

CRITERIA FOR NOMINATING TRAILS INTO THE ARIZONA PREMIER TRAILS SYSTEM

I. PURPOSE

Arizona Premier Trails is a system of trails offering a diversity of quality non-motorized trails that inspire people to experience the State's magnificent outdoor environment and cultural history.

The Arizona Premier Trails System have been established to recognize and promote non-motorized trails that are of special significance to Arizona's residents and visitors. Trails offer a wide variety of outdoor opportunities. To provide for recognition of various types of trails, trail designations are categorized as Recreation, Interpretive, Historic/Cultural, Scenic, Water/Riparian, and National trails and Trail Systems. The integrity of the managing agency's trail system and its management will not be changed by designation of the nominated trail as part of the Arizona Premier Trails system.

Arizona Premier Trails System (APTS) nomination and designation process is guided by the criteria, requirements, and procedures listed below. A complete nomination must include all requested information relating to the general and specific nomination criteria.

II. GENERAL NOMINATION CRITERIA

(includes general information for all trail types)

1. Nominations may be submitted for existing, built trails only.
2. Nominated trails must be publicly owned or managed, and available to the public. They must be located on public lands or public easements.
3. Public access shall be provided via a public road/street or public parking area.
4. Trails that allow motorized recreational trail use are not eligible for the Arizona Premier Trails.
5. Anyone may submit a nomination. However, documented concurrence of the involved landowner(s) and/or managing agency(s) must be provided with each nomination.
6. The nominated trail must be identified on an accurate geo-referenced map or maps (including a digital data file) that show its verified location.
7. Global Positioning System (GPS) locations (latitude and longitude) of all trailheads (including put-in, put-out points for water trails) must be provided.
8. Trails must be a minimum of one mile in length unless it demonstrates unique characteristics (i.e. interpretation, ADA, water trails etc).
9. The nomination and designation must be for the entire length of the specific single trail involved as established by the managing agency's official documentation.
10. A minimum of 75% of the entire length of trail nominated must exhibit 'unique, special characteristics' as indicated in the category criteria it is being nominated for. If a

“system of trails” being nominated, 80% of the trails in the system need to meet the minimum 75% category criteria.

11. All trails or trail segments must be constructed, signed, and maintained to standards as set by the managing agency(s).
12. Any theme and general methods of interpretation being utilized must be identified.
13. The trail must be open for use during a majority of the season.
14. The managing agency and/or land owner must have the capability to adequately serve the public and maintain any related facilities (for example access, sanitation, parking, etc.).
15. The trail must have no more than 10% of its entire length (or no more than 10% of a trail system) parallel roadway corridors or developed areas. The 10% must have a minimum 200' buffer.
16. Trails that ONLY serve as a connector to a trail with the APT criteria should not be allowed unless there are no other access points to the trail.
17. Loop trails do not have to have a different beginning and end point.
18. Trails must have an annual and/or weather event conditions evaluation with a committed on-going maintenance program with preferably a designated trail steward or coordinator.
19. Trails must have a signage/wayfinding and preferably an emergency marker system. Signage shall provide clear directions/wayfinding and opportunities to learn about the value of Arizona's natural and cultural resources, unique environment, and outdoor recreation and trail ethics.
20. Trails must be designed, constructed, and maintained according to current best management practices for its type of use.
21. Trails must be in compliance with applicable land use plans and environmental laws.
22. Trails must have technical, physical, and special attribute descriptions available in a public format including but not limited to:
 - a. Level of difficulty
 - b. Water availability
 - c. Shade and/or Storm protection availability if applicable
 - d. Emergency contact/availability/location
 - e. Seasonal warnings
 - f. Elevational changes/profile
 - g. Special and unique features (geological, biological, vegetative, cultural (historical, pre-historical, Native American, scenic, etc.)
 - h. Location and level of access
 - i. Signage and marker system
 - j. Wildlife information
 - k. Potential hazards that may be encountered

III. SPECIFIC NOMINATION CRITERIA BY TRAIL CATEGORY

A. U.S. NATIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

1. Existing, built trails in Arizona that are designated as a U.S. National Trail will be included in the Arizona Premier Trails System upon consent of the land owner and trail manager.

