

Important Points about the National Trails Willing Seller Bill

- The bill only authorizes land acquisition from willing-sellers. The owner must want to sell his land, and he must want to sell it to the Federal government. This is a private property rights bill. Without it, landowners who want to sell to the Federal government are denied the right to do so.
- The bill only authorizes the Federal government to act. It does not appropriate any money. Once willing-sellers are identified, Congress must appropriate the money for each individual project.
- The trails affected by the bill cross 24 states and 81 Congressional districts.
- The Federal government currently has the authority to buy land along 16 of the 25 national scenic and historic trails. The bill gives authority to buy land from willing sellers along the other 9 trails so that there is parity for the entire National Trails System. Those nine trails are: **Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, Lewis and Clark, Iditarod and Nez Perce National Historic Trails and the Continental Divide, Ice Age, North Country and Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trails.**
- Individual families have voluntarily protected many unique and special historic sites along the nine affected scenic and historic trails for several generations. These public-spirited families should have the right to sell these irreplaceable places of our Nation's heritage to the Federal government to continue their protection when they choose to do so.
- There are only 25 trails in the system of National Scenic and Historic Trails. The bill will enable the Federal government to help conserve the special resources of these Congressionally designated trails for the benefit of future generations of Americans.
- With willing seller authority, sections of these trails now located on roads can be moved to overland routes that will provide safer and better conditions for hikers and other trail users.
- Under the willing-seller bill, no contract is valid unless the landowner receives compensation for his land, reflecting basic contract law.
- 34% of the American population, 16 years or older, went hiking on a trail in 1999 (71 million people).
~ *National Survey on Recreation and the Environment 2000*
- Accessible, safe trails means that more people will walk and hike, leading to both short- and long-term health benefits. Walking can prevent heart disease, decrease hypertension, decrease cholesterol levels, help weight loss, improve osteoporosis, improve and maintain mental health, prevent and control diabetes, improve arthritis, and relieve back pain.
- The human-powered outdoor recreation industry contributes an estimated \$40 billion annually to the U.S. economy and employs nearly 768,000 full-time employees.
~ *Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America 1997 State of the Industry Report*