

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

Dear AHS Supporters,

In 2022, we continued to build on the momentum from 2021. and were grateful for the support we received from you, our hiking community. We worked hard to continue to rebuild participation in AHS programs. Thankfully, the advent of COVID-19 vaccinations in 2021 meant we could safely field Volunteer Vacations crews and we were back in 2022 with a full schedule of trips from March through November. The 30th anniversary of American Hiking's National Trails Day® (NTD) saw tens of thousands of people from coast to coast get out on the first Saturday of June to leave the trails better than they found them. We were all grateful to be together on the trails again!

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, 100% of our leaders led National Trails Day ® events, and they pursued professional development opportunities funded by AHS. The all-virtual 2022 Hike the Hill® brought more trail advocates to the table, as a unified team, than ever before. These trail partners met with key congressional committees and federal agency leaders, including the Director of the National Park Service, to advocate for trails, public lands, and equitable access. Throughout the rest of the year, AHS continued to lead national coalitions focused on funding for and equity in the outdoors; achieved a decades-long effort to secure a new funding line item for the National Trails System in the Bureau of Land Management budget; and increased support for 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 <u>your participation</u> 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 in 2023 that will recruit a new generation of folks from a variety 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 peoplefocused culture of philanthropy. We have also spent 2022 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® 2022 reaching a whopping 23 million people on social media, a 140% increase in the number of NTD Pledge takers, and more cause-focused content shares. After 30 years, NTD is becoming recognized across the country as a national day of service for trails and the hiking community.

2023 is going to be better than ever, thanks to your committed, ongoing support. We are deeply grateful!

Happy hiking,



Saveria Tilden Board Chair (she/her/hers)

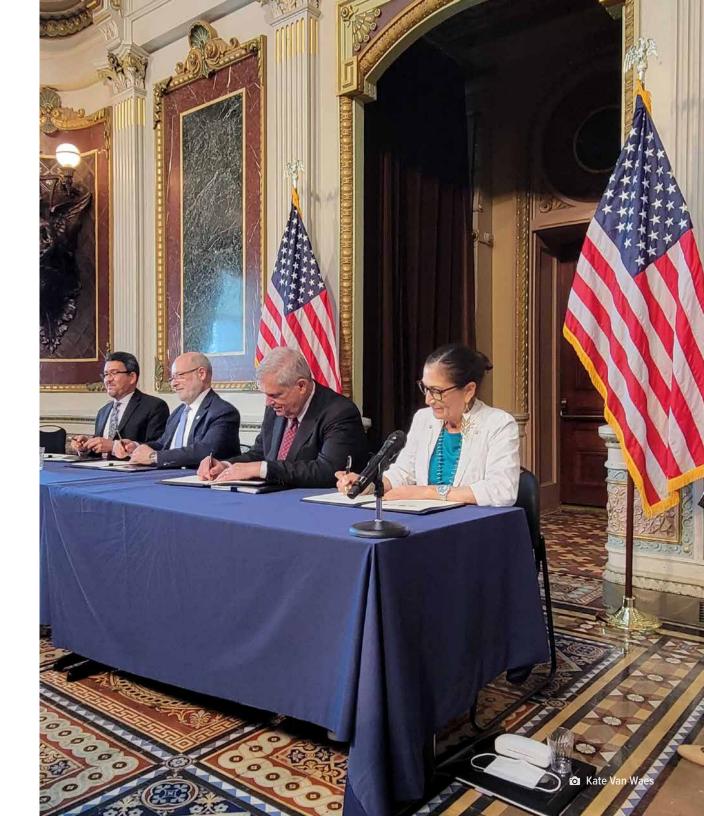


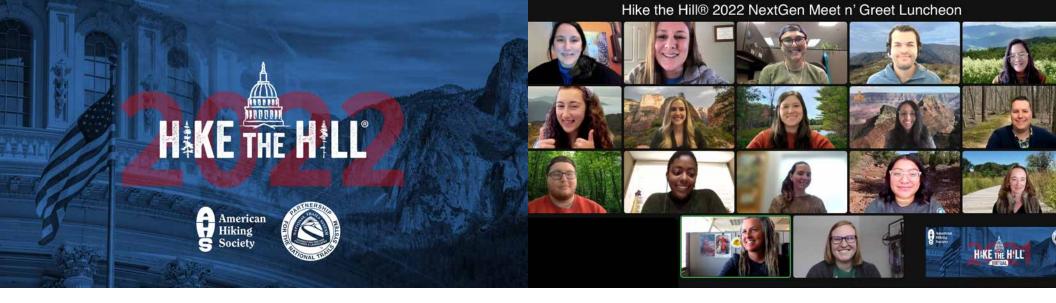
Keather Klein Don

Heather Klein Olson Acting Executive Director (she/her/hers)

