

National Blueways System

On May 24, 2012, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar signed Secretarial Order 3321 establishing the National Blueways System. The System was established to provide a new national emphasis on the value and significance of a watershed approach to river conservation and encourage stakeholders to integrate their land and water stewardship efforts by forming watershed-based, community-led partnerships.

Nomination

National Blueways will be nominated by an established stakeholder partnership that has been established to promote conservation, recreation, education, and sustainable economic outcomes for the river and its watershed. Nominations will be self-initiated by stakeholder partnerships, and will require the sponsorship of a Federal or State agency.

Significance of the Secretarial Order

The National Blueways System will be the first designation to recognize community-led partnerships that approach rivers and their watersheds holistically, from headwaters to mouth and across the watershed, and integratively, incorporating both land and water resources in their approach to conservation, recreation, education, and sustainable economic activities.



Significance of National Blueway Designation

Designation as a National Blueway will be a prestigious award, providing national recognition and attention to the on-the-ground efforts of the organizations involved in the partnership. Designated National Blueways will also be prioritized for existing funding and technical assistance, and the Department of the Interior will coordinate its efforts with those of other federal agencies in support of designated rivers and their watersheds.



Implementation

The Secretarial Order will be implemented with the help of a National Blueways Committee, comprising representatives from the Department of the Interior Bureaus and other Federal agencies that participate in the National Blueways System. The Committee will establish the nomination process and criteria using several pilot projects during 2012, and nomination materials will be made available on the Department of the Interior web site.

The Connecticut River Watershed National Blueway

The Secretarial Order established the Connecticut River and Watershed as the nation's first National Blueway. The Connecticut River and Watershed will serve as a

model for future designations, due to its decades-old partnerships including over 40 organizations; protection of over 2 million acres of habitat within the watershed; recreational access to the river, its tributaries, and public lands; and educational efforts aimed at both rural and urban populations.