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Multiple Streams Framework, Advocacy Coalition Framework, and the Passage of the National Trails Systems Act of 1968

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Early American conservation efforts consisted primarily of the federal government seizing large swaths of land in the largely unpopulated western frontiers, away from more concentrated populations, and placing them under federal protection. While many of these became National Parks, to visit them was still mostly available only to the upper class, and they often seemed more like investments in to-be-cultivated land than sincere efforts at environmental conservation. In the eastern U.S., where the population was dense and industrialization was the new norm, federally protected lands were harder to come by. This pattern of federal conservation continued well into the 20th century. Though, with the social and industrial reforms of the 1920s and 30s, more Americans had leisure time than ever, and the idea of visiting National Parks and the like for recreation, mainly by car on scenic parkways, became increasingly popular. Around the same time, while the federal government began setting aside more land in the dense east for protection and recreation, the idea that hiking for recreation was much more beneficial than merely driving to a scenic overlook began to take hold.

It was in this context that Congress passed the National Trails Systems Act of 1968 which most significantly detailed the protection of the entire Appalachian Trail, the hiking trail that runs from Georgia to Maine, close to many of America's densest population centers. The question still remains, then, of *why did the 90th Congress decide to pass the National Trails Systems Act in 1968?* And that is what this paper seeks to examine.

The NTSA is important not just for protecting the Appalachian Trail indefinitely, but for providing several categories of designation for trails so that more could be protected in the future, as well as instituting a new and growing conservation paradigm: the public-private partnership. For this paper, I focus on the Appalachian Trail, its history, the various players and

organizations involved in its journey towards federal protection, because it provides the perfect single case for a study on how the public-private partnership became the new mode of environmental conservation. Using the policy theories *Multiple Streams Framework* and *Advocacy Coalition Framework*, I compared how my findings aligned with each one and ultimately developed an explanation as to why Congress chose to pass the National Trails Systems Act of 1968.