

Park Service Studies Historical Trail

The National Park Service announced today that a study will be made of the historic 2,000-mile Dominguez-Escalante Trail for possible inclusion in the National Trails System. The Franciscan Fathers, Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante followed the route through parts of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona in 1776 while seeking a way to California.

The National Trails System Act of 1968 was amended in 1976 to include a study of this trail. It will be evaluated for its potential for preservation and for public enjoyment of its nationally significant scenic, historic, natural and cultural qualities.

In July 1776, while General George Washington was attempting to prevent British forces from capturing New York City, Dominguez and Escalante set out from Santa Fe, heading a 10-man missionary, exploration party bound for Monterey, the newly established capital of California.

Originating in Santa Fe, the trail follows the San Juan, Dolores, Gunnison and White Rivers in Colorado; westerly to Utah Lake, Utah; southward to Arizona

and finally returns to Santa Fe.

The major objectives of the expedition were to establish a connection between the New Mexico settlements and Monterey and to bring Christianity to the many Indian tribes along the way.

Father Escalante's journal constitutes the earliest description of much of the area covered. Don Bernardo Miera y Pacheco, the expedition's cartographer, prepared a map which is the first to show significant physical features of the area.

In an effort to permit public participation in the trail study, the National Park Service is requesting information from the public about specific trail locations, prehistoric and historic sites along the trail, concerns about the study and the possible designation of all or parts of the trail as a National Trail.

Individuals and organizations are invited to send their comments and suggestions to the National Park Service at either the Rocky Mountain Regional Office, 655 Parfet Street, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, Colo. 80225 or the Southwest Regional Office, P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501.

