



Become part of the National Water Trails System

Water trail managers around the country all play an integral role in the success of the National Water Trails System. You too can contribute by proposing a water trail for designation. Applications for designation are accepted on a continual basis and are reviewed by a team of water trail specialists and agency representatives. Successful applications demonstrate the implementation of best management practices. The recommended trail nominations are forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for review and designation.



The National Water Trails System is a collaborative interagency effort that is administered by the National Park Service.

NATIONAL WATER TRAILS SYSTEM

A distinctive national network of exemplary water trails that are cooperatively supported and sustained.



Mission

The National Water Trails System will uniquely connect Americans to the nation's waterways and strengthen the conservation and restoration of these waterways through the mutual support of federal, state, local and nonprofit organizations by

- ◆ establishing a national system of exemplary water trails.
- ◆ becoming a catalyst for protecting and restoring the health of local waterways and surrounding lands.
- ◆ establishing a community that mentors and promotes the development of water trails and shares best management practices.

Water trails are recreational routes on waterways with a network of public access points supported by broad-based community partnerships. Water trails provide both conservation and recreational opportunities.



Benefits

Benefits of designation into the National Water Trails System

- ◆ designation by the Secretary of the Interior
- ◆ national promotion and visibility
- ◆ positive economic impact from increased tourism
- ◆ mutual support and knowledge-sharing
- ◆ assistance with stewardship and sustainability projects
- ◆ opportunities to obtain technical assistance and funding
- ◆ increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and water resource protection
- ◆ contribution to public health and quality of life



Best Management Practices

A designated water trail must incorporate the following best management practices:

Recreation Opportunities: The water trail route has established public access points that accommodate a diversity of trip lengths and provide access to a variety of opportunities for recreation and education.

Education: The water trail users are provided with opportunities to learn about the value of water resources, cultural heritage and boating skills and outdoor ethics.

Conservation: The water trail provides opportunities for communities to develop and implement strategies that enhance and restore the health of the local waterways and surrounding lands.

Community Support: Local communities provide support and advocacy for the maintenance and stewardship of the water trail.

Public Information: The public is provided with accessible and understandable water trail information, including details for identifying access and trail routes; cultural, historic, and natural features; hazards; and water quality. The water trail is promoted to the community and broad national audience.

Trail Maintenance: The water trail managers demonstrate ability to support routine and long-term maintenance investments on the water trail. Facilities are designed, constructed, and maintained incorporating sustainability principles.

Planning: The water trail managers maintain a water trail plan that describes a vision, desired future conditions, and strategies to strengthen best management practices.