

[View Entire Newsletter](#)



Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life
June 27, 2026



Lewis and Clark Pass on the Continental Divide East of Lincoln, MT

Report from the Annual Gathering

The conference featured an outstanding lineup of speakers. Dr. Robert Peck delivered the prestigious Moulton Lecture, "Ordering the Cosmos: Charles Willson Peale and the Philadelphia Museum," and generously spent time throughout the conference engaging with attendees.



Participants enjoyed guided visits to the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the Great Falls Portage Route, Decision Point, and historic Fort Benton, gaining a deeper appreciation for the Expedition's remarkable achievements. The Gathering also celebrated outstanding service with Distinguished Awards presented to

Duane Buchi, the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard, Tom Elpel, Norman Anderson, Kari Sliva, the Mitchell Family, and Bill Bronson.



Hasan Davis captivated audiences with his acclaimed first-person portrayal of York, the Corps of Discovery's only Black member, and shared his own inspiring journey from a troubled youth to earning a Juris Doctor degree, serving as Judicial Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and becoming a nationally recognized motivational speaker and self-described "Hope Dealer."

You can watch [Hasan's performance](#) on the LCTA YouTube Channel. In the next few weeks we will be posting additional speaker videos.

With beautiful Montana weather, exceptional educational programming, and lasting camaraderie, the 2026 Annual Gathering was one to remember.

A [Google Photo Album](#) has been created. Feel free to upload your photos of the Gathering. Sincere thanks to the LCTA Portage Route Chapter and their planning committee, the Portage Cache Store (Lewis and Clark Foundation), and Duane Buchi and the staff and volunteers at the US Forest Service Interpretive Center for being our hosts.

Mark your calendars now for the 2027 Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance Annual Gathering, which will be held August 29–September 1, 2027, at the beautiful Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington, overlooking the spectacular Columbia River Gorge.



Future State Report Approved by Board of Directors

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance has completed an extensive Future State planning process designed to strengthen the organization and position it for long-term success. Guided by input from members, partners, volunteers, and organizational leaders, the recommendations focus on building a stronger, more sustainable Alliance while expanding public engagement across the Trail.

The report outlines eight strategic initiatives that will shape the organization's future. Among the recommendations are creating a dedicated Trail Engagement Manager to support chapters and local programming, modernizing the membership program with enhanced benefits, investing in a new constituent management system, and adopting a content-driven strategy that leverages the Alliance's growing collection of educational resources, publications, websites, videos, and digital media.

Additional recommendations include establishing a National Programming Council to expand educational offerings, developing the Digital Sherman Library into a premier national resource, launching a formal affiliate partnership network with museums, universities, libraries, and historical organizations, and diversifying revenue sources to reduce reliance on membership dues while strengthening long-term financial sustainability.

Collectively, these recommendations represent a roadmap for transforming the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance into a more connected, resilient, and impactful organization—one that better serves members, partners, communities, and the millions of people who engage with the Lewis and Clark story each year.

The complete Future State report, including detailed recommendations, implementation priorities, and measures of success, is available through the link below.

[Future State Report](#)
[Engagement Survey Analysis Report](#)

Volunteers Complete Inaugural Lolo Trail Stewardship Work Project



Members of the Lolo Trail Stewardship Work Project pause for a group photo at the Lewis and Clark interpretive panels after completing a day of trail maintenance and stewardship.

Fifteen dedicated volunteers gathered June 19–21 for the inaugural Lolo Trail Stewardship Work Project, spending three days preserving one of the most significant segments of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.



Camping at Musselshell Meadows in the Clearwater National Forest, the crew cleared approximately six miles of trail by removing downed trees, cutting back encroaching vegetation, and performing maintenance on interpretive and directional signs. Their efforts

improved access and enhanced the visitor experience along the historic route traveled by the Corps of Discovery in 1805 and 1806.

The project was organized by Chuck Raddon and brought together an outstanding partnership that included the U.S. Forest Service, [Idaho Trails Association](#), the [Idaho Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance](#), [Travelers' Rest Connection](#), and the [Trust for the Nez Perce Trail](#). [Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures](#) provided outfitting support, helping make the backcountry work project possible.

Each evening, participants gathered around the campfire for interpretive programs that deepened their appreciation of the region's history and cultures. A highlight of the weekend was a presentation by Salish tribal educator Frank Finley, who shared Indigenous perspectives on the landscape and its enduring cultural significance.

Funding and sponsorship for the stewardship effort came through the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance Bicentennial Trail Stewardship Grant Program, with additional support from [OnX Maps](#), [Yamaha](#), and [Athletic Brewing](#).



