

*#Makeyoursplash*



**Commemorating Our Commitment to River Protection:** Wild and scenic rivers capture the essence of rivers that surge, ramble, gush, wander, and weave. From the remote rivers of Alaska, Idaho and Oregon to rivers threading through the rural countryside of New Hampshire, Ohio and Massachusetts, to the protected waterways in urban population centers from California to Pennsylvania, they offer the grand experiences that impress the indifferent and inspire the choir. They are the life-blood of the American story.

That story began in the 1960s when outdoor enthusiasts and visionary congressional leaders demanded the creation of a protected system of free-flowing rivers to balance America's policy of rampant dam building. The passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 created the National Wild and Scenic River System, which today protects more than 12,000 miles of rivers in 40 states and Puerto Rico for recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, scenery, and cultural heritage.

In 2018, we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of our Wild and Scenic River System by inspiring community building around river stewardship and advocacy to safeguard future free-flowing water.

## Looking Back, Looking Forward: Relationship Building

Eight national river organizations and agencies—American Rivers, American Whitewater, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, River Network and River Management Society—united on collaborative anniversary planning beginning in 2017. River Management Society served as the fiscal sponsor for collective funding. While interagency cooperation has been happening long-term through the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, the strengthening of non-profit relationships and the government/non-profit partnerships forged during the anniversary are unprecedented.

Also unique is collaboration with a companion team of trail organizations including the Partnership for the National Trails System and American Hiking Society. This trail group formed to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Trails Act, which was signed into law along with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Together, the rivers and trails 50<sup>th</sup> teams provided resources and outreach both for the anniversaries separately as well as together under *#FindYourWay*.

Looking forward, a Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition of engaged river non-profit organizations has formed to protect and defend existing and potential Wild and Scenic Rivers and broaden the river conservation movement by raising awareness about their value. With capacity, advocacy and communications goals, the emergence of this group following the anniversary has the potential to better unify the river non-profit sector, much in the way the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council has unified the federal river agencies for many years.

### **#MakeYourSplash: Media and Building Relationship**

A [new anniversary section of rivers.gov](#) released in early 2017 included marketing and messaging materials, the Wild and Scenic Rivers 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo (available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#)), videos, event planning resources, [national event map](#), Junior Ranger tools and press kit. Website analytics show that visitation on Rivers.gov, overall, increased 24% in 2018, and anniversary resources were viewed more than 33,000 times. Visitation before and during the official anniversary of the Act on October 2, 2018 was almost three times the daily average. Nearly 800 people signed up to receive an email river updates newsletter that published seven editions during 2018. An online [press kit](#) served to support the more than 9,100 articles published online by news outlets. Highlights from this coverage include:

- [USA Today's Wild and Scenic River photo story](#) (April 5)
- [NRS Wild & Scenic Wednesday's Instagram weekly feature](#) (ongoing) and [Duct Tape Diaries blog post](#) (June 4)
- [Backpacker Magazine's Best River Trips article](#) (June 15)
- [Department of Interior blog post on rivers and trails](#) (October 1)
- [High Country News Wild and Scenic River photo story](#) (October 2)
- Canoe & Kayak Magazine's Voice for Wild and Scenic (four part series started October 29)



[#MakeYourSplash](#), part of the [#FindYourWay](#) video series on rivers and trails, illustrates the values of rivers to families.



[Wild Olympics](#) showcases the many values of rivers flowing from Washington's lush Olympic Peninsula and educates viewers about efforts to protect them.



[How You Can Shape the Future of Rivers](#) is an animated infographic primer on Wild and Scenic Rivers from Your Forests Your Future.

- [Travels With Darley television episode](#) (Aired on PBS stations nationwide starting March 26)

[22 river videos](#) created for the anniversary by various non-profit and agency partners covered topics including diversity, history, community river stewardship, citizen involvement in river stewardship and current designation efforts. Four of these films were selected for the 2018 Wild and Scenic Film Festival. Originally shown in January at this annual California/Nevada festival, 58 communities hosted rivers-focused on-tour film festivals throughout 2018 generating \$70,000 to support river work by hosting organizations. Collectively, these films were viewed online around 70,000 times, and one film, [Run Wild Run Free](#), which debuted and was streamed live online on October 2, 2018 garnered more than 20,000 views.

Merchandising relationships with seven select companies allowed individual and bulk purchasing of 14 different logo-themed products including pins, magnets, paddle medallions, stickers, temporary tattoos, patches, hats, t-shirts, socks, beverage cozies, water bottles, cell phone dry sacks, safety whistles and rivers booklets. In total, nearly 36,000 products were sold generating \$48,000 in sales. Companies donating a percentage of proceeds from the sales of these items contributed, in total, over \$7,000 to support the anniversary. In addition to merchandise, 25,000 river Leave No Trace hangtags and 60,000 informational brochures with maps were produced by the agencies and distributed to the public at local river events. Fourteen travelling displays were produced by the agencies, also for use at local river events with agency office involvement. Announced in late 2018, the United States Postal Service unveiled [twelve new Forever stamps of Wild and Scenic Rivers](#).

