



Oregon and California National Historic Trails

Four Trails Feasibility Study Update

The planning team, along with retired NTIR employee Kay Threlkeld, drafted additional route descriptions and historical summaries, updated the GIS database, and prepared regional maps. Route descriptions and summaries have undergone preliminary review by trails subject matter experts and have been revised.

NTIR is preparing route description packages for SHPOs, tribes, and other federal agencies for preliminary review before release of the public review draft.

The team developed two alternatives and a no action alternative for the feasibility study/environmental assessment. A preferred alternative has not been identified. For more information, please ask a planning team member or go to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/FourtrailFS>

Project Highlight



Members of OCTA's Mapping and Marking Committee, National Trails Intermountain Region, the Bureau of Land Management, and University of Utah met for a workshop in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Partners and NTIR staff attended a dedication on August 11, 2012 for five new waysides installed at McCoy Park in Independence, Missouri.

Project Updates - Protection, Development, and Promotion

Exhibits:

- A dedication was held on August 11, 2012 for five new waysides installed at McCoy Park in Independence, Missouri. Over 100 people celebrated the three trails that passed through Independence in the 1800s.
- Site and interpretive planning continue for the New Fork River Crossing Historical Park. The park is scheduled for opening in September 2013.
- Four wayside exhibits on Red Bridge in Kansas City, Missouri have been installed and were dedicated on July 27, 2012.

Design/Development:

- Sign plan standards and tools are available online for the Oregon and California national historic trails (NHTs). Go to: www.nps.gov/california/parkmgmt/how-to-create-your-sign-plan.htm and www.nps.gov/oregon/parkmgmt/how-to-create-your-sign-plan.htm
- We reached a verbal agreement with CALTRANS regarding methodology to start planning for signing NHT routes in California. We are still working to transfer funds from CALTRANS to the NPS. Once the funding is in place, we will schedule a project scoping meeting and then a sign planning workshop.

Tribal Liaison:

- NTIR hosted a trail association Leadership and Tribal Outreach workshop in December 2012 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- NTIR in partnership with OCTA and the Shoshone-Bannock tribes presented a tribal listening session at Fort Hall, Idaho on March 5-6, 2013.

GIS/Mapping:

- Thirty-eight mapping enthusiasts participated in a three-day workshop led by Dave Welch (OCTA), Dr. Phoebe McNeally (U. of Utah, DIGIT Lab) and John Cannella (NPS); held at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City from October 30-November 1, 2012.

Trail Exhibit Highlights

Snowshoe Thompson Cave
California National Historic Trail
Oregon-California Trails Association
National Historic Trail

Explore Carson Canyon

You are standing in what some gold seekers referred to as "Pass Creek Canyon" or "Carson Canyon." "Forty-niners" used this canyon as a main route into California during the Gold Rush. In fact, more people traveled into California over this trail than on any other. Between 1856 and 1876, John "Snowshoe" Thompson carried the mail along this route twice a month throughout the winter season.



"The mountain was [Snowshoe Thompson's] sanctuary and horses were just another part of all that made his life. He could hardly move across the canyon covered landscape... He knew like that, he must have felt like a warrior again!"

Photo credit: © Oregon State Historical Society

Walk to Snowshoe Thompson Cave



Program Trail to Snowshoe Thompson Cave

Walk the trail to see the Snowshoe Thompson Cave. John "Snowshoe" Thompson took five days to ski 180 miles round trip between Riceville and Genoa on his hand-made skis. In extreme weather, Thompson would seek shelter under the overhanging rocks of this cave.

Distance: 1/2 mile round-trip
Elevation Gain: 164 feet

Be prepared to walk on uneven terrain; trail conditions may be wet.

Know Before You Go

- Dogs are permitted, please do not allow pets to become wildlife.
- Fishing is permitted, California state fishing licenses are required for individuals aged 16 and older.
- Protect archaeological resources. Leave them as you found them for others to enjoy.
- Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) are not permitted.
- For emergencies call 911.

