

004 Trails and conservation

CONSIDERING that trails are the customary routes that people use to travel through roadless parts of protected and conserved areas and other natural and semi-natural landscapes;

RECOGNISING that trails in such areas are used: by visitors for recreation, nature study, scientific research, socialising and accessing scenic, cultural and spiritual sites; by conservation staff for interpretation, education, monitoring and maintenance; and by law enforcement and emergency responders;

RECOGNISING FURTHER that trails are used by people traveling on foot and, where permitted, by bicycle, by riding horses and other animals, and by operating motor vehicles;

AWARE that connectivity among protected and conserved areas and other intact ecosystems is essential for conserving biodiversity, adapting to climate change and resisting disease, and that ecological corridors are a key method of making such connections, as described in the IUCN publication *Guidelines for conserving connectivity through ecological networks and corridors* (2020);

RECALLING that the critical role of ecological corridors is recognised in: IUCN Resolution 7.073 *Ecological connectivity conservation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework: from local to international levels* (Marseille, 2020); Convention on Biological Diversity Decision 15/4, *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (2022), Target 3; and Convention on Migratory Species Resolution 14.16 *Ecological connectivity* (2024);

NOTING that ecological corridors along trails provide such connectivity;

NOTING FURTHER that such corridors offer opportunities for trailside interpretation and education;

AWARE that trails in ecological corridors include those running through metropolitan greenbelts and those connecting urban, rural and natural places, as well as trails through remote areas;

CONCERNED that many ecological trail corridors lack formal protection and are threatened by urban sprawl and expanding road networks; and

NOTING that IUCN has not given adequate attention to trails or ecological trail corridors;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. CALLS ON the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) to explore means of providing guidance on using trails and ecological trail corridors as conservation tools, including by gathering information, convening discussions and producing case studies and recommendations;

2. REQUESTS WCPA to conduct this work in cooperation with the IUCN Secretariat, other IUCN Commissions, IUCN Members, intergovernmental organisations, and other governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations, including the World Trails Network; and

3. REQUESTS WCPA to incorporate in this endeavour methods for:

a. planning, creating, restoring, protecting and securing legal recognition of trails and ecological trail corridors;

b. interpretation and education, including wildlife viewing, use of trailside examples to demonstrate consequences and expected effects of climate change, and websites and apps that include in-depth information on the natural history, conservation and culture of the area;

c. preventing and lessening the harm trails may cause to people and the surrounding natural environment, in cooperation with the Species Survival Commission (regarding human-wildlife interactions and invasive species) and the One Health initiative, particularly regarding zoonotic diseases; and

d. managing conflicts among kinds of trail users, ranging from hikers and bicyclists to horseback riders and drivers of all-terrain vehicles.