

Appeal for letters of support

A study proposal to obtain Congressional authorization for a “Feasibility Study” of the southern overland migration routes used by emigrants and gold rushers to reach southern California has been prepared by the Southern Trails Chapter, Utah-Crossroads Chapter, and the Legislative Liaison Committee of the Oregon-California Trails Association. The purpose of the “Feasibility Study” is to determine if these emigrant trails meet the criteria of the National Trails System Act for designation as a National Historic Trail.

While the better known emigrant trails to the north have been given National Historic Trail designation (California Trail, Oregon Trail, and Mormon Pioneer Trail), the lesser known, but equally significant, emigrant trails in the south have been overlooked. The great westward expansion that took place in America during the mid-nineteenth century was the largest peaceful, voluntary migration of people in history. It was also one of the most documented events in American history. It was all one large migration, during the same time period, across the entire United States. Today that is not reflected in the national historic trails designated by the National Trail System. A school child using the western half of the [National Trail System map](#) to study this historical period of American history would see no national historic emigrant trail across the entire southern half of the United States celebrating and honoring the trails that brought thousands of emigrants and gold rushers to California in the mid 1800's. They would see three national historic emigrant trails across the northern half, but it was not just a northern experience over northern trails. It was truly a national experience also over southern trails, and this proposal is directed at correcting that disparity by recognizing a Southern National Historic Trail that played a comparable role across the south.

Our proposal uses emigration as the main purpose of the trails in our request for national historic trail status; however, we have also chosen a sub purpose of military. The Southern Trail was the trail of the Army of the West, instrumental in bringing New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada and portions of Utah and Colorado into the Union during the Mexican-American War. During this campaign Lt Col Philip St George Cooke and the Mormon Battalion forged “Cooke’s Wagon Road” (also known as the Southern Trail) which would become the first wagon road from the United States to the shore of the Pacific Ocean.

These southern trails used by the military in both the Mexican-American War and the Civil War played a very historically significant role in American history.

Regardless of how strong the case is for national historic trail status nothing can happen until we are successful in convincing Congress to authorize the feasibility study. In our effort to obtain Congressional support it is important that we can show legislators that there is a broad base of support from creditable historical organizations and other interested parties from across the trail states for this proposal. This is the reason for our appeal for your letter of support.

We would appreciate a letter of support from as many interested organizations as we can get to recommend that Congress act favorably on our request for a study bill that would grant authorization for a feasibility study to be completed on the trails listed in the study bill to determine if they meet the criteria necessary for designation as a national historic trail in accordance with the National Trails System Act of 1968. A copy of the [study proposal](#) and a [map of the southern trails](#) included can be seen by selecting these links.

Again, at this stage we are only asking for your support in recommending to Congress that they authorize a feasibility study to determine if the Southern Trail meets all the criteria to be designated as a national historic trail. The decision on recognizing it as a national historic trail will come later in the process.

For your convenience a [sample letter](#) is included here. This is a brief, basic letter that will serve the purpose but, of course, you are welcome to change and incorporate your own words in any way you see fit; and ideally place the letter on your organizations letterhead.

The major goal here is to be able to show legislators that there is a long list of supporters for this proposal who believe these southern trails deserve to be evaluated for possible inclusion in our National Trail System as national historic trails.

If you have any questions or want more information on the Southern National Historic Trail proposal please contact Albert Eddins at aseddins@msn.com or call 480 686-1155.

Thank you very much for your help and support.