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Contact: Patricia Brooks, patricia@matchmapmedia.com, 202.351.1757

Rails to Trails Conservancy Honors City of Philadelphia's Sarah Clark Stuart As Nation's 2024 Trail Champion

Stuart recognized for leadership to develop one of the nation's foremost multiuse trail networks, the Circuit Trails, inspiring hundreds of communities nationwide to pursue infrastructure that makes it safer and easier for people to walk and bike

WASHINGTON—Rails to Trails Conservancy has named Sarah Clark Stuart, trails and transportation manager in the City of Philadelphia Department of Streets, the 2024 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion for her visionary leadership that has been central to the progress of the Circuit Trails, an 860-miles-plus regional trail network that serves Greater Philadelphia and South Jersey.

"For decades, Sarah's leadership, ingenuity and determination have made it safer to walk and bike in Greater Philadelphia and South Jersey," said Ryan Chao, president of RTC. "The impact of the Circuit Trails stretches far beyond the places the trails touch, though. Sarah and the early organizers of the Circuit were at the forefront of the movement to create connected trail systems—understanding that it would take a big vision and big impact to unlock the investment, advocacy and political will needed to position trails at this scale. Since then, hundreds of communities are following in her footsteps, looking to the Circuit as a model for what's possible when we prioritize trail networks as essential."

In Stuart's previous roles as executive director of the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and chair of the Circuit Trails Coalition, she led the advocacy and organizing to unlock significant funding to bring the concept of the Circuit Trails vision to reality. Her leadership is central to the success of the trail network—bringing together the partners necessary to tap into millions of dollars in private and public funding that were necessary to demonstrate the viability of this bicycle and pedestrian project as essential regional infrastructure. Under Stuart's leadership more than 150 miles of new Circuit trails have opened and \$240 million in federal, state and local funding has been invested in building out this infrastructure.

"Trails are amazing pieces of infrastructure that provides multiple benefits to people and the planet, ranging from environmental to safety and public health," said Stuart. "I have a strong conviction that multiuse trails are critical to the goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, but only if they are connected in networks that enable Americans to get where they need to go, just like roads, airline hubs and train tracks do. I am truly honored to be recognized by RTC and being part of the movement to make active transportation a critical component of addressing climate change, the most consequential and significant environmental challenge of our time."

The Circuit Trails is one of the nation's first multiuse trail networks and part of RTC's TrailNation™ initiative, which seeks to accelerate the pace of equitable trail network development nationwide, creating new access to this essential infrastructure and the benefits

it brings for everyone in America. The Circuit Trails will ultimately connect more than 860 miles of multiuse trails in Greater Philadelphia and South Jersey, creating new transportation and recreation opportunities for a nine-county region—including Philadelphia, Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Bucks in Pennsylvania, and Burlington, Gloucester, Camden and Mercer in New Jersey. More than 400 miles of the trail network are complete. Learn more about the Circuit at www.circuittrails.org.

Since 2011, the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions Award has honored individuals from across the country who have made significant contributions to the rail-trail movement through their hard work, volunteerism and support—in short, those who have gone above and beyond in the name of trails. The award is named in honor of the late rail-trail philanthropist Jeffrey L. Doppelt. Learn more about the nation's Rail-Trail Champions: rtc.li/trail-champions.

Rails to Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).