

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ESTABLISHING BLUEWAYS IN ONE'S COMMUNITY

A blueway is very similar in concept to a greenway except rather than being a trail across land, this is a water trail. Creating blueways in one's community can provide a venue to promote river stewardship and encourage "leave no trace" ethics. It also provides information about access points and routes for canoes, kayaks, and motorized watercrafts as well as encourages safe use of waterways and designated public access points. See example and an interactive map at www.wku.edu/blueways.



Two Studies on the Economic Impact of Blueways

An economic impact study was conducted on 58 miles of river in the western section of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail in the Adirondack Mountains of New York during the Summer of 2006. Three public campgrounds, dozens of remote campsites, over fifty lodging establishments are located on the waterway. It is estimated that approximately 28,000 visitors paddle a portion of the 750 mile Northern Forest Canoe Trail each year spending an estimated \$4.4 million in the local economies. After accounting for multiplier effects, these expenditures created \$3.3 million in value added to the local economy, \$6.2 million in total economic impact, supported an estimated 134 jobs and provided \$2.1 million in personal income.

The most common expenses were lodging (54%), restaurants (59%), groceries (56%) and transportation (45%). Only 9.4% used guides or outfitters and 31% reported spending money on other retail purchases with each paddler group spending on average \$215 in local economies with the non-locals spending on average \$414-\$498 each trip or \$46 per person per day primarily on food, lodging and transportation. Depending on the infrastructure in each of the areas, some local economies tended to capitalize considerably more than other areas in capturing tourism dollars.

A similar study in the North Carolina coastal plains reported nearly \$55 million in paddler economic impacts. Both reports suggested that the majority of users appeared to be from a 4 to 5 hour radius and tended to be fairly self supporting with only a small portion (less than 10% used outfitters or guides) and many others doing day trips. The greatest amount of revenue was during multi-day canoe races held several times a year and suggested more such events be planned to encourage larger number of people to come to the area more often.



The results of the two studies suggest that paddler recreation and tourism can positively impact local economies. Expenditures by visitors coming to an area to paddle can help stabilize and diversify the local economy, supporting a greater mix of businesses in rural communities. Communities with developed tourism infrastructure situated close to well-traveled waterways appear most successful at capturing visitor dollars. Economic benefits can be greatly increased by expanding camping and lodging opportunities on both public and private lands, constructing rustic shelters to attract additional users, developing and supporting guide training and promotion initiatives, holding organized events such as canoe races and festivals, and participating in collaborative marketing efforts.

In both studies, the economic impact of the blueways on local economies was fairly modest compared to the overall tourism dollars spent in each area. Rather than creating new markets, both studies recommended working with existing businesses to provide additional food, lodging and outfitting services and increase the number of special events to encourage longer and more frequent stays.

CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING BLUEWAYS

CREATING A BLUEWAYS BECOMES A CLASS PROJECT



Similar in concept to a greenway but focused on Kentucky's waterways, the first ever "Blueway in Kentucky" has been developed for over 185 miles of rivers in Warren and parts of Allen, Logan, Butler, Barren and Edmonson counties. The project was designed to increase river stewardship and improve the quality of life in South Central Kentucky by improving river awareness, conservation, improving river access, and ultimately by bringing the rivers back to the people. Blueways also tend to encourage economic development and tourism through the enhancement and promotion of the existing river resources.

An ultimate goal of the Blueways Project is to become a designated Water Trail as recognized by the American Canoe Association Water Trails Program and to expand the Blueways Trail to other rivers throughout the Commonwealth.

