

NATIONAL BLUEWAYS SYSTEM

National Blueways System Frequently Asked Questions

What is a National Blueway?

National Blueways are nationally and regionally significant rivers and their watersheds that are highly valued recreational, social, economic, cultural, and ecological assets for the communities that depend on them.

What is the National Blueways System (NBS)?

A locally-driven, partnership-based, federally supported program to recognize river systems conserved through diverse stakeholder partnerships that use a comprehensive watershed approach to resource stewardship.

What is a watershed approach?

Consideration of all activities within a watershed and how these activities affect its lands and waters.

When and how was the NBS established?

The NBS was established on May 24, 2012, through a Secretarial Order, by Department of the Interior's Secretary Ken Salazar.

What is the goal of the National Blueway System?

The goal of the NBS is to advance a whole river and watershed-wide approach to conservation, outdoor recreation, education, and sustainable economic opportunities in the watersheds in which we live, work, and play.

How are National Blueways selected?

Participation in the NBS is entirely voluntary and locally-led. National Blueways are selected through a competitive nominating process.

How can I nominate my river and watershed as a National Blueway?

Application packages will be accepted from diverse stakeholder partnerships that obtain sponsorship from a state and a federal agency.

What are the minimum requirements for consideration?

- 1) A large river system from headwaters to mouth with watershed at the hydrologic unit code (HUC) 4-6 level;
- 2) Natural, cultural, recreational resources of national significance;
- 3) A diverse stakeholder partnership that has developed a shared vision and long-term goals for the river and its watershed; and
- 4) A Federal and a state sponsor.

Who will review the applications?

A committee appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, including officials from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Resources Conservation Service, and the Army (Civil Works). Representatives of

other Federal agencies that can contribute to the goals and objectives of the National Blueways System may be added to the committee later.

What is the nomination process?

The nomination process has two steps: (1) an application will be submitted and reviewed; and (2) the National Blueways System Committee will invite nominations selected from among qualified applicants.

How do I get an application form?

The application forms and instructions will be available on-line; the website is currently under development.

How will Blueways applications be evaluated?

Evaluations will be based on: (1) the presence of a committed, diverse local stakeholder partnership that has developed a shared vision for the river and its watershed; and (2) demonstrated success of the partnership (or participating organizations) in protecting and restoring natural resources, and promoting conservation, education, recreation, and sustainable economic opportunities.

How many National Blueways have been recognized?

Two: (1) the Connecticut River and Watershed in New England, spanning the states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, and (2) the White River Watershed, spanning Arkansas and Missouri.

How long does a National Blueway recognition last?

A river system recognized as a National Blueway will enjoy a five year benefit period. The National Blueway recognition does not expire.

What are the benefits of becoming a Blueway?

Recognition will highlight existing conservation efforts and enhance communication, cooperation, collaboration, and leveraging of resources within the Federal family, as well as with state and local partnerships. Federal agencies active in managing land and water resources in the river basin will coordinate their activities via a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreements. Cabinet level recognition is expected to increase public awareness, partner involvement, visitation, financial and technical assistance and access to expertise, increased competitiveness for grants, and other economic opportunities.

Who will manage National Blueways after they are recognized?

National Blueways recognize and support local and regional conservation, recreation, and restoration efforts, and do not establish new management, protective status, or regulations.

What role will the states and local governments play in the administration and implementation of the National Blueways System?

State, local, and tribal governments will determine their level of participation. To be recognized, proposed National Blueways must have diverse support from government agencies within the watershed.

Is there any limit to the size of a National Blueway?

It is anticipated that National Blueways will be large river systems, with a hydrologic unit code (HUC) of 4-6. To date, National Blueway watersheds range in size from a few million acres to nearly twenty million acres.

Does recognition as a National Blueway affect private property rights?

