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Planning the NK Water Trail

Turning the idea of a water trail into a reality will depend on the thoroughness of your planning. This section provides advice on getting started, developing grassroots support, and drafting a plan for building the trail.

1. Getting Started

Begin by forming a strong core group of similarly inclined individuals and representatives of organizations who are keenly interested in establishing a water trail and will share in the workload. Develop a vision statement and mission statement that describes the desired future condition of the water trail and how the group wants to proceed.

2. Garnering Community Support

With the basic organization in place, the advisory committee should begin expanding the constituency and supporters for the water trail. The trail will not succeed without widespread community support. It's time to identify stakeholders, gather data supporting the initiative, recruit volunteers, and raise funds.

3. Drafting A Water Trail Plan

Planning and developing a water trail requires maintaining a careful balance between protecting the resource and responding to the needs of landowners, trail users, and the community. You have established a steering committee or formal organization, talked with the stakeholders, established partnerships, recruited volunteers, and started raising funds. Now it is time to study the evidence and make some thoughtful choices about the character of the trail.

Building the NK Water Trail

You have created a nonprofit organization, identified the stakeholders and partners, and drafted a development plan for the trail. Now it is time to go to work—to create access sites, develop facilities, and prepare guide materials for trail users.

1. Establishing Access

Over the years local boaters commonly create informal sites to get onto and off the waterway. Some of them make ideal accesses for the trail while others might be dangerous, awkwardly placed, and unevenly spaced for general public use. You probably will have to develop some new launch sites and parking areas, and you may have to create some campsites.

2. Developing Trail Facilities

Facilities that are customarily built along a water trail fall into three general categories: access, day use, and camping. The size and appearance of these facilities may well be determined by the availability of funds, the setting, and the expertise of the construction crew.

3. Producing Guide Materials

All but the most adventurous of boaters want a map of the water trail and information about sites—and hazards—they will encounter along the way. They want to know the locations of launching and parking areas, campsites, picnic areas, toilets, and other facilities. You can convey this information, safety tips, and management policies through map folders, guidebooks, signs, and orientation exhibits and websites. Properly written and designed, they can greatly enhance the water trail experience.

Managing the Nk Water Trail

After the water trail has been established, the organization will be faced with a constant challenge: balancing the needs and values of recreation and conservation. Managing and maintaining a water trail may require the skills of some individuals who helped establish the trail. But the trail organization now has to make an ongoing effort to attract staff members and volunteers who can devote their energies to day-to-day and seasonal tasks.

1. Protecting the Resource

The water trail's success now hinges on keeping the waterway as pristine as possible or improving its condition through a variety of conservation programs ranging from cleanup campaigns to habitat restoration projects.

2. Educating the Public

Building and expanding community support for the water trail is a never-ending process and should be considered an essential element of the management plan. Provide a variety of interpretive educational programs to inform both children and adults about the waterway and the Chesapeake Bay. An informed citizenry will value and champion the trail and become active in stewardship activities.

Creating the NK Water Trail Plan

Planning and developing a water trail requires maintaining a careful balance between protecting the resource and responding to the needs of landowners, trail users, and the community. You have established a steering committee or formal organization, talked with the stakeholders, established partnerships, recruited volunteers, and started raising funds. Now it is time to study the evidence and make some thoughtful choices about the character of the trail.

Conduct Suitability and Feasibility Studies

Inventory and document the natural, historical, recreational, and scenic resources in the area of the proposed water trail. Gather and study reports about water quality, sensitive environmental factors, population patterns, socioeconomic characteristics, and public services and facilities. Along with all the pertinent statistical data and research findings, include maps and photographs of major resources.

Analyze Needs of Stakeholders

Study the needs and objectives expressed by landowners, local officials, potential trail users, and other stakeholders. Involve the stakeholders in resolving their differences and other issues.

Additional Help

- [Assessing Resources and Social Factors](#)
- [Assessing Recreational Carrying Capacity](#)
- [Locating Facilities](#)
- [Making a Work Plan](#)
- Composting Toilet Bibliography

Guiding Principles of NK Water Trail

All water trails follow three guiding principles:

1. Environmental Enhancement

- natural resource conservation, preservation and restoration
- volunteer resource stewardship by the users of the resource
- sensitive, sustainable, no-impact use by individuals and business

2. Community Livability

- citizen's rights of access to public waterways and enjoyment of the resource
- scientific, historical and cultural interpretation, appreciation and education
- citizen involvement, local community involvement, action and pride

3. Personal Wholeness

- health and wellness through outdoor exertion
- character growth - building confidence and self-reliance through outdoor skills
- spiritual growth through solitude, observation and communication with the wilderness

Helpful Resources
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Publications

In addition to the Rivers & Trails 'recommended reading list' (see left), you might also want to investigate the following publications which we've either written ourselves or helped other conservation groups write or produce. (File size is listed for PDF links, larger files will take longer to download.)

[Community Tool Box](#)

by National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, 2002.

A collection of techniques for public participation that communities can use to get organized, to turn their vision into reality, to work together to improve their special places...

[Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors](#)

by National Park Service, 4th edition, 1995.

Shows how parks benefit the local economy by creating jobs, enhancing property values, attracting businesses and increasing local tax revenues.

Online Resources for: [Trail Development](#)

[Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities](#)

by Lindsay Johnson, MCRP, for National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, 2002. (4 MB)

A comparative analysis of rural communities with calm water trails. Case studies illustrate impacts of calm water trails and trends are drawn from community economic development associated with water trails.

[Impacts of Rail-Trails](#)

by National Park Service and Penn State University, 1992. (23 MB)

Studies three trails' effects on the communities through which they pass.

