

About Blue Trails



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WHY BLUE TRAILS?

Though many rivers have suffered mightily from decades of neglect, pollution, and other ills, communities are taking steps to reconnect with their rivers through recreation.

Rivers are again becoming a focal point for communities and a destination for boating, fishing, and other recreation. Paddlesports are one of the fastest growing sectors in the recreational industry. Fishing continues to enjoy a devoted following and outdoor fitness is very popular as well.

Blue trails reconnect communities to rivers and their recreational, economic, and cultural values. They inspire people to protect rivers from harm and repair damage from the past. Enabling residents and visitors alike to rediscover their rivers through recreation provides communities with a host of other benefits.

Enhance local economies: Blue trails and riverside greenways provide countless opportunities for economic renewal and growth. Increased tourism, jobs, and recreation-related spending positively impact local economies. Healthy river systems also provide for cost effective flood control, reduced infrastructure costs, and increased property values.

Protect the environment: Blue trails and riverside greenways protect important habitat and provide corridors for people and wildlife. They help improve water quality. By protecting land along rivers, greenways prevent soil erosion and filter pollution caused by agricultural and stormwater run-off. Riverside greenways also serve as natural floodplains. By restoring developed floodplains to their natural state, many communities are preventing potential flood damage.

Blue trails are often associated with conservation easements and land acquisition, stream buffer requirements, higher water quality standards, and requirements for stream flow protections. They can be the driving force behind removing dams that no longer make sense and building support for protections such as Wild & Scenic River designation. They are also hands-on environmental classrooms where people of all ages can experience and learn about the natural world.

Promote healthy living: Exercise is important for maintaining good health in all stages of life, however many people do not regularly exercise. The U.S. Surgeon General estimates that 60% of American adults are not regularly active and 40% of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity. Blue trails and riverside greenways provide a safe, inexpensive avenue for regular exercise for people living in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Preserve history and community identity: The migration and trading routes of Native Americans, the epic path drawn by Lewis and Clark – these journeys define America’s cultural identity and they happen in and along rivers. Blue trails and riverside greenways have the power to connect us to our heritage by preserving historic places and providing access to them. Through the recognition of the cultural, historic, and natural places, blue trails and riverside greenways enhance a sense of community identity and pride.

Reconnect people and places: Blue trails and riverside greenways reconnect us to our families and neighbors by creating common ground for social interaction and providing safe and healthy recreation for people of all ages. They bring us closer to nature by giving us access to blue and green spaces for recreation and relaxation.

Through them, we create a valuable legacy that honors the past, enriches the present, and provides a precious gift to the future.

Special thanks to the [Rails-To-Trails Conservancy](#) for their contribution to this section