

PA Water Trails



Developing Water Trails in PA



Water trails are an important part of recreation and conservation activities in Pennsylvania and they contribute to the health of local communities. This is a report of the PA Water Trails Partnership to expand and strengthen PA's system of water trails.

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What is a Water Trail? **Definition**

Water trails are recreational and educational corridors between specific locations that can be used for both single day and multiple day trips. They are comprised of access points, boat launches, day use sites, and -- in some cases -- overnight camping areas. They provide safe access to and information about Pennsylvania's waterways while also providing connections to our diverse history, ecology, geology, heritage and wildlife.

Pennsylvania Water Trails provide information to users about general boating safety and also local information that's necessary for enjoying the specific water trail. Information should be provided through a combination of materials including a trail map and guide, signage, web site, or other format.

Water Trails are positive contributors to local communities by providing economic stimulus and also protecting resources that are important to the quality of life of Pennsylvania residents. Water trails promote an ethic of caring that makes the Commonwealth a better place. Pennsylvania Water Trails embrace the "Leave No Trace" code of outdoor ethics that promotes the responsible use & enjoyment of the outdoors.

Water Trail Checklist

The water trail checklist provides guidance on what activities you should undertake to implement your water trail.

Every water trail must have...

- A **local managing organization** to care about and manage the trail.
- A part in the statewide water trail system with **state designation** by the PFBC.
- Public involvement** by the local community.
- A **map** providing information for using the trail.
- Free** information provided to users on the internet and/or printed materials.
- Water trail **feasibility study or plan** to determine if your waterway can be a water trail.
- Active **volunteers** who will participate in the management of the trail.
- Signage** that can direct users, interpret the resource, provide safety and orientation information.
- Maintenance** of existing and new amenities (boat access points, signage, information provided, etc.).

Every water trail project should consider...

- Designation** by the CBGN (where relevant), National Recreation Trail, American Canoe Association or other nationally recognized organization.
- For-Sale** water trail map & guide.
- Volunteer** recruitment & development program.
- Conducting **outreach educational programs**.
- Trail amenities** & facilities including campsites, comfort stations, access points, a full range of signage, etc.
- There are a variety of additional **planning and implementation** efforts to consider:
 - Stewardship & conservation plan.
 - Interpretive Plan
 - Management Plan
 - Marketing & promotion plan.

PA Water Trails Partnership

Pennsylvania has a statewide program to support the development of water trails. The partners include: PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, PA Environmental Council, PA Fish & Boat Commission, National Park Service – Chesapeake Bay Gateways & Watertrails Network and National Park Service-Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program. The partners are available to assist with local water trail efforts and to advance projects at the statewide level.

For more information or assistance please contact the PA Water Trails Partners:



1. Pennsylvania Environmental Council

Hannah E. Hardy, hhardy@pecpa.org, 412-481-9400

www.pecpa.org

2. PA Fish & Boat Commission

Dan Martin, danmartin@state.pa.us, 717-705-7849

www.fishandboat.com

3. PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Terry Hough, though@state.pa.us, 717-783-2712

www.dcnr.state.pa.us

4. National Park Service – Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network

Bob Campbell, bcampbell@chesapeakebay.net, 412-267-5747

www.baygateways.net

5. National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program

Dave Lange, david_a_lange@nps.gov, 215-597-6477

www.nps.gov/rtca

PA Water Trails Partnership Statement of Purpose

Among
The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
The National Park Service,
The Pennsylvania Environmental Council

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania has an abundance of natural resources that are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike with 86,000 miles of rivers and streams in one state;

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is a major contributor to the Chesapeake Bay as home to 517 miles of the Susquehanna River, which provides the Chesapeake Bay with fifty percent of its fresh water (24 million gallons) on a typical day;

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is a participating partner in the multistate effort to conserve and restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed and as a signatory to the Chesapeake 2000 agreement has committed to expanding public access to Bay tributaries in an environmentally sensitive manner, to increasing the number of designated water trails in the region, and to support local and community-based watershed restoration and protection projects;

