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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL DESIGNATED AS NATIONAL PRIORITY AREA BY USDA

GOLDEN, Co. (Mar. 6, 2018) – The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) has been designated as one of 15 Trail Maintenance Priority Areas by the U.S. Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The successful partnership between the Forest Service and the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) played an important role in this recognition, as the Forest Service is working to increase the role of partners and volunteers in maintaining trails across our national forests and grasslands.

“As a non-profit partner working with the Forest Service to complete and protect the CDT, the Continental Divide Trail Coalition is excited to see the CDT designated as a Trail Maintenance Priority Area,” said Teresa Martinez, CDTC Executive Director. “We hope to use this opportunity to demonstrate a successful model of public-private partnership for trails across the country as we continue to engage new users and volunteers in the stewardship of our public lands.”

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the National Trails Systems Act, which established America’s system of national scenic, historic, and recreation trails. This anniversary presents a pivotal opportunity for the Forest Service and partners like CDTC to lead a shift toward a system of sustainable trails maintained through shared stewardship. Focused trail work in the Trail Maintenance Priority Areas that engages partners and volunteers will help address a more than \$300 million trail maintenance backlog on trails managed by the Forest Service.



Volunteers perform maintenance along the Continental Divide Trail in Colorado.

“Partners like the Continental Divide Trail Coalition are vital in helping the Forest Service manage the important recreational resources that are our nation’s trails,” said Brenda Yankoviak, the Forest Service’s Administrator for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. “Our partnership with CDTC and their dedicated volunteers greatly increases the Forest Service’s capacity to improve the CDT and protect it for future generations.”

The priority areas focus on trails where a lack of maintenance has led to reduced access to public land and increased risk of harm to natural resources and trail users. The CDT connects several other priority areas, including Montana’s Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, the Colorado Fourteeners, and the Wyoming Forest Gateway Communities, and connects Rocky Mountain communities both large and small to their public lands. In 2017, 88% of small business owners surveyed in communities along the CDT reported that the protection and enhancement of the CDT is important to their local economy.

“Our nation’s trails are a vital part of the American landscape and rural economies, and these priority areas are a major first step in USDA’s on-the-ground responsibility to make trails better and safer,” said USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue.

The CDT was designated by Congress as a National Scenic Trail in 1978, making 2018 the trail’s 40th anniversary. Yet the CDT is yet to be fully completed, and some sections are still on roads or are poorly maintained. With the Trail’s designation as a Trail Maintenance Priority Area, the Forest Service and CDTC aim to double trail maintenance accomplished by partners and volunteers. One important step CDTC is



taking to accomplish this is “Blaze the CDT,” a year-long volunteer effort to mark all 3,100 miles of the Trail. CDTC is currently recruiting both new and experienced volunteers to be a part of this historic effort.

You can learn more about Blaze the CDT and other opportunities to support the CDT at continentaldividetrail.org/get-involved.

About the Continental Divide Trail

The CDT is one of the world’s premiere long-distance trails, stretching 3,100 miles from Mexico to Canada along the Continental Divide. Designated by Congress in 1978, the CDT is the highest, most challenging and most remote of the 11 National Scenic Trails. It provides recreational opportunities ranging from hiking to horseback riding to hunting for thousands of visitors each year. While 95% of the CDT is located on public land, approximately 150 miles are still in need of protection.

About the Continental Divide Trail Coalition

The CDTC was founded in 2012 by volunteers and recreationists hoping to provide a unified voice for the Trail. Working hand-in-hand with the U.S. Forest Service and other federal land management agencies, the CDTC is a non-profit partner supporting stewardship of the CDT. The mission of the CDTC is to complete, promote and protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, a world-class national resource. For more information, please visit continentaldividetrail.org.

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