

## **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, which covers Fiscal Years 2016 through 2020 and was signed by the President on December 4, 2015.
- RTP applies 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. Program implementation is consistent in practice with other expenditures from the Highway Trust Fund. Although the gas tax supporting the Fund is paid primarily by gas-using vehicles, resources are shared with other users of recreational trails to develop a balanced system.
- Project categories eligible for funding are many and varied, giving states the flexibility they need to administer state trail programs. Eligible projects include: maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails; development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails; purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment; construction of new recreational trails (with specific requirements when federal land is involved); acquisition of easements and fee simple title 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 enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with qualified youth conservation or service corps.
- Thirty percent of funds are to be spent for uses relating to motorized recreation; 30% are to be spent for uses relating to 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 to be apportioned to the states in the same amounts that were in place in Fiscal Year 2009, the last year of SAFETEA-LU. At that time, the formula apportioned half of all funding to the states equally and the remaining 50% was apportioned among eligible states based upon nonhighway recreational fuel use in each of those states during the preceding year. There have been no adjustments to those apportionments since 2009.
- 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.
- Since 1991, more than 21,000 RTP-funded projects have been documented nationwide with details 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 leverages hundreds of millions of dollars of additional 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 continues to be efficient, effective, and responsive.

### ***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  
BlueRibbon Coalition  
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  
SnowSports Industries America  
Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals  
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America  
Sports and Fitness Industry Association  
The Student Conservation Association  
Tread Lightly!  
United Four Wheel Drive Associations