2022 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY WINS

- Virtual Hike the Hill® brought together 120+ trail advocates for invaluable advocacy training, meetings with key congressional committees and federal agency leaders, including the Director of the National Park Service, to advocate for trails, public lands, and equitable access.
- ► Led trails community advocacy to secure a \$40M increase in funding for trails and trail related programs.
- Achieved a decades-long effort to secure a new funding line item for the National Trails System in the Bureau of Land Management budget.
- ▶ Joined the <u>REI Cooperative Action Network</u> and the <u>Outdoor Alliance for Kids</u> coalition to advocate for the Transit to Trails Act.
- Celebrated the White House launch of the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR). Attendees included DOI Secretary Haaland, USDA Secretary Vilsack, and Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. (Twitter/ Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn)
- Facilitated participation of NextGen Trail Leader Alumni to join a listening session on Diversity in the Outdoors with Department of Interior Deputy Director Tommy Beaudreau.





ANNUAL ADVOCACY EVENT FOR THE TRAILS COMMUNITY

Over 120 hikers and trail advocates from across the country came together for the 25th Annual Hike the Hill® advocacy event. This annual event, co-hosted with Partnership for the National Trails System, brings together hikers, leaders of the National Trails System, the trails community at large, and NextGen advocates to collectively advocate for shared priorities of the trails system before congress and federal agency leaders. Participants learn from experts and leaders during briefings on the key issues impacting trails.

The trails community met with the National Park Service Director, top leadership at the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, and key congressional committees. Through these meetings, trail leaders demonstrated the importance and value of the following:

- Trails and the National Trails System
- Partnerships with the non-profit trails community and volunteers in managing and maintaining trails
- Increased funding and restored staffing for trails; and
- The critical work being done to expand equitable access to the outdoors for all communities

AHS <u>NextGen Trail Leaders</u>, trail organizations, and advocates urged Representatives and Senators to support and advance legislation for trails while meeting with congressional offices. The key priorities during Hike the Hill® included:

- Passing a full-year 2022 funding bill, to realize a \$40M increase in trail and trail-related funding!
- ▶ Robust funding for trails in the fiscal year 2023 funding bills
- ► Co-Sponsoring the <u>Transit to Trails Act</u>
- ► Co-Sponsoring the <u>Outdoors for All Act</u>
- ▶ Co-Sponsoring the Continental Divide Trail Completion Act
- ► Co-Sponsoring the National Scenic Trails Parity Act
- ► Supporting full funding for the <u>Recreational Trails Program</u>

Hike the Hill® provided NextGen Trail Leaders their first opportunity to make their voice heard and meet with their congressional representatives' offices and share about the important work they're doing in their communities. NextGen shared their experiences across social media and a blog to encourage and educate the hiking community on the importance of advocacy and ways to get involved. There was also an opportunity for NextGen participants across trail organizations to come together for a meet and greet to create connections and engage in dialogue on how to advance their efforts and support each other.

2022 NEXTGEN TRAIL LEADERS

The fifth class of <u>NextGen Trail Leaders</u> (NGTLs) energized emerging leaders across the country in advocacy, communications, and stewardship!



Aleshea Carriere (she/her) @Glitzngrits



Verónica Miranda (she/her) @vero_wandering



Rebeca Rodriguez (she/her) @hikewithrebeca



Robert White (he/him) @yogirawraw



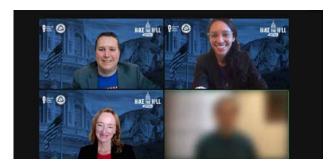
Machiko Yasuda (she/they) @the.machiko

We could not be more proud of the fifth class of NextGen Trail Leaders (NGTLs) we partnered with in 2022! Representing many different backgrounds and interests, this class not only had 100% participation in National Trails Day®, but they also made the most of their advocacy efforts, professional development pursuits, and stewardship opportunities. All year long, NGTLs inspired, taught, and empowered others through social media and across AHS communications to build a stronger hiking community. The year began with NGTLs participating in virtual Hike the Hill® after their deep dive into advocacy during the issue briefings and advocacy training they received in January. From crafting their pitch to support legislation like the Transit to Trails Act and making trail funding requests to sharing why access to the outdoors has been so important in their lives, the impact they make is immeasurable. Rebeca Rodriguez shared her Hike the Hill® experience on the AHS blog.

