

## **RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM**

- The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), reauthorized in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), again in 2005 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21). Most recently, the RTP was reauthorized as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in December 2015 for Fiscal Years 2016 to 2020.
- RTP embraces the “user-pay/user-benefit” philosophy of the Highway Trust Fund, returning federal tax on fuel used for nonhighway recreation to the states for trail projects. Although the tax supporting the Fund is paid only by gas-using vehicles, revenue is available for all recreational trails.
- Eligible project categories are many and varied, giving states flexibility. Eligible projects include: maintenance and restoration of recreational trails; development and rehabilitation of trail and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails; purchase/lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment; construction of new trails (with specific requirements for federal lands); acquisition of land and easements for recreational trail corridors; and assessment of trail conditions. State administrative and educational program costs are capped at 7% and 5% respectively. States are encouraged to use contracts and cooperative agreements with qualified youth conservation or service corps.
- Thirty percent of funds are earmarked for motorized recreation; 30% are similarly earmarked for nonmotorized recreation. In addition, 40% are to be used for projects that facilitate diverse recreational trail use within a recreational trail corridor, trailside or trailhead.
- Funds are apportioned to states unchanged since Fiscal Year 2009, the last year of SAFETEA-LU. At that time, the formula apportioned 50% of all funding to the states equally and the remaining 50% was apportioned based upon nonhighway recreational fuel use in each state.
- After 25 years, RTP funding has grown to represent a larger portion of the total fuel taxes paid by nonhighway recreationists, although it is conservatively estimated that the RTP receives about one third of the total taxes paid annually by nonhighway recreationists. During Fiscal Year 2009, the last year of SAFETEA-LU, states received slightly more than \$84 million in RTP funds, the same annual maximum approved under MAP-21 and now the FAST Act. However, each state is now required to return 1% of its funding to the Federal Highway Administration for program administration. As a result, the total funding available to each state is actually less than the amount available in FY 2009.
- Information on 22,000+ RTP projects funded since 1991 is available on the RTP database: [www.recreationaltrailsinfo.org](http://www.recreationaltrailsinfo.org). The RTP has become the foundation for state trail programs across the country. It attracts hundreds of millions of dollars of matching support from other sources for trails, encourages productive cooperation among trail users, and facilitates healthy outdoor recreation and associated, badly needed economic activity in countless communities.

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## **COALITION FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) is a federation of national and regional trail-related organizations. Its members work together to build awareness and understanding of the Recreational Trails Program, which returns federal gasoline taxes paid by off-highway recreationists to the states for trail development and maintenance. CRT was formed in 1992 following the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) to ensure that the National Recreational Trails Fund (now known as the Recreational Trails Program or RTP) established by that legislation received adequate funding. During the six years of ISTEA, CRT worked to ensure that the program was continued and strengthened as part of the ISTEA reauthorization process. Following the 1998 enactment of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), both of which significantly increased RTP program funding, CRT's efforts focused on RTP's continued, effective implementation. Those efforts resulted in the reauthorization of RTP in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012 and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015 at funding levels equivalent to the last year of SAFETEA-LU – slightly more than \$84 million overall annually. CRT efforts are now focused on:

- Continuing and enhancing the RTP at the state and federal level;
- Educating policy makers and the public about the RTP's accomplishments; and
- Ensuring that the return of federal gasoline taxes to the program is equitable, that the allocation of those funds among the states reflects current fuel-usage data, and that the utilization of those funds is efficient, effective, responsive and accountable.

### ***National Members***

American Council of Snowmobile Associations  
American Hiking Society  
American Horse Council  
American Motorcyclist Association  
American Recreation Coalition  
American Trails  
Americans for Responsible Recreational Access  
Back Country Horsemen of America  
Conservation Legacy  
The Corps Network  
Equine Land Conservation Resource  
International Association of Snowmobile Administrators  
International Mountain Bicycling Association  
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association  
Motorcycle Industry Council  
National Association of State Park Directors  
National Association of State Trail Administrators

National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council  
National Recreation and Park Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Partnership for the National Trails System  
PeopleForBikes  
Professional TrailBuilders Association  
Public Lands Service Coalition  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association  
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association  
ShareTrails.org/BlueBibbon Coalition  
SnowSports Industries America  
Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals  
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America  
The Student Conservation Association  
Tread Lightly!  
United Four Wheel Drive Associations