


2021 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

 Liz Bailey

Dear AHS Supporters,

In many ways, 2021 was a build-back year for American Hiking just as it was for you. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we were obliged to cancel all but two Alternative Break trips and all Volunteer Vacations. We also chose, in alignment with our [Commitment to All Hikers](#), to cancel our promotion of [National Trails Day®](#) in 2020 (which we'd already quickly reworked to be all virtual due to COVID). Thankfully, the advent of COVID-19 vaccinations in 2021 meant we could field [Volunteer Vacations](#) crews, though many fewer than normal while also updating safety protocols. And, we got National Trails Day® back up and running with an enormous online celebration, even if the number of in-person events was reduced. Being able to promote in-person hiking was indeed a boon of the latter part of 2021!

Throughout the challenging context of the last two years, AHS has persevered because

of your support. AHS [NextGen Trail Leaders](#) pushed advocacy forward through social media campaigns, participated in Volunteer Vacations, led National Trails Day® events, and pursued professional development opportunities funded by AHS. The all-virtual 2021 [Hike the Hill®](#) brought more trail advocates to the table, as a unified team, than ever before. Throughout the rest of the year, AHS continued to lead national coalitions focused on funding for and equity in the outdoors; submitted testimony to the [House](#) and [Senate](#) in support of increased trails funding; fought for trail and hiking [inclusive provisions](#) within the Build Back Better Act (including \$650 million for trails and roads, \$350 million for expanded access and urban parks, funding for the Civilian Climate Corps and other climate resilience efforts, and potential new grant funding for the [Recreational Trails Program](#)); and pushed for the reintroduction of the [Outdoors for All](#) and [Transit to Trails](#) Acts. Despite a

bitterly partisan environment in Congress, AHS and our allies have been able to connect with both sides of the aisle to forge bipartisan collaboration thanks to [your participation](#) by making your voice heard.

Our volunteer programs continued to evolve as well. We recruited new crew leaders and crew hosts and are looking forward to creating a brand new, robust crew leader training program that will recruit younger folks from a diversity of backgrounds. We have been transforming AHS fundraising as well, building stronger relationships with all donors no matter the size of the gift, continuing to diversify our funding sources, and educating our team in building a people-focused culture of philanthropy. We have also spent 2021 building a stronger, more diverse, more engaged social media follower base to strive for even bigger national advocacy wins and build an even stronger sense of community among hikers of all identities. That concerted,

strategic effort resulted in [National Trails Day® 2021](#) reaching a whopping 45 million people on social media, a 40% increase in the number of NTD Pledge takers, and more cause-focused content shares – all despite the reduced number of in-person events. NTD is quickly becoming recognized across the country as a national day of service for trails and the hiking community.

2022 is going to be our best year yet, thanks to your committed, ongoing support. Please know we are grateful!

Happy hiking,



Kathryn (Kate) Van Waes
Executive Director
(she/her/hers)



Sarah Baker Morgan
Board Chair
(she/her/hers)

2021 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY WINS

- ▶ At (the virtual) Hike the Hill, 150+ trail leaders advocated to Members of Congress and Federal agency leaders for trails, public lands, and equitable access.
- ▶ Successfully pushed to put Hiking Priorities in Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal and [Build Back Better Act](#).
- ▶ AHS Executive Director Kate Van Waes [testified](#) in support of \$100+M increase in trail funding!
- ▶ AHS pushed for reintroduction of the [Transit to Trails Act](#) and the [Outdoors for All Act](#), and Members of Congress featured AHS in their press releases.
- ▶ Transit to Trails Act and the Outdoors for All Act advanced in House of Representatives as part of the [\(INVEST Act\)](#)
- ▶ Partnered in support of the [Recreational Trails Program](#), [Outdoors Alliance for Kids](#), and other coalitions!
- ▶ Guided Administration efforts to address [Racial Equity](#) and [Support for Underserved Communities](#) in outdoor recreation.



HIKE THE HILL[®] VIRTUAL

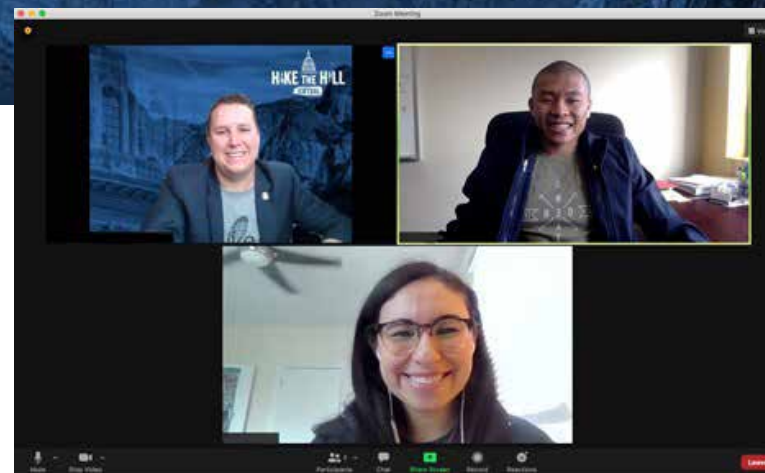
HIKE THE HILL GOES VIRTUAL IN 2021

The continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic required changing our annual in-person advocacy event in Washington, DC to a virtual event. We saw this as a silver lining opportunity for greater participation from across the country by eliminating travel expenses. In collaboration with our longstanding co-host, the Partnership for the National Trails System, AHS coordinated and led meetings with key federal agency leaders, Members of Congress, and Congressional Committees to advance shared trail priorities.