[Logical Lasting Launches](#)

by National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, 2004 (available for download by chapter or as a complete document).

This guide provides design guidance for developing canoe and kayak launches; case examples, designs, and photos are included.

[Recreational Use Statutes and the Private Landowner](#)

by National Park Service, American Association for Horsemanship Safety, American Whitewater, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource and International Mountain Bicycling Association, 2002.

This .pdf contains printable files for the fifty states that have a Recreational Limited Liability Law.

[Trails for All Americans](#)

Submitted by American Trails to the National Park Service, 1990.

A national trails agenda formed by a private-public task force. Some recommendations are now dated, but the basic vision of integrated trails systems available to all, health benefits, interagency collaboration, protected resource corridors, and trails as infrastructure is still valid today.

[Trails for the Twenty-First Century, 2nd ed.](#)

by Charles A. Flink, Kristine Olka and Robert M. Searns, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.
Planning, design, and management manual for multi-use trails

[Watertrails: Ribbons of Discovery](#)

by National Park Service and North American Watertrails, Inc., 1999.
Brochure introduces concepts and benefits of watertrails.

Online Resources for: [River Conservation](#)

[Creek Care Guide](#)

by National Park Service, Friends of Alhambra Creek, and the City of Martinez (CA), 1994.
Offers practical information on proper creek care and how to solve existing problems in degraded creeks

[Daylighting and Restoring Streams in Rural Community City Centers](#)

by National Park Service, June 2002, rev. 2005.
This report provides case studies of five river restoration/day lighting projects used to revitalize small communities across America. It is a companion to the 'Giving New Life to Streams' Brochure (see below) and provides a substantial reference and contact section.

[Dam Removal and Historic Preservation: Reconciling Dual Objectives](#)

by American Rivers in partnership with National Park Service, August 2008.
This report provides guidance to help dam removal and historic preservation advocates collaborate effectively.



[Economic Benefits of Conserved Rivers: An Annotated Bibliography](#)

by National Park Service, June 2001. (1 MB)
An effort to document, enhance, and share knowledge of the economic benefits of conserved rivers. It offers an extensive list of studies, papers, and articles on this subject, with summaries of their content.

[Floods, Floodplains and Folks](#) (19 MB)

by National Park Service, 1996.
A casebook in managing rivers for multiple uses. Case studies of multiple-objective approaches to river planning and flood loss reduction.

[Flows and Recreation: A Guide to Studies for River Professionals](#)

by Doug Whittaker, Bo Shelby, and John Gangemi, for the Hydropower Reform Coalition and National Park Service - Hydropower Recreation Assistance, 2005.

This guide is intended to facilitate decision-making to define flows for recreation on regulated rivers. It provides an updated framework and methodologies for assessing flows for recreational use.

[Giving New Life to Streams in Rural City Centers](#)

by National Park Service.

An educational brochure developed in partnership with the city of Caldwell, Idaho. The publication profiles several small communities that opened and restored streams that had been buried for decades under their downtown streets

[Nationwide Rivers Inventory](#)

by National Park Service.

A register of over 3,000 rivers that potentially qualify as national wild, scenic or recreational rivers.

[Restoring Streams to Reduce Flood Loss](#)

by National Park Service and Trout Unlimited, 1998.

Describes how flood control work causes more problems than it solves and how natural streams and floodplains work to reduce flood damage.

[River and Watershed Conservation Directory, 2003](#)

by National Park Service and River Network, 2003.

A directory with addresses and brief descriptions of over 3,600 river-related organizations

[River work Book](#)

by National Park Service, 1988.

Local river conservation planning efforts in a step-by-step format. It outlines a process for community based river conservation efforts and presents tools for building organizational and technical skills.

Online Resources for: [Open Space Conservation](#)

[Conservation Assistance Tools \(CAT\)](#)

by National Park Service et al., 2000 now maintained by Red Lodge Clearinghouse.

A searchable database of grants, cost sharing, and technical assistance available for natural resources projects in the western United States.

[Groundswell - Stories of Saving Places, Finding Community](#)

by Alix W. Hopkins; Published by the Trust for Public Land; Co-sponsors: The Conservation Fund, The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, and The Nature Conservancy, 2005.

With more than 150 color photos, maps, FAQs and other resources, GROUNDSWELL serves as a Call to Action and a useful guide for people with the passion and energy to make a difference in their community. It highlights several RTCA project examples.

[How Greenways Work: A Handbook on Ecology](#)

by National Park Service and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, 1992.

Jonathan Labaree. Full text and illustrations of QLF's 1992 handbook, published with the National Park Service, that describes how to design and manage greenways to fulfill ecological functions in the landscape.

[Key Components of Creating A Volunteer Program](#) developed for the American Hiking Society by Mayes Wilson & Associates, LLC, 2006.

An informative manual that provides step-by-step instructions on how to plan and implement a successful volunteer program.

[Protecting Open Space: Tools and Techniques](#)

by National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, 2004.

Describes eleven techniques that are commonly employed for conserving open space in Texas and how and where they might be effectively applied, including case studies.

[O. Say, Can you See: A Visual Awareness Tool Kit for Communities.](#)

by M. Maguire, C. Truppi, R. Hawks, J. Palmer, C. Doble, S. Shannon, S. Stokes, and S. Morris, 1999.

A collection of visual assessment exercises to help members of your community to open their eyes, assess local visual assets and think about how to preserve and enhance them.

Pacific Northwest Resource Guide

For more information on or to apply in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho contact Michael Linde, Program Manager at 206-220-4113.

Learn more about projects in the Pacific West Region.

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