

NATIONWIDE SYSTEM OF TRAILS

HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS UNITED
STATES SENATE
NINETIETH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

S. 827

**A BILL, TO ESTABLISH A NATIONWIDE SYSTEM OF TRAILS, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

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This marked the path for thousands of forty-niners and those who followed. The stagecoach and the Pony Express traversed much of the trail.

And so the Mormon Trail, although vitally associated with Mormon history, has broader connotations and associations. The preservation of the trail will therefore, permit Americans today to reassociate themselves with those momentous events which permitted and made the West survive and develop into its present greatness.

The Utah State Historical Society heartily supports the establishment of a system of historic trails and urges the enactment of appropriate legislation. Sincerely yours,

EVERETT L. COOLEY, *Director*.

Senator Moss. Senator Jordan, do you have a statement ?

Senator JORDAN. NO statement at this time, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Moss. Senator Nelson of Wisconsin and Senator Dominick of Colorado have sent statements. They will be included in the hearing record at this point.

(The statements referred to follow:)

STATEMENT BY HON. GAYLORD NELSON, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF
WISCONSIN

I am pleased to testify in behalf of S. 827, a bill to establish a nationwide system of trails. This legislation will be a benchmark in the history of wise outdoor recreational development in this nation.

Unlike conventional park projects which are dependent upon exceptional geographic features, trails can bring a quality recreation experience into every city in America, quickly and at rock bottom cost. They could provide a high quality, low cost supplement to our system of natural recreational resources.

Trails can bring our increasingly urbanized citizens out into the world of nature where they can obtain the exercise which is vital to their individual health and to our strength as a nation. I see no reason why we cannot have a hiking trail within one hour of every American who needs one.

The Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture have recently completed a comprehensive trail study. The bill which we are considering today is the result of that study. Also, from that study has come an outstanding book, "Trails for America." I commend this book to anyone who is interested in this subject.

The Appalachian Trail—that magnificent footpath which winds from Maine to Georgia through some of the most beautiful parts of our nation—is a great example of what can be done. The Appalachian Trail has been developed, maintained and protected for 30 years by thousands of conscientious citizens, some of whom live very close to the trail and others who live many miles from it. They are to be commended for the great contribution they have made to the development and preservation of this magnificent outdoor asset.

But early action to preserve the Appalachian Trail and to establish vitally needed new trails is imperative if we are to have them to enjoy.

Increasing pressure to develop land for commercial and residential purposes is placing existing trails in serious jeopardy and will soon make it nearly impossible to establish new trails where they are most needed, near centers of population. Unless decisive action such as this bill provides is taken soon, we risk the permanent loss of several major trail opportunities and the reduction of the quality of others.

It was in recognition of these great opportunities and serious dangers that I first introduced legislation to recognize and protect the Appalachian Trail in the 88th Congress. In the first session of the 89th Congress I introduced the first National Hiking Trails bill.

President Johnson endorsed the proposal and in the second session of the 89th Congress I introduced with Chairman Jackson the Administration's National Hiking -Trails bill which included the Appalachian Trail. S. 827 is an expansion of that bill.

The Nationwide System of Trails bill will provide present and future outdoor recreation needs through the upgrading and expansion of existing trails systems

and through the addition of new trails. A nationwide system would be established consisting of our categories of trails; extended trails of national significance identified as "National Scenic Trails" ; trails located in Federal parks, forests and recreation areas; trails located in state parks, forests and recreation areas; and trails convenient to metropolitan areas.

The present Appalachian Trail, for 2,000 miles from Maine through 14 states to Georgia, is listed in the bill for initial national scenic trail status. The Continental Divide Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail and the Potomac Heritage Trail will also be recognized as National Scenic Trails. I heartily endorse this and urge prompt study, development and recognition of the other eight trails listed for study in the bill.

Improvement and expansion of recreation trails in Federal parks are a second major objective of this bill. The bill directs the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to improve, expand and develop trails on the national forests, national parks, public lands, national wildlife refuges and Indian reservations that they administer. Both Departments already have authority for trail development on these lands. However, the potential for trail purposes has only been partially realized. Much more can be done to provide for needed public recreational trail use on Federal lands.

State park and forest trails and metropolitan area trails will be encouraged by the Secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development. Again, authority exists for such encouragement, but much larger programs are needed, especially in and near metropolitan areas. Once trails have been developed by states and their political subdivisions to acceptable standards, they could be designated and marked as part of the nationwide system with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior.

Special emphasis will be given to trails in metropolitan areas where opportunities for hiking, cycling and horseback riding are often severely limited. In every city our people should be able to walk directly from their homes to an access point on a metropolitan trail network which will enable them to travel at a leisurely pace through natural areas, by watercourses, along ridge lines and through spots of scenic beauty. Utility rights-of-way for example offer many special opportunities for metropolitan area trail development.