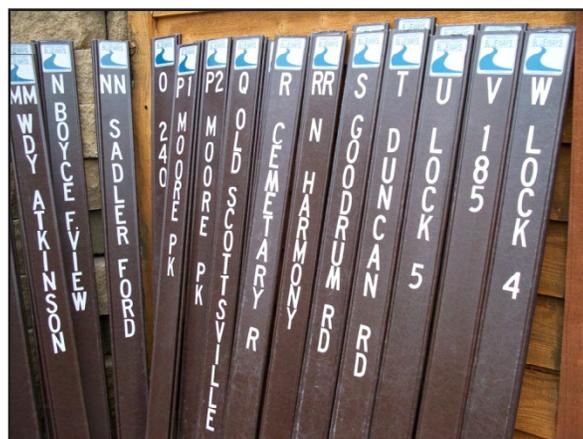
Funded through grants from the Kentucky Department of Local Development's Recreational Trails Program and WKU Provost's Initiative for Excellence, Western Kentucky University students did much of the data collection for the project and assisted in installing the designated markers at each of the access points along the river ways.

At the heart of the Blueways project is a web page at www.wku.edu/blueways. The web site was developed by Kevin Cary with the WKU GIS center with assistance from We Make Things Happen Corporation and includes river stewardship information, access points for canoeing, pictures of the access points, pictures of segments on rivers, identifies motorized river segments, access points suitable for trailers, and various river related links.

"We are continually adding to this project. Our Web page is a work in progress", said Steve Spencer, the Blueways Project Coordinator. "A companion brochure and detailed map are now in the works and will soon be downloadable from the website".

Dr. Steve Spencer, a professor at Western Kentucky University who teaches outdoor leadership skills through adventure tourism activities stated, "A strong emphasis beyond promoting river stewardship has been to improve access to rivers. Warren County Parks and the Bowling Green, Warren County Greenways have played an integral role throughout this process."

Signage identifying all public river access points have been posted at river access points at locations noted on the website. The signs resemble the standardized trail sign utilized throughout our National Parks and Forest Service lands and include the Blueways logo.



Blueways signs marking access and river miles

CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING BLUEWAYS

Inside of the brochure includes the list of access points, river miles between each and GPS coordinates.

SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY RIVERS ACCESS POINTS

Bays Fork, Barren River, Gasper River, Clear Fork of Gasper River, Drakes Creek, West Fork of Drakes Creek, Middle Fork of Drakes Creek, Trammel Fork of Drakes Creek and Green River

