Walking as a Practice Case Study
Partnership for the National Trails System
and
Continental Divide Trail Coalition

With hundreds of thousands of users daily across the U.S.A., the Partnership for the National Trail System (PNTS) represents one of our country’s most significant legacies and an extraordinary opportunity for walking as a practice.

Since 1978, the federal government has protected corridors of historical and cultural significance to be enjoyed by the public in perpetuity. Categorized as National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails, and National Recreation Trails, some of these trails include the:

- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Arizona National Scenic Trail
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Louis and Clark National Historic Trail
- Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
- Santé Fe National Historic Trail
- Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail
- Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

PNTS Board Member and Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) Director, Teresa Martinez, says, "Our trail systems create experiences away from the noise of cities, driving, and busy schedules. While walking and hiking on these trails, people connect to things that are more fundamental to life. They guide us into our most natural state."

Partnership for the National Trails System

- Founded: 1997
- Headquarters: Madison, WI
- Website: www.pnts.org
- Mission: The Partnership for National Trails System connects member not-for-profit trail organizations and federal agency partners to further the protection, completion, and stewardship of the 30 National Scenic and Historic Trails within the National Trails System.

- Walking as a Practice typology: Inward and Outwards Journey, Personal Health and Connection
One of the most geographically and culturally diverse trails in the network is the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which runs for 3,100 miles from Mexico to Canada along the spine of the continent. Teresa notes, "The Continental Divide Trail is one of the largest conservation efforts in the history of the United States. It's much more than just a line on a map: it is a living museum of the American West, a place to reconnect with nature, and a unifying force bringing people of all walks of life together."

For each National Scenic or Historic Trail, a private partner works with federal agencies to protect, preserve, and promote stewardship of that trail, and CDTC is the private partner that supports the Continental Divide Trail. With thousands of users every year, including 150 "thru-hikers" (who walked the entire trail) in 2014 and 225 in 2015, and more than 21,000 volunteer hours ($450,000 value), this trail is growing in popularity.

The Continental Divide Trail has two sister "Triple-Crown" trails. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail has more than 2,000 thru-hikers each year, and 242,000 volunteer hours, while the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail has recorded 82,000 volunteer hours and seen a 200% increase in trail users since the release of New York Times Bestseller, Wild, by Cheryl Strayed.

Groups like PNTS and CDTC are two of hundreds of trail stewardship organizations across the country that play a critical role in protecting wilderness and recreation corridors for millions of people to develop their own habits of walking as a practice.

**Action Item:** Learn how to connect and support a National Historic, Scenic, or Recreational Trail near you by visiting www.pnts.org.

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**Continental Divide Trail Coalition**

- **Founded:** 2012
- **Headquarters:** Pine, CO
- **Website:** www.continentaldividetrail.org
- **Mission:** The Continental Divide Trail Coalition’s mission is to create a community committed to construct, promote, and protect in perpetuity the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail which stretches from Canada to Mexico, through Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.
- **Walking as a Practice Typology:** Inward and Outwards Journey, Personal Health and Connection

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