

West Virginia's Designated Water Trails

West Virginia Senate Outdoor Recreation Committee

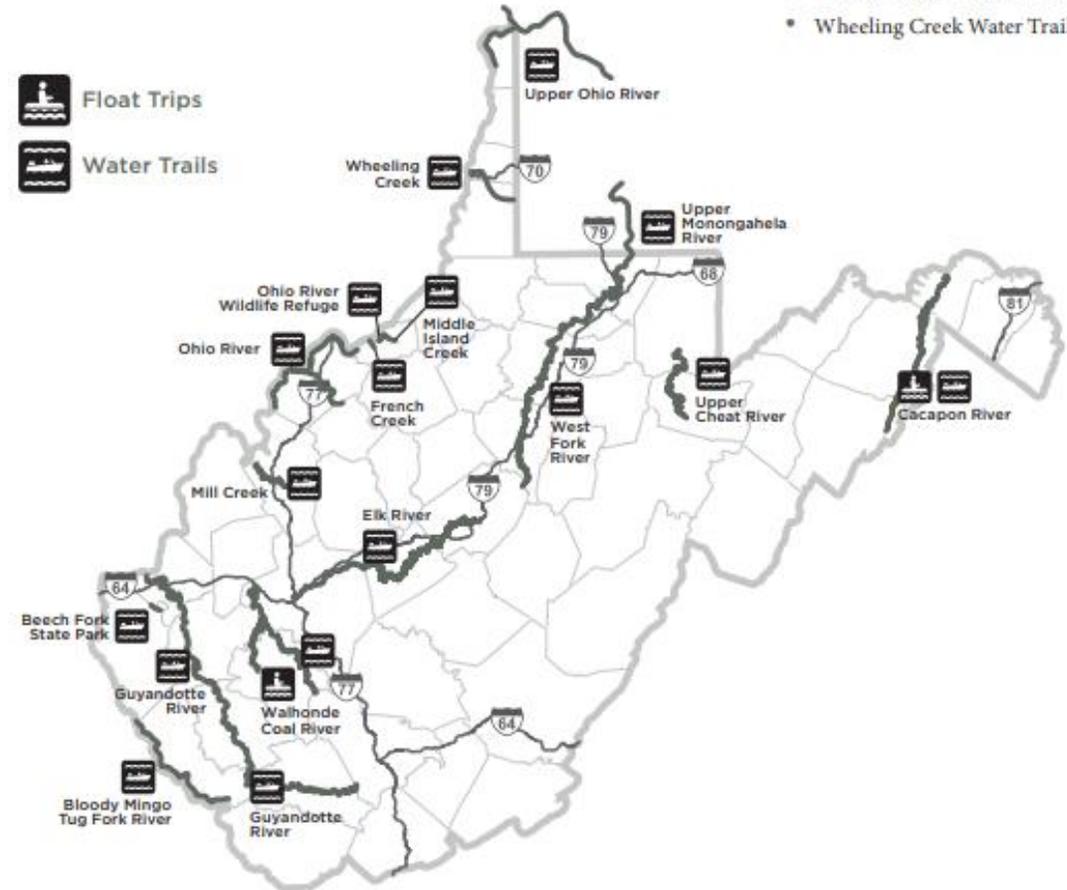
January 24, 2024



A water trail is a route on a stream, river or lake that provides boaters with a recreational, scenic, historical and/or educational opportunity.

The West Virginia Recreational Trail Advisory Board and the West Virginia Department of Transportation recognize the increasing popularity of water sports, especially paddle sports on the lakes and streams of the state. Currently, there are 16 designated water trails in West Virginia:

- Beech Fork State Park Water Trail
- Bloody Mingo Tug Fork Water Trail
- Cacapon River Water Trail
- Coal River Walhonde Water Trail
- Elk River Water Trail
- French Creek Water Trail
- Guyandotte River Water Trail
- Middle Island Creek Water Trail
- Mill Creek Water Trail
- Ohio River Water Trail
- Ohio River Wildlife Refuge Water Trail
- Upper Cheat River Water Trail
- Upper Monongahela River Water Trail
- Upper Ohio River Water Trail (Pennsylvania)
- West Fork River Water Trail
- Wheeling Creek Water Trail



Designated Trails-

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Fishing Regulations.

mapwv.gov (WV Trails Inventory)

What is a Water Trail?

