

About Blue Trails



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WHAT ARE BLUE TRAILS?

Blue trails are the water equivalent to hiking trails. They are created to facilitate recreation in and along rivers and water bodies and are found in urban settings as well as remote environments. Blue trails come in all shapes and sizes and are used by paddlers, anglers, hikers, picnickers, and those just seeking a bit of solitude.

There is no division between blue trails and riverside greenways just as there is no division between a river and its watershed. Not everyone who wants to enjoy their river wants to get their feet wet. It is important to provide people opportunities to reconnect with their rivers in a variety of ways so they can discover the activities they enjoy most.

To have a successful blue trail you need to have a healthy water body. That is why blue trails are often associated with conservation easements and land acquisition, stream buffer requirements, higher water quality standards,

and requirements for stream flow protections. Blue trails also can be the driving force behind removing dams that no longer make sense and building support for protections such as Wild and Scenic River designations.

Communities across the country are realizing this and beginning to plan for conservation when creating new and improving existing blue trails. We hope this guide will help communities reconnect with their rivers through recreation and work to protect and restore these valuable assets.