WHEREAS, the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 (*P.L. 105-312, Sections 501-2*) calls for the National Park Service to facilitate development of a network of Chesapeake Bay gateways, water trails and other connecting routes in cooperation with other Federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profit organizations and the private sector and to establish a technical and financial assistance program to aid development of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network;

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is a national leader in the development of water trails with an active water trails program and over twenty water trails developed or under development. Each water trail provides users with a different and unique trail experience;

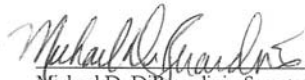
WHEREAS, In order to ensure the ongoing stewardship and sustainability of our water trails, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, National Park Service-Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, National Park Service-Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council agree to work together in a coordinated effort with local and regional organizations to achieve collaborative goals of the Pennsylvania Water Trails Partnership; and


NOW, THEREFORE, we the undersigned representing the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, National Park Service – Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program, Pennsylvania Environmental Council intend to collaborate to provide overall planning and coordination for implementation of water trail projects in Pennsylvania. The partners will work in concert with a variety of local and regional organizations and agencies to implement projects throughout Pennsylvania and with our adjoining states. We will work with the understanding that each resource has its own character and will need to be approached with that character in mind. The goals of the Pennsylvania Water Trails Partnership are to:

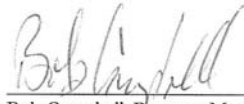
- To encourage and further the development of water trails in Pennsylvania,
- To strengthen the connections between and among existing water trails to promote a system of water trails,
- To better market and promote Pennsylvania's water trails as a recreational resource to residents and visitors alike,
- To provide technical assistance to local project managers who are implementing water trail projects,
- To promote the national recognition of Pennsylvania's water trails,
- To provide assistance to local project manager specifically with the long-term maintenance, stewardship and sustainability of water trails.
- To promote the development and management of water trails as a means to enhance citizen stewardship of local water resources

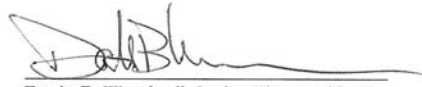
By this statement of our intention, we will work toward our goals in a spirit open to others, welcome new ideas, encourage collaborative approaches, and always be committed to the common goal of a strong system of water trails that benefit the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

This Statement of Purpose and the commitments of the parties hereunder are subject to the availability of funding. Nothing contained herein shall be construed as binding the parties to expend in any one fiscal year any sum in excess of appropriations or administrative allocations for the purpose of this statement, or to involve the parties in any contract or other obligation for the further expenditure of money in excess of such appropriations or allocations. In addition, nothing contained herein shall be interpreted as obligating the parties to provide funding, compensation or reimbursement.


 Michael D. DiBerardinis, Secretary
 PA Department of Conservation &
 Natural Resources


 Douglas J. Austen, Ph.D., Executive Director
 PA Fish & Boat Commission


 Bob Campbell, Program Manager
 Chesapeake Bay Gateways and
 Watertrails Network


 Davitt B. Woodwell, Senior Vice President
 Pennsylvania Environmental Council



Secretary DiBerardinis (PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources), Dr. Austen (PA Fish & Boat Commission), Davitt Woodwell (PA Environmental Council) and Bob Campbell (National Park Service – Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Network) sign the PA Water Trail Partnership Statement of Purpose at the 4th Annual PA Greenways & Trails Summit (2008).

Guiding Principles and Guidelines

“The water trail vision is best fulfilled when global principles, augmented by local purposes, guide trail development and use. Successful water trails have used the following ‘Principles’ as a framework for the development of their definitive trail design and management plan.”

*-North American Water Trails, Inc. **

The PA Water Trails Partnership has adopted eight principles to guide our work promoting and developing water trails in Pennsylvania. The principles are intended to promote the potential of water trail projects. Water trail projects can have a positive impact on local communities by building an ethic of stewardship, bringing new people into the community and providing recreational resources for local residents.