No. The National Blueways System recognizes and supports local and regional conservation, outdoor recreation, education, and sustainable economic development activities. The recognition has no legal impact on private property, nor is it specific to any parcel of land. The Program is entirely voluntary and private landowners choose whether or not to participate in any assistance programs or initiatives undertaken by the stakeholder partnership. The Secretarial Order that created the National Blueways System states that designation does not authorize or affect the use of private property; nor does it affect or interfere with any Federal, state, local and tribal government jurisdiction or applicable law.

Does recognition as a National Blueway affect water rights?

No. The Secretarial Order that created the National Blueways System states: "nor shall this initiative or any designation pursuant to this Order affect or interfere with any Federal, state, local, and tribal government jurisdiction or applicable law including interstate compacts relating to water or the laws of any state or tribe relating to the control, appropriation, use or distribution of water or water rights."

What types of economic development will be supported by the National Blueways System?

Sustainable economic development activities are identified and led by local stakeholders. We anticipate that recognition as a National Blueway will encourage local business ventures that are connected with the river system, such as outdoor recreation, education and conservation, tourism-related ventures (for example, restaurants, lodging, camp grounds, guide services), and outdoor recreational equipment supplies and rentals.

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NATIONAL BLUEWAYS SYSTEM NOMINATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

Vision

The National Blueways System, established on May 24, 2012 by Secretarial Order 3321, will recognize and support a new generation of river and watershed partnerships. These partnerships will collaborate, cooperate, and promote a network of nationally significant rivers and their watersheds that are highly valued as economic, recreational, social, and ecological assets by the communities that depend on them. National Blueways will use a landscape-scale approach to river management that integrates land and water stewardship efforts within a working landscape from headwaters to mouth and across entire watersheds. National Blueways will be locally envisioned and led by diverse stakeholder partnerships consisting of the communities, organizations, and agencies that have an interest in the welfare of their river, its watershed, its resources, and the public.

Description

Strategic management of our land and water resources is vital to our economy, to our enjoyment of America's natural resources, and to the resilience of the ecosystems on which we depend. Throughout the nation, communities; local, state and federal governments; non-governmental organizations; businesses; landowners; and volunteers are coming together to collaborate and devise sustainable solutions for healthy rivers and watersheds.

The National Blueways System will recognize and support the work of those partnerships and provide a platform to encourage expanded collaboration among stakeholders within the larger landscape of the watershed. The goals are to inspire these locally based partnerships to plan and manage for the resiliency, health, and connectivity of their rivers, to promote communication and seek cooperation among a diverse cadre of partners across jurisdictions, and to strive for an integrated, adaptive approach for sustaining whole river systems. The National Blueways System is designed to recognize, inspire, and magnify the impact of these large river and watershed partnerships by establishing a national network of synergistic and sustainable watershed approaches to conservation, education, recreation, and economic activities within a large working landscape.

Participation in the National Blueways System is entirely voluntary and partnership-initiated via an application to determine eligibility followed by invitations to selected partnerships to submit a nomination. Reviews are conducted by the National Blueways Committee¹. National Blueways will receive prestigious public recognition benefits and coordinated federal assistance during a five-year period of emphasis to promote, facilitate, and leverage technical and financial assistance from federal agencies and other partnering entities that support the National Blueways System.

Eligibility Criteria

National Blueways are nationally and regionally significant river systems supported by diverse locally-led stakeholder partnerships that use a watershed approach to resource stewardship. River systems eligible

¹ The National Blueways Committee consists of representatives of the Department of the Interior bureaus, the Office of Policy, Management, and Budget, and the Assistant Secretaries; and representatives of the Departments of Agriculture and of the Army (Civil Works). Additional agencies that have sponsored and/or entered into a Department/Agency level Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support a candidate and/or designated National Blueway will be invited to join the Committee.

