

CERTIFICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Certification is an important procedure providing a common way to track segments of the trail that are completed, designed and constructed to federal standards and are reasonably expected to remain for the long term in the condition documented on the date of certification. In exchange, the North Country Trail emblem is approved for posting at selected locations along its route, the trail segment is recognized as an official segment of the North Country Trail and federal trail support (within the confines of legally approved action) will receive high priority.

Certification does not convey to the federal government any property rights or management authority over the lands on which the trail lies. Certification is a completely voluntary action on the part of all who sign the Certification Agreement.

Preparation and completion of the Certification Agreement form is a **collaborative effort** on the part of the maintaining organization, the easement, lease or permit holder, and the property owner. **Therefore, it is important to establish communication early with an NPS Trail Planner to ensure that any issues are addressed and resolved before submitting a Request for Certification. The Trail Planner will assist with filling out the Agreement Form. Submitting a Request without prior communication or collaboration with NPS staff may result in a denial of request or an undesirable delay.**

CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

Certified Trail must comply with the Law and the CMP. Segments proposed for certification:

- MUST be non-motorized and be open to travel on foot its entire length.
- MAY include other non-motorized uses (including bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and jogging) per the desires of the Managing Authority.

Other criteria will be applied to requests for certification. Ideally, the trail segment:

- follows the route in the CMP or any subsequent approved planning documents, such as Regional Plans or Optimum Location Reviews (OLRs).
- maximizes physical or visual connections to the scenic, natural, historic and cultural qualities an area has to offer.
- is designed to support the approved uses, complies with the Trail Handbook and is environmentally sustainable.
- is fully constructed.
- is secured for the long term – ideally, in perpetuity.
- is at least one mile long unless connecting previously certified sections.
- has no restrictions to trail use (i.e. seasonal closures, etc).

Of course no trail segment will satisfactorily comply with all of the “Other Criteria” noted above. It will be the responsibility of the NPS staff to thoughtfully consider the collective degree of fulfillment to the “Other Criteria” in order to determine that the segment is the best that can be reasonably achieved for that particular location over the long term. For example, a segment of trail may be 95% constructed, 100% secured via easement and have hunting closures.

Collectively, the criteria may be the best that can be reasonably achieved in the long term for that area and would be certified. Each request is different and prior certification decisions, no matter

how similar, should not influence any other certification decision.

DELIVERY:

Once the Applicant and NPS Trail Manager are in agreement that all information is gathered and all signatures are obtained, applications for Certification of Completed Segments should be sent to:

Luke Jordan
North Country National Scenic Trail
National Park Service
PO Box 288
Lowell Michigan 49331
Or via email: luke_jordan@nps.gov

Questions about preparing and submitting this application should be directed to an NCT NPS Trail Planner at 616-319-7906.

Applications will be evaluated according to the responses given. In most cases, if the NPS North Country Trail Planner is not personally familiar with the segment, an application will not be approved until there has been an opportunity to inspect the segment.

The North Country National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan and other planning and management documents referenced here can be found at:
<http://www.nps.gov/noco/parkmgmt/planning.htm>

UPON CERTIFICATION:

If approved, NPS will notify NCTA of certification and copy the applicant to verify communication.

If not approved, NPS will prepare a response explaining its decision to the applicant and copy NCTA.

CERTIFICATION AGREEMENT

Between

National Park Service,

Landowner(s) or Land Management Agency(s)

and

Trail Maintainers

regarding

NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL SEGMENT

Locally known name of Segment, Township(s), County(s), State(s), (Beginning and End Points of segment -GPS coordinates OR intersections with roads, destinations, etc)

[Click here to enter location information.](#)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this agreement is for the signing parties to recognize that the trail and trailway described in this document are designated by mutual agreement as a certified segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail and will be managed and maintained cooperatively pursuant to the powers and authorities contained in the National Trails System Act of October 2, 2014, 1968, as amended [16USC 1241 et seq] (the Act), the Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use (CMP), and the North Country National Scenic Trail Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance (Handbook). Upon certification the trail segment is designated as an official segment of the North Country Trail and may be posted with the North Country National Scenic Trail emblem.

TRAILWAY / TRAIL SEGMENT DESCRIPTION

Length of trail. Description of trail setting and key destinations within the trail segment and trailway.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Trail design / cross-section (Natural footpath? Paved? General dimensions. If design varies, please explain).