B. RECREATION TRAIL

Trails that qualify for this category must have as its main purpose physical characteristics that support a range of multi-purpose outdoor recreation activities resulting in a high level of satisfaction of exercise and leisure enjoyment.

1. The trail must provide day-use or extended trail opportunities for any of a variety of non-motorized outdoor recreation activities, including but not limited to hiking, horseback riding, pack stock, bicycling, backpacking, or cross-country skiing.
2. The trail must be of sufficient length to provide appropriate access to and facilitate the type of activities it is designated for.
3. Recreation trails are more about the activity or user enjoyment and designed to lend themselves to the users' preferred activities.

C. SCENIC TRAIL

Trails that qualify for this category must have scenery and scenic views of a natural beauty that is rare and unique, and far exceeds that found on the vast majority of trails. These trails must portray a relative value of High or Medium High for its visual resources as described by the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) Classes I and II. The Scenic Quality Rating Criteria shall consider the following key factors and be scored according to the BLM VRI evaluation process:

1. Landform: Topography becomes more interesting as it gets steeper or more massive, or more severely or universally sculptured. Steep canyons, mesas, buttes, interesting erosional patterns or a variety of size and shape of landforms.
2. Vegetation: Consideration is given to the variety of patterns, forms, colors and textures created by plant life.
3. Water: This ingredient adds movement or serenity to a scene.
4. Color: The overall colors of the basic components of the landscape, (e.g., soil, rock, vegetation, etc.) add variety contrast and harmony to the scene.
5. Adjacent Scenery: This factor identifies the level of influence the adjacent scenery has on the overall visual quality of the trail corridor.
6. Scarcity: This factor gives an opportunity to give added importance to one or all of the scenic features that are unique, rare, one of a kind or very memorable.
7. Cultural Modifications: This identifies if human modifications to the environment add visual variety in a favorable or discordant manner; promoting visual harmony or disharmony.

Additional criteria include:

8. A minimum of 75% of the trail's length (minimum of 75% of trails in a trail system) must provide high to medium high scenic quality (Class I or II).
9. Specific scenic views and overlooks must be identified and located on a map and digital data file with a topographic overlay.

D. INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

Trails that qualify for this category must have a high interpretive value that communicates and shares knowledge and understanding of Arizona's natural and cultural resources. This includes, but is not limited to, biological (wildlife, fisheries, vegetation, habitats, etc.); geological (strata, formations, soils, etc.); historical and prehistoric (culture, events, persons, places, etc.); astronomy; and ethnic cultures.

1. By their very nature interpretive trails are intended to be quite informative. Therefore the signs, plaques, kiosks, and/or other instruments of information presentation should be of sufficient number, detail, and quality to accomplish this information presentation in a significant degree.
2. Interpretive trails shall either allow visitors to use and learn the information at their own pace by reading panels, exhibits, brochures, etc. or allow for an interactive experience with docent or volunteer led interpretive walks, and/or both.
3. Provide an interpretive map and program for the proposed trail route.
4. Clearly identify the items being interpreted and the primary and secondary themes and messages that will be graphically illustrated.
5. Clearly identify in detail the means and methods of how the interpretive information will be communicated to the public.
6. Identify locations of visitor amenities including, but not limited to, benches, viewing blinds, signs/interpretive panels or stations, drinking fountains, and/or shade structures that will enhance the visitor experience.

E. HISTORIC/CULTURAL TRAIL

Trails that qualify for this category must be an existing trail that is physically discernible on the ground's surface. The trail must have had an historic and/or prehistoric use that had an effect on Arizona's history and/or culture as it relates to our State's trade, commerce, migration, or settlement.

