

## **UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE**

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The U.S. Forest Service receives and reviews countless proposals to add, reroute and eliminate trails every year. When developing a trail proposal, the Forest Service requires that project proponents take some time to consider the following:

- Why is the proposal needed within the context of the existing network?
- Are there existing trails in the area of interest that could meet your needs?
- Could your interest be met on other public or private lands?

Beyond general access and trail availability there are a number of other factors that need consideration:

- Does the proposal align with USFS Management Plan and the GMNF Comprehensive Trail Strategy?
  - USFS Management Plan: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/land/gmfl/landmanagement>
  - GMNF Comprehensive Trail Strategy: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/gmfl/landmanagement/planning>

There are also a number of economic and environmental factors that require consideration:

- What are the anticipated use levels and can the proposal support those levels considering: sustainable trail design/location as well as support the infrastructure (parking etc.)?
- Are there safety concerns and/or potential user conflicts?
- Does the chapter have enough volunteer labor to commit to long-term maintenance?
- Short and long-term financial needs – what is the plan to fund the project? If the chapter is relying on grants, does the group have the capacity to write effective grants?

Proposals addressing the entirety of the above lists are to be submitted to the District Recreation Program Manager for the unit where the proposal is located (Manchester or Rochester/Middlebury).

Submitted proposals are reviewed by district staff, paying particular attention to items listed above in addition to:

- What is the trail's purpose and how does it meet new/greater demands, connect users to services and other attractions?
- Does the submission indicate that the project would meet the Forest Service National Quality Standards?

Please Note: If it is determined to move a proposal forward, the USFS will outline the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process. The NEPA process may take several months and up to multiple years depending on the complexity and location of the project. As part of this phase other important items are defined including funding options, construction timelines and maintenance agreements.

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