In June, we saw all five NGTLs host or participate in National Trails Day® events ranging from trail clean ups, educating people of all ages, and maintenance from New Jersey to the coast of California. This is the first year in the program's history that all NGTLs have been able to join the largest day of trail service in the US. First time trail maintenance trip lead Robert White shared, "This was personally my first time doing any type of volunteer trail work, and man was it a rewarding feeling! The trail we worked on hadn't been worked on since prior to the COVID quarantine covering about a mile." Robert's trail maintenance trip came about after attending Wilderness First Responder training at the Big Sur Preserve earlier in the year using his professional development fund and speaking to the preserve's director about the amount of work that needed to be done.

In the fall, NGTL Rebeca used her professional development stipend to attend the Partnership for the National Trails System fall workshop in New Mexico with AHS's Senior Director for Programs and Advocacy. She gained advocacy knowledge while collaborating with the trails community on creating a more equitable outdoors. NGTL Aleshea attended her first Volunteer Vacation in Natchez Trace State Park, Tennessee. She shared her experience on the AHS blog and plans to attend another Volunteer Vacation in 2023!

The 2022 class went above and beyond with their individual advocacy and stewardship initiatives in addition to Hike the Hill® and National Trails Day® which was made possible by having increased staff support and support from the AHS board.





In 2022, a total of 81 students from 9 colleges and universities participated in an Alternative Break with American Hiking Society, contributing to the maintenance of over 25 miles of trails in state parks across the country. Students often join these projects with little to no previous trail maintenance experience but leave with a deep sense of accomplishment, camaraderie with their group, and an appreciation for the work that goes into creating and maintaining safe access to hiking trails.

Oregon State University's new hiking club was selected as one of American Hiking Society's Alternative Break financial support recipients, removing the financial barriers that would have prevented them from otherwise participating. Students contributed to a week-long trail maintenance service project at Moran State Park located on Orcas Island, Washington.

"We were honored to receive the Alternative Spring Break [financial support] from the American Hiking Society. Without the [financial support], it would be impossible for us to enjoy trail volunteering in Moran State Park on Orcas Island, WA.

There were many things I enjoyed on this trip. I love the wildlife, fungus, and plants unique

to Orcas Island. I also adore the beautiful landscapes and gorgeous views. I enjoyed talking to the knowledgeable park rangers who warmly hosted us throughout this trip.

However, out of all of them, what I love most is how this trip bound the hiking club members together. We got to know each other during the week of volunteering and shared laughter by the campfire.

The most rewarding part of the experience for our group is seeing how our volunteer projects can help people and impact the environment. We went to Sucia Island to clear the English Ivy threatening the local species. We opened trails covered with heavy pine needle litter and overgrown branches that might hurt hikers. We also built a trail to create easy access and guide the hikers. Besides these, we even repaired one of Moran State Park's most popular trails broken by fallen trees. The hikers who passed us all showed appreciation for our work by saying 'thank you'. The simple words made us feel our work was worthy, and we knew that we were making long-lasting impacts on the state park.

We all formed strong bonds with our club members and the park rangers, adopted trail stewardship, learned new skills, and created long-lasting friendships and memories on this trip. Through our volunteer work and the lessons by the park rangers, we understand the hard work of maintaining the trails that we deeply love.

We were surprised about how much effort the state park has put into maintaining the trails. This alternative spring break provides us with a new vision to look at the trails. We will have more appreciation for the trails and the trail crews in the future.

We will definitely participate in another alternative spring break by the American Hiking Society. It is such a meaningful and unforgettable experience.

I would tell my friends who want to participate in the alternative spring break that it is an amazing opportunity to be outdoors and benefit our hiking community. The hands-on experience is unique and creates long-lasting memories, and impacts us. We learned many things on this trip that we will never forget and will not be learning in classrooms."

Yan Yan, Oregon State University Alternative
 Break Financial Support Recipient 2022

In 2022, a total of 303 volunteers joined one of 34 Volunteer Vacations that helped to create and maintain access to over 45 miles of new and existing trails, built new bridges and boardwalks, and completed many other trail projects across the United States. Volunteers joined these projects from across the country, and contributed their time and effort to support a variety of projects from creating a new ADA-accessible trail at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, clearing the Big Creek Trail of more than 85 fallen trees in the Bitterroot National Forest in Montana, to helping the Appalachian Trail Conservancy complete a multi-year effort to maintain survey markers (monuments) that span 6.75 miles of the boundary along the Appalachian Trail Protected Land Corridor in Maine.

