



Checklist for Starting a Water Trail

Starting a Water Trail

Below are some of the points you may want to consider as your first steps in planning a water trail. You can utilize Georgia River Network's Water Trails Website and Toolkit to look up additional planning resources at <http://gawatertrails.org>

What are your goals for the trail?

Trails can provide recreation opportunities, assist in nature protection and wildlife conservation efforts, contribute to the health of your community and help drive economic growth. Think through the possibilities for your trail.

Do you have a long term vision for the trail?

Consider the big picture in planning your trail, even if you start off working on a small section of the overall plan. Can this trail connect to other cities, important conservation areas, other water trails, land trails, bike trails, businesses, community and cultural resources or other transportation networks? Look at local land use plans and infrastructure plans. If your trail is not a part of these plans, consider having it added.

Do you have a short term plan for getting the trail started?

Break down the big picture into phases of work and take it one step at a time.

Partnerships

Do you have an organization or committee to support formation of the trail? Have you identified possible partners? Consider local non-profit groups, county governments, local outfitters or area businesses. A trail is ideally sponsored, maintained and promoted by a local entity or partnership.

Have you located potential access points?

You want to make sure that river access sites are appropriately spaced apart on the river to provide sections reasonably paddled in a few hours or a full day. How many access points will the trail have? Who owns the land and do those sites have a safe and accessible launch area? Have you located existing boat ramps on this stretch of river?

Do you want to include improvements and facilities?

Are there already facilities at these points? Is there parking? Are there areas where paddlers can unload boats and park vehicles? Do you want to provide overnight camping facilities? If you do have facilities, trash cans, signage etc, have you thought about who might maintain these items?

Safety

Have you paddled this section of river and do you understand navigability, obstacles, and level of difficulty? Have you considered a need to keep improved access areas safe by partnering with your local law enforcement?

Maps and Signage

Have you considered education kiosks, maps of the trail or a website with trail information? It is important that users can access this information and understand the area they are going to paddle.

Economic Growth Opportunities

Consider what businesses may be able to profit from increased visitation to the trail such as gas stations, restaurants, outfitters and hotels.

Funding

Trails range in costs based on whether the land is already owned, what facilities exist or are planned to be built, how complicated any launch site improvements may be and what in-kind services are available. Talk to your partners about what they can bring to the table. Talk to other trail communities to find creative ways to get the job done. Check our website for grant opportunities.

Additional Help

Are you aware of the resources available to you? Georgia River Network provides guidance/ technical assistance and can connect you to resources to get you on your way.

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