



Building Community Capacity for Water Trail Development

Water trails are networks of points along the water that people can access using human-powered boats, but they are more than that. To NPS staffer Jerry Willis, they can change a community's perception about its local waterways, particularly urban waters that have been neglected and polluted over the years.

"Water trails are a wonderful strategy to get people to look at these rivers in a different way," he says. "They are a foot in the door. We can start talking about creating access points for people to get to the river, stream bank restoration, and replacing invasive species. If you bring people to the edge of the river, you'll create a new generation of stewards for these often forgotten resources."

How We Can Help:

NPS RTCA staff have supported water trail development projects across the country for a decade or more through:

- Partnership building
- Visioning/strategic planning
- Public participation
- Opportunities/constraints analysis
- Exploring conservation options
- Best management practices
- Project management
- Inventory and resource analysis
- Mapping/guide creation
- Funding research
- Education and outreach

Find Water Trail Tools:

go.nps.gov/watertrails



Willamette River Water Trail



(WA) The NPS RRTC Program helped the Mid-Willamette Connections Workgroup conduct planning sessions and public outreach to support a paddling trail for the Willamette River. Volunteers inventoried access sites, developed a management plan, and produced a series of popular guidebooks. More than 75 partners came together to shape the water trail, securing over \$350,000 in public/private funds. The ribbon-cutting events were attended by more than 500 people and drew top-flight speakers, including Governor Kulongoski, Congressman Wu, Congresswoman Hooley and Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Today the Willamette River Water Trail continues to provide a vital connection between the community and the River.

Milwaukee Urban Water Trail



(WI) Water trails typically are created as a result of public interest in water based recreation, stewardship, or both and the Milwaukee Urban Water Trail is no exception. A canoe and kayak route through urban portions of the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic Rivers, the trail provides 35 miles of access and paddling. It includes 33 access sites and portages passing through portions of five cities and two counties and connects the three rivers to paddling opportunities on Lake Michigan. Access sites have been greatly improved, new access sites provided, and access signage installed. The coalition for the trail includes the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County Parks, Wisconsin Sea Grant Program, several local and national boating groups, private landowners, environmental groups, and concerned citizens to organized to create a water trail on Milwaukee's rivers. The NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program provided technical assistance in water trail development, partnership building, and finding funding for the project.

Delaware River Water Trail



(NY, NJ, PA) The NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program guided a Steering Committee that developed a comprehensive signage program for paddlers, based on the Delaware River Water Trail Concept Plan. A \$26,270 NPS Challenge Cost Share grant funded the program's development and \$49,000 from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) will go to develop plans to improve river safety and enhance promotion, including the creation of an interactive, trip planning web site for the 220-mile trail. The steering committee included Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, PA Fish and Boat Commission, NJ DEP, and American Canoe Association's Delaware Valley Division.

North Raccoon River Water Trail



(IA) Over 100 supporters and future paddlers celebrated the North Raccoon River Water Trail, 160 miles of river that flow through six counties in central Iowa. Local river supporters, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Water Trails Program, and the Raccoon River Watershed Association were joined by Iowa's Congressional delegation for a day of celebration including food, music, and fantastic paddling. The NPS River, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program provided technical assistance to the Greene County Conservation Board by helping to design the detailed water trail guide map. The map includes local business information, land trails in the area, town festivals, and specific paddling routes for beginners. The project's success was due to many partners, including Central Iowa Paddlers, Iowa Whitewater Coalition, and Dallas County Conservation Board, and has inspired the creation of an online toolkit for developing other water trails.