PA Water Trail Principles

1. Partnerships
2. Stewardship
3. Volunteerism
4. Education
5. Conservation
6. Community Vitality
7. Diversity
8. Wellness & Wellbeing

We have also developed guidelines for fulfilling each principle and provided project examples and resources to get more information. When considered together, the principles and guidelines should provide a “*how to*” manual for developing a water trail. Some elements may not be relevant to your specific experience, but there should be something in each principle that is important for each project. The Partners encourage you to use each of the eight principles in the development of your water trail.

* North American Water Trails, Inc. is a non-profit organization that spearheaded the national water trails movement. They can be credited with initially developing these principles. They are no longer an active organization, but their work lives on in other national organizations like the American Canoe Association and American Rivers.

#1- PARTNERSHIPS – Cooperating and Sharing

A water trail is the product of partnerships among an array of governmental and non-governmental entities. With volunteers as the key supporters and advocates of the trail, partnerships are developed among government land managing agencies, private property owners, government regulatory agencies, user groups, and local businesses. Together, these groups can create and maintain and promote a successful water trail with broad-based and long-term support.

Partnership Guidelines

-Establish a Core Group - Form 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.

-Form an Advisory Committee - Create an advisory, or steering, committee composed of the core group and the initial key partners to generate a long-term development and management plan for the trail and if appropriate, formally establish a permanent water trail organization.

-Identify Stakeholders - Identify all individuals and groups in your community that could have an interest in or be affected by the creation of the water trail. They are your stakeholders. Some stakeholders may become partners—those who will work jointly on shared goals. Others may become sponsors—those who support the trail with funds, resources, or expertise. Some may become opponents of the trail. To be successful, you must understand and address the interests and concerns of all of these stakeholders.

-Local Government Notification - As part of the public process it is highly recommended that water trail organizers work with the local governments that are traversed by the trail. The purpose is both to notify and involve them in the development of the water trail. Local support is critical. Water trails benefit local governments so it is only logical that they should be involved. Also, if the local government is not involved at the outset of the project there may be unforeseen conflicts as the trail goes into development.

-Public Planning Process - In order to designate a water trail, there must be a public process. This includes multiple public meetings that are publicly advertised. The purpose of the meetings is to collect information about the water trail (access points, amenities, etc.) and to gain support for the water trail.

-Create a Vision - Develop a vision statement that describes the desired future condition of the water trail and how the group wants to proceed. Members of the core group may have different ideas on what the trail actually should be. Reaching a consensus on a vision statement will help build a sense of ownership and commitment.

-Define the Mission - Create a mission statement that defines the role of your group in reaching your vision for the water trail. This statement can help keep the group focused and introduce and explain it to others. The mission statement should be clear and concise—ideally, no more than 25 words.

-Establish Partnerships - Use the vision and mission statements to establish partnerships with local governments, community organizations, state natural resource agencies, private property owners, and user groups such as paddlers' clubs and anglers. Partners should be willing to share in the responsibility for getting the actual work done.

-Communicate with Stakeholders - Conduct face-to-face interviews with community leaders, meet with focus groups, mail a survey to all landowners that may be affected by the proposed water trail, conduct public forums and meet one-on-one with water trail opponents. Develop a variety of ways to communicate with the different kinds of stakeholders.

Project Examples:

-Chemung Basin River Trail Partnership – www.chemungrivertrail.com

-Susquehanna River Trail Association Bylaws available at
http://www.susquehannarivertrail.org/about_sрта.htm

Resources:

-Planning a Water Trail - http://www.baygateways.net/trail_planning.cfm

-Vision Creating - http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox/dec_vision.htm

- Florida Guidelines for Paddling Trails Development
<http://myfwc.com/Boating/Paddling/Guidelines.htm>

#2- STEWARDSHIP – Leaving No Trace!

Water trails promote minimum-impact practices that ensure a sustainable future for waterways and adjacent lands. Water trails embrace the Leave No Trace Code of Outdoor Ethics that promotes the responsible use and enjoyment of the outdoors. A trail user, who understands their potential impacts to water, soil, vegetation and wildlife, and their impact on other trail users, will be a better caretaker. When users learn to protect and restore areas along the trail, they may be inclined to do likewise in their own communities and backyards.

