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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's 2020 Doppelt Fund Grants Invest \$100,000 in Community Projects to Fill Critical Funding Gaps

Targeted Investments in Local Communities Will Ultimately Deliver Great Returns for Strengthening Trail Networks Across the Entire Country

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) today announced the recipients of its 2020 Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund grants, with an emphasis on strategic investments that provide necessary financial support for regional and community trail-development goals. The Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund invested a total of \$100,000 in six priority regional and community trail projects across the country.

This year's recipients—from Pennsylvania, Missouri, Louisiana and Florida—were chosen from a pool of 170 applicants, and all offer leading visions for improved connectivity, mobility, health and social equity through trail development.

"The competitive Doppelt Fund grants bring regional trail projects to fruition that otherwise would never have been possible," said Ryan Chao, president of RTC. "There are no other grants offering resources to communities like the Doppelt Fund. These funding sources are critical because the projects tend to be overlooked in traditional funding streams but deliver tremendous impacts to a community and the nation."

The 2020 Doppelt Fund grant recipient list emphasizes investments in projects with the potential to strengthen or connect trails in six communities nationwide. The recipients include:

- **Missouri Rock Island Trail, Inc. (MoRIT)** (Missouri), receiving \$20,000 to rehabilitate two trestles as part of the 144-mile developing Rock Island Trail corridor, which could open 43 miles of trail to the public. This new portion will connect communities in Osage, Maries, Gasconade and Franklin counties to St. Louis and the eastern state border. The trail is expected to drive the local economy across four counties, similar to Katy Trail State Park, which the trail will connect with to form a 450-mile loop, and which has an annual impact surpassing \$18 million per year.
- **Armstrong Trails (formerly Allegheny Valley Land Trust)** (Pennsylvania), receiving \$35,000 to open the Brady Tunnel in Clarion County, enabling a link between communities at a disjointed 4.5-mile northern section of trail, and the southern 31-mile portion connecting East Brady and Ford City. Completing this project will also help support increased

connectivity and regionwide outdoor tourism along the larger 270-mile Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

- **Groundwork Jacksonville, Inc.** (Florida), receiving \$30,000 for the construction of the first segment of the Emerald Trail, a planned 30-mile urban trail system in Jacksonville. This is a critical trail connectivity project in Duval County. Once complete, the Emerald Trail will connect the existing S-Line Trail and developing McCoys Creek Trail to the regional transit hub in the LaVilla neighborhood, a historically African American community in Jacksonville, while providing new opportunities for green infrastructure along the trail.
- **Bike Easy** (Louisiana), receiving \$5,000 to spearhead the formation of the Bootlace Trail Network Coalition to lead the build-out of the trail project across Orleans, St. Tammany, Jefferson, St. Bernard and St. John the Baptist parishes. Project developers are creating the network of trails to enable residents and visitors to easily navigate the entire region for a broader economic impact.
- **Lafayette Consolidated Government** (Louisiana), receiving \$5,000 to propel the project forward to transform the abandoned railbed along North Saint Antoine Street into a trail, which is set to connect historically disadvantaged communities to parks, recreational opportunities and job centers on a piece of disused rail line running through a neighborhood with low personal car ownership and few sidewalks. The grant will support the development of design renderings and stakeholder outreach to acquire community input and support for the project.
- **Rail-Trail Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania** (Pennsylvania), receiving a \$5,000 state grant match to install a bridge that connects the D&H Rail-Trail to the small town of Lanesboro, Pennsylvania, and eliminate the need for an on-road detour that is dangerous to walkers and bicyclists.

Each project will help to transform their communities by supporting trail connectivity goals and enhancing the economic development of nearby towns.

“This year’s projects will deliver a lasting return on investment for decades within their communities,” said Jeff Doppelt, a philanthropist from Great Neck, New York. “The rails-to-trails movement is gaining momentum across the country, and these projects are leading the way as examples of regional trail projects that can spark community transformation.”

The Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund was established in 2015 with funding from philanthropist Jeff Doppelt of Great Neck, New York, and an anonymous donor. The Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund has awarded well over a half-million dollars in vital grants to nonprofits and government agencies in 25 states to strengthen critical regional trail projects. A listing of all Doppelt Fund grant recipients can be found at railstotrails.org/grants.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.