



SEEKING NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL DESIGNATION FOR THE

Bay Area Ridge Trail



Background

The National Trails System Act of 1968 established a national system of trails, which now includes scenic, historic, and recreational trails. National Scenic Trails are “continuous protected scenic corridors that offer a superlative recreational experience.” Created to showcase the country’s natural resources and beauty, National Scenic Trails are routes of outstanding recreation opportunity. They are primarily non-motorized continuous trails that extend for 100+ miles, traverse beautiful terrain, and connect communities, significant landmarks, and public lands. Only 11 trails, including the Appalachian and Pacific Crest, claim this distinction today.

Adding new national scenic trails to the system requires an Act of Congress. The first step is for Congress to direct the National Park Service to conduct a feasibility study. No supplemental funding is required for a study.

We seek Congressional action to authorize a feasibility study of the Bay Area Ridge Trail as a National Scenic Trail.

The Bay Area Ridge Trail meets the criteria for National Scenic Trails outlined in the National Trails System Act of 1968:

✓	Extended trail route of more than 100 miles
✓	Provides maximum outdoor recreation potential
✓	Provides for enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic and cultural qualities
✓	Represents desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river and forest
✓	Represents landforms that exhibit significant regional geographic characteristics
✓	Connects with side trails, which provide additional public access

National Scenic Trail status would enhance Ridge Trail’s visibility as a world-class recreation opportunity and attract new users from the communities around the Bay and beyond. National recognition would also help build support to connect the 550+-mile trail and promote public access to parks and preserves around the Bay Area.

Next Steps and Timeframe

Below are four key steps in the process, which can take five or more years:

1. An amendment to the National Trails System Act requesting a feasibility study
2. Trail feasibility study (typically conducted by the NPS) to evaluate the Ridge Trail as a candidate for National Scenic Trail status. Note: The Ridge Trail Council has detailed reports and trail data to support this effort.
3. If the feasibility study recommends establishment, another act of Congress is needed to add the trail to the National Trails System
4. Once established, the NPS, Ridge Trail, and agencies will develop a comprehensive management and use plan outlining the roles of partners.



The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council

is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that partners with park agencies, local governments, land trusts, landowners, and volunteers throughout the Bay Area to complete the Ridge Trail.

Mission

To plan, promote, and sustain a connected hiking, cycling, and equestrian trail on the ridgelines around San Francisco Bay – linking people, parks, and open space for today and future generations.

History

Decades ago, park visionary William Penn Mott, Jr. had a big idea: to unite the ridges encircling the San Francisco Bay Area via a continuous park “necklace” or ridgeline trail for hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.

Mott’s idea took hold, and in 1989, the first Ridge Trail section was dedicated. Within the first five years, the Bay Area Ridge Trail grew to 200 miles by adding existing trails on public lands to the network.

Today, over 400 miles of Ridge Trail are ready to explore. Step by step, long continuous sections are being knit together to provide thru-hike (or bike or horseback) opportunities.

Long Connected Stretches

WEST
80 miles

from Big Rock in northern Marin County to Highway 92 in San Mateo County

EAST
45 miles

from Kennedy Grove Regional Park in Contra Costa County to Garin Regional Park in Alameda County

Bay Area residents and visitors can reach the world-class Ridge Trail within a short trip from home, work, or school through multiple access points around the Bay. The Ridge Trail brings people and communities together and offers opportunities for exercise, recreation, and a connection to nature with scenic vistas close to a diverse urban area.

Get in Touch

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