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Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus announced today that a proposal has been sent to the Congress recommending designation of the Lewis and Clark Trail as a National Historic Trail in the National Trails System.

Legislation proposed earlier to the Congress would add National Historic Trails as a new category of trails within the National Trails System. They would complement the existing three types of trails: National Scenic Trails, National Recreation Trails, and connecting or side trails.

A study of the Lewis and Clark Trail was conducted by the Interior Department's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, pursuant to the National Trails System Act of October 2,1968, Public Law 90-543. The Bureau was assisted in the study by the Federal agencies which administer lands along the proposed route, by the States through which the trail passes, The Lewis and Clark Heritage Foundation, Inc., and by other interested organizations and individuals.

The proposed Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail would cover some 3.700 miles following the outbound and inbound routes of the 1804- 1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition. The trail begins near St. Louis. Missouri and is primarily water-based along the Missouri Snake and Columbia Rivers. The route crosses portions of Missouri. Kansas. Nebraska. Iowa. South Dakota. North Dakota. Montana. Idaho. Oregon and Washington. Its western terminus is the mouth of the Columbia River.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806 is considered by many historians to be the most important event in the development of the Western United States.

BOR studies indicate that despite extensive development and alterations along both the land and water passages, significant segments of the Expedition's route offer a variety of historical, scenic, and recreation opportunities.

According to the BOR surveys, land ownership along the trail route is approximately 46 percent public; 5 percent Indian; and 49 percent private. Nearly 15 million people live within 100 miles of the trail corridor.