<p>GREEN RIVER</p> <p>U-V 2 m. Lock # 5 Rd. (1749). To Hwy 185 (GPS-U: 37.169387, -86.400072) (GPS-V: 37.154255, -86.408420)</p> <p>V-W 19 m. Hwy 185 to Lock # 4 Woodbury (403) (GPS-V: 37.154255, -86.408420) (GPS-W: 37.180540, -86.62379)</p> <p>BARREN RIVER</p> <p>BB-A 6 m. Hwy101 to Martinsville Ford (961) (GPS-BB: 36.933334, -86.204718) (GPS-A: 36.913633, -86.229182)</p> <p>A-B 5 m. Martinsville Ford (961) to Iron Bridge Road (poor access) (GPS-A: 36.913633, -86.229182) (GPS-B: 36.941342, -86.258562)</p> <p>B-C 19 m. Iron Bridge (poor access) to Weldon Peete Park on Old Louisville Rd. (GPS-B: 36.941342, -86.258562) (GPS-C: 37.006431, -86.410224)</p> <p>C-D 1 m. Weldon Peete Park on Old Louisville Rd. to State Street Bridge (Dangerous rapid-- Portage river left) (GPS-C: 37.006431, -86.410224) (GPS-D: 37.000443, -86.428694)</p> <p>*D-E 2 m. State Street Bridge to Beech Bend Park (private) (GPS-D: 37.000443, -86.428694) (GPS-E: 37.019438, -86.398690)</p> <p>*E-F 4 m. Beech Bend Park (private) to Boat Landing Road Park (GPS-E: 37.019438, -86.398690) (GPS-F: 37.020274, -86.447139)</p> <p>F-GG 8 m. Boat Landing Road Park to H.P.Thomas Landing (Lonnie White Ramp) (Barren River Rd) (GPS-F: 37.020274, -86.447139) (GPS-GG: 37.035418, -86.497866)</p> <p>GG-G 9 m. H.P.Thomas Landing (Lonnie White Ramp) (Barren River Rd) to Greencastle Rd. (Lock #4) (263) (GPS-GG: 37.035418, -86.497866) (GPS-G: 37.090080, -86.498867)</p> <p>G-H 9 m. Greencastle Rd. (Lock #4) (263) to Gasper Confluence (1435) (GPS-G: 37.090080, -86.498867) (GPS-H: 37.084907, -86.577702)</p> <p>H-W 8 m. Gasper Confluence (1435) to Lock # 4 Woodbury (403) (Green River) (GPS-H: 37.084907, -86.577702) (GPS-W: 37.180540, -86.623279)</p> <p>BAYS FORK</p> <p>AA-A 4 m. Cemetery Road to Martinsville Ford (961) (Barren River Road) (GPS-AA: 36.903912, -86.234964) (GPS-A: 36.913633, -86.229182)</p> <p>GASPER RIVER</p> <p>*RR-KK 4 m. Old River Road (Logan Co), ford to Hullet Lane (private access) (GPS-RR: 36.977836, -86.681278) (GPS-KK: 36.993844, -86.659086)</p> <p>KK-K 3 m. Hullet Lane (private access) to 1083 Access (GPS-KK: 36.993844, -86.659086) (GPS-K: 36.991171, -86.630910)</p> <p>K-J 5 m. 1083 Access to Jackson Bridge on Jackson Bridge Rd. (626) (GPS-K: 36.991171, -86.630910) (GPS-J: 37.020627, -86.606730)</p> <p>J-I 4 m. Jackson Bridge on Jackson Bridge Rd. (626) to Morgantown Rd. (Hwy. 231) (Only whitewater stretch (Class II) in Warren Co.) (GPS-J: 37.020627, -86.606730) (GPS-I: 37.053427, -86.596076)</p> <p>I-H 11 m. Morgantown Rd. (Hwy. 231) to Gasper/Barren Confluence (1435) (GPS-I: 37.053427, -86.596076) (GPS-H: 37.084907, -86.577702)</p> <p>CLEAR FORK OF GASPER RIVER</p> <p>JJ-K 6 m. Browing Rd Access to 1083 Access on Gasper (GPS-JJ: 36.949167, -86.637667) (GPS-K: 36.991171, -86.630910)</p>	<p>DRAKES CREEK</p> <p>L-M 6 m. 240 Woodburn Allen Spg. Rd. to Johnson County Park on Mt. Lebanon Church Rd. (Trammel Fork of Drakes Creek) (GPS-L: 36.842410, -86.416404) (GPS-M: 36.873116, -86.372368)</p> <p>M-P1 or P2 6 m. Johnson County Park on Mt. Lebanon Church Rd. (Trammel Fork of Drakes Creek) to Phil Moore Park on 231 (GPS-M: 36.873116, -86.372368) (GPS-P1: 36.895313, -86.380890) (GPS-P2: 36.899229, -86.380697)</p> <p>P1 or P2-Q 6 m. Phil Moore Park #1 or #2 on 231 to Old Scottsville Rd. (GPS-P1: 36.895313, -86.380890) (GPS-P2: 36.899229, -86.380697) (GPS-Q: 36.935317, -86.392284)</p> <p>Q-R 7 m. Old Scottsville Rd. to Cemetery Rd. (Poor access) (GPS-Q: 36.935317, -86.392284) (GPS-R: 36.973322, -86.392284)</p> <p>R-C 8 m. Cemetery Rd. (Poor access) to Weldon Peete Park on Old Louisville Rd. (Barren River) (GPS-R: 36.973322, -86.392284) (GPS-C: 37.006431, -86.410224)</p> <p>WEST FORK OF DRAKES CREEK</p> <p>NN-MM 5 m. Sadler Ford Bridge (Simpson Co.) to Woody Atkinson Rd. Bridge (Simpson Co.) (GPS-NN: 36.808274, -86.512570) (GPS-MM: 36.802224, -86.461047)</p> <p>MM-LL 4 m. Woody Atkinson Rd. Bridge (Simpson Co.) to 622 (GPS-MM: 36.802224, -86.461047) (GPS-LL: 36.837904, -86.423474)</p> <p>LL-L 1 m. 622 to 240 (Confluence with Drakes Creek) (GPS-LL: 36.837904, -86.423474) (GPS-L: 36.842410, -86.416404)</p> <p>MIDDLE FORK OF DRAKES CREEK</p> <p>S-T 1 m. Goodrum Rd. to Duncan Rd. Ford (GPS-S: 36.818683, -86.394490) (GPS-T: 36.827782, -86.409716)</p> <p>T-L 3 m. Duncan Rd. Ford to 240 (Drakes Creek) (GPS-T: 36.827782, -86.409716) (GPS-L: 36.842410, -86.416404)</p> <p>TRAMMEL FORK OF DRAKES CREEK</p> <p>O-N 2 m. 240 Woodburn Allen Spgs. Rd. to Boyce-Fairview Rd. 9 (GPS-O: 36.827468, -86.331517) (GPS-N: 36.844968, -86.349138)</p> <p>N-M 7 m. Boyce-Fairview Rd to Johnson Co. Park on Mt. Lebanon Church Rd. (GPS-N: 36.844968, -86.349138) (GPS-M: 36.873116, -86.372368)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerning river access from private property, get permission from owners prior to putting on the river. • Where a state or county road bridge crosses a river, the river may be accessed from the county or government land beneath the bridge. • Streams and river waters are owned by people of the commonwealth. The land beneath the river and on the banks is owned by adjacent landowners. • ALWAYS check the weather before entering the water. </div>
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www.wku.edu/blueways