Stewardship Guidelines

-Stewardship & Conservation Plan – Generally the process can include: 1. Assess the current water trail situation, 2. Develop a future vision for the water trail, 3. Develop water trail management principles, 4. Develop a water trail stewardship and conservation action plan, 5. Determine future organizational structure for future water trail management. The plan should inventory significant viewsheds, landscapes and critical habitats and develop a plan for riparian buffer protection.

-Maintain Facilities - Clean and repair parking areas, launch ramps, campsites, fire rings, toilets, portage trails, signs, exhibits, and other facilities. Establish a regular maintenance schedule and keep records of repairs and replacements.

-Conduct Cleanup Campaigns - Organize public campaigns to clean up trash along the waterway at least twice a year, before and after the busy season.

-Monitor Water Quality - Enlist volunteers to establish and conduct an ongoing water-quality monitoring program. Alert officials about illegal dumping, floodplain encroachments, and damage to natural, archeological, and historical resources.

-Promote Species Awareness – Promote drying of equipment to prevent transferring invasive species from one waterway to another. “Clean Your Gear”

Project Examples:

-West Branch of the Susquehanna Stewardship & Conservation Plan. Contact the Northcentral PA Conservancy, www.npcweb.org.

-Clinton County Cleanscapes <http://www.clintoncountypa.com/PA%20Cleanways%20Banner.htm>.

Resources:

-Bureau of Forestry – Campsite and Aquatic Buffer Guidelines

http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/sfrmp/documents/Water_Aquatic_Buffer_Guidelines.pdf

-Protecting the Resource http://www.baygateways.net/trail_protecting.cfm

-American Canoe Association - Club Fostered Stewardship Program

<http://www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/cfs.lasso>

- Leave No Trace <http://www.lnt.org/>

- Maine Island Trail Association - Recreation Management Plan for the Public Islands on the Maine Island Trail 2004-2014. <http://www.mita.org/learn/stewardship>

#3- VOLUNTEERISM – Experiencing the Joy of Involvement

Most water trails are created, promoted, and maintained through the energy and dedication of local citizens, working individually and through organizations to support the trail. Community involvement and volunteerism are the keys to developing a sense of trail stewardship, promoting the trail within the community, encouraging respect for the trail's natural and cultural heritage and ensuring that local governments support the trail's existence. Through love of place, and of good times, volunteers bring hard work and celebration to the water trail community.

Volunteerism Guidelines

-Management & Stewardship Commitment – There must be a local group who is willing to sign a Water Trail Partnership Agreement with the PA Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC). The agreement is for a length of five years and includes specific agreements about signage, mapping, roles of the local group and the PFBC, stewardship goals, etc.

-Establish a Formal Organization – Consider establishing, after gaining sufficient community support, a permanent organization to implement the development and management plans and to carry out fundraising and personnel initiatives, including the hiring of a professional staff. Members of the advisory committee may well become officers and directors of the new organization. An alternative to establishing a formal organization would be to have one of your partners “adopt” the water trail as an ongoing project.

-Recruit Volunteers – Enlist volunteers to carry out day-to-day stewardship tasks and special development projects. Your organization cannot succeed without a solid corps of volunteers. Use their expertise so their tasks are meaningful. Recognize their contributions.

Project Examples:

-Susquehanna River Trail Association - Island Steward Program www.susquehannarivertrail.org

-Friends of the Rappahannock - Volunteer Programs www.riverfriends.org

Resources:

-RTCA Community Toolbox – Working with Volunteers
http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/org_volunteers.htm

#4- EDUCATION – Learning by Experience

Through comprehensive trail guides, signage, public outreach, and informative programs, water trail organizations encourage awareness of the natural, cultural, and historical attributes of the trail. Serving as outdoor classrooms, water trails teach through seeing, listening, touching – experiencing.

Education Guidelines

-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 development of the trail. Provide a variety of interpretive educational programs to inform both children and adults about the waterway. An informed citizenry will value and champion the trail and become active in stewardship activities.

