

Rivers, Trails and Conservation
Assistance Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Climate Change Adaptation

Assisting communities in becoming resilient to a changing climate

The National Park Service works with communities to incorporate ecosystem services and green infrastructure solutions to mitigate impacts from storms and extreme heat events.

NPS-RTCA

The National Park Service **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program**

About Us

The **National Park Service**, through the **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance** program (NPS-RTCA), has supported locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States for more than 30 years. NPS-RTCA assists communities in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. Through an annual application process, community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies can apply for NPS-RTCA technical assistance.

Our Model

Across the country, NPS-RTCA staff pair their professional planning, design and technical expertise with your team and knowledge experts from the community. Together, our 1 to 2 year-long partnership works to achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision. Based on the complexity of the project, we tailor our assistance to meet your needs and help you navigate a path to success. Although NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, we can help your organization identify potential funding sources for your project.

Community Engagement

As a collaborative partner, we strive to achieve successful project outcomes by engaging communities in the visioning, planning and implementation of each project. We encourage strong community partnerships and facilitate meaningful engagement to ensure your conservation and outdoor recreation projects last into perpetuity.

Building Climate Resiliency in New Orleans

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst storms in U.S. history, devastated the Lower 9th Ward, a neighborhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. Today, less than 5,000 of its original 14,000 residents remain in the predominantly African American community. Blighted properties, overgrown lots and vacant buildings are scattered throughout the area which continues to be impacted by seasonal flooding.

As part of a larger neighborhood revitalization effort, a local nonprofit organization, the Sankofa Community Development Corporation (Sankofa CDC), collaborated with NPS-RTCA, the City of New Orleans, and the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans in developing plans for the Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail. This planning project is transforming a 40-acre vacant site into a conservation and recreation area that integrates nature-based climate resiliency solutions to improve protection from future hurricanes and flooding in the Lower 9th Ward.

In partnership with Sankofa CDC, NPS-RTCA facilitated a master plan and design process which included extensive community outreach efforts to build project support among residents and neighborhood organizations. NPS-RTCA developed a master plan which incorporates a

