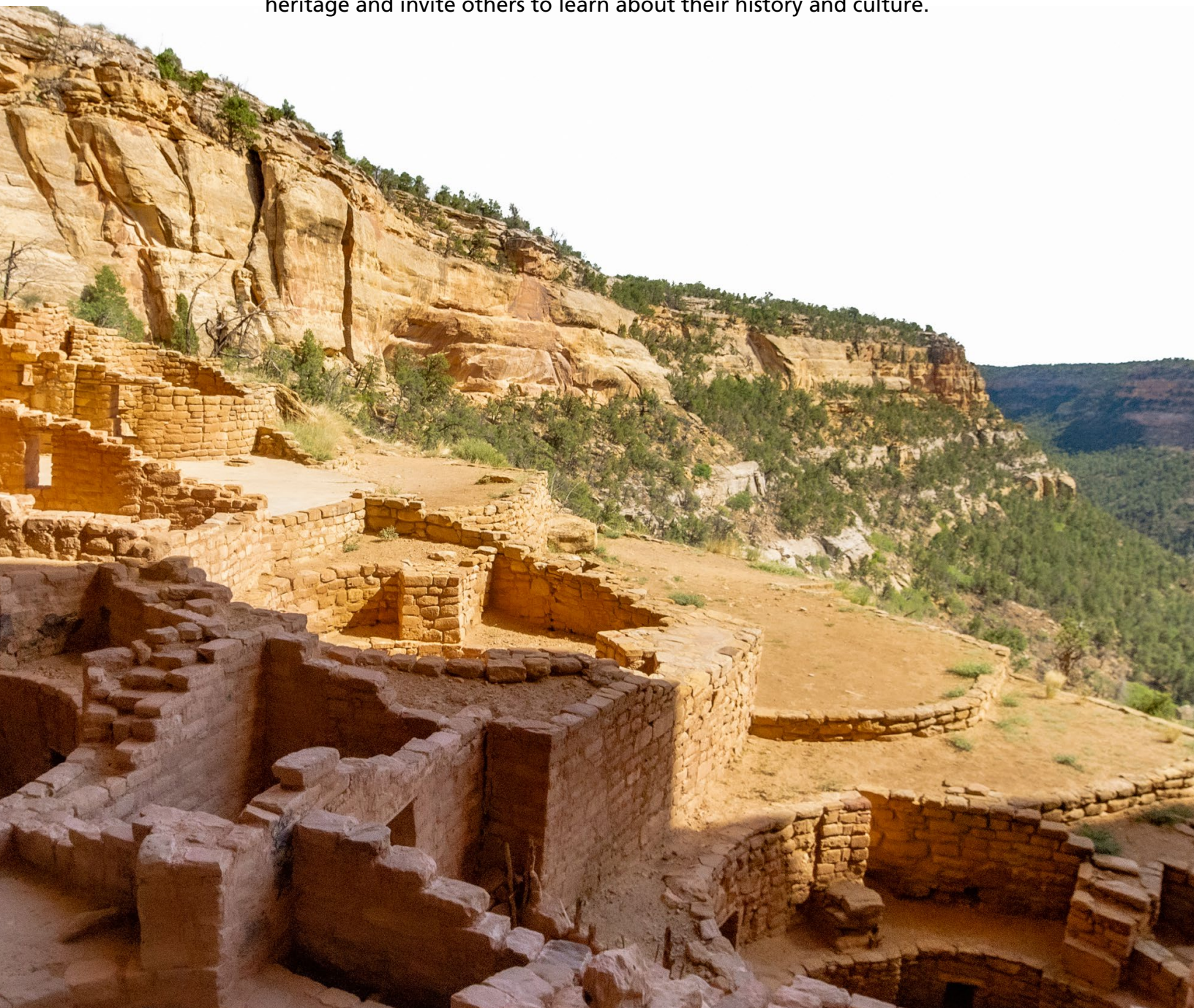




Heritage

Helping communities preserve cultural
connections to lands and waters

The National Park Service collaborates with communities to preserve their lands and waters, create spaces that commemorate their heritage and invite others to learn about their history and culture.



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.

Alabama

Africatown: From Environmental Injustice to Healing

In 1860, the Clotilda was the last known slave ship to reach U.S. shores near Mobile, Alabama – 52 years after the United States had banned the import of slaves. On board the ship were captives from the Tarkbar Tribe who went on to establish Africatown, where the native language and cultural traditions from their home in West Africa still remain today.

For decades, the community fished, swam and gathered at the creeks that connect to the Mobile–Tensaw River Delta, until the area transformed into an industrial zone and the water was blocked and polluted by factories. Seeking to reconnect the community to their waterways, the Mobile County Training School Alumni Association asked NPS-RTCA to help Africatown create a water trail and expand access to outdoor recreation opportunities.



In collaboration with landscape architecture students from Mississippi State University, NPS-RTCA worked with residents to design access points and develop a waterfront plan that includes piers, picnic areas and parks. NPS-RTCA engaged the Africatown community in efforts to build support for the plan, identify potential funding sources and strategies for the Africatown Connections Blueway, a water and walking trail network that will highlight cultural and historic sites and connect to the proposed Africatown USA State Park.

Illinois

Honoring Indigenous Heritage in Chicago

Nestled between the Des Plaines and Chicago rivers, 4000N (formerly known as the Northwest Portage Walking Museum) is a 9-mile, art-lined trail that commemorates the rich heritage of Indigenous people.

The project started out as a broad idea to link Chicago's two landmark rivers, but quickly turned into a community-led and multi-faceted vision to connect residents to the city's cultural history and river recreation opportunities. Eager to turn their vision into a reality, the Metropolitan Planning Council asked NPS-RTCA to help partners develop strategic goals, facilitate conversations with stakeholders and local government entities, and identify potential funding opportunities.

After gathering community ideas, Indigenous artist Santiago X, proposed building two effigy mounds – one at each river site to resemble a serpent. NPS-RTCA facilitated a steering committee consisting of members from the American Indian Center, the Portage Park Neighborhood Association and Chicago Public Art Group in securing resources to build the first mound as well as permits to use county land.

On Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2019, nearly 400 people gathered at Schiller Park, along the Des Plaines River, for the unveiling of the Serpent Mound which was built with native plants and soil. Once the Coil Mound is installed, they will serve as anchors for the interactive walking museum trail and honor the city's history and Indigenous people.



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

 NPS_RTCA@nps.gov

 facebook.com/RTCANPS

 [twitter: @RTCANPS](https://twitter.com/RTCANPS)

National Park Service
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