-Develop a Marketing & Promotion Plan – Focus efforts by developing a specific action plan for promoting your water trail. Define the audience that you want to attract and identify how to get information to them. A well thought out plan of attack will help in reaching everyone that you want to be involved in your local water trail.

Project Examples:

-Friends of the Rappahannock - Education Programs www.riverfriends.org

-Wildlands Conservancy - Education Programs www.wildlandspa.org

-PA Fish & Boat Commission Learning Center <http://www.fish.state.pa.us/edind.htm>

Resources:

-Boating Sidekicks www.boatingsidekicks.com

-Leave No Trace PEAK (Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids) Program www.lnt.org

#5- CONSERVATION – Protecting our Natural and Cultural Heritage

Water trail activities support the conservation of the aquatic ecosystem, contiguous lands, and important cultural artifacts. Trail builders and activists are a respected constituency advocating for resource protection and participating in resource restoration. The water trail community is a watchdog in prevention of environmentally harmful acts, striving to sustain the natural integrity of the trail and preserve the quality of the trail experience.

Conservation Guidelines

-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.

-Conservation and Education – At all times, the water trail organization must be vigilant about protecting—and, better yet, enhancing—the natural qualities of the waterway itself. By initiating a series of conservation projects and education programs, the organization not only protects the waterway but gains a cadre of water trail supporters.

Project Examples:

-PA Fish & Boat Commission - Conservation Programs

http://www.fish.state.pa.us/partners_programs.htm

Resources:

-Pennsylvania Land Trust Alliance www.conserveland.org

-American Rivers Blue Trails Program

http://www.americanrivers.org/site/PageServer?pagename=AR7_BlueTrails

-PA DCNR PA Rivers Conservation Program <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/rivers/riversconservation/>

#6- COMMUNITY VITALITY – Connecting People and Places

A water trail is a network of recreational and educational opportunities. Hiking trails, bikeways, greenways, museums, historic sites, parks and preserves are connected by water trails creating frontiers for exploration, discovery and enrichment. The connections build a sense of place and bind citizens in a love for their community. Water trails link families who grow together through work and play on the trail.

Community Vitality Guidelines

-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.

-Connecting to Land Based Recreation- Make strong connections to land-based recreation, natural and historic resources. By emphasizing land-based points of interest in water trail publications and information water trails provide another way to bring people into local communities. Connections can be strengthened through shared facilities (i.e. shared parking lots for both land and water trails) and Trail Town development.

-Interpretive Plan – An interpretive master plan emphasizes the natural, cultural and stewardship components of a water trail. Plans typically provide information about under-represented themes and they can be used to encourage greater personal involvement by telling the stories of the water trail. Plans guide future implementation of wayside exhibits and other interpretive materials.

Project Examples:

-Susquehanna Greenway Interpretive Plan – www.susquehannagreenway.org

-River Towns – Lancaster York Heritage Regions - <http://www.lyhr.org/RiverTowns.asp>

-PA Wilds <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/info/pawilds/index.aspx>

Resources:

-Chesapeake Bay Gateway Network Interpretive Planning Assistance - <http://www.baygateways.net/assistance.cfm>.

-Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities

<http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/wtimpacts.pdf>

-Northern Forest Canoe Trail –

- Trip Planner <http://www.northernforestcanoetrail.org/>
- Baseline Economic Impact Study <http://www.uvm.edu/~snrvtdc/NFCT/>
- Art and Community Landscapes http://www.nefa.org/feature_canoeTrail/index.html

#7-DIVERSITY– Providing Opportunities for all

Water trails are non-exclusive. They benefit the able-bodied and the disabled, the young and the old, the disadvantaged and the advantaged. Water trails welcome all those that want to respectfully enjoy and appreciate the trail experience. Through shared work and play, tolerance and understanding are fostered. Broad-based participation in trail activities is achieved through affirmative outreach and recruitment.

Diversity Guidelines

-Outreach Programming – Many water trail managers are paddling enthusiasts who have already “come to the river”. To enhance the positive long-term impacts of water trails it is important to go beyond the *usual suspects* to get as many people involved as possible. Project managers should consider developing their own programs or partnering with other organizations who can assist getting people out onto the water.