1. The trail must provide day-use or extended trail opportunities for outdoor trail activities.
2. The description of the trail must be specific enough to assist in identifying and protecting prehistoric and historic routes, high potential sites, high potential segments, remnants, and artifacts for public knowledge and enjoyment.
3. Trails containing proprietary information of a historical/cultural context according to existing laws and regulations will not be accepted.
4. Use of the trail must have had an effect on Arizona's culture with respect to a broad aspect of the State's historic or prehistoric past.

5. Nomination documentation must include notification records and approvals of landowners along the route.
6. Signage and interpretive information must be provided to the trail users that identifies the trail's historical/cultural importance, with consideration given to culturally sensitive material through consultation with Native American representatives of tribes of Arizona; including how to protect the resource and its context while enjoying the site. (Refer to the Interpretive Trail category for interpretive requirements.)
7. Land Manager(s)/Owner(s) must designate a contact person, agency or organization that will act as curator or steward of the trail and its historical/cultural information.

F. WATER TRAIL

Trails that qualify for this category must meet the requirements of one of the following two subcategories: Paddle Trail or Riparian Trail.

Both types of water trails must:

1. Provide non-motorized access to permanent, perennial, or intermittent bodies of water, either static or free-flowing.
2. Serve to protect, restore, and conserve Arizona's rivers, waterways, creeks, washes, shorelines, and natural areas adjacent to these water features.
3. Have an established, designated route and public access points that accommodate a variety of trip lengths and types and abilities of users.
4. Provide a range of recreational and educational opportunities. Refer to the Interpretive Trail criteria for signage and interpretive requirements.
5. Public information shall include, but not be limited to, water quality, hazards, and emergency protocol.
6. Provide seasonal average water flow and water level information at the put-in and take-out access points and trailhead/staging areas.
7. Provide an emergency access plan identifying potential hazard areas with their safety takeout points and emergency access routes.
8. Comply with local, state, and federal laws regarding waterways and water rights.
9. Have approvals of the jurisdictional agency and landowners.
10. Have sufficient parking areas and sanitary facilities at appropriate put-in and take-out points.

Paddle Trails are trails that must have a route identified on a map for those waterways and/or bodies of water that provide a sufficient depth of water to allow for non-motorized water craft such as kayaks, canoes, row boats, and rafts. Paddle Trails must:

11. Have sufficient water depth to accommodate non-motorized paddle craft and have a published map that shows the route, put-ins, take-outs, parking areas, and mileage points along the route.

Riparian Trails are trails that must have a general route identified on a map for waterways and/or bodies of water that have a perennial or intermittent source of water. These trails may be physically constructed and maintained or non-discernible in nature. Riparian Trails must:

12. Have designated trailhead/staging areas with interpretive signage including a topography map of the riparian corridor.
13. Identify areas that should not be encroached upon or passed through.
14. Provide a recommended route and topography map for non-discernible trails.

G. TRAIL SYSTEMS

1. A trail system must list each individual trail at the time of nomination. When additional trails are added to the system, an agency must amend and submit their updated approved map and digital map data file to include the additional trails.
2. A least 80% of the system nomination must satisfy the relevant criteria.
3. Trail systems must not have any broken segments; all trails within the system must have connectivity to other trails and access points.

IV. DESIGNATION AS AN ARIZONA PREMIER TRAIL

1. The Arizona State Committee on Trails (ASCOT) will make a 'Call for Premier Trails' to identify and receive nominations of up to 100 trails.
2. All nominations will be reviewed by the ASCOT for completeness, appropriateness, and other factors such as general public safety if submitted by March 14, 2016.
4. The list of the Arizona Premier Trails System will be re-evaluated every five years by the ASCOT to determine if they still meet the criteria set within this document.
5. Timelines for the nomination and evaluation process will be established by Arizona State Parks staff and ASCOT.
6. The Arizona Premier Trails System will be listed on the State Parks website with all the available details for each trail. The list will be sent to local, county, and state entities for publication on their websites.