Online event planning resources and three event planning webinars held the winter and spring of 2018 helped communities plan partnership-driven local events celebrating Wild and Scenic Rivers and other local waterways. Overall, 250 river events took place in 164 different cities in 36 states. These events involved 191 community partners and 56 agency offices and collectively engaged more than 82,000 people. Events took many forms including film showings, speakers, conferences, clean-up and stewardship activities, paddling trips, river festivals, symphonies and races.



Wonder where else the rivers 50<sup>th</sup> logo ended up? Watch this [anniversary event highlights video](#).



The twelve new 2019 Forever stamps from the United States Postal Service feature stunning images from professional photographers Michael Melford and Bob Wick and renowned river historian and photographer Tim Palmer.

## River History Speaker Tour



Photo credit: Kial James

River history buff Tim Palmer toured the country giving more than 50 public multimedia lectures on Wild and Scenic River history. Due in part to Tim's tour, speakers were the most popular type of event.

## Triathlon



Engaging 140 race participants and 250 spectators, the Bureau of Land Management hosted its first [triathlon on the Wild and Scenic Missouri River](#) and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

## Anniversary Beverages



In Oregon, nine breweries produced limited edition beers with proceeds supporting river conservation work.

## River Festivals



Photo credit: Jay Hemphill

Many river festivals, such as Silver City, New Mexico's Gila River Festival, adopted the anniversary as the annual theme. The Gila River is the nation's first wilderness river, but is not yet protected as a Wild and Scenic River.

## Veterans Healing and Recreation



Healing and learning occurred for veterans during rafting trips on the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River through the Sierra Club's Military Outdoors Program.

## River Cleanups

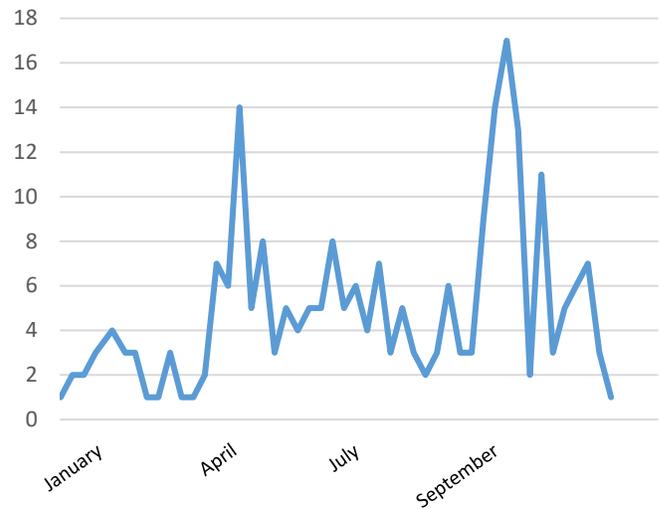


River clean-ups, such as this one on California's Peralta Creek, brought communities together to remove invasive species and pick up trash.

## TYPES OF RIVER EVENTS



## EVENTS OVER TIME



Although events occurred steadily throughout, the anniversary year culminated with the River Management Symposium, held in Vancouver, Washington in late October. The first spike in events began with River Rally, River Network's annual gathering of river and watershed friends groups, and included events coinciding with spring run-off. The most events occurred in September due in part to National Public Lands Day on September 22, 2018. An annual volunteer-on-public-lands-focused holiday, this year's theme was *Restoration and Resilience*, and sites were encouraged to focus on rivers and trails. Ultimately, 683 miles of trails and rivers were maintained through National Public Lands Day 2018 volunteer events.

Another key public lands holiday is Latino Conservation Week, an initiative developed by the Hispanic Access Foundation that creates a space for the celebration of Latinxs connection to nature and the outdoors. Held July 14-22, 2018, LCW has grown nearly 20 times since it began four years ago, and engaged Latinx communities in 2018 to experience their rivers and waterways. Overall, 54 Latino Conservation Week events in nine states were rivers-focused, with 31 centered on designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.



Events like a (above) Stand Up Paddleboarding day on California's American River and a kayak day on Cache Creek (right) for Latino Conservation Week inspired Latinx communities to engage with local rivers.

In addition to supporting Latinx outreach through Latino Conservation Week, Wild and Scenic Rivers information was transcreated by partners such as Corazon Latino and the U.S. Forest Service for a Spanish-speaking audience including:

- Three blogs published by five Latino media outlets
- Two radio spots for Latino Conservation Week events
- Two Spanish language infographics published online
- Two Spanish language videos



## Our Rivers, Our Future: Education, Stewardship and Advocacy

In addition to the public education value of rivers anniversary events and media, the federal river agencies engaged tomorrow's river managers and advocates. Through the biennial [Student Congress](#), held in August in Oregon, the Bureau of Land Management and the Public Lands Foundation engaged 28 students and recent graduates from across the country in public lands and water policy and stewardship.

