Partnership – An arrangement that is voluntary, mutually beneficial and for the purposes of mutually agreed upon objectives
- ▶ Volunteers – individuals whose services are uncompensated and under the Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 588a et seq.)

The Strategy

- ▶ To be published not later than 2 years after passage
- ▶ Needs to significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in trail maintenance

The Elements of the Plan

- ▶ Augment and support capabilities of Federal employees to carry out or contribute to trail maintenance
- ▶ Provide meaningful opportunities for volunteers to carry out trail maintenance
- ▶ Address barriers to increased volunteerisms and partnerships in trail maintenance
- ▶ Prioritize increased volunteerism and partnerships in areas with most severe trail maintenance needs and backlogs
- ▶ Aim to increase volunteer trail maintenance by 100% in 5 years

Liability

- ▶ Volunteers are recruited, trained and supported by a cooperator under mutual benefit agreement
- ▶ Volunteer supervision is provided by the cooperator
- ▶ Safety standards and protocols will be followed by the volunteer and enforced by the cooperator
- ▶ On-site visits will be conducted by the Forest Service
- ▶ Not later than 2 years after enactment. Regulations shall ensure that financial risk from claims or liability associated with trail maintenance shall be shared by all administrative units

Consultation and Coordination

- ▶ Strategy will be developed in consultation with volunteers, trail maintenance partner organizations, a broad array of outdoor recreation stakeholders and other relevant stakeholders
- ▶ Each administrative unit will develop an implementation plan which defines rules and responsibilities
- ▶ Secretary shall report on:
 - ▶ Effectiveness of the strategy
 - ▶ Increase of volunteerism
 - ▶ Miles of NFS trails maintained by Volunteers and partners
 - ▶ Recommendations for further increasing volunteer trail maintenance

Priority Trail Maintenance Program

- ▶ Will identify 9 to 15 priority areas where lack of trail maintenance has:
 - ▶ Reduced access to public land
 - ▶ Led to an increased risk or harm to natural resources
 - ▶ Jeopardized public safety
 - ▶ Increased future maintenance costs
- ▶ Priority selection shall be based on:
 - ▶ Public input
 - ▶ Range of trail users (including motorized and non-motorized users)
 - ▶ At least one area in each Region

Cooperative Agreements

- ▶ May enter into a cooperative agreement with and State, tribal, local government, and private entity to carry out the Act
- ▶ Agreement will:
 - ▶ Improve trail maintenance in priority areas
 - ▶ Implement the strategy or
 - ▶ Advance trail maintenance in a manner deemed appropriate