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for inclusion in the National Blueways System share the following characteristics:

- Large river systems (i.e., Hydrologic Unit Code or HUC 4-6)²
- River systems than contain important natural, recreation, economic, and/or cultural resources
- Presence of a committed, diverse locally-led stakeholder partnership or association that has developed a vision for their entire (i.e. headwaters to mouth) river system and that has collectively demonstrated success in accomplishing goals related to conservation, recreation, education, and/or sustainable economic outcomes in the river and its watershed
- Evidence of an integrated and adaptive management strategy that employs a diversity of approaches for land and water resources and that promotes healthy river systems for the benefit of human and natural communities

Competitive Selection Process

Nominations will be made by a watershed partnership on a voluntary basis in cooperation with sponsoring Federal and State agencies. The process is initiated with submission of an application to determine eligibility. Selected watershed partnerships will be invited to submit a nomination.

1. The National Blueways Committee will review applications from watershed stakeholder partnerships twice per year.
2. The National Blueways Committee will review and assess applications and invited nominations according to the maturity, diversity, and accomplishments of their partnerships and/or participating organizations, and their National Blueway vision, goals, objectives and strategies.
3. The Committee will issue up to nine (9) invitations to submit a nomination to stakeholder partnerships annually.
4. The Committee will forward their recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior for a final decision on recognizing a new National Blueway.

Benefits

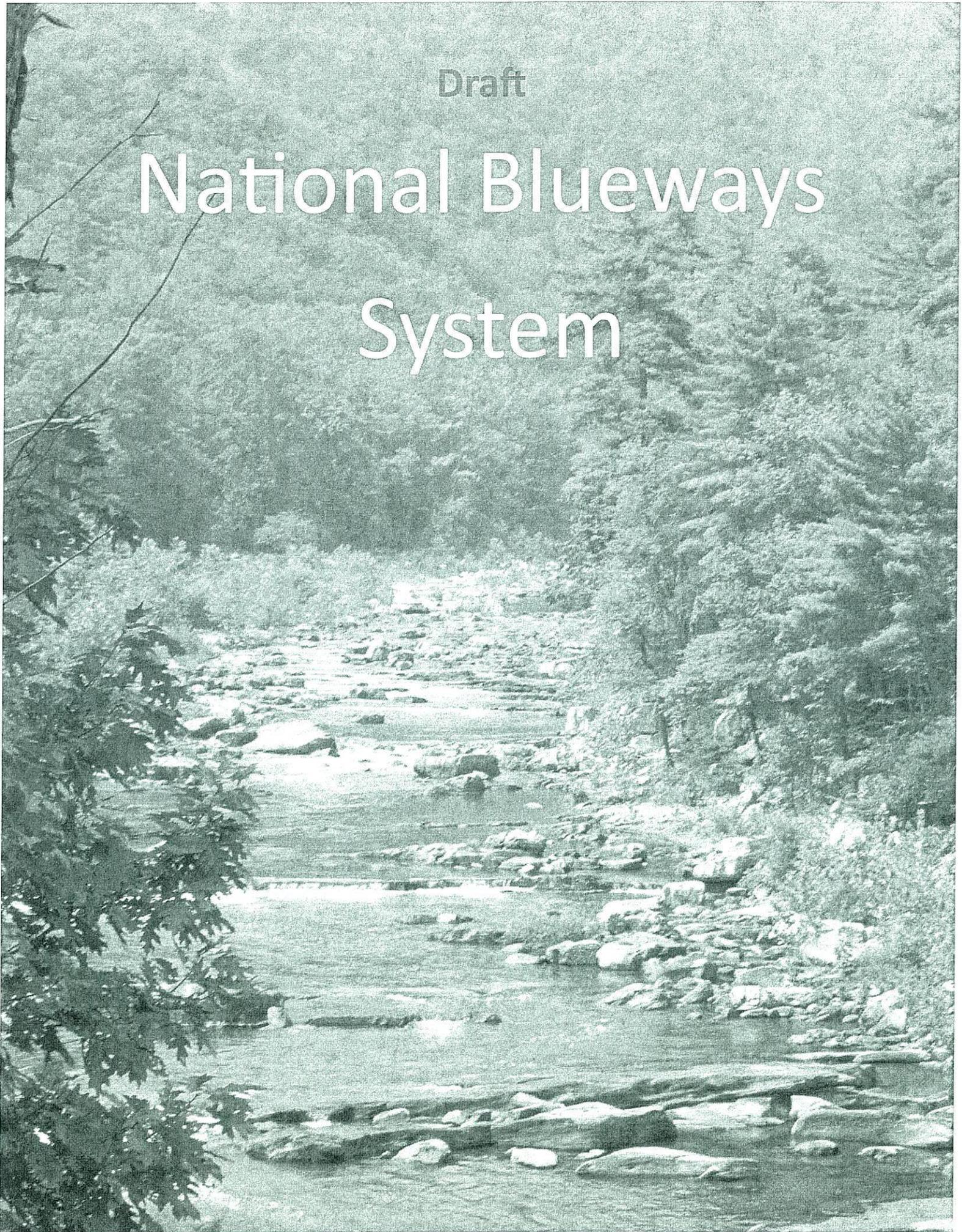
With the recognition as a National Blueway comes prestige, collaboration, and tangible assistance from federal agencies and other partnerships, including:

