



Rock River Trail Initiative
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Rock River Water Trail is new National Water Trail

The Rock River Water Trail has been designated into the National Water Trails System by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, according to a statement by the National Park Service in Washington, DC.

The National Water Trails System is a distinctive national network of exemplary water trails of local and regional significance that are cooperatively supported and sustained. The trails system has been established to protect and restore America's rivers, shorelines and waterways and to increase access to outdoor recreation on shorelines and waterways.

"We are extremely pleased and honored to have been designated a national water trail," said Greg Farnham of Hustisford, Wis., coordinator of the Rock River Trail Initiative.

"For the past two years our management council has worked closely with the Wisconsin and Illinois Departments of Natural Resources and the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program in Milwaukee and Chicago to establish a water trail on the Rock River."

"We understand that the Rock River Water Trail is the first national water trail in both Wisconsin and Illinois."

The Rock River Water Trail links 11 counties in both states along the 320-mile river course, from the headwaters above the Horicon Marsh in Fond du Lac and Dodge Counties to the confluence with the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois. The water trail is a delineated path on the river that connects access sites, resting places and attractions for users of water craft.

"During the planning process our council members contacted each of the counties, municipalities, park districts and park departments along the river," offered Frank Schier of Rockford, Ill., founder and coordinator of the Rock River Trail Initiative.

"In addition we spoke with community organizations with interests in public health, resource conservation, public recreation, tourism and economic development. The water trail is truly a locally-supported effort."

Benefits of the designation include national promotion and visibility, with use of the National Water Trails System logo, and opportunities to obtain technical assistance and funding for planning and implementing water trail projects.

"The National Park Service has found that as a result of designation, national water trails can provide tangible benefits to river communities," added Farnham.

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"These benefits include a positive economic impact from increased tourism, assistance with sustainability projects, increased protection for outdoor recreation and water resources, and contributions to public health and quality of life from maintaining and restoring watershed resources."

Farnham and Schier emphasized that achievement of national water trail designation highlights the collaborative process of local community interest, support and participation along the river.

"Each of the 11 counties, 37 cities and villages and local organizations has stepped forward to affirm the Rock River as a vital natural resources and backbone for local recreational, cultural and historical interests, and economic and community development activities."

"What a wonderful achievement for all concerned," they added.

Information on the National Water Trails System is available at <http://watertrails.nps.gov/watertrails/>
The website of the Rock River Trail is www.rockrivertrail.com.

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