Project Examples:

- Venture Outdoors www.ventureoutdoors.org
- Wildlands Conservancy – Bike & Boat Program
http://wildlandspa.org/recreation/bikeandboat_main.html

Resources:

- The Black & Brown Faces in America’s Wild Places, by Dudley Edmondson, publisher: Adventure Publications, Inc., 144 pages, softcover.
- Universal Trail Access Program <http://www.beneficialdesigns.com/rectech/water.html>
Adaptive paddling for paddlers with disabilities

#8-WELLNESS AND WELLBEING– Caring for Self and Others

Water trails are wholesome; fresh air and exercise bring fitness and health to trail users. While actively promoting these benefits, water trail users need reliable and accurate safety information and training to responsibly enjoy and appreciate water trails. Safe use requires a commitment to safe design and sound management. Awareness, education and safety skills training promote the wellness and well being of all water trail users.

Wellness and Wellbeing Guidelines

-Gather Data - Conduct a feasibility study. Identify needs, problems, and opportunities. Determine the funds and other resources required to establish and maintain the trail. Create a development plan and budget. Your best case for your trail system will be one that articulates benefits to the community.

-Raise Funds - Develop a fundraising plan based on projects in your development plan. Focus first on obtaining contributions of money, services, products, and labor from the local community. Then, extend your fundraising efforts to a larger, regional audience and to state and federal agencies and foundations that provide grants.

-Safety Information - Managers of water trails have a responsibility to provide safety information and to warn of hazards. No waterway is completely safe. However, by providing pertinent information about the waterway and good safety tips, hazardous conditions can be addressed appropriately. For example, users may be asked to portage around a particularly hazardous area.

-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.

-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.

-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.

Project Examples:

-Wildlands Conservancy - Walk for Wellness <http://wildlandspa.org/recreation/walk.html>

-Wyoming Valley Wellness Trails Partnership <http://www.wvwellnesstrails.org/>

Resources:

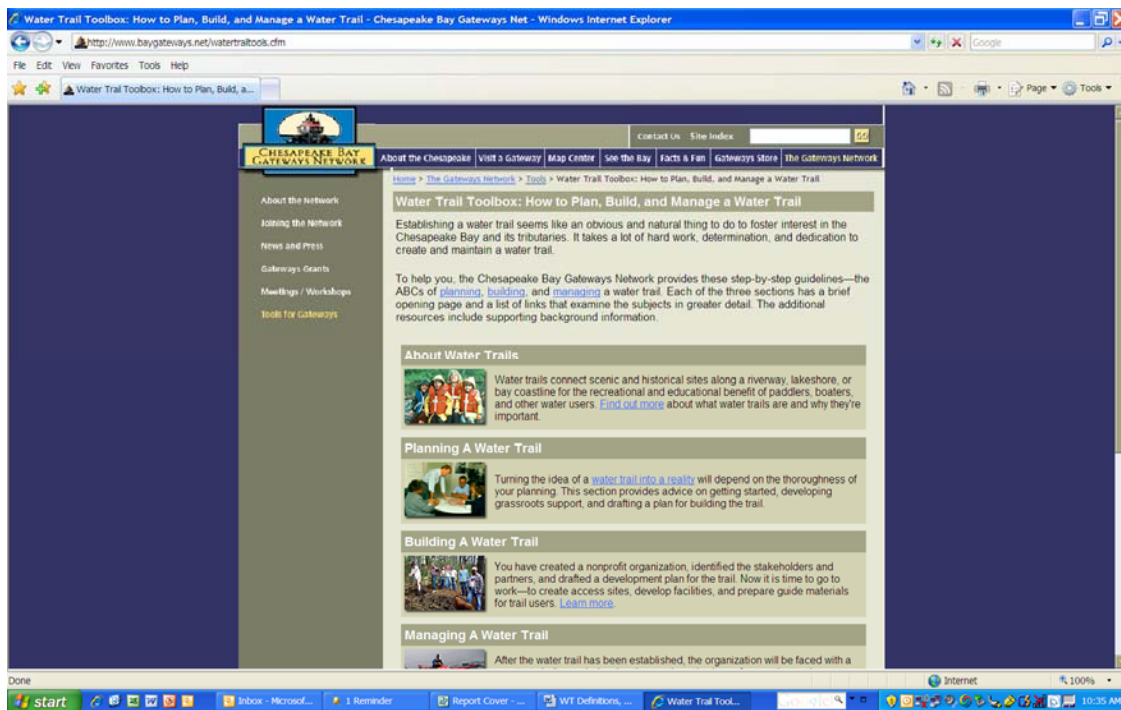
-PFBC Technical Guidance Program and Safe Paddling Tips www.fish.state.pa.us