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Approved use(s) of the trail. Explain how uses were determined

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Does this trail segment follow the route identified in the CMP or subsequent plans or Optimum Location Review (OLR)? If not, explain

[Click here to enter text.](#)

If applicable, has the public land managing authority designated a corridor for the trail to protect the scenic quality and other values of the trail? Explain.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Are there any other agreements, relationships or plans that could have an impact upon the planning, design, construction or maintenance of the trail segment?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Other:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

BEYOND THE TRAILWAY

Does this segment connect to other certified segments of the North Country Trail? If so, please briefly describe these other segments- approved uses, design, etc.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

What land uses or activities exist along both sides of the trail or trailway? (Agriculture, housing development, forestry, etc

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Does the managing authority identify other uses that will impact the trail or trailway? (Timber and vegetation management, communication corridors, energy extraction, other recreation uses in the area,

etc.)?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

LOCAL AND/OR REGIONAL TRAIL OR OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANS

Are there any approved public trail management plans, local jurisdiction outdoor recreation plans, or similar documents for the area? If so, explain how the trail segment is in harmony with the plan(s).

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Have public land managers or local jurisdictions, as applicable, been kept informed of the progress of trail development?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Legal Trail Access mechanism (Identify and explain only those that apply and attach documentation):

Fee simple (note owner name)

Access easement (identify parties and lifetime of easement)

Access Agreement (identify parties and lifetime of agreement)

Lease (identify parties and lifetime of lease)

Permit (Identify parties and lifetime of permit)

Simple letter/handshake (identify parties and rationale)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Are there any restrictions (such as seasonal or other closures) and/or fees impacting access?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

FUTURE TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Are the signers of this document in agreement regarding trail repair, maintenance and management of the segment? Identify responsibilities, limitations, etc.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Are there any future plans for the trail not included elsewhere in this Agreement?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

ATTACHMENTS

Please provide sufficient maps and photos to describe the existing conditions and the proposed trail. The NPS Trail Manager can help with developing the Attachment package.

LANDOWNER or LAND MANAGING AGENCY AFFIRMATION If the segment crosses multiple property ownerships, please duplicate this Affirmation section and attach with all necessary signatures.

I hereby acknowledge that I am/we are the Landowner(s) or Land Managing Agency(s) of the property through which the North Country Trail passes. If I am a private landowner, I have willingly allowed trail access via formal documentation (permanent easement, access agreement, etc). If I am a public land manager, I acknowledge access approval for North Country Trail. I approve of this application for Certification, and I authorize _____ to prepare and submit this application.

Signed _____ Date _____

Title _____

Agency, if applicable _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

EASEMENT-, LEASE-, or PERMIT-HOLDER AFFIRMATION If the segment includes multiple easement-, lease-, or permit-holders, please duplicate this Affirmation section and attach with all necessary signatures.

I hereby acknowledge that I am/we are the easement-, lease-, or permit-holder authorizing access of the trail segment across land owned or managed by others. I authorize _____ to prepare and submit this application.

Signed _____ Date _____

Title _____

Agency, if applicable _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

TRAIL MAINTAINER AFFIRMATION (by the NCTA chapter, affiliate or other organization responsible for trail design, construction and/or maintenance, etc. In some cases, easement/lease or permit holder may be the same as the trail maintainer.)

I hereby affirm that: (1) I am/We are duly authorized to submit this application for certification, (2) the segment is in existence and available for public use, (3) the segment is designed, constructed, maintained and managed in accordance with the Act, CMP, Handbook and where applicable, the United States Access Board Final Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas., (4) I/We will notify the National Park Service if there is a change in the location or status of the segment, (5) the official NCT markers will be posted along the trail segment and they will be maintained and (6)I/We will inform the National Park Service concerning the status of this segment on at least an annual basis.

Signed _____ Date _____

Title _____

Representing _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

CERTIFICATION (by National Park Service)

All compliance requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and if applicable, United States Access Board Final Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas are satisfactorily performed.

I hereby certify the trail described in this application as a segment of the North Country NST. If this segment is located on nonfederal lands, the National Park Service will provide a reasonable and sufficient quantity of the official North Country NST marker for the segment.

Signed _____ Date _____

Title Superintendent, North Country National Scenic Trail, National Park Service