In preparation for this impactful advocacy week, we held trainings on: Implementing the Great American Outdoors Act; promoting Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in legislative and Administration policies and priorities; how to push funding for trails in

Appropriations (the Congressional budgeting process); and how trails fit into Congressional and Administration priorities, projects, and policies regarding transportation and infrastructure. AHS also outfitted Hike the Hill participants with pro tips on holding virtual meetings with Congress and Administration leaders.

American Hiking Society's NextGen Trail Leaders (NGTL) also kicked off their year-long partnership with AHS by joining [Hike the Hill[®]](#). They began with an advocacy training session, where they learned the basics of advocacy, practiced meeting with Congressional staff, and developed their personal pitch on the importance of the



outdoors to them. Each NGTL took this opportunity to meet their elected officials' staff to support the Transit to Trails and Outdoors for All Acts and increased funding for trails. To energize other emerging leaders, the NextGen Trail Leaders shared their experiences on social media and the AHS blog.

2021 NEXTGEN TRAIL LEADERS

The fourth class of [NextGen Trail Leaders](#) (NGTLs) energized emerging leaders across the country in advocacy, communications, and stewardship!



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In June, NGTLs activated their local communities in American Hiking Society National Trails Day® (NTD) events. NGTL Satya organized a hike and afterparty at a local brewery in the Evergreen, CO area. REI and the U.S. forest Service invited NGTL Shira to share their experiences volunteering and highlighting NTD as a day of service.

As part of deepening the NextGen program, AHS funded two Trail Leaders, Irene and Shira, to join AHS Volunteer Vacation crews. Irene shared her experienced on [YouTube](#), inspiring the next generation of trail stewards.

Increased staff support for the NextGen Trail Leader program has allowed AHS to more closely tailor the partnership for each participant and engage more fully year-round. This included new quarterly calls that connected the NGTLs with the broader AHS community, including board members and NGTL alumni, for collaboration, support, mentoring, and networking.



"I got to participate in a volunteer vacation with American Hiking Society and we spent an entire week in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. I'm an avid hiker,

but this was my first time doing something of this nature. I decided to go on this volunteer trip so that I can learn more about the trails and give my time and energy into protecting it.

We did so much in one week! I met some amazing people and together we cleaned up seven recreation sites, dismantled and cleaned up

***some illegal campfire sites and installed fifty-one checked dams. Everything we did was to ensure that the forest was well protected, create space for vegetation to grow and to encourage responsible recreation. Special thank you AHS for making this trip possible for me. It was an exhausting but very rewarding experience. This experience pushed me to go outside of my comfort zone and expanded my knowledge about trails, something that I use very often. I got to see the trails and the outdoor spaces from a different perspective. I'm thankful for this opportunity and I'm looking forward to doing more work on the trails in the future."** - Irene*

VOLUNTEER VACATIONS

In 2021, American Hiking Society resumed in-person volunteer programming for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. With increased safety precautions in place, AHS successfully ran 19 Volunteer Vacations with eager volunteers joining from 34 different states. Volunteers celebrated the joy of getting back out on the trail, meeting new people after a year of isolation, and relishing the opportunity to give back to the natural spaces so many of us have used and relied on during the pandemic.

A total of 132 volunteers participated in these work trips, building and maintaining nearly 50 miles of trails at a volunteer labor value of \$150,691. These trails are now sustainable and expand access for over 2.25 million annual, new and returning recreation users to safely enjoy. Participants came from all walks of life and backgrounds to experience a week of trail stewardship, recreation, and new friendships.

Words from the Project Hosts

“The AHS crew was outstanding. The crew had the knowledge and experience in building and maintaining great trails and it showed. They were extremely hard working and passionate about each task on the trail. I will definitely be looking to host another crew in the future!”

– **Richard Tryder**
Bureau of Land Management

“We couldn’t have done it without the help of AHS volunteers - this multi-year effort, completed in 2021, was an important project for which there simply wasn’t funding. Without the volunteer crews to do the heavy work of trail reconstruction, it simply would not have happened in the foreseeable future.”

– **Samuel Annabel**
Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Volunteer Reflections

“What I really love about Volunteer Vacations is that it gives you an experience of place and people like no other. During my recent Volunteer Vacation, I especially enjoyed observing local and visiting trail users, climbing Sheep Mountain for the spectacular view, and learning about native flora and fauna, history and folkways from local people.”

“Not everyone was familiar with the tools at the start but all were willing and eager to learn. It was a good week of learning to know each other and working together.”

