AllTrails | Public Lands Program

Using visitor insights to fund trail maintenance

Goal

Secure funding to hire dedicated trail maintenance staff on non-motorized trails within Maryland's Western Region State Forests.

Impact

- **Awarded a 3-year trail maintenance grant**, to establish continuous funds with dedicated staff
- **Ensured efficient deployment** of trail maintenance resources by monitoring AllTrails usage trends and heatmap data
- **3,800 maintenance hours** logged on 100 miles of non-motorized trails across three state forests

> "Reviewing AllTrails data played an important role in identifying the need for broader programmatic trail maintenance effort within Western Maryland's State Forests."
>
> **Jeff Simcoe, Trails Planner at Maryland Department of Natural Resources**

Background

Maryland's Western Region State Forests contain over 200 miles of shared-use trails on approximately 130,000 acres.

Challenge

Trail maintenance backlogs resulting from deferred maintenance are a common problem across public lands. The lack of trail maintenance-specific funding and trail-dedicated field staff only exacerbates the problem, resulting in overgrown, impassable, and unsustainable trails. To advocate for funding, organizations typically need detailed reports of insights from visitors and trail reviews that document the maintenance that needs to happen.

Approach

Systematic, regular inspections of trails should be a part of any trail management program. Yet, it isn't possible for trail managers to have their boots and eyes on all trails all the time. Maryland had been monitoring trail condition trends through the AllTrails data dashboard, and they knew they needed to make progress on trail condition issues, so they:

- Utilized AllTrails data to advocate for the need for broader programmatic trail maintenance funding

- Amended an expiring trail maintenance grant to address user-reported trail condition issues on a 17-mile trail system as a test of the impact

- Partnered with the Appalachian Conservation Corps trail crews to improve trail conditions and enhance user experiences

- Reviewed AllTrails visitor insights and heatmap data to deploy targeted trail maintenance resources more efficiently

Outcome

Trail maintenance is a continuous process. No trail is ever truly complete, so the Maryland Forest Service applied for another grant, utilizing what they learned from the first few years.

- **Awarded a 3-year trail maintenance grant**, which will kick off in the Spring of 2024 in partnership with the Appalachian Conservation Corps, who will complete the trail maintenance work

- Maryland Forest Service will continue to **monitor AllTrails usage trends and heat map data** to ensure the most efficient deployment of trail maintenance resources

- In the first years of the grant, the trail crews **logged approximately 3,800 hours**, targeting **100 miles** of non-motorized trails across three state forests