

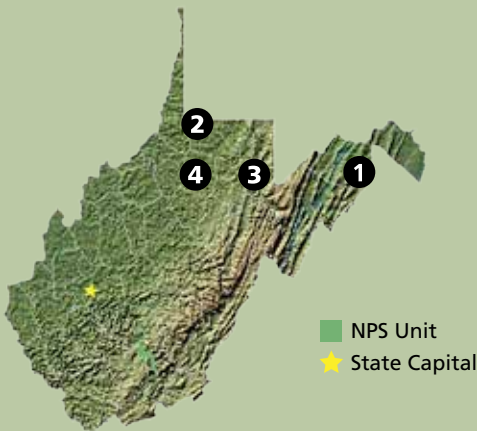


West Virginia News



Western Maryland home school group on an overnight on the Cheat River Water Trail. Photo: Crede Calhoun

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2014



CURRENT PROJECTS

1. **Cacapon Valley Regional Conservation Priorities**
Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust
2. **Dunkard Creek Water Trail**
Greene County Watershed Alliance
3. **Upper Cheat River Water Trail**
Friends of the Cheat
4. **West Fork River Water Trail**
Guardians of the West Fork River

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

Recent Successes

Cheat River Water Trail opens!

National Trails Day 2013 was a celebration on the water! On June 1, the Upper Cheat River Water Trail officially opened for public use with the release of its first map and guide. The water trail committee of Friends of the Cheat held a fun day-long ceremony in St. George West Virginia, on the banks of the river at Blackwater Outdoor Adventures' river outpost. Elected officials and guests took turns paddling out on this flat section of the Cheat River using a variety of crafts from traditional canoes to stand-up paddleboards.

The project, which began in 2012, quickly progressed with an active committee that successfully obtained local donations totaling over \$10,000. Two of the nine public access sites involved agreements acquired in cooperation with the West Virginia-Department of Natural Resources, using private properties. Kiosks and signage were installed in time for the paddling season. Support from area Convention and Visitor Bureaus will enable the group to create a new resourceful website in 2014.

“The NPS has been by our side every step of the way, providing support and direction, from the initial development concept right through opening day.”

- Dave Cassell, Chairman, Cheat River Water Trail

Current Projects

1. Cacapon Valley Regional Conservation Priorities

Project Partner: Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust
NPS Contact: Wink Hastings
Location: Hampshire, Hardy, Morgan Counties
Congressional District: WV - 2

Project Goal

Develop and implement a landscape-scale conservation strategy to enhance collaborative partnerships capable of protecting regionally significant lands for biodiversity and resiliency to climate change.

NPS Role

Facilitate the creation of a summary of conservation success from years 2002 to 2012, develop a regional strategic conservation agenda, and prepare a diverse financing plan.

2. Dunkard Creek Water Trail

Project Partner: Greene County Watershed Alliance
NPS Contact: Peggy Pings
Location: Monongalia County WV; Greene County, PA
Districts: WV - 1, PA - 12

Project Goal

Create a 30-mile water trail and develop a plan for access points from Blacksville, West Virginia to Dilliner, Pennsylvania along the Monongahela River.

“The NPS has allowed our project to grow and our organization to become more stable. Without this assistance, it would have taken years to get where we are right now. Our organization is stronger and better thanks to the work of the NPS.”

- Joanna Swanson, Coordinator, Great Eastern Trail



TuGuNu Hiking Club spends a great day doing volunteer trail maintenance at Twin Falls State Park, along the future route of the Great Eastern Trail! Photo: Joanna Swanson

NPS Role

Assist with the bi-state water trail planning and designation process, public involvement, establishing additional public access, and preparing map and guide.

3. Upper Cheat River Water Trail

Project Partner: Friends of the Cheat
Contact: Peggy Pings
Location: Tucker and Preston Counties
Congressional District: WV - 1

Project Goal

Expand public awareness and use of the 38-mile Upper Cheat River Water Trail from Hendricks and Parsons to Rowlesburg.

NPS Role

Assist the water trail committee with community involvement in the development of a river access management plan.

4. West Fork River Water Trail

Project Partner: Guardians of the West Fork River
NPS Contact: Peggy Pings
Location: Weston to Fairmont
Congressional Districts: WV - 1, 2

Project Goal

Develop the 70-mile West Fork River Water Trail from Stonewall Jackson dam to the Monongahela River.

NPS Role

Assist with the West Virginia water trail planning and designation process, public involvement, finding funding, and the development of a map and guide.

We're Here For You!

Could your project benefit from NPS Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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2013 Nationwide Partnership Success

1,357 Miles of Trail Developed
736 Miles of River Conserved
20,270 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



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Recent Successes cont.

The NPS assisted with organizational development, action planning, and water trail designation process. The committee quickly took leadership and moved forward with vigor, and is working on continuous improvements.

Stories of Land, People, and Stewardship

Stories and photographs from West Virginia's Cacapon and Lost River Valley are featured in a book just released by West Virginia University Press. The book *Listening to the Land* features stories of people in the watershed who have a deep connection to their land. In following the guiding principles of its strategic conservation plan

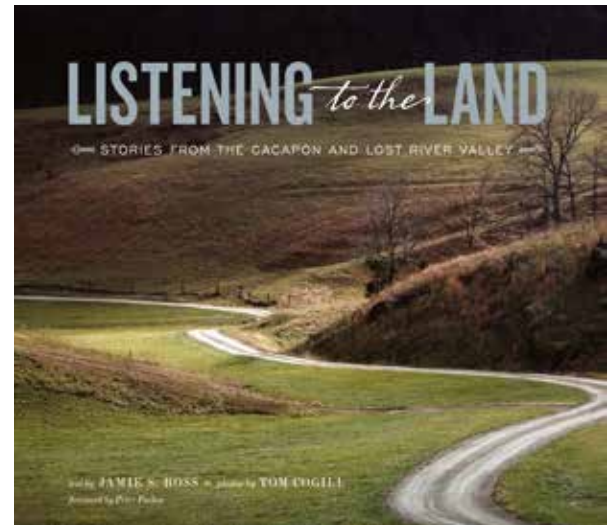
“Stories about the why of saving the land, not just the how.”

- Rand Wentworth, President, Land Trust Alliance

(prepared with technical assistance provided by NPS staff), the land trust has substantially increased land conservation over the past ten years.

Quite often as conservation easements were signed, Executive Director, Nancy Ailes, observed land owners getting very emotional about protecting their land. Realizing that there must be compelling stories behind the tears, Ailes received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and assistance from NPS staff to document these stories in word and image. *Listening to the Land* is the culmination of a six-year effort to celebrate the land ethic of the people in the Cacapon Valley of West Virginia.

Using grant funds, the land trust hired a documentary writer, Jamie Ross, and photographer, Tom Cogill, to traverse the valley documenting the people, their land, and their stories. Referring to a photo of a weathered wood plank wall, photographer, Cogill, described the messages scratched in the wall as a portrait; a short story about the people living in the valley. Ross recorded story upon story of how deeply the people loved the land that they owned and cared for. Far beyond stories and images however, *Listening to the Land* has forged a deep and trusting connection between the land trust and the people it serves through conservation -- a connection not given, but earned. A connection that the trust hopes will inspire land stewardship for years to come in places far from the Cacapon Valley.



Cover of *Listening to the Land* featuring an image by Tom Cogill. Photo: West Virginia University Press

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. Program staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.