1. Cabinet-level recognition and prestige
2. Marketing value and recognition opportunities offered by federal and partner organizations
3. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Cooperative Agreements with federal agencies, and commitments of support from public and private partners
4. Robust consideration for federal technical and monetary assistance to achieve partnership goals, including development of an online river atlas in collaboration with stakeholders
5. Eligibility for National Blueways System specific grants to stakeholder partnerships for expansion, and for river or watershed projects
6. Participation in a mentoring network with other watershed partnerships working within the National Blueways System.

² This criteria can be waived to accommodate a HUC 2 or a HUC 8 watershed in those instances where scale is the only element prohibiting an exceptional and compelling application from being considered.

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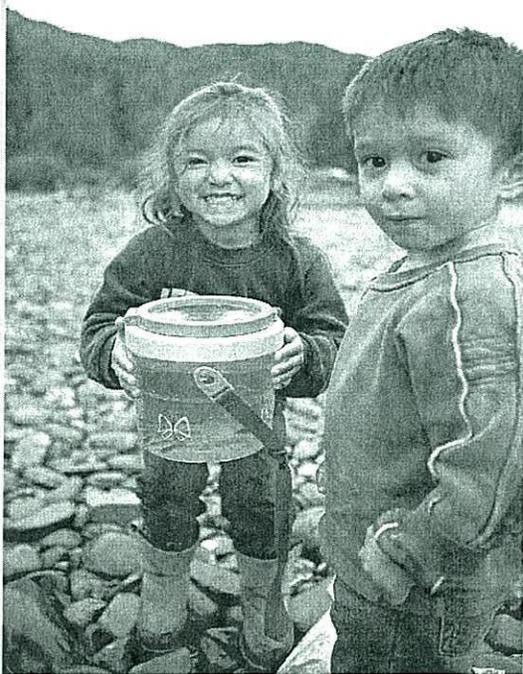
National Blueways System



OBJECTIVES

Vision

The National Blueways System recognizes and supports a new generation of river and watershed action that connects communities to our shared natural heritage, to outdoor recreational opportunities, to sustainable economies and to each other. National Blueways foster human health and well-being, strengthen community ties, enhance environmental learning, reflect our stewardship and pride of place, and support restoration and conservation efforts along our rivers and across their watersheds.



Foster strong partnerships: Diverse stakeholder partnerships are critical to achieving lasting success for river conservation, recreation, restoration, and education. The National Blueways System actively supports watershed partnerships and strong multi-agency working relationships with state, tribal, and local governments, and federal agencies to increase collaboration, leverage resources, and enhance coordination of policy, priorities, and funding.

Connect people with the outdoors: For many Americans, rivers provide the closest available link to the great outdoors. They connect communities to one other and connect people to nature. We are working with our partners to enhance conservation and recreational opportunities along rivers and within watersheds throughout the nation.

Promote healthy rivers and watersheds: America's lands and waters are fundamentally interconnected, and stewardship of those resources should also be interconnected. The watershed approach of the National Blueways System recognizes this inherent connection and supports communities that adopt an integrated approach in defining their vision and goals for their river and its watershed.