American Hiking Society partnered with Latino Outdoors to co-host a Volunteer Vacation in the Redwoods National and State Parks in Northern California that centered and celebrated the Latinx experience in the outdoors and in conservation work. This special project offered Latino Outdoors community members the opportunity to gather together, conduct trail service, and learn about Redwoods Rising, the largest restoration project of its kind in the country that aims to restore over 50,000 acres of second-growth forest into the old-growth redwood forests of the future. Throughout the week, the volunteers assisted trail crews in the Redwoods National and State Parks to brush and maintain popular trails and remove invasive species all while learning about the work it takes to support healthy redwood ecosystems. Thanks to the philanthropic support of partnering organizations and individual donors, American Hiking provided financial support for this project including meals and transportation so the participants could participate in the Volunteer Vacation with little to no financial barriers.



"The overall experience of being away from home and the routine for a whole week was transformative, restorative and fulfilling on many levels. Being around like-minded Latina women from all walks of life, each with a unique perspective and life story was one of the highlights of the trip. I appreciate learning with them and from their experiences, struggles and accomplishments; laughing at nothing and everything, watching them be marveled by nature and having that childlike wonder...

This adventure could not have been possible without the great leadership of our organizers from Latino Outdoors and American Hiking Society. Typically, I would not have been able to afford a whole week off from work... [nor]

the knowledge or resources to replicate a trip like this. I appreciate the careful attention to detail and the accommodations provided to make this a successful trip. It was evident that [our hosts and crew leaders] worked very hard to make this event a success, and I know there were other people involved; I appreciate everyone who made this happen."

Trini Villegas, VV participant

Volunteer Vacations are made possible by our generous sponsors AKHG by Duluth Trading Company, Athletic Brewing Co., L.L. Bean, and Backpacker's Pantry. Thank you to our federal partners: the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service.



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\$1.18M Volunteer Labor Value



57,340 Event Participants



12,314
Trail Service
Volunteers



698 Registered Events



Improved



TRAILS FOR EVERYONE

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

I spent the morning hosting a trail clean-up. Taking little ones into nature is my favorite pastime...one of the girls found a kiddie pool and tennis shoes in the middle of one of the trails.

Aleshea Carrieré
 AHS NextGen Trail Leader

We were able to accomplish meaningful work on one of our trails. At the end of the event, we took down the "closed" signs and opened the trail for the season.

—Cedar Breaks National Monument

Logout teams clear[ed] over a dozen downed trees along the route using antique crosscut saws.

-Pacific Northwest Trail Association

A top team of volunteers completed the job in two hours, less time than originally thought.

-New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

A couple came on one of their first dates years ago when we started this. They now have 2 children and continue to come.

-Lebanon Rails to Trails

It was a great way to promote the service that my search and rescue team provides to the general public. It was great to have [Outdoor Afro] there hiking along with us.

—New Jersey Search and Rescue

Volunteers enjoyed a day in the wilderness. We didn't get 100% finished, but the trail is in much better shape now.

-Lumpkin Coalition

As we hiked, picking up trash as we went, we saw many other hikers look at what were doing and join in to help or thank us and pledge to continue to look for trash as they hiked that day. Stewardship was contagious that day!

We had a great turnout to celebrate the multi-use and equestrian trails by recreating and being outdoors. We had over 25 people sign up to become volunteers to help us maintain the 340+ mile of trails that they enjoy and even got at Jr. Ranger! Everyone was grateful for the trails and the beautiful weather.

-Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway

COMMUNITY GRANT EVENTS

American Hiking, with financial support from the U.S. Forest Service, launched the first-of-its-kind National Trails Day® Community Grant this year. Designed to reduce barriers for underrepresented communities to organize meaningful events, the grant greatly added to the celebration of the 30th annual National Trails Day®.

Dozens of welldeserving individuals and organizations from across the country applied for funding for events organized by underrepresented communities, affinity groups, or clubs in the outdoors to support an in-person event for National Trails Day® at a National Forest or National Grassland site. Funds help support transportation costs, hands-on materials, stewardship supplies, gear, food, event promotion, and other materials needed for a full trail experience.

Ruth Rosas and Ismael Cuevas – Huron-Manistee National Forest:

Black and Brown Chicagoans with limited exposure to biking and camping trips joined a ride and camping trip. The group biked 60 miles from Chicago, IL to their campsite where they camped for two nights. During the first night, the group got to know one another as they cooked dinner and discussed the importance of access to public lands and conservation. On National Trails Day® the group enjoyed all that the trails in Huron-Manistee National Forest have to offer. Participants also had the option of enjoying group trail runs and paddle activities.



