

Senators from Big Sky to Bootheel Demonstrate Support for Trails

CDT Completion Act Earns New Sponsors

HELENA, MT, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Senators Tim Sheehy (R-Mont.) and Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) signed on as cosponsors of the [Continental Divide Trail Completion Act](#) in early March. Introduced in the Senate in April 2025 by Senators Steve Daines (R-Mont.) and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), the bill is now sponsored by all four senators from the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail's (CDT) northernmost and southernmost states.



CDT hiker on a trail gap near Rawlins, Wyoming.

Hikers and horseback riders embarking on a 3,100-mile journey along the CDT mark the beginning and end of their journeys in the arid desert of the Bootheel region of New Mexico and in Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in Montana. “The bipartisan collaboration of Senators Daines, Heinrich, Luján, and Sheehy on this bill demonstrates the power of the CDT to bring together outdoor enthusiasts and diverse rural communities located along the length of the country’s spine,” said Claire Cutler, the [Continental Divide Trail Coalition](#)'s (CDTC) Trail Policy Specialist. According to a recent CDTC Community Survey, 95% of respondents in communities connected to the CDT reported that they support efforts to complete the route.

“

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*Teresa Martinez, CDTC
Executive Director*

Although the CDT was designated as a National Scenic Trail nearly fifty years ago, about 160 miles of the trail are still routed on highways and busy roadways. Not only are these “gap areas” incompatible with the purposes for which the trail was designated under the National Trails System Act, they also make for an unsafe journey for long-distance hikers and horseback riders seeking a continuous footpath between Mexico and Canada. Major gap areas remain in all five

states through which the CDT passes, with significant gaps in northern New Mexico, northern Colorado, southern Wyoming, and along the Idaho-Montana border.

The CDT Completion Act directs a Trail Completion Team, composed of staff from the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, to relocate these CDT gaps onto safe, protected, enjoyable, and scenic trails within ten years of the bill's enactment.

The CDT Completion Act does not directly acquire any lands, and the bill establishes that eminent domain will never be used in the completion of the CDT. Additionally, any government spending required to complete the CDT would be subject to congressional appropriations processes. In the House of Representatives, the bill is sponsored by Representatives Joe Neguse (D-Colo.), Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.), and Gabriel Vasquez (D-N.M.).

The bill received a favorable markup vote out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in December and is awaiting consideration by the full Senate. During the committee hearing on the bill, Ranking Member Heinrich said of the CDT:

The trail is part of the Triple Crown of hiking and brings visitors from around the world to climb the spine of the North American continent. For the mountain towns along the way, the trail really means economic development. It means good jobs, and it means money in their pockets. The Continental Divide Trail is not just for thru-hikers. For many New Mexicans, the CDT is their local trail, the trail where they walk their dog or spend time with their families.

In addition to creating a continuous, protected border-to-border footpath, completion of the CDT will improve access to public lands for local communities, which often serves as an access point for hiking, hunting, horseback riding, fishing, camping, and other outdoor recreation activities.

Teresa Martinez, Executive Director of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition, celebrated the addition of Senators Sheehy and Luján as cosponsors of the CDT Completion Act.

“Senators Sheehy and Luján joining their colleagues as cosponsors of the CDT Completion Act shows us that elected officials in DC know what we see to be true through our work in communities,” said Martinez. “Outdoor recreation and completion of the Continental Divide Trail is a priority to politically, culturally, and economically diverse communities along the trail, and our public lands are a place to find and celebrate common ground.”



CDT thru-hikers are forced onto busy roadways in gap areas.

Claire Cutler

Continental Divide Trail Coalition

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