Students at Western Kentucky University helped develop the first Blueways in Kentucky - A 185 mile river trail through six counties -

Now that is something to write home about. WKU Students helped in the mapping and sign placement.



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA WATERWAYS

Virginia is blessed with a multitude of waterways. The Spearhead Trails region in particular has river segments that are suitable for everything from flatwater floating, all the way to Class V whitewater which should be navigated only by experts.

When one looks at the whitewater opportunities, the American Whitewater Association identifies numerous rivers and sections in SW Virginia. Many of these runs are for Kayaks only and are extreme. Whitewater boating carries inherent risks and paddlers running whitewater creeks and streams understand this inherent risk. For tourism purposes, those individuals looking for extreme whitewater experiences are fairly independent. Most whitewater boaters of this variety have their own equipment and due to the infrequent water levels that make the rivers extreme, there are not many public access points on these creeks and streams. Focusing on rafting venues and exploring the possibility of adding additional elements during times when rivers may not be flowing as much may be the better option.

In SW. Virginia, tourism related paddling is a relatively untapped market. The wide variety of streams offers unlimited options to be developed for the middle paddling range market. In fact, for paddling to become a financial benefit, marketing and livery operation must be developed. One ideal area to be considered for tourism development and livery operation is the Clinch River from St. Paul to Dungannon *(See APPENDIX B: Rivers & River Accesses for more on the Clinch and other rivers in Southwest Virginia.)*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Establishing and promoting blueways along rivers such as the Clinch River through Wise, Scott & Russell counties and the Powell River through Lee County into Tennessee is recommended. Creating greater river access along the Cranes Nest, Russell Fork and Prater into communities such as Haysi should also be encouraged and could become the first step to developing an opportunity for an entrepreneur to open a campground or start a canoe livery service.

The SSRA should work with river communities to encourage the development of campsites, signage, and portage trails, as well as to promote the trail in the media. At the same time, local communities and SSRA must work together to proactively plan and implement strategies to minimize the negative social and environmental impacts of increased visitation, which may include the spread of invasive aquatic species, wildlife disturbance, increased traffic, overcrowding of waterways, and land degradation at campsites.