Alejandro Ruiz Rosales

We're Out Here – Cleveland National Forest: Queer BIPOC folks in Orange Country joined a nature walk in Black Star Canyon. A low-intensity, mostly flat hike was selected and the event was led by queer, Latinx naturalists Michelle and Tatiana. During the nature walk, participants met fellow queer BIPOC nature lovers, and along the way, observed and connected with native plants and birds, and even learned about how the mountains used to be under the ocean. Event leaders discussed the presence of the Indigenous peoples whose land they are guests on, and how they can respect and protect the land for generations to come. Designed for all bodies and abilities ages 18+, this trip required no hiking experience.



Yadi Rocha

New Mexico Wildlife Federation (Nature Niños New Mexico) – Gila and Cibola National Forest: This storytelling hike (to be held at a later date due to a forest closure) will invite students from the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy and their families to participate in an accessible event with multiple interactive stories and a variety of hikes based on the family's needs and abilities. This event will have ASL and Spanish interpretations.



Nature Niños

Khmer Community of Seattle King County – Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest: Members of the Khmer community came together for a multi-generational community picnic near Annette Lake followed by a student-led interpretive group hike. The event helped unite the community elders with the youth in a shared immersive outdoor experience rooted in tradition and connection to the natural world.



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\$5,000+

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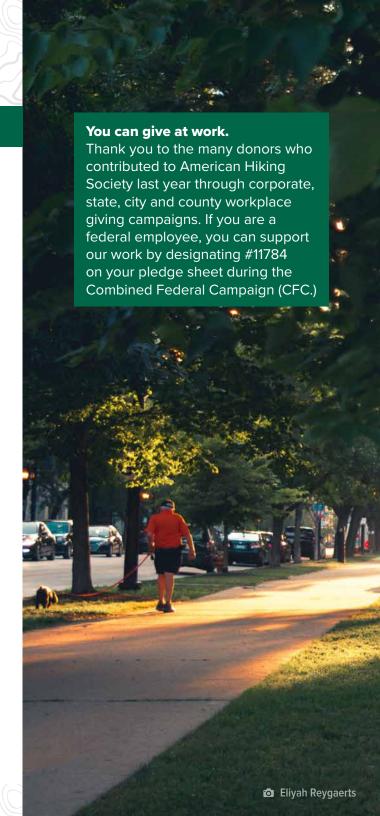
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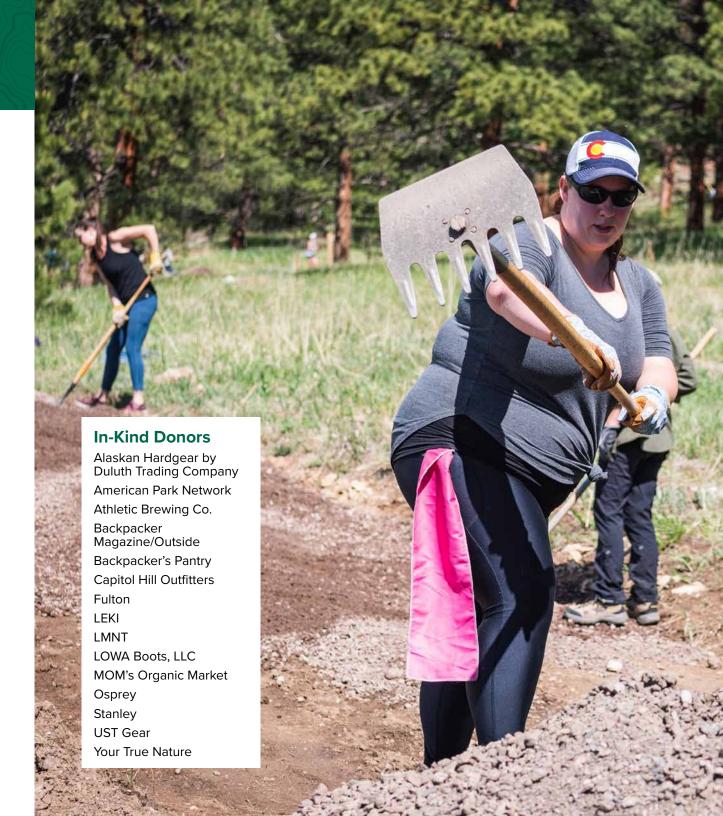
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