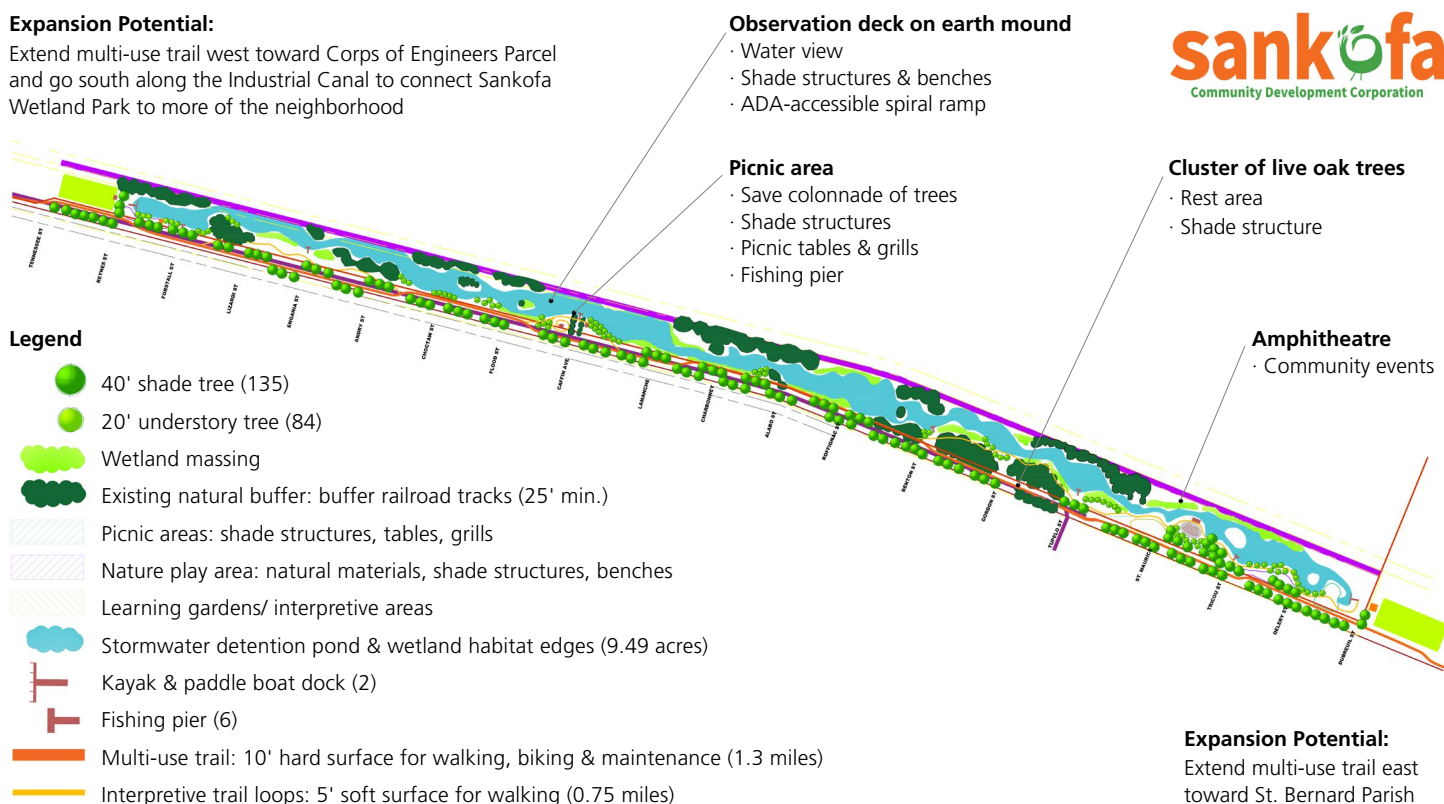
10-acre wetland pond that will function as a stormwater filtration and absorption system while providing recreation opportunities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Other elements of the plan include nature trails, picnic areas, interpretive signage, outdoor recreation facilities, and a bicycle trail system that will connect the Lower 9th Ward to adjoining neighborhoods.

Through grants and volunteer support, 8-acres of habitat have already been restored and invasive vegetation were removed and replaced with native trees and flora that capture rainfall, absorb groundwater and cool the area's extreme heat temperatures. With a restored ecosystem, the wetland park now attracts native and migratory birds as well as other wildlife.

The project has also spurred local economic development opportunities with the launch of the Sankofa CDC Workforce Development Program. Capitalizing on the park as an outdoor classroom, the program provides individuals with valuable hands-on job training and education in horticulture and green infrastructure topics such as stormwater systems and rain gardens. The paid three-month training program helps participants prepare for the state licensing exam as a pathway to a career in horticulture and landscaping.

Expansion Potential:

Extend multi-use trail west toward Corps of Engineers Parcel and go south along the Industrial Canal to connect Sankofa Wetland Park to more of the neighborhood



Frequently Asked Questions

Who are we?

The **National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA)** assists communities, public land managers and nonprofit organizations with conservation and outdoor recreation projects. NPS-RTCA provides professional planning, design and technical expertise to help achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision.

Does NPS-RTCA provide funding?

No. NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, but we can help you identify potential funding sources for your project.

What kind of projects does NPS-RTCA support?

Our program staff support locally-led projects that develop or restore parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as create outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.

Are NPS-RTCA staff contractors?

The NPS-RTCA model is to combine the skills of our staff with those of your organization. It's a partnership – we work alongside your team and local knowledge experts to assist with the work that you are leading.

How much time do NPS-RTCA staff spend on each project?

Typically, NPS-RTCA staff collaborate with communities for 1 to 2 years on conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Depending on the complexity of the project and our staffing capacity, the time frame may be extended.

Who can apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?

NPS-RTCA provides services to established community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies.

How can you apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?

NPS-RTCA support is provided when we are invited to assist you on a conservation or outdoor recreation project. We encourage you to contact us to discuss your project before applying. The application is available on our website: www.nps.gov/RTCA

 nps.gov/RTCA

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