

## Healthy Communities

### Trails and Greenways Promote Physical Activity



<p>Physical activity need not be strenuous. A thirty-minute walk several times a week brings enormous health benefits.</p> <p>Physical inactivity is the number one public health problem in the United States, according to a landmark report published by the Surgeon General in 1996. In the report, the Centers for Disease Control found that three out of five Americans are not physically active on a regular basis-and one in four are not active at all.</p> <p>Physical activity-just thirty minutes a day of a simple activity like walking or biking reduces the risk of dying from heart disease, the leading cause of death in America. It also can reduce the risk of developing colon cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure and depression.</p> <p>America's infrastructure-roads, elevators, and other technology-promotes inactivity. The average person takes eight to ten trips each</p>	<p>Day to go to work, school or shop; nine out of ten of those trips are made by car even though most are shorter than a mile-a fifteen or twenty-minute walk for most people.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control is developing strategies to encourage Americans to be physically active. One of these is to promote the development of trails and greenways that are pleasant, safe and close to home, connecting neighborhoods with schools, shopping and workplaces.</p> <p>The National Park Service joined the Centers for Disease Control's campaign to promote physical activity in communities across America. Through its Rivers &amp; Trails Program, the National Park Service helps local groups plan and develop new trails, greenways, and open space that are close to home and</p>	<p>"They built roads and people got in their cars. Now, we build trails and greenways-and people lace up their walking shoes or hop on bicycles. It's a healthy change."</p> <p><b>Tom Ross</b> Assistant Director National Park Service</p> <p>encourage regular physical activity. This year, the Rivers &amp; Trails Program helped over twenty communities plan and develop trails that enable people to walk, run, ride and refresh their spirit.</p>
---	---	--

## A Message from the Rivers & Trails Program

Want to develop a trail or greenway to make you and your Northwest community more healthy?

Turn to the National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program, a national network of professionals who help groups develop plans for trails and greenways and to protect rivers and open space.

Reaching out from our office in Seattle, Washington, the Rivers & Trails Program staff work with local groups throughout Washington, Idaho and Oregon. Last year, we helped over twenty groups plan trails and greenways that made their communities more healthy, including the Lakes to Locks Water Trail in metropolitan Seattle, the Jacksonville Woodlands in Jacksonville, Oregon, and the Latah Trail in Latah County, Idaho.

If you are interested in developing plans for trails and greenways to improve the health and quality of life of your community, please contact us.

**Michael Linde, Leader  
Rivets & Trails Program**

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Rivers & Trails Program's mission is to advocate and assist community-based conservation action. We build and support partnerships that conserve natural and cultural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and contribute to economic and social well-being.

**Address**  
Rivers & Trails Program  
National Park Service  
909 First Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Phone**  
(206) 220-4113

**E-mail**  
michael-linde@nps.gov

**Website**  
<http://www.nps.gov/rtca>

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

## Communities Taking Action

### Safford Discovery Park and Multi-Use Trail Safford, Arizona

The City of Safford developed a 7.5-mile regional trail that links communities in the Gila Valley-such as Safford, Thatcher, Pima, and Solomo-to existing trails on federal lands. The trail also connects schools, parks and other public open space areas. Exercise stations along the trail designed by a health care educator provide an opportunity to exercise the legs and lungs; the city developed physical activity programs with school districts to promote the trail's use by their students. The National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program helped the city develop the trails plan.

### Hay Springs Community Trails Omaha, Nebraska

The City of Omaha created a four-mile trail system that extends beyond the city limits to the north and south and links two state

recreation areas. Trail development not only included route planning and construction, but also the creation of a health program to encourage elderly residents to use the trails-and improve their cardiovascular health. The National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program helped the Nebraska Health and Human Services System create the trails plan and develop the health program.

### Safe Routes to Schools Arlington, Massachusetts

The City of Arlington created ten miles of "Safe Routes", marked bike routes that connect neighborhoods with schools. The National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program helped the municipal government create a "Safe Routes" committee which collaborated with health and transportation officials to develop and encourage use of close-to-home walking and biking routes to promote health and safety.



Nine out of ten trips that people take each day are less than a mile and can often be walked in less than twenty minutes.