Throughout 2018, agency offices collectively employed six rivers fellows—young college graduates seeking real-world work experience in river stewardship. These fellows worked closely with the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council and other agency staff and partners. In addition to social media, diversity engagement, communications and event planning, the fellows mapped eligible and suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers, created a database of hydropower projects near Wild and Scenic Rivers and completed a [technical report](#) on the state of water quality across the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. These projects will inform the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council and partners efforts to support rivers stewardship and enhance water quality in Wild and Scenic River basins in the years to come.

Anniversary efforts to provide improved training opportunities for river stewards included the development of river management core competencies and the launch of the River Management Society's River Training Center, which conducted its first instructor training workshop in October, which was attended by nearly 40 participants. The Bureau of Land Management also led an interagency effort to design, develop and publish 13 [online training modules on Wild and Scenic Rivers](#). Since their launch in October 2018, 45 have registered for these professional development courses.

Additional stewardship achievements began in 2018 due to grant programs through [River Network](#) and the [National Park Foundation](#). Together, these two grant programs allocated nearly \$309,000 to support eight projects including:

- River access improvements, such as creating a new interactive map of access and recreation sites along the Eightmile Wild and Scenic River in Connecticut
- Designation efforts, such as protection for an additional stretch of the Yellow Dog River in Michigan
- River recreation, such as added support for the National River Recreation Database, which matches visitors to river recreation opportunities, and doubling the size of the Redwood National and State Parks free kayak tour program on the Smith Wild and Scenic River in California

American Rivers, American Whitewater and other supporting partners launched [5000 Miles of Wild](#), a new campaign to protect an additional 5000 miles of rivers as well as collect river stories from American citizens. To date, 5,300 stories have been collected, and the campaign added a new Wild and Scenic River, East Rosebud Creek in Montana, which was designated on August 2, 2018. This hard fought addition to the system is the first in the state of Montana in more than 40 years. In December, an [event at REI's Washington D.C. flagship store](#) engaged members of Congress to build momentum for new Wild and Scenic designations for rivers such as the Hoh on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, the Nashua in Massachusetts, the Gila in New Mexico and the Molalla in Oregon.

*"I've been on the kayak program several times over the years, and I have not gotten to write how much I love and appreciate this program. The tour guides have always been wonderful every time. I have enjoyed this experience every time and want to extend my personal thanks to the rangers and all the people involved in maintaining the kayak tour."*

*Smith Wild and Scenic River  
kayak tour participant*



Professional athletes Susan and Adam Elliott of [@wildriverlife](#) toured the United States in 2017 and 2018 fulfilling their commitment to paddle 50 Wild and Scenic Rivers for the anniversary. Here they paddle the Virgin Wild and Scenic River within Utah's Zion National Park.



Zachary Collier, owner of Northwest Rafting Company, paddled all of Oregon's Wild and Scenic Rivers. Some of his accounts are featured in NRS' fact-filled [#wildandscenicwednesday](#) Instagram series, and his is just one of the many stories of river love shared by Americans as part of *5000 Miles of Wild*.

### International Interest: Sharing Rivers Conservation Expertise

The past year has also marked a spike in international engagement specific to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as the global standard for river conservation, with cross-cultural learning about river management taking place in a variety of settings.

The *International Journal of Wilderness* published a [special rivers anniversary issue](#) dedicated to articles on domestic and international efforts to understand and protect free-flowing rivers, while also seeking to cultivate a renewed community of interest in river science and a river protection research agenda.

Similar to water quality assessments conducted domestically this year, internationally, scientists commissioned a worldwide assessment of rivers continent-by-continent to understand and catalogue river conditions around the world. This data can be used as a basis for river protection, stewardship and restoration efforts on a global scale.

In September 2018, Jackson Hole, Wyoming played host to a Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Tour for delegates from various countries in the Balkans and other parts of Europe. The Snake River Headwaters Wild and Scenic River, its designation story, and the management challenges faced today served as an illuminating case study for this cross-cultural exchange.



Organized by the Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund in coordination with American Rivers and the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, this international river managers gathering provided a forum for dialogue about balancing river protection and energy needs.



The [Jr. Ranger Wild and Scenic River Activity Flyer](#), available at agency offices and visitor centers, helps kids learn about Wild and Scenic Rivers benefits.



Cakes in all shapes and sizes graced events across the country in 2018. Where rivers and trails meet, events celebrated both 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries together.



Artists including the Teton Plein Air Painters drew inspiration from rivers.



In 2018, citizens finished surveying all 78 miles of Massachusetts' Westfield Wild and Scenic River by collecting water quality data and photographing segments and tributary. Partnership rivers like the Westfield rely on community management, and the data collected will guide stewardship of this river well after the anniversary.



At the REI Flagship Store in Washington D.C., members of Congress including Senators Maria Cantwell of Washington, Tom Udall of New Mexico, Ron Wyden of Oregon, and U.S. Representatives Don McEachin of Virginia and Kurt Schrader of Oregon spoke and attended in support of additional Wild and Scenic River protection.



Many events, such as the Urban Kids Fishing Derby on the DC Mall, used agency-produced display materials in both English and Spanish.