-PANA – Keystone Active Zone & nrg Outdoors Program www.nrgoutdoors.org

- Logical, Lasting Launches http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/ht_launch_guide.html

Resources

A useful resource for water trail development is the Water Trail Toolbox that was put together by the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (CBGN). This online toolbox provides hands on information about developing a high quality water trail. The Toolbox is available at <http://www.baygateways.net/watertrailtools.cfm>.



Another important resource that cuts across several of the principles is the Community Toolbox that was prepared by the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program. The Community Toolbox provides information on a variety of topics to assist project managers in working in their communities. The Community Toolbox is available at <http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/>.

Other national organizations that have information about water trails are:

- American Canoe Association www.americancanoe.org
- American Rivers www.americanrivers.org
- American Trails www.americantrails.org

Water Trail Brainstorming – What do we want to work on next?



Trails Program.

On April 18, 2008 over 70 water trail stakeholders from Pennsylvania and additional states met in Danville, PA at the Geisinger Center for Health Research for the Water Trails Working Session. This was the second meeting of this kind in Pennsylvania. The first Water Trails Workshop was held in Harrisburg in May 2004. The Working Session was a follow-up to this earlier gathering and was focused on the long-term sustainability of the PA Water

Both the Workshop and Working Session included interactive sessions for participants to brainstorm project ideas that should be implemented at the statewide and local levels. Some of the sessions were set up to provide technical assistance on specific questions. We have complete documentation of the input from the statewide gatherings.

Many of the project ideas from these conferences have been acted upon. We have, for example, integrated water trails into the statewide tourism promotion system and we do have a set of guidelines for camping along water trails. Both of these project ideas came from the Water Trail Workshop. Many of the projects remain to be completed.

On the following pages are the major project recommendations from both the Water Trails Working Session and Water Trails Workshop. We will continue to implement as many as possible at the statewide level and continue to keep you updated as to our progress.

Our hope is that you will participate in implementing relevant projects in your area.



Water Trail Working Session (April 2008):
Open Space Discussion Groups
MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Stewardship & Sustainability

1. Volunteer recruitment, retention and training programs to define what is needed of volunteers and how they can help.
2. Improve marketing efforts related to water trails by forming partnerships with the media to assist in spreading the word.
3. Conduct educational outreach programming, particularly with local schools.
4. Provide information to users about access point ownership issues, where camping is available and other private property concerns so that users know where to and where not to go.

Rainbow of Users/Diversifying the Audience

1. Make sure that programs and activities are culturally appropriate for everyone considering differences in cultural expectations.
2. Develop and implement additional models for working with school districts.

Making Water Trails More User Friendly

1. Consider distances between access points to assure that water trails are accessible to families with small children.
2. Engage the younger generations and inner city/urban populations through educational programming with schools.
3. Develop creative marketing strategies to attract new users (i.e., geocaching).
4. Improve water quality so that new users have a quality recreation experience.
5. Provide free opportunities for people to use water trails and grant programs for organizations to get free equipment.

Insurance Liability

1. A risk management entity is needed to provide assistance for problem areas along trails.
2. Develop multi-county authorities to provide umbrella insurance policies.

Log Jams

1. Work with property owners for access to blocked areas, for permission before applying for grants and to determine ownership of the trees.
2. Leave root structure intact to prevent erosion.
3. Get statewide agencies involved.