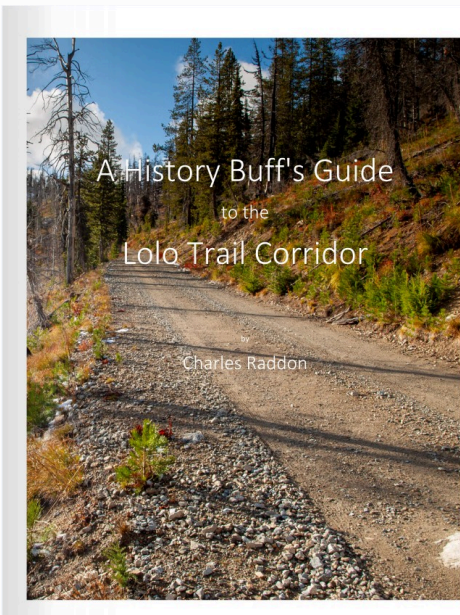
The success of this inaugural project demonstrates the power of volunteers and partnerships working together to preserve the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail for future generations.

A second Lolo Trail Stewardship Work Project will take place near Powell, Idaho, July 9–12. A limited number of volunteer openings are still available for those interested in helping preserve this nationally significant trail

while enjoying a unique backcountry stewardship experience. Visit the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance website for [registration](#) details.

Watch this [short video](#) of the work

Exploring the Lolo Corridor: A New Resource for Trail Travelers



For centuries, the mountain route now known as the Lolo Trail served as a vital pathway between worlds. Long before maps, highways, or national historic trails, Indigenous peoples traveled these ridges and valleys between the buffalo-rich plains east of the Rockies and the salmon-filled rivers of the Columbia Basin. Often described as the "Road to the Buffalo" and the "Road to the Salmon," this corridor connected communities, cultures, and trade networks across the Northern Rockies.

Now, a new publication ["A History Buffs Guide to the Lolo Trail Corridor"](#) written by LCTA member and retired U.S. Forest Service manager Chuck Raddon, edited by LCTA

volunteer webmaster Kris Townsend, offers readers an opportunity to explore this remarkable landscape. Prepared for heritage travelers, amateur historians, and outdoor enthusiasts, the guide highlights historic sites located along the National Forest portions of the Lolo Corridor and provides information about their significance.

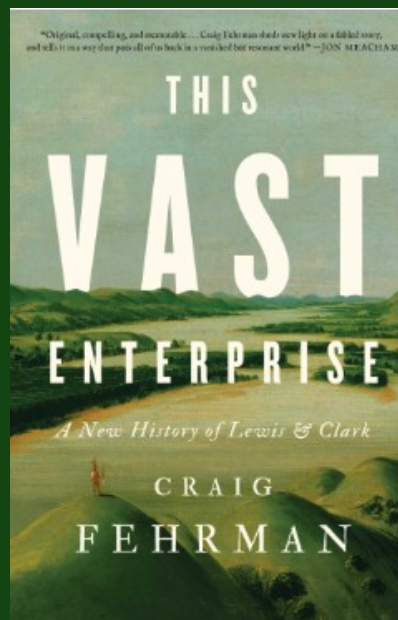
The guide explores both the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the [Nee-Me-Poo National Historic Trail](#), including the Corps of Discovery's difficult crossings of the Bitterroot Mountains in 1805 and 1806. Yet the story extends far beyond Lewis and Clark. At its heart are the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce) and Salish people, whose ancestors established and maintained these routes for generations. This guide is an invitation to discover one of the most historically significant travel corridors in the American West.

LCTA Zoomcast Library

[William Clark](#)
[John Ordway](#)

“Do we really need another book about the Lewis and Clark expedition? Over the past two centuries, hundreds of titles have charted the journey. And yet, after reading “This Vast Enterprise,” by Craig Fehrman, my answer is an emphatic yes.” *New York Times*

[Bookshop.org](#)



New Lewis & Clark Substack Articles

If you haven't already, we encourage you to explore [Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail](#) and [Undaunted Travel](#), subscribe to receive future articles, and share your favorite stories with friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts. Every new reader helps expand awareness and appreciation of the Lewis and Clark story.



The grand finale of the 38th Annual Lewis and Clark Festival in Great Falls, Mont., was better than grand—it was truly special.

On June 20, the Black Lodge Singers brought the event to a close on the grounds of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive



Most travelers crossing Donner Pass today are focused on reaching the next destination. Few realize they are following one of the most important corridors in American history—a route traveled by emigrants, gold seekers, railroad builders, Native peoples, and one remarkable man whose life began on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Center, where about 150 people gathered above a sweeping view of the Missouri River for a capstone performance to the two-day festival grounded in family, memory, and living tradition.

[Read the Article](#)

This week, Undaunted Travel begins a three-part journey tracing the final travels of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, the infant carried west by his mother, Sacagawea, during the Corps of Discovery Expedition.

[Read the Article](#)

Jefferson River Chapter - Video

For many people, Tom Elpel is best known for his remarkable 2019 journey down the Missouri River in a hand-carved dugout canoe. Crafted with the assistance of Churchill Clark, a direct descendant of William Clark, the canoe carried Elpel more than 2,300 miles from the Missouri's headwaters near Three Forks, Montana, to St. Louis, retracing much of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's route.

Yet Elpel's passion extends far beyond the water. A Montana native, author, educator, conservationist, and founder of the Jefferson River Canoe Trail, he views rivers not simply as destinations, but as pathways to a deeper understanding of the land. Inspired from an early age by his grandmother's love of nature, Elpel developed lifelong interests in wilderness survival, edible and medicinal plants, and self-sufficiency.

