

Options for Landowners



From the desk of Andrea Ketchmark, NCTA Executive Director:



From the North Dakota plains to the mountains of Vermont—and through all the special places in between—dedicated people are building and maintaining the North Country National Scenic Trail and telling its story so that

all Americans will have a place to hike and fully experience what makes us unique. I invite you to join us today in a national effort to ensure this trail and its surrounding lands will be enjoyed for generations to come.

THE NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL IS THE LONGEST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL IN THE COUNTRY, STRETCHING OVER 4,800 MILES ACROSS THE NORTHERN UNITED STATES.

THE NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL IS INCOMPLETE AND NEEDS YOUR HELP TO GET APPROXIMATELY 1,400 MILES OF THE 4,800 MILE ROUTE OFF OF ROADS. ADDITIONAL LAND IS NEEDED TO BUFFER THE TRAIL AND PROTECT THE TRAIL'S UNIQUE HIKING EXPERIENCE. PRIVATE LANDOWNERS LIKE YOURSELF ARE IMPORTANT PARTNERS IN THE LONG TERM VISION FOR THE TRAIL.

About NCTA

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is a nonprofit organization that partners with the National Park Service to build, maintain, protect and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail. NCTA works with local volunteers, organizations and landowners to link communities and promote the diverse natural, cultural and historic features along the trail.



Landowners have options

By granting a trail use agreement, a trail easement, or by selling or donating land or a conservation easement on your land, you will become part of the legacy of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Trail Use Agreements (verbal or written) outline your conditions for permitting the trail to pass through your land, and are revocable. This is a good place to start if you are unsure about committing your land to one of the permanent options described below.

Trail Easements provide permanent permission for the trail to pass through a defined corridor on your land. Trail easements are bound to the property and pass on to subsequent owners.

Conservation Easements protect the land's conservation values along with the NCT, but allow you to continue to own and use your land for compatible purposes, such as agriculture, recreation, and forestry, as agreed upon by you and the conservation easement holder. Conservation easements have real value and can either be sold or donated. They are bound to the property and pass on to subsequent landowners.

You may also **Sell or Donate Your Land** (or part of it) to help secure a permanent route for the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Frequently asked questions

Who will take care of the trail after it is built on my land?

The North Country National Scenic Trail is designed, built and maintained by volunteers. The local NCTA Chapter or partner organization will monitor the trail regularly, with guidance from NCTA professional staff, and are always available to address any of your concerns.

What if someone gets hurt on my land?

You are protected under your state's Recreational Use Statute, which relieves landowners of any liability if they allow the public on their land free of charge.

Will I have a say in where the trail goes on my land?

Yes. We will work with you to make sure that the trail route works for you.

What type of uses will be allowed on my land?

The NCT is designed, built and promoted as a long-distance hiking and backpacking trail. You can continue your exclusive private uses including hunting, fishing, forestry, ranching, and farming, unless otherwise agreed upon.

Will the public know they are on private property?

Trail signs will alert hikers that the property is private and tell them to stay on the designated trail and respect the property including fences, gates or other structures.

Will hikers be camping on my land?

You are encouraged to consider whether you want to permit camping or allow a designated campsite on your land, but the decision is up to you. Our maps and GIS data will inform hikers where they can and cannot camp.

I raise livestock on my land. How will you ensure hikers don't accidentally let my animals loose?

NCTA is willing to pay for and build fence stiles to allow hikers to pass without releasing livestock.

If I sell my land, or sell a conservation easement on my land, how much will I get paid?

The value of land, or a conservation easement, is established by an appraisal conducted by a professional real estate appraiser licensed to work in your state. In most circumstances, before NCTA or its partners can make you an offer on your land, it will need to be appraised. Negotiation will proceed based on the appraisal.

How soon can you purchase my land?

If your land is desired for the trail, NCTA and its partners will make an effort to work with you toward a reasonable and transparent outcome and date. The need for preliminary work (such as appraisals, surveys, environmental site assessments, agreeing upon a sale price, etc), will influence the date of sale. In some cases, NCTA will need to line up federal, state or local partners and/or raise money or apply for grants first.

Can I receive a tax deduction if I donate land or a conservation easement?

Full or partial donations of land value or conservation easement value may qualify you for tax deductions. The amount of deduction will depend on the amount of value donated, as well as your overall financial situation. If you plan to donate, we encourage you to speak to a tax professional to help you determine how to structure and time your donation.

I want to sell or donate my land for the trail now, but want to continue to use my land for the rest of my life. Is that possible?

Yes! There are a number of ways this can be accomplished, including conservation easements, wills, and life estates. We're glad to speak with you in more detail about the options.

If I were to sell or donate land, how much of it would you want?

At a minimum, enough land for a continuous route to trail connections on either side, but we are able to contemplate the purchase or donation of a larger area of land, or all of the land (if you want to part with it) especially if it provides an attractive buffer around the trail corridor.

If I sell or donate land, who would it be sold or donated to?

NCTA works closely with a variety of federal, state, and local governments & agencies, as well as non-profit organizations and will work to find the best recipient for the land. In some circumstances, it may make sense for NCTA to own the land itself. In all cases, land acquired for the trail will be permanently protected as conservation land and will be open for hiking and other reasonable recreational uses

If I decline to allow the trail to pass through my land, or decline to sell my land, will the federal government then take my land from me through eminent domain?

No! The federal government, including the National Park Service, is specifically not authorized to use eminent domain to acquire land for the North Country National Scenic Trail. Both NPS and NCTA have a strict "willing seller / willing donor only" policy. NCTA believes that acquiring land through eminent domain is counterproductive to achieving our trail protection goals, and that respecting the private property rights of landowners is the best way to get the trail on the ground.