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Iowa's Raccoon River Valley Trail Inducted Into Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's National Hall of Fame

The 89-mile Raccoon River Valley Trail, the longest paved loop trail in the nation, known as the "quintessential central Iowa experience," secures more than 16,000 votes in national contest

WASHINGTON—Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the nation's largest trails organization, today announced the induction of the Raccoon River Valley Trail into its Rail-Trail Hall of Fame after the trail secured a record-breaking number of public votes during the annual contest.

"The 89-mile Raccoon River Valley Trail is incredible—I've experienced it firsthand! It is a stunning example of the powerful role trails play in building community and connecting the past, present and future of a place," said Brandi Horton, RTC's vice president of communications. "This trail is an invaluable asset to the entire country and an engine for health, wellness, tourism and economic activity for the communities it serves. It's no surprise that the trail received a record-breaking number of votes."

Since opening in 1989, the trail has been a vital tourist attraction and embraced as an asset for health, wellness and connections among the region and state. This 89-mile path—offering views of woodlands, prairies, public art and a unique "lighted bridge"—connects rural communities to larger cities, including Jefferson, Des Moines and Perry. Plans are in the works to eventually connect the Raccoon River Valley Trail to the world-famous High Trestle Trail. The trail is also an important segment of the cross-country Great American Rail-Trail™, a flagship project of RTC that will connect Washington, D.C., and Washington State across 3,700 miles of trail.

"Being nominated for the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame was an honor," said Mike Wallace, executive director of the Dallas County Conservation Board and board member of the Raccoon River Valley Trail Association. "Winning the vote will bring the Raccoon River Valley Trail national attention and also bring trail enthusiasts as tourists to central Iowa. It was great to see trail users' support, excitement and sense of pride for the Raccoon River Valley Trail during the entire Rail-Trail Hall of Fame process."

The Rail-Trail Hall of Fame inductee is selected during a public vote each year. More than 38,000 votes were cast in the 2021 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame contest, marking a record-breaking number of votes overall for the nationwide event. The Raccoon River Valley Trail was nominated alongside Delaware's Georgetown–Lewes Trail and Junction & Breakwater Trail, and New Hampshire's Northern Rail Trail, securing 42% of the vote for the status of RTC's 2021 inductee to the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. Hall of Fame trails are an elite group recognized for outstanding scenic value, use, amenities, historical significance and community value. Learn more about the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame at railstotrails.org/halloffame.

The Raccoon River Valley Trail, the longest and oldest paved loop trail in the nation, was developed using the former right-of-way of a railroad built in the 1870s. Great stretches of farmland that greeted railroad passengers in the 19th and 20th centuries are still visible today along with a canopy of trees that provide great aesthetics, wind breaks and cooling temperatures for summer users. Artwork on the trail highlights the region's railroad history, including restored depots, a 350-foot-long trailhead gateway and a lighted bridge that spans the river for which the trail is named. More than 350,000 people use the trail annually, bringing economic opportunities and vitality to the 14 communities that dot the trail, much like the railroad did 150 years ago. Learn more about the trail at raccoonrivervalleytrail.org.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.