Everywhere I go in this nation to speak on conservation I find many people asking what they can do to make a concrete contribution to the cause.

Their energy, spirit and dedication could very well find a most useful and satisfying outlet in working on trails that will be part of the Nationwide System of Trails.

Volunteer workers of many sorts—youth groups like the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, college hiking and outdoor clubs, adult conservation and social clubs—would all be eager to help.

The young men in the Job Corps conservation centers in Wisconsin are helping work on the Wisconsin Trail System and could be available for similar work in other states.

Maintenance of a hiking trail system would generate tremendous support and enthusiasm at the grass roots. I have no doubt that local groups would quickly volunteer to maintain their section of the trail just as local volunteer clubs maintain their sections of the Appalachian Trail and take great pride in it. I can think of no way to secure broader public participation in resource education and preservation, no way to provide a more fruitful opportunity for old and young alike, to make a useful and satisfying contribution to the public welfare.

In my original National Hiking Trails bill I proposed that Federal grants be made to the states to pay the full costs of planning coordinated state hiking trail systems. Under this bill (S. 827), planning money is available to metropolitan areas from HUD funds whereas Federal money for planning state trail systems would come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. If money for planning trails comes from state portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, I am afraid that this much needed planning will be given very low priority by the states. Therefore, I propose that provision be made in this bill to provide states with planning money for state trail systems from the general funds.

The nationwide systems of trails bill follows careful studies by the principal land management agencies of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

These studies were made in close cooperation with many state, localities and private groups. The bill, in my judgment, is a reasonable approach to the problem of providing adequate trail mileage and goes a long way toward meeting the Nation's long-range needs.

I believe that the prospect of a well developed and coordinated system of hiking trails in this nation is an extraordinarily exciting one. However, I believe that time is short. Especially in those areas near our growing urban areas we must either move soon or see land devoted to other uses.

STATEMENT OF HON. PETER DOMINICK, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF
COLORADO

THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL

I'm pleased that the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs has called these hearings on the National Trails bill. I take particular interest in this legislation, since for years I have urged the establishment and development of a Continental Divide Trail included in the overall program presented in this bill. I will limit my comments at this time to the Continental Divide Trail, since it is of so much importance to my State of Colorado.

George Cranmer, former Manager of Parks and Safety of the City and County of Denver, and founder of Red Rocks Amphitheater just outside of Denver, two years ago discussed with me a trail beginning in southwest New Mexico and ending at the Canadian border in Glacier National Park. Mr. Cranmer has been active in setting up an exceptionally fine system of parks in the Denver area and has been influential throughout the entire state in this field, so he is very knowledgeable about the problems—and advantages—a trail along the Continental Divide would have. When he brought the idea to me, we decided to take it to the Department of the Interior to discuss its potentials and express our enthusiastic support for the idea.

As I am sure the Members of this Committee realize, the natural attractions of the area which would be covered by the Continental Divide Trail already have been luring hundreds of thousands of Americans every year. The National Park System which includes great portions of Colorado has become the vacation mecca not just for the Rocky Mountain area but for Americans from every state. A trail extending the length of the great and beautiful Southwest and Rocky Mountain region on up to the northern reaches would be of immense value to all future generations. Providing now for the establishment and development of the Continental Divide Trail would insure that in ten years the people of this nation would more easily benefit from the invigorating and healthful climate of our region. They would be able to enjoy more fully the numerous advantages of my own State of Colorado, which boasts 52 mountains over 14,000 feet in height, interlaced by clear, clean, rushing mountain streams that have been singled out by our water pollution experts as examples of the cleanest water in the country. They would have greater opportunities to experience the fantastic ski areas which Colorado claims as her own. The Continental Divide Trail would preserve for future generations these values of outdoor recreation, if we establish it *now*.

The primary value of the Continental Divide Trail is its emphasis on conservation of the natural beauty of our environment, and on a wise use of our environment to give the greatest pleasure and health to our citizens. Under the proposed scheme, it is my understanding that 90 percent of the Trail would be on federal land, and the environment of the Trail would be kept in its natural state as much as possible. Such an investment is prudent now, before the natural beauty can be eroded through overuse and expansion of communities into the area.

I am very eager to see early action on the Continental Divide Trail proposal, as I think it will be beneficial to every person in this nation. Therefore, I urge this committee to act speedily and favorably on the proposal.

Senator Moss, Governor Burns, of the State of Hawaii, and Governor Hoff of the State of Vermont, have sent letters. They will be printed at this point.