Learn and share knowledge: Knowledge gained from our past conservation efforts can be shared with others to improve the science and practice of conservation. Rivers can provide a focal point for educational efforts that help Americans to understand and appreciate their natural, cultural, and recreational resources, ensuring sound stewardship now and in the future.

Promote sustainable economic opportunities: Healthy rivers and watersheds provide outdoor recreation, clean water supplies, flood and drought protection, and other valuable social and ecological services. We seek to sustain and enhance these services to provide long-term value for the American people.

Focus on the future: The needs of communities, uses of natural resources, and environmental conditions within a river basin change over time. National Blueways partnerships take an adaptive management approach to promote healthy rivers and watersheds that are resilient.

THE NATIONAL BLUEWAYS SYSTEM AT-A-GLANCE

Blueways are nationally significant, large river systems (see map page 10) supported by committed and diverse stakeholder partnerships that use an integrated and adaptive watershed approach to resource stewardship. River systems eligible for inclusion in the National Blueways System share the following characteristics:

- A large river system that contains significant natural, recreation, economic, and/or cultural resources
- Presence of a committed, diverse, stakeholder partnership or association that has developed a vision and long-term goals for its entire river system from the headwaters to the mouth, including the entire watershed
- Demonstrated ability to successfully undertake an integrated and adaptive management strategy that employs a diversity of approaches for land and water resources that address outdoor recreation, environmental education, conservation, and sustainable economies

National Blueways will be nominated by their stakeholder partnership in a two-stage process. The partnership will complete an initial application outlining its structure and goals. Partnerships submitting applications that demonstrate excellence in the stated criteria may be invited to prepare a comprehensive nomination package detailing the attributes of the watershed, and partnership goals and plans for outdoor recreation, environmental education, conservation, and sustainable economic development. A description of the nomination process can be found at: www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/whatwedo/rivers/upload/xxxxxx.

Within 180 days following recognition as a National Blueway, federal agencies with land and water management responsibilities who are within the departments that have signed the National Blueways System - Memorandum of Understanding will develop an inter-agency memorandum of understanding to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate in support of stakeholder goals for the river and watershed, consistent with agency priorities, objectives, and funding limitations. National Blueways receive robust consideration for technical and financial assistance to accomplish stakeholder goals for natural resource conservation, outdoor recreation, environmental education, and sustainable economic development. The National Blueways System memorandum of understanding can be found at: www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/whatwedo/rivers/upload/XXXXX.

Participation in the National Blueways System is entirely voluntary and locally-driven. There are no new regulations, rules, or requirements associated with recognition as a National Blueway, nor are there any changes in private property or water rights. Federal, state, and local authorities and responsibilities are not affected. A set of answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at: www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/whatwedo/rivers/upload/NBS_FAQs.pdf

More information about existing National Blueways can be found at: www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/whatwedo/rivers/upload/XXXXXX.

AREA OF IMPACT – SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

If you've ever wondered about the impact of outdoor recreation on the American economy – here are some numbers that paint a picture of this vibrant and growing sector:

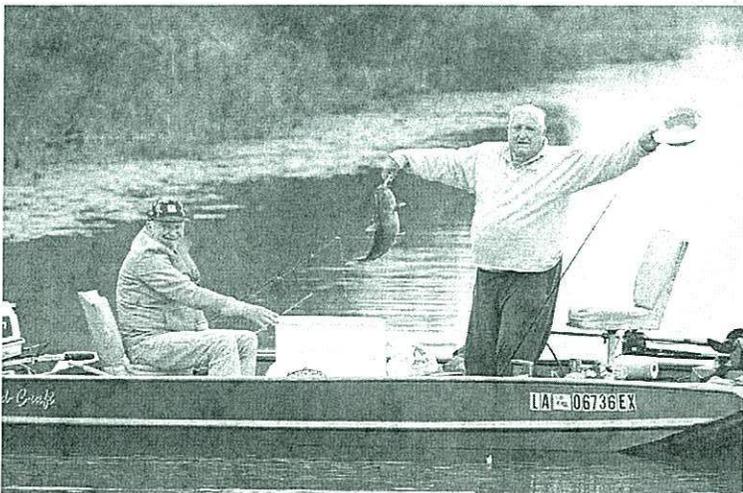
- \$6.1 million direct American jobs
- \$646 billion in direct consumer spending each year
- \$39.9 billion in federal tax revenue
- \$39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue

And it's not just the outdoor industry itself that benefits but manufacturing, hospitality, and transportation as well.

