National Water Trail System

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National Water Trails System

has been established to:

• **Encourage stewardship of** America’s rivers, shorelines, and waterways

• **Increase access** to outdoor recreation on shorelines and waterways

A distinctive national network of exemplary water trails which are designated by the Secretary of the Interior. The trails within the National Water Trails System are cooperatively supported and sustained.
The National Water Trails System will uniquely connect Americans to the nation’s waterways and strengthen the conservation and restoration of these waterways by:

- Establishing a distinct national network of exemplary water trails.
- Becoming a catalyst for protecting and restoring the health of local waterways and surrounding lands.
- Building a community that mentors and promotes the development of water trails and shares best management practices.
Water trails are defined as...

• **Recreational routes on waterways consisting of a network of public access points**

• **Supported by broad-based community partnerships.**

• **Provide both conservation and recreational opportunities.**
“Rivers, lakes, and other waterways are the lifeblood of our communities, connecting us to our environment, our culture, our economy, and our way of life. The new National Water Trail System will help fulfill President Obama’s vision for healthy and accessible rivers as we work to restore and conserve our nation’s treasured waterways.”

Secretary Ken Salazar 2012
Who Designates Them?
• Designated by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture
• Recognized as part of the National Trails System

Who Manages Them?
• Managed by a local management entity (local, state, or federal government agency; nonprofit organization; interagency organization)
Criteria

• The trail (and its access points) must be open to public use and be designed, constructed, and maintained according to best management practices, in keeping with the anticipated use.

• The trail is in compliance with applicable land use plans and environmental laws.

• The trail will be open for public use for at least 10 consecutive years after designation.

• The trail designation must be supported by the landowner(s), (public or private), on which access points exist.
Best Management Practices

- Recreation
- Education
- Conservation
- Public Information
- Community Support
- Trail Maintenance
- Planning
Salt Marsh Restoration at Concrete Plant Park, Bronx River
Rock River:
• Water Trail committee reps in each community; posts signs
• Broad local, state, federal and community support for improving access
Hudson River Water Trail Association provides info for identifying access and trail routes; cultural, historic, and natural features; hazards and water quality.

- Info on 94 access sites posted online
- Hudson River Water Trail Guide
- Kiosks at access points
The Alabama Scenic River Trail:
• Asks municipalities to tend to access points
• Engages landowners to be stewards,
• Works with partners (US Army Corps of Engineers, Alabama Power, TVA) to help with upkeep.
A community driven water trail plan describing vision, desired future conditions, and best management practices is developed and maintained.

The Willamette River Water Trail has a Memorandum of Understanding between all of the parties with access points to the river.
Designated National Water Trails

- Chattahoochee River NRA
  - 48 miles (Atlanta, GA)
- Mississippi River NRA
  - 76 miles (Minneapolis, MN)
- Bronx River Greenway
  - 8 miles (New York, NY)
- Willamette River Water Trail
  - 216 miles (Oregon)
- Hudson River Water Trail
  - 256 miles (New York)
- Mississippi / Great River WT
  - 121 miles (St. Louis, MS)
- Okefenokee NWR
  - 120 miles (Georgia)
- Alabama Scenic River Trail
  - 631 miles (Alabama)
- Kansas River Water Trail
  - 173 miles (Kansas City, KS)
- Rock River Water Trail
  - 320 miles (IL, WI)
- Missouri NRA Water Trail
  - 147 miles (SD, NE, IA)
- Red Rock Water Trail
  - 36 miles (IA)
- Island Loop Trail
  - 10 miles (Michigan)

(as of November 2013)
Benefits

• **Designation by the Secretary of the Interior**

• **National promotion and visibility**

• **Mutual support and knowledge sharing**

• **Opportunities to obtain technical assistance and sources of funding**
Benefits

• Positive economic impact from increased tourism
• Stewardship and sustainability projects
• Increased protection for outdoor recreation and water resources
• Improved public health and quality of life
• Access to networking and training opportunities
• Recognition and special events
Applying for National Water Trail Designation

- Submit formal application (www.nps.gov/watertrails)
  - Describe how you meet criteria and will implement the best management practices
  - Applications accepted on a continual basis
  - Reviewed by water trail subject matter experts and collaborative interagency group
  - Recommended nominations forwarded to Secretary of Interior for review and designation
  - Announcement of New Designation
Cooperating Federal Agencies

• National Park Service
• Bureau of Land Management
• National Fish and Wildlife Service
• Army Corps of Engineers
• National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Coastal Mgm’t Program
• Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
• Department of Transportation
• Bureau of Reclamation
• Bureau of Indian Affairs
For More Information

- National Water Trail System
  www.nps.gov/watertrails
  - Toolbox

- NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
  www.nps.gov/rtca/watertrails
  - “Logical Lasting Launches”
  - “Prepare to Launch”