Those interests led him to build his own stone and log home near Pony, Montana, write numerous books on botany, foraging, primitive living skills, and sustainable construction, and establish Green University and the Outdoor Wilderness Living School. Through these programs, Elpel teaches practical outdoor skills while encouraging a lasting connection to the natural world.

Enjoy Tom's story in this [video presentation](#)

2026 Photo Contest

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance 2026 Photo Contest is now open to submit your fantastic photos for judging and winners to be included in our annual calendar.

In 2024 Michelle Schwartz won with this *Headwaters of the Missouri* landscape. Entries will be accepted through August 1, 2026.



[Enter the Contest](#)



Indian Grave Meadow

© 30 June 2009 by Kristopher K. Townsend.

Day by Day Radio Episodes

At the request of their [Nez Perce](#) guides, the expedition pauses at the [Smoking Place](#). There, they see [yellow glacier lilies](#) and “Stupendous Mountains” covered with snow. They push hard along the [Northern Nez Perce Trail](#) and encamp at present [Spring Mountain](#)—sometimes called Bears Oil and Roots Camp. The captains apply a poultice made from [wild ginger](#) to [Pvt. Potts’](#) badly swollen leg.

[June 27, 1806](#)

Listen to the full library of [Day by Day broadcasts](#)

Originally aired by [Yellowstone Public Radio](#) during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial observance. These 627 radio episodes parallel the expedition dates starting May 14, 1804, and ending September 25, 1806. They are narrated by Hal Hansen, scripted by Whit Hansen and Ed Jacobson, and produced by Leni Holliman.



Teacher Workshop

The Lewis and Clark Fort Clatsop Teacher Workshop is designed for educators seeking creative ways to bring history to life for their students. Hosted at historic Fort Clatsop, one of the most significant sites associated with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, this in-person

professional development opportunity provides practical teaching tools, historical resources, and collaborative learning experiences that can be immediately applied in the classroom.

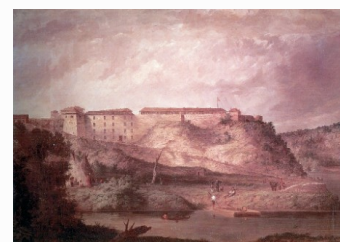
Participants will earn five professional development credit hours and enjoy a complimentary lunch while exploring innovative approaches to teaching American history, Indigenous history, geography, exploration, and cultural heritage.

Whether you teach elementary, middle school, high school, or informal education programs, this workshop will provide valuable resources and strategies to help students connect with the story of the Corps of Discovery and the people, places, and cultures that shaped the American West.

October 24 at 9 a.m. Fort Clatsop Visitor Center, Astoria, Oregon

[Registration](#)

See all the events on the [LCTE Events Calendar](#)



[America 250](#)

Lewiston, ID
July 3

[Keelboat Adventure](#)

Atchison, KS
July 2 - 6

[LCTA Great Lakes](#)

Minneapolis, MN
August 11 - 13

Where on the Trail?

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is filled with fascinating museums, breathtaking landscapes, and historic sites—but it also features its share of quirky roadside attractions.

This issue's "Where on the Trail?" spotlights one of these unexpected gems. Can you identify where this photo was taken?

[Answer](#)



Share the Adventure!



Help us expand the community by sharing the newsletter with your network. Simply provide this [sign-up link](#) to friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts.

The Last Word

There are times when it seems that everything is happening at once—and for the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, that's a good thing.

Over the past few months, we've reached several important milestones that are already demonstrating the power of thoughtful planning combined with action. The Board's approval of the Future State Report, developed through the outstanding work of Pat Traffas, Yvonne Kean, Richard Welch, and our Future State Workgroups, gives us a clear roadmap for the years ahead. Now the real work begins as we move from planning to implementation.

We're also seeing encouraging signs that our efforts to engage people where they are—and through the experiences they value—are paying off. Our first Lolo Trail work party was a tremendous success, bringing together volunteers for meaningful trail stewardship while welcoming new faces alongside longtime members. The Annual Gathering in Great Falls exceeded expectations with attendance up 11 percent over last year and ten new members joining the Alliance during the event.

Our digital outreach continues to gain momentum as well. Since launching our Substack publication in mid-March, we've welcomed more than 500 subscribers and surpassed 10,000 article views. Those numbers represent thousands of people discovering the stories, history, and places that make the Lewis and Clark Trail so remarkable.

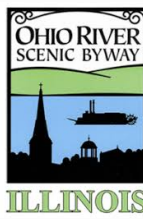
None of these accomplishments happened by accident. They are the result of dedicated volunteers, engaged members, supportive partners, and a shared commitment to preserving and promoting our national historic trail.

Momentum is building. We have a clear vision, an ambitious but achievable plan, and growing evidence that we're moving in the right direction. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we will continue to preserve the past, inspire the present, and build an even stronger future for the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance.

We proceed on.

Richard Hunt

Our Corporate and Travel Sponsors



TRAVEL

ALLIANCE

EDUCATION



lewisandclark.org



Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation | PO Box 3434 | Great Falls, MT 59403 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!