



# The Continental Divide Trail Completion Act

## Continental Divide Trail Completion Act

**Co-Lead:** Rep. Leger Fernandez

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) was created by Congress in 1978 to conserve and enhance access to the natural, scenic, historical, and cultural resources along the Continental Divide. It spans 3,100 miles between Mexico and Canada, traverses five states and connects countless communities along the spine of the Rocky Mountains.

Despite more than 40 years of work by dedicated federal agency personnel, nonprofit partners, volunteers, and residents of trailside communities, the CDT remains incomplete. More than 160 miles of the CDT are routed along roads and busy highways due to gaps in public lands. Additionally, there are almost 600 miles of trail that are currently located on public lands but need to be relocated to a more optimal location to move the CDT off motorized trails and other undesirable routes.

**The CDT Completion Act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to prioritize completion of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail to the extent practicable in time for the CDT's 50th anniversary in 2028**, by acquiring land to eliminate gaps between sections of the Trail and relocating existing portions of the Trail where necessary to maximize conservation and enjoyment of the Trail Corridor.

### Specifically, the CDT Completion Act:

- Directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to create a Trail Completion team dedicated to completing the CDT. This team, working in coordination with affected stakeholders, would be responsible for doing the necessary planning work to complete and optimize the trail, identifying priority tracts for acquisition, and working to acquire those lands where possible.
- Requires the Secretaries to submit a Comprehensive Development Plan to Congress within 2 years, which would include the identification of gap areas along the trail, and a plan for closing those gap areas. Requires additional annual reporting on the implementation of the plan.
- Explicitly states that eminent domain will not be used for acquisitions to complete the CDT, and lands may only be acquired by purchase from a willing seller, donation, exchange, cooperative agreement, or easement agreement.

This bill passed the House as part of the House-passed FY23 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in 2022.