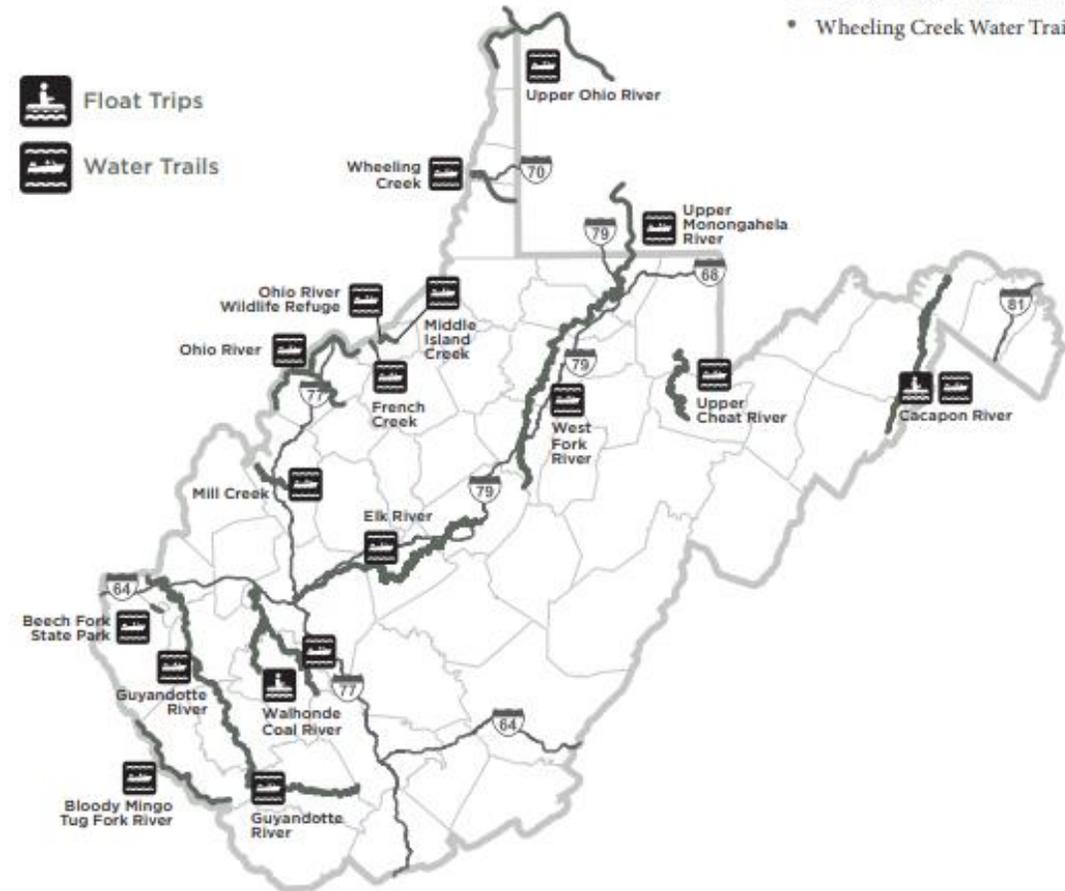
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Basic Criteria for a Water Trail

- A water trail is a route on a stream, river or lake that provides boaters with a recreational, scenic, historical or educational opportunity.

- 1. One local organization must agree to be the primary sponsor of the trail and manage the trail.**
 - a. The primary sponsor of the trail may be either a state or local government agency or a non-profit organization registered with the West Virginia Secretary of State.
 - b. The primary sponsor of the trail is responsible for developing a proposal for designating and managing the trail.
 - c. Any number of organizations may partner with the primary sponsor in sponsoring, developing, maintaining and managing the trail.
 - d. Any application for grant funding for the trail or trailside amenities submitted to the West Virginia Recreational Trail Advisory Board must be approved by the primary sponsor of the trail.
 - e. The primary sponsor of the trail is responsible for coordinating maintenance and upkeep of any public access points, trailside amenities, signage, maps, guides, or website developed with West Virginia Recreational Trail Advisory Board awarded grant funds.

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2. The water corridor must be contiguous or nearly contiguous waterway or series of waterways open to recreational use by paddlers or boaters.

- a. At a minimum, the stream must be deep and wide enough for a modern johnboat, canoe, kayak or similar boat to maneuver with no great difficulty.
- b. The proposed water trail should primarily be flat water. Some shoals, rapids or falls are allowed but whitewater should not be the major feature of the stream.
- c. Plans to construct portage trails around obstacles (such as falls or dams) or between water bodies should be included in the initial request for designation as a water trail.

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3. The trail must have ample public access points for paddlers.

- a. Public access points should be located about every five to ten miles or so along the water body. If the stream or water body does not currently have sufficient public access, suggested locations for additional public access should be included with the initial request for designation as a water trail.
- b. At a minimum, public access points must include parking and a path or ramp to the water body.
- c. Public access points may include any other normal trailside amenity such as informational kiosk, outdoor classrooms, restroom, benches, campsite, fire ring, picnic table, trash receptacle, etc.
- d. Portage trails connecting public access points should be as short as possible and should be free from brush, branches or other obstacles.
- e. Some state or local agency or non-profit organization must agree to maintain each public access point and its amenities.
- f. Construction of new public access points must be coordinated with WVDNR)/Wildlife Resources Section and must meet all WVDNR and States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) design criteria.

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4. A map, guide, signage, web site and/or other public outreach must be developed to provide complete information about the trail.

- a. The map or guide must be developed and distributed free in cooperation with the local Convention and Visitors Bureaus and the WV Division of Tourism. Specialty maps (laminated, printed on bandanas or with other special characteristics) may be sold but the basic map printed on paper must be distributed free.
- b. Accurate information must be included in the map or guide. All publications advertising the water trail must include mileage between services, the level of difficulty, basic water safety information and information concerning low-impact practices (Leave No Trace Code of Outdoor Ethics or similar program) as approved by WVDNR.
- c. Signage should be developed to inform users on the river of river access points, camping facilities, portages and hazards.
- d. Road signage should be developed to direct users to the river access points. These signs must comply with the Department of Transportation's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

Basic Criteria for a Water Trail Summary

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- 2. The water corridor must be contiguous or nearly contiguous waterway or series of waterways open to recreational use by paddlers or boaters.**
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- 4. A map, guide, signage, web site and/or other public outreach must be developed to provide complete information about the trail.**

Procedure for Designation as a Water Trail

- A water trail is a route on a stream, river or lake that provides boaters with a recreational, scenic, historical or educational opportunity.

- 1. Draft application to the Division of Highways, containing but not limited to sponsors, mapping, agency coordination.**
- 2. Public involvement, including a public meeting.**
- 3. Final submission to the West Virginia Recreational Trail Advisory Board.**
- 4. Review and vote by WVRTAB.**
- 5. Decision/Designation.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

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