Long-Term Management Strategies

1. Provide training for volunteer managers.
2. Identify successful models.
3. Coalitions as a model for long-term management.
4. Provide templates for: management plans for sustainability and forming a functioning coalition.

Marketing

1. Coordinate statewide marketing within and throughout the PA Water Trails System taking into account local considerations.
2. Focus on safety, stewardship and participation.
3. Develop a new web site that is a coordinated effort among state agencies including a database of groups.

4. Use new methods of advertising.
5. Market all of the ways that people can get involved with water trails including habitat and invasive species.

Maintaining the Primitive Nature of a Campsite

1. Policy recommendation – for islands develop a policy that facilities are on the shore at a PFBC access point.
2. Marketing strategy – “You pick up after your dog don’t you?”, “Going to the bathroom is fun.”
3. Develop guidelines for the minimal components that are needed for a primitive campsite.

Creating Realistic Expectations for the Public

1. Provide information to users about what they can expect so that users are prepared for the current conditions. First time users are not going to want to purchase a guide so there should be free information readily available.
2. Provide adequate signage to users and development of a statewide template for signage.
3. Develop educational components to water trail development.

Signage for Water Trails

1. Circulate standard signs templates to all organizations.
2. There is a need for a committee to look at the standardization throughout the water trails signage system and develop uniformity.
3. Coordinate with PennDOT to get signage in place.
4. Provide resources of where and how to get signage made.

Susquehanna River Water Trail System

1. Work together on funding applications to avoid competition among groups.
2. Establish guidelines for consistent signage.
3. Initiate an interstate coalition of water trail groups.
4. Develop a forum for connecting all of the water trails.
5. Develop a joint system or organization for management of the water trails (i.e., Susquehanna River Trail Association or Susquehanna Greenway).

Water Trail Workshop (May 2004): *Developing a Statewide System*
Open Space Discussion Groups
MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Starting a Water Trail – What Makes a Great Water Trail?

1. Include information about hazards on maps and on signage at access sites.
2. For every new bridge project PennDOT should provide river access – it should be standard procedure. Give PennDOT contacts to local project managers.
3. Develop a list of desired access points under or near bridges. Give this list to MPO and RPO for planning purposes.

Conservation is Business

1. Better communicate the benefits and successes of conservation to local governments.
2. Require an economic development component as part of River Conservation Plans.
3. Develop partnerships at all levels – local businesses, local officials, regional, state & federal.

Interpretive Art & Signage

1. Develop statewide consensus on maps/guides.
2. Develop statewide interpretation guidelines.
3. Develop a template for signs – design package.

Providing Camping Opportunities on Water Trails

1. Develop a sub-set of regulations for camping along water trails to allow for flexibility of use.

Universal & ADA Compliant Accessibility

1. Develop guidelines to assist with the design aspects of water access. Especially for getting into the water.
2. Develop appropriate signage at access points to let users know how an area is accessible.
3. Develop a clearinghouse of information regarding accessible water trail sites.

Recreation-Outreach beyond “Die Hard Enthusiasts”

1. In order to attract novice users project managers should do the following: include activities that will appeal to kids, incorporate both river and other community related aspects into events, involve the public in the planning, schedule events that attract novice users, get the press out early and often, work in conjunction with other existing events and organize specialized outings that will attract specific audiences.

Role of Non-Profits and Water Trail Partnerships

1. Develop a vehicle to bring water trail leaders together from around the state.
2. Develop a forum for sharing information among water trail project managers.
3. Evaluate existing programs.

Marketing

1. Incorporate water trails into the state tourist promotion system.
2. Develop a bigger and better PaddlePA – online and print versions of outreach materials.
3. Develop an informal system for continuing discussions about statewide marketing of water trails and the development of PaddlePA.

Water Trail Maps & Guides

1. Determine what users would like to see on water trail maps & guides.

2. Develop a system for providing more information in a take home guide and offering a simpler map those users will take on the water with them.
3. Identify as many ways as possible to distribute information about water trails.