

NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

# 2025-2030 Strategic Plan





## Mission

*The mission of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is to develop, maintain, protect and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.*

## Vision

*Our vision for the NCNST is a footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience in a permanently protected corridor where users can traverse and interpret the diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.*

# Strategic Planning

In June 2024, NCTA staff, board of directors, and National Park Service (NPS) partners collaboratively chose priorities for the coming years. For decades, we've made incredible progress building, maintaining and promoting the NCNST. But as we approach the trail's 50th birthday in 2030, it's time to lean into the fourth pillar of our mission. We must strengthen our ability to permanently protect the trail, empowering our volunteers, staff, and stakeholders in the process. This strategic plan is focused on one breakthrough goal: **Build trail protection and land stewardship capabilities that will forever protect the North Country Trail and its surrounding landscapes.**



## THE NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION IS:

- Determined to secure permanent route for the nearly 1,500 miles of trail that are currently not in a guaranteed position.
- Dedicated to conserving additional and needed to buffer the trail and to enhance your experience.
- Resolved to preserve our volunteers' efforts by safeguarding the trail miles they built and work hard to maintain.
- Devoted to advocating for both legislation and funding that adequately support management and protection of the trail.





# The 5 Strategies

These are the main focus for the first 18 months. Other strategies will emerge as capacity grows.

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## 1. Identify potential trade-offs.

Conduct cost-benefit analysis of current programs to identify opportunities to open up staff capacity and funding.

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## 2. Hire and align staff and build a board to grow protection capacity.

Consider new staffing needs, realignment of current staff work plans, and build board committees to meet needs of trail protection, as well as basic organizational needs that will open up capacity.

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## 3. Build the NCTA's project management capabilities.

Develop consistent project management processes, tools, and policies across the organization to improve communication, eliminate silos, and execute all projects more effectively.

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## 4. Create and deliver the forever route.

Create a collaborative strategy and procedure (among the NCTA and NPS) for implementing trail route planning across the trail.

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## 5. Tell the story of trail protection.

Develop framework for engaging and replicable messaging to elevate awareness of and support for the Association's work in trail protection.

### NEXT UP

- Expand capabilities of the volunteer community.
- Ramp up federal and state advocacy.
- Strengthen partnerships for protection.
- Increase funding to grow protection capacity.
- Build a stewardship program.
- Protect threatened trail.

To learn how you can support the NCTA's mission and this strategic plan, contact Andrea Ketchmark at [aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org](mailto:aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org).