



# 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](http://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](http://www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/watertrails-overview.lasso)
  - WT Database: [www.americancanoe.org/recreation/watertrails.lasso](http://www.americancanoe.org/recreation/watertrails.lasso)
  - Recognition program: [http://www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/arwt\\_all.lasso](http://www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/arwt_all.lasso)
  - CFS Grant program: [www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/cfs.lasso](http://www.americancanoe.org/stewardship/cfs.lasso)
- **American Rivers Blueways Program:**
  - [http://www.americanrivers.org/site/PageServer?pagename=AR7\\_BlueTrails](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](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/ht_publications.html)
- **Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network WT resources:** [www.baygateways.net/tools.cfm](http://www.baygateways.net/tools.cfm)
- **A few remnants of NAWT (North American Water Trails) on the web.**
  - [www.bayaccess.org/nawt.html](http://www.bayaccess.org/nawt.html)
- **Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Comm. Water Trails page:**
  - [www.fish.state.pa.us/Fish/watertrails/trailindex.htm](http://www.fish.state.pa.us/Fish/watertrails/trailindex.htm)
- **Washington Water Trails Ass'n FAQ page:** [www.wwta.org/about\\_us/faq.asp#1](http://www.wwta.org/about_us/faq.asp#1)
- **Northern Forest Canoe Trail:** [www.northernforestcanoetrail.org](http://www.northernforestcanoetrail.org)
- **Scuykill River Heritage Area:** [www.schuykillriver.org/](http://www.schuykillriver.org/)
- **Bartram Canoe Trails in Alabama:** <http://www.outdooralabama.com/outdoor-adventures/bartram.cfm>



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