

March 30, 2020  
For Immediate Release



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# Bulletin

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## National Park Service Completes its Feasibility Study; Recommends National Historical Trail Designation For 2 Trails Across 21 Kansas Counties

In May 2019, the Santa Fe office of the National Park Service (NPS) issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the *Chisholm and Great Western National Historical Trails Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment (FS/EA)*.<sup>1</sup> In winter, 2019 draft legislation was prepared by Kansas Senator Jerry Moran that if passed, would designate the 1,378-mile Chisholm and the 1,350-mile Great Western Trails as a single-managed unit under the National Trails System Act.<sup>2</sup>

The proposed 1,350-mile Great Western Trail cuts across a four-state region, including **Clark, Ford, Hodgeman, Finney, Lane, Gove, Sheridan and Rawlins** Counties in western Kansas.

While the Moran legislation proposes safeguards for landholders, limits on federal eminent domain powers, and positive protection from buffer zones, counties, affected landholders, and agricultural interests should understand that the designation process imposes procedural requirements on the Secretary of the Interior that include an inventory of historic trails, sites and items, as well as preparation of a Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP):

*“If Congress designates the trails, a comprehensive plan would be prepared covering administration of the trails. The planning process would involve federally recognized American Indian tribes; federal, state, and local agencies; landowners; and site managers. NEPA analysis and other regulatory compliance requirements for the comprehensive plan will be completed as appropriate. The plan would outline resource protection and interpretation of the trails. The plan also would identify high potential trail segments and historic sites. Cooperative agreements would outline strategies for partners to accomplish national historic trail goals.”<sup>3</sup>*

The inventory and management-planning process can take years to complete, and can result in mapping of ruts, barns, outhouses, fences or other, seemingly innocuous structures on public or private lands. Impacts can include pressure on landholders to allow access or protect artifact sites, reductions in county revenues from tax abatements, complications with county land use plans, or protection requirements imposed on agricultural operations as part of federal funding programs.

KNRC is convening a National Historic Trails subcommittee of county commissioners who have interest in the Great Western and Chisholm trail corridors and the coalition will be hosting a briefing session along with its fall Policy meeting on **Friday, September 18, 2020**. The subcommittee will analyze and report the history, benefits, impacts, tax implications and private property issues associated with National Heritage and National Trail designations in a position paper to be distributed to the National Park Service, the executive branch, and the Kansas delegation in the fall of 2020.

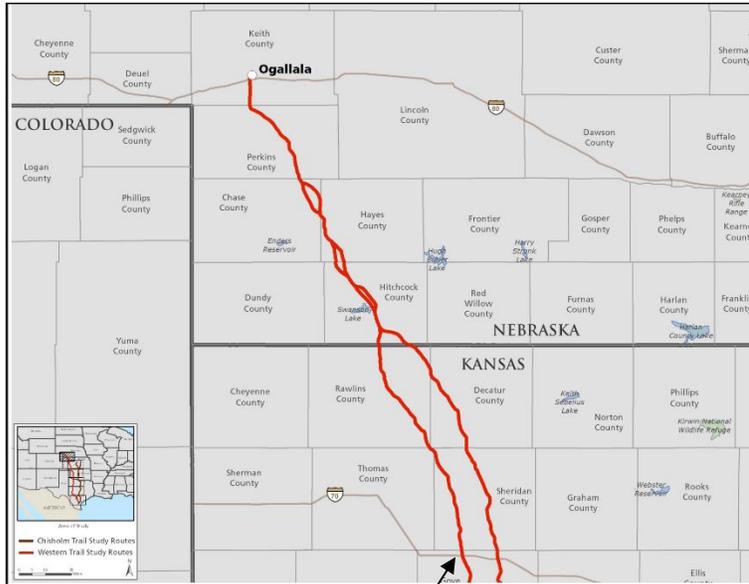
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<sup>1</sup> Draft Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trail Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment. National Park Service. May, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> National Trails System Act. 16 USC 1244(a).

<sup>3</sup> Finding of No Significant Impact. Chisholm and Western Historic Trails Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment. September 09, 2016. pps 2

# Proposed Historic Trail Designations Under the National Trails System Act Kansas



Great Western Trail

Chisholm Trail