According to the American Sportfishing Association, there are more than 30 million anglers in the U.S. – more people than play golf (24.2 million) or tennis (10.2 million). Looking across all outdoor activities, nearly 50 percent of American ages six and older participated in some form of outdoor activity in 2012. That's 141.1 million Americans! The five most popular activities are running or jogging, fishing, biking, camping and hiking.

Healthy, intact ecosystems are essential to the quality of these activities. The National Blueways System offers communities a pathway for greater economic sustainability by supporting opportunities for our citizens to work and play in America's Great Outdoors.

Sources: asafishing.org, outdoorindustry.org



"Americans want and deserve access to quality outdoor recreation experiences—for quality of life, health benefits, and the good of our economy. Protecting America's parks, waters and trails isn't just about the land and water. It's about protecting outdoor experiences for the benefit of the thousands of businesses, communities and families whose livelihoods depend on the outdoor recreation economy. Outdoor recreation can continue to generate jobs and be an economic driver in this country if parks, waters and trails are managed to sustain these economic dividends for America." –Frank Hugelmeyer, President and CEO, Outdoor Industry Association

AREA OF IMPACT - HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Many of us remember a time when we played outside until we were called home for dinner. Today's children seldom have this experience. The average American child spends less than ten minutes outside each day. As a result, childhood obesity rates have doubled in the past 20 years.

While we know there isn't one single solution to this problem, we do know that access to open space and parks is directly correlated to increased activity. We also know that only one in five children have a park within walking distance of their home.

We need to do something about this. The positive impacts of outdoor activity are astounding, and not just for kids but for adults as well. Numerous studies have demonstrated that simple contact with nature positively affects blood pressure, cholesterol, outlook on life, stress reduction, and behavioral problems.

The National Blueways System encourages communities to develop and expand recreational opportunities for all of their citizens. It especially offers a pathway to greater recreational opportunities and healthier living for urban communities and underserved populations.

A great example is the San Joaquin River Partnership, where stakeholders plan to increase river access through trails, campsites, boat access and innovative programs for rural and urban communities.

Sources: [nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org); <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100502080414.htm>



"We are drawn to rivers. Throughout generations, the San Joaquin River has supplied California and beyond with food, powered the state's Central Valley economy, and served as a source of great beauty and inspiration. Today, efforts are underway to re-water sections of the river that have been dry for decades, providing new opportunities to consider the river's full potential as a healthy and vibrant Blueway -- a restored resource reconnecting individuals, families, and communities to the river itself." *Dave Kohler, San Joaquin River Partnership Coordinator*

AREA OF IMPACT – REDUCING FLOOD DAMAGE

Flooding is our most common natural disaster, causing more than \$2 billion of damages each year across our nation. As our climate changes, the frequency and severity of storms are increasing and so are the damage from these storms. By restoring the natural functions of wetlands and floodplains, we can take action now to lessen the damage caused by these extreme events.

For example, Hurricane Irene dumped more than 15 inches of rain across Vermont in August, 2011. During the storm, hundreds of roads and bridges failed, but others were undamaged. Some towns were severely impacted while neighboring communities remained intact. While some of these differences were due to geography or storm intensity, much of the explanation is found in the outdated practices commonly used by communities before Irene. During the storm, rivers where floodplains and adjacent wetlands had been protected were slower to rise and fall. As floodwaters spread across these wetlands, they lost velocity, thereby reducing the extent of downstream damage. These floodplain forests also acted as natural filters, trapping sediment, debris, excess nutrients, and chemicals before they could reach our rivers and, ultimately, Long Island Sound.