Visit More Carson Route Interpretive Sites

1 Snowshoe Thompson Cave

Drop this interpretive guide on the trail to see the cave where John "Snowshoe" Thompson sought shelter from the elements.

2 Big Tree Road

In 1856, local residents had this road built to connect their homes to supplies. It was used by gold seekers and pack animals.

3 Horse's Ladder

The Horse Ladder is a natural rock formation that was used by pack animals to cross the canyon. It is a narrow path that is only a few feet wide.

4 Little Pass

In 1856, John "Snowshoe" Thompson used this pass to carry his mail across the canyon. It is a narrow path that is only a few feet wide.

5 Little Pass & Crystal Lake

John "Snowshoe" Thompson used this pass to carry his mail across the canyon. It is a narrow path that is only a few feet wide.

Travelers took the Carson Route as an alternative to Donner Pass



Westport Landing

Three Trails from Westport Landing

Since 1821, traders on the Santa Fe Trail had brought their goods by oxcart as far as the Missouri River as possible before departing on foot and wagon for Santa Fe. Landings continued to move farther and farther west along the river and by the late 1830s Santa Fe traders disembarked here at Westport Landing - just before the river's northward bend.

Thousands of Oregon-bound emigrants and California gold seekers also disembarked here before going west. Leaving Westport, travelers heading to Santa Fe, Oregon, and California followed the same trail until they crossed the state line and split off at the trail junction west of present-day Gardner, Kansas.



We presume not less than 100 wagons have left Kansas this spring for the plains, west of which have gone to Santa Fe... The trail between this point and N.M. is rapidly increasing. Already not less than 1,500,000 lbs. of freight for that country has been loaded here and shipped for its destination, and there is much yet to arrive from St. Louis.

Kansas Pacific Ledger, May 1851

Westport Landing remained the primary jumping-off point for trade and emigration until the outbreak of the Civil War, when trail traffic moved north to Leavenworth. Before long, the landing, which had borne the weight of freight and emigrant dreams, became obsolete.

All three trails have been designated as National Historic Trails by Congress. Learn more about the National Trails System and these three trails at www.nps.gov/nts

Auto Tour Route Interpretive Guide Series

Through congressional funding obtained by the Partnership for the National Trails System, seven of the nine interpretive guide series have been developed for the four northern national historic trails. These include guides for:

1. Northwestern Missouri and Northeastern Kansas
2. Iowa
3. Nebraska and Northeastern Colorado
4. Wyoming
5. Idaho
6. Utah
7. Nevada

The Nevada interpretive guide is now available.
Planning for the Oregon/Washington guide is underway.

Snowshoe Thompson Cave Orientation Wayside Carson Canyon, California

The project includes six wayside exhibits located at five stops along the Carson Route. Five exhibits have been installed to date.

The final exhibit in the series has been fabricated and delivered. OCTA member Frank Tortorich will coordinate installation of the panel in late spring 2013.

NTIR partnered with the California-Nevada Chapter of OCTA, and the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest.

Westport Landing Kansas City, Missouri

Nine wayside exhibits were installed at Westport Landing, also known as Town of Kansas, in Kansas City, Missouri. A dedication ceremony was held in September 2012.

Projects Near You

New Projects

NTIR has partnered with the Lander Trail Foundation to create one three-panel exhibit at the Fort Hall Museum with the Shoshone-Bannock tribes, and one exhibit on the Salt River Crossing of the Lander Trail.

We are currently working on a mobile smartphone application version of the Utah interpretive guide to be available via a web address, phone number, and quick response (QR) code.

National Register

Kansas State Historic Preservation Office (KSHPO) submitted 15 draft site and segment nominations to NPS for the Oregon and California trails across Kansas. NPS has reviewed these nominations, now in revision, and KSHPO continues to work with landowners for permission to list.

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office submitted a draft Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for the Oregon Trail in Oregon and is in the process of developing three site and segment nominations. The MPDF has been reviewed by NPS and is currently in revision.

NTIR funded these nominations through cooperative agreements.



National Trails Intermountain Region

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Comments? Contact:

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