

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Water Trails

Creating public access to explore our nation's waterways

The National Park Service provides planning assistance to improve public access and enjoyment of close-to-home rivers and waterways.





NPS-RTCA

The National Park Service **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program**

About Us

The **National Park Service**, through the **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance** program (NPS-RTCA), has supported locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States for more than 30 years. NPS-RTCA assists communities in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. Through an annual application process, community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies can apply for NPS-RTCA technical assistance.

Our Model

Across the country, NPS-RTCA staff pair their professional planning, design and technical expertise with your team and knowledge experts from the community. Together, our 1 to 2 year-long partnership works to achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision. Based on the complexity of the project, we tailor our assistance to meet your needs and help you navigate a path to success. Although NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, we can help your organization identify potential funding sources for your project.

Community Engagement

As a collaborative partner, we strive to achieve successful project outcomes by engaging communities in the visioning, planning and implementation of each project. We encourage strong community partnerships and facilitate meaningful engagement to ensure your conservation and outdoor recreation projects last into perpetuity.

Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky

Tennessee RiverLine: A Multi-state Strategy

Spanning four states, nine major dams and 652 miles, the Tennessee River flows between Knoxville, Tennessee and Paducah, Kentucky. However, despite its length, many communities rooted along the river have historically been disconnected from the waterway.

The vision for the Tennessee RiverLine began with landscape architect students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In collaboration with the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley Authority, NPS-RTCA identified new project partners and funding resources, as well as assisted with the development of a strategic plan for their vision. NPS-RTCA and the university organized partnership forums, leadership retreats and public workshops to collect river recreation concepts from 5 pilot communities. The concepts led to the establishment of the Tennessee RiverTowns Program which is galvanizing 15 communities in creating new river access and infrastructure that will connect their residents to the river.



Ohio

Cuyahoga River Access

The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio was once known for catching fire in 1969. However, according to USA Today, it is now recognized as the number one destination for urban kayakers. More than 50 years later, the efforts from Cuyahoga Valley National Park, local governments and river management partners throughout the watershed have improved water quality, built stewardship and increased outdoor recreation opportunities.

Working in collaboration with the park and regional community partners, NPS-RTCA mapped the river, identified hazards and determined access points along the 90-mile waterway. To promote paddling resources, NPS-RTCA held community engagement events, created a website, developed a social media presence and assisted in the formation of the Cuyahoga River Water Trail Partners – a grassroots collaboration of more than 25 organizations, agencies and communities. The water trail partners produced a brochure map, installed signage and got the Cuyahoga River designated as a state water trail shortly after the 50th anniversary of the last river fire.



Today, as Ohio's 13th State Designated Water Trail, the Cuyahoga River is welcoming back visitors and wildlife – boosting tourism and economic development for communities along the trail.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who are we?

The **National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA)** assists communities, public land managers and nonprofit organizations with conservation and outdoor recreation projects. NPS-RTCA provides professional planning, design and technical expertise to help achieve your conservation and outdoor recreation vision.

Does NPS-RTCA provide funding?

No. NPS-RTCA is not a grant-funding program, but we can help you identify potential funding sources for your project.

What kind of projects does NPS-RTCA support?

Our program staff support locally-led projects that develop or restore parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as create outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.

Are NPS-RTCA staff contractors?

The NPS-RTCA model is to combine the skills of our staff with those of your organization. It's a partnership – we work alongside your team and local knowledge experts to assist with the work that you are leading.

How much time do NPS-RTCA staff spend on each project?

Typically, NPS-RTCA staff collaborate with communities for 1 to 2 years on conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Depending on the complexity of the project and our staffing capacity, the time frame may be extended.

Who can apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?

NPS-RTCA provides services to established community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, national parks, and local, state and federal agencies.

How can you apply for assistance from NPS-RTCA?

NPS-RTCA support is provided when we are invited to assist you on a conservation or outdoor recreation project. We encourage you to contact us to discuss your project before applying. The application is available on our website: www.nps.gov/RTCA

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