Floodplains are more than just a buffer from storms. Floodplain forests, while rare, are one of the most biologically important ecosystems in our nation. Numerous fish species, such as Chinook salmon in the west and sunfish and catfish in the southeast use floodplains to spawn. Migratory birds, such as the scarlet tanager, the Acadian flycatcher, the red-bellied woodpecker, the eastern wood pewee, and a variety of warblers, use floodplains for nesting.

Working together, partners supporting National Blueways System rivers can chart a pathway for successfully tempering the impacts of changes in climate and in storm intensity while protecting both natural ecosystems and nearby communities.

Source: http://action.clf.org/site/PageNavigator/hurricane_irene_anniversary.html



“In the Otter Creek Valley, we don’t hear people clamoring for us to straighten the river, or deepen the channel... each year when the spring rains come and the snow melts, we are accustomed to a detour here and there for a few days around our wetlands and floodplains. When Hurricane Irene slammed into our valley in the summer of 2011, these wetlands and floodplains were ready to get to work for us, as they do year after year. The best news is, they do this for free!” *Mike Kline, Rivers Program Manager, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation*

AREA OF IMPACT - CLEAN WATER

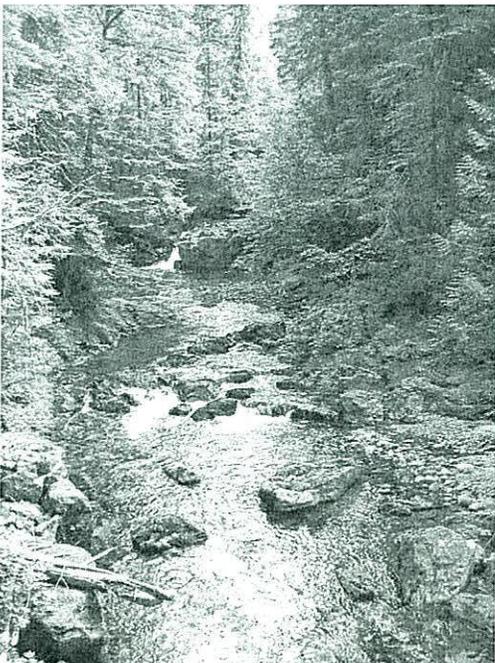
Forests, marshes and floodplains are nature's tools for cleaning water. A vegetated river bank helps to clean run-off from adjacent land by slowing it down and allowing sediment to drop out before it enters the river, effectively capturing extra nutrients from the water that are harmful to aquatic life. And these natural plant communities do this all for free!

In fact, an EPA study of 27 major U.S. water supplies showed that protecting forests across a watershed significantly reduced capital, operational and maintenance costs for drinking water treatment. The study found that for every 10 percent increase in the amount of forest protected, treatment and chemical costs decreased by 20 percent.

The drinking water supply for New York City is one such example. Foresight in protection of the Delaware and Catskill River watersheds has resulted in an estimated \$100 million in annual savings to the 8 million people who drink from the New York City water supply each day.

Across America, more than 60-percent of our drinking water comes from rivers and streams; therefore, investments in the health of our watersheds make good economic sense. The National Blueways System will provide a pathway for communities to plan and implement programs to re-vegetate our rivers and streams, leading to cleaner drinking water, lower treatment costs and beautiful riverine corridors.

