



VRPS

Governor's Conference On Greenways, Blueways and Trails 2008

Water Trail Planning and Management
Monday, October 6, 2008 8:00am



The ACA

- Nonprofit membership organization – 40,000 canoeists, kayakers and rafters.
- Three focus areas:
 - Providing paddlesports education;
 - Promoting responsible stewardship of the paddling environment; and
 - Supporting organizations and events that provide paddlesport recreation opportunities.



ACA's Water Trails Program

- Goal -- To support water trails in four ways:
 - Assist with the development of new trails.
 - Provide resources for the maintenance of existing trails.
 - Connect paddlers to trails around U.S. & Canada.
 - Celebrate the successes of water trails nationwide.



Why Water Trails?

- Water trails serve paddlers by answering important questions:
 - Where should I go paddling?
 - What will I find when I get there?
 - Water conditions, skills and equipment needed.
 - Access facilities, services, wildlife viewing, *etc.*
 - What do I need to do to be safe?
 - Where can I go to get more information?



What A Water Trail Can Do For You

- Expand recreation opportunities.
- Help you manage for safety and sustainability.
- Provide new opportunities and greater leverage for protecting and restoring rivers, lakes and coastlines.



What is a Water Trail?

“...A recreational waterway on lake, river or ocean between specific points, containing access points and day use and/or camping sites for the boating public. . . . An important ingredient . . . is an ethic of low-impact use and personal stewardship of the lands and waters being used.”

David R. Getchell, Sr.

Modern Water Trails Guide, 1998



ACA Water Trail Criteria

- Contiguous / semi-contiguous waterway or series of waterways open to recreational use by paddlers;
- At least one public access point;
- Covered by a publicly available map, guide, sign or website of reasonable quality and detail;
- Map, guide, sign or website communicates low-impact ethics to trail users; and
- Trail supported and/or managed by one or more organizations.



Developing a Water Trail

[One of many ways to do it...]

- Step 1 - Inventory available resources.
 - Waterways (history, culture, character).
 - Access points and facilities.
 - Hazards.
 - Funding for WT implementation.
- What are these resources like?



Developing a Water Trail

- From this, sketch out your water trail's personality.
 - What kind of “experience” will your trail provide?
 - Purely recreational?
 - Historic or cultural? Wildlife viewing?
 - Adventure and/or adrenaline?
 - Type of experience determined both for you and by you (within funding and natural limitations).
 - No two water trails are alike!



ID Target Users

- Who will be interested in this experience?
 - Individuals, families, scout groups?
 - History buffs, nature lovers, bird watchers?
 - Adventurers, adrenaline junkies?
- What are their boating skill levels?
 - Safety has a big impact on sustainability.
 - Safe trip = good experience = friend of the trail.
 - Fewer accidents = less pressure to restrict use.



Tips for Identifying Target Users

- Analyze hazards at various water levels.
- Paddle the trail yourself in different types of boats and at different water levels.
- Ask people of different skill levels to paddle the trail and provide you with feedback.



Infrastructure needs

- Determine infrastructure needs of target users.
 - Launches, rest stops, campsites, portage routes, restroom facilities.
- Develop infrastructure to serve two purposes:
 - To enhance safety and enjoyment for trail users.
 - To help you manage the trail in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive way.



Access

- The best launches are:
 - Durable, green, cost-effective and well-suited to waterway.
 - Enhance safety and reduce conflicts with other boaters.
 - Offer accessibility features whenever possible.
 - Logical Lasting Launches – NPS RTCA publication.
- Rest stops are vital features.
 - Destination to stop and stretch.
 - Direct users away from sensitive areas.
- Carefully consider whether campsites are appropriate, and choose sites to minimize impacts.



Maps and Guides

- Key marketing tool for your trail
- Well-designed maps and guides:
 - Tell users what to expect.
 - Enable them to self-select a trail that:
 - Provides the experience they want...
 - At their particular skill level...
 - Without hazards they wish to avoid.



Map and Guide Tips

- Tell your story – both the river's history and the trail's history.
- Map the trail in as much detail as practical.
- Describe available facilities & services:
 - Access points, campsites, portages.
 - Motels, restaurants, private campgrounds
 - Some users may prefer developed facilities.
 - Listing increases buy-in from local businesses.



Map and Guide Tips

- Content
 - List required safety equipment and skills.
 - Describe trail hazards & hazard avoidance.
 - Include LNT ethics and urge users to follow them.
 - Use pictures of appropriate trail users.
 - Invite users to join your efforts to protect the trail.
- Materials
 - Work with a good cartographer and graphic artist.
 - Print your map on waterproof paper.



The Trail is Just the Beginning

- WTs are not just for recreation.
- Water trails can help protect and restore rivers, lakes and coastlines.
 - Serve as a catalyst for a wide range of conservation & stewardship activities.
 - Build a constituency of individuals and businesses that benefit from a high-quality WT experience.
 - Provide additional leverage for “upslope” conservation initiatives away from water’s edge.



ACA & Water Trails

- Club-Fostered Stewardship Grants
 - Small grants available for partner NGOs
 - Volunteer-driven stewardship
- ACA Water Trails Database
 - 400 water trails from U.S. & Canada
 - www.americancanoe.org/recreation/watertrails.lasso



ACA Recognition

- ACA Recommended Water Trails
 - Recognition of premier water trails.
 - ID in ACA database, use of logo in printed materials.
- Champions of Water Trails
 - People and organizations responsible for premier water trails.



Resources

- **American Canoe Association:**
 - Program overview: www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/watertrails-overview.lasso
 - WT Database: www.americancanoe.org/recreation/watertrails.lasso
 - Recognition program: http://www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/arwt_all.lasso
 - CFS Grant program: www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/cfs.lasso
- **American Rivers Blueways Program:**
 - http://www.americanrivers.org/site/PageServer?pagename=AR7_BlueTrails
 - Blue trails development guide: <http://www.bluetrailsguide.org/>
- **RTCA resources:**
 - www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/ht_publications.html
- **Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network WT resources:** www.baygateways.net/tools.cfm
- **A few remnants of NAWT (North American Water Trails) on the web.**
 - www.bayaccess.org/nawt.html
- **Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Comm. Water Trails page:**
 - www.fish.state.pa.us/Fish/watertrails/trailindex.htm
- **Washington Water Trails Ass'n FAQ page:** www.wwta.org/about_us/faq.asp#1
- **Northern Forest Canoe Trail:** www.northernforestcanoetrail.org
- **Scuykill River Heritage Area:** www.schuykillriver.org/
- **Bartram Canoe Trails in Alabama:** <http://www.outdooralabama.com/outdoor-adventures/bartram.cfm>



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