“This was my first trip, and I felt supported and a great way to learn and explore the area and acquire new skills. Super leaders, they really were superb.”

AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY'S NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®

June 5, 2021

A DAY OF SERVICE AND ADVOCACY FOR HOMETOWN TRAILS

People across the country found physical, mental, and emotional restoration on trails during the pandemic. In honor of National Trails Day®, tens of thousands of participants came together to give back and care for America's magnificent trail system and ensure more people in the U.S. can enjoy trails and natural areas.

Following COVID-19 local guidelines, folks across the country united around trails through modified in-person events, virtual events, and record social media engagement. Trail enthusiasts also participated by taking the National Trails Day® Pledge to take action in 2021 to care for trails and advocate for equitable, safe access to quality green spaces. In efforts to remove transportation barriers access to trails, Congress received hundreds of messages supporting the Transit to Trails Act* in celebration of National Trails Day®.



45.18M

Est. Social
Media Reach

45% Increase
from '19



17.05M

Digital News
& Blog Reach



\$3.79M

Advertising
Value Equivalent



564,639

Social Media
Interactions



20,000

Social Interactions
on AHS Channels



10,362

Digital
Mentions



\$681,371
Volunteer
Labor Value



36,398
Event & Pledge
Participants



6,006
Trail Service
Volunteers



565
Registered
Events



274
Miles of Trail
Improved



111
Trail Service
Projects

UNITED BY TRAILS

National Trails Day® volunteer and recreation events took place across the country on all types of hometown trails, including the National Scenic, Historic, and Recreation Trails of the National Trails System (and trails supported by the Recreational Trails Program) on lands managed by BLM, USFS, NPS, state, and local agencies.

We had 13 people put in over 75 hours of work to complete the trail. This has been a 3 year project for the TCC and we are very proud of the work the community has done.

—Tahoe Climbing Coalition

With a group of Boy Scouts and teachers from the local school coming together to tackle this trail, it seemed everyone enjoyed the work and the end result was a much-improved trail.

—Los Padres Forest Association

Everyone had a job from the very young (8 years old) to the very experienced (80 years old).

—Maah Daah Hey Trail Association

The visitors seemed to have a great time. We offered dip nets to look for invertebrate animals in the wetland that was nearby. It was good muddy fun!

—Linn County Conservation

Participants indicated many of them discovered trails they were not previously familiar. Local businesses were very pleased to be involved in the event. The local visitors bureau ended up with a map of local trails as a result of the event.

—Grand Traverse Hiking Club

We used the event to construct new trails in an area being developed as a new addition to the town's trail system. At least one new trail by-passed a wetland area crossed by an older trail that will be closed.

—Hopkinton Trails Club

We had a nice workday with a mixture of experienced volunteers and new volunteers. Work went smoothly, repairing erosion damage to the trail.

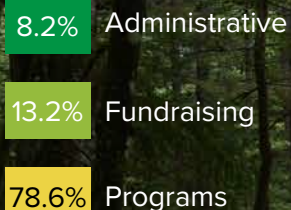
—Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail

We invited members of the local Outdoor Afro chapter to participate. We had a few folks from their group attend. It was a great day with lots of laughter, camaraderie, and face to face conversation.

—Florida Trail Association: Suncoast Chapter

2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

Expenses



Income



*Includes in-kind donations.

**Includes PPP loan forgiveness

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Kate Van Waes, Executive Director

Executive Director's Council Lifetime Membership

Executive Director's Council Lifetime Membership recognizes and honors American Hiking Society's most generous donors for their cumulative and consistent support. The Lifetime members of the Executive Director's Council are the philanthropic leaders of American Hiking Society, and their impact is significant. Individuals have the opportunity to qualify for

Lifetime Membership by establishing endowed scholarship funds to benefit Alternative Break student participants or can achieve their Lifetime status solely through their long-standing support of American Hiking Society. This society honors donors who have cumulatively given \$25000 or more in any of the following forms: planned gifts, outright gifts, new pledges,

and matching gifts. The Executive Director's Lifetime members plan a large role in bringing to life the mission of American Hiking Society and empowering all to share, preserve, and protect the hiking experience.

Lifetime membership in the Executive Director's Council is based upon total cumulative gifts and commitments:

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\$100,000 - \$499,999

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Hugh Zimmerman

Learn more about our Executive Director's Council Lifetime Membership at americanhiking.org/ways-to-give

Special Thanks To Our Contributors

The individuals listed on this page generously contributed \$100 or more in 2021 and are therefore included as members of the American Hiking Society Executive Director's Council. AHS gratefully acknowledges their commitment to empowering all to enjoy, share, and preserve the hiking experience.

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\$100 - \$249

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Thank you to the many donors who contributed to American Hiking Society last year through corporate, state, city and county workplace giving campaigns. If you are a federal employee, you can support our work by designating #11784 on your pledge sheet during the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC.)

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Thank you to our supporters

Founded in 1976, American Hiking Society is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering all to enjoy, share, and preserve the hiking experience. We thank each and every one of our donors for their dedication to our mission.

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**POPULAR
MECHANICS**



LOWA