Sources: NYC.gov; EPA.gov



"Next time you walk through a forest, imagine that the trees are affixed to the end of your kitchen faucet like a large green purifier, cleaning the water before it splashes, crystal-clear and cool, into your drinking glass. The civil engineers who are responsible for safe drinking water in New York City have known about this cost saving secret for years." *Bill Ulfelder, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy in New York*

AREA OF IMPACT – ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

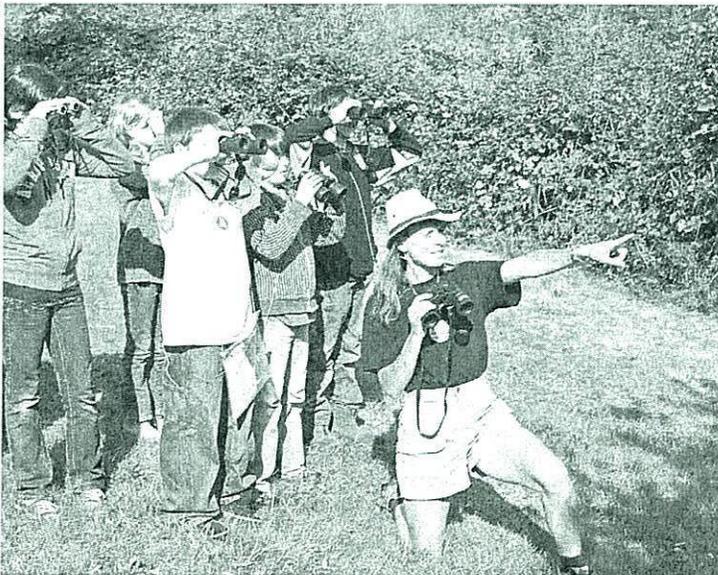
America benefits from a well-informed populace with an understanding of the natural systems that sustain us and an appreciation of how healthy ecosystems affect our quality of life.

Environment-based education is well known to engage children in a way that other, less tangible subjects do not. Moreover, environmental education fosters creative and successful problem solving by introducing inquiry-based instructional activities with real-world applications and encouraging critical thinking about these activities. It also helps students make connections between disciplines.

The National Science Foundation's Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education confirmed the importance of these skills in a 2003 report, noting that "in the coming decades, the public will more frequently be called upon to understand complex environmental issues, assess risk, evaluate proposed environmental plans and understand how individual decisions affect the environment at local and global scales. Creating a scientifically informed citizenry requires a concerted, systematic approach to environmental education."

By fostering stakeholder partnerships that promote, produce and deliver environmental education programs, the National Blueways System can become a pathway for a more scientifically literate, engaged, and stewardship-minded citizenry.

Sources: National Education and Environment Partnership, National Science Foundation



"We in the Minnesota River Valley are proud of where we live, and understand that pride of place can lead to action, but only if we educate the citizens of our watershed about the challenges we face and how they can be part of the solution. It won't be easy, and it may take some time, but we are making progress and I'm so excited about what we can do together." *Scott Sparlin, Executive Director, Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River*

GOVERNANCE

National Blueways System Committee

The Committee will initially consist of individuals designated by the agency directors of the:

National Park Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bureau of Land Management

Bureau of Reclamation

U.S. Geological Survey, and

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Representatives of the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretaries of Policy, Management, and Budget; Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Water and Science; Land and Minerals Management; and Indian Affairs

Representatives of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Army (Civil Works)

Additional federal departments and agencies will be invited to join the NBS Committee that have sponsored and/or entered into an MOU to support a NBS watershed.



The role of the National Blueways System Committee is to:

Oversee the development of National Blueways criteria and the assessment and recognition of new National Blueways,

Make recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on recognizing National Blueways,

Coordinate and promote support for designated National Blueways,

Report to the Secretary of the Interior on the progress and accomplishments of the National Blueways System.

A complete copy of the Secretarial Order can be found at: www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/whatwedo/rivers/upload/NBS_Sec_Order_3321.pdf



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Pages 1, 3, 4 and 8 (left): Steve Hillebrand, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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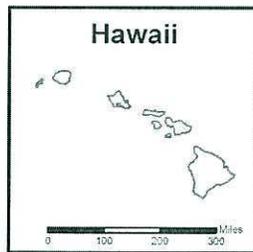
Page 6: David Patte, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Page 7: George Gentry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Page 8 (right): Ryan Hagerty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



National Blueway System



-  1 - Connecticut River National Blueway 05-24-12
-  2 - White River National Blueway 01-08-13

