Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 26, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing to obtain additional information regarding the National Blueways System (NBS) and, in particular, the Department's decision to designate the White River in Arkansas and Missouri as a National Blueway on January 9, 2013.

After reviewing the NBS program and the White River designation process, we share many serious concerns regarding the NBS generally and the White River designation specifically. Secretarial Order 3321 (creating the NBS) was unilaterally enacted, without clear legal authority, and it enables the executive branch to singlehandedly designate Blueways. The White River was designated without public comment, without adequate notice, without transparency from the federal government, and without clear evidence of broad public support. This is no way to start a program that is, according to the Department, intended to promote "collaboration, communication, and cooperation." In addition, despite assurances that the NBS is neither "intended to authorize or affect the use of private property" nor "intended to be the basis for the exercise of any new regulatory power," the practical consequence (intended or not) of this designation is that increased regulatory attention will likely be focused on the White River watershed using existing authorities. Also, the focus on "land and water management practices" and a "headwaters to mouth approach to river management," makes clear that impacts could extend to citizens and property owners throughout the watershed, not just along the River itself.

Due to these issues and a variety of other ambiguities associated with the NBS, we are writing to request additional information. Our intention is to understand the Department's plans and activities associated with the NBS, and to find out whether there is an opt-out mechanism our states can use should they desire to exit the Blueways program.

Please provide responses to the following questions and requests for information:

1) What is the process through which a State, non-federal entity, or individual may request that a Blueway designation be revoked?

2) If a State Government were to request that the Department revoke a Blueway designation, would the Department grant this request? Please provide a clear and thorough response.

3) Responding to a question regarding whether there would be "a cost to taxpayers," the Department stated in a January 4, 2013 e-mail to Congressional stakeholders that: "No. Instead, through improved communication and cooperation among federal agencies managing natural resources in the watershed, existing federal resources should be deployed more effectively and efficiently." However, the attached Department responses state that funds supporting NBS initiatives are derived from "participating DOI bureau and office appropriated funds" and funding for potential watershed would come from "existing base funds."

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Please provide the department, programs, and accounts any funds will be withdrawn from for the following requests:

a. Which existing funds would be designated for the NBS initiatives on the White River;

b. Which DOI bureau or office the funds would originate from; and

c. What is the total amount of funding that will be diverted from other programs into the NBS initiatives on the White River?

4) We were surprised to see that a group of 79 non-profit organizations (most of them small, localized watershed groups or associations) have written to the Senate Appropriations Committee urging the appropriation of "$3.3 million in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife budget for the National Blueways System."[1] Despite the fact that the White River is one of only two currently-designated National Blueways, it appears that none of the organizations signing this support letter are directly and primarily associated with the White River.

a. Did the Department provide information related to the need for NBS funding or FY2014 appropriations for the NBS to any representative of any of the 79 organizations that signed the letter referenced above? If so, please provide a copy of any related documents or records, and a description of information provided.

b. Please provide a copy of any NBS-related correspondence, e-mails, or related documents that have been provided to any of these groups during either FY2012 or FY2013.

c. Would $3.3 million fulfill all identified NBS objectives for FY14, or would you continue to draw funds from other programs?

d. If you believe that appropriated funding is needed to carry out the NBS in FY2014, would you support a rider on FY2014 appropriations legislation stipulating that funding to carry out the NBS will be taken from the Secretary's budget.

e. Please provide a detailed list of all activities the Department would fund with this appropriation, were the full $3.3 million to be provided.

f. Please provide an FTE (full-time equivalent) estimate for the anticipated workload associated with the NBS in FY2014.

5) Please provide a detailed list of all Department costs associated with the NBS to date. This listshould include, for example, expenses such as the travel of Department personnel to Arkansas, staff resources dedicated to the development of MOUs, and any other salaries and expenses related to development and implementation of Secretarial Order 3321.

6) To justify the Secretary's legal authority to issue Secretarial Order No. 3321, the document states that:

> This Order is issued in accordance with authority provided under the Take Pride in America Act, Public Law 101-628; the Outdoor Recreation Act, Public Law 87-714; and the Cooperative Watershed Management Program of the Omnibus Public Land Management

[1] Letter to the Honorable Jack Reed (Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman) and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski (Subcommittee Ranking Member), May 28, 2013. See Attachment 2.

Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11. The bureaus within Interior have a broad panoply of legal authority to carry out their respective missions that support enhancing river recreation, undertaking river restoration, and pursuing river protection initiatives to pass on healthy rivers to future generations. These authorities include the Comprehensive Environmental, Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.; the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742 et seq.; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 16 U.S.C. 4601-4 et seq.; the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287; the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 U.S.C 1702 et seq.; the Reclamation Act, Public Law 57-161; the Omnibus Public Land
Management Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11; and the National Trails System Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. 1241 et seq.

a. Do any of these statutes explicitly authorize the unilateral creation of the National Blueways System? If so, please specify where and how.

b. If not, please provide the specific language, if any, from each of these statutes that you believe most clearly authorizes the creation of the NBS.

7) In a January 4, 2013 e-mail to Congressional stakeholders, the Department wrote that "no new resources are available" as a result of a Blueway designation, yet the Department claims that "designation confers numerous short and long-terms [sic] benefits on a National Blueway watershed."[2] Please provide a description of these benefits.

8) In a January 4, 2013 e-mail to Congressional stakeholders, the Department stated that the White River "nomination was reviewed by an interagency committee with representatives from DOI (FWS, NPS, BLM, BOR, BIA, USGS), USDA, and Army." The same e-mail included an attached "list of supporting organizations" who "nominated the White River." This document, titled "White River Watershed National Blueway Support Organizations," listed the Department of the Interior (i.e. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (i.e., Natural Resource Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In other words, most of the federal departments and agencies that were tasked with reviewing the nomination directly participated in the nomination. Please provide the names and positions of the individuals who participated in the interagency committee that reviewed the nomination for White River, as well as the NBS Working Group that worked with the committee. Please provide a copy of all materials and recommendations that were produced by the interagency committee with regard to the White River nomination (including the committee's recommendation to the Secretary).

The following set of questions relates to a staff briefing on the NBS, conducted by DOI Senior Advisor Rebecca Wodder and other Department of Interior personnel, which was organized and hosted by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee staff on January 28, 2013. Shortly thereafter DOI provided written responses to a number of questions posed at the briefing (See Attachment 1).

The following questions and requests relate to this attached DOI document:

9) The attached Department responses state that "the watershed evaluation is based on the presence of a committed, diverse, stakeholder partnership or association that has developed a vision for the river

[2] *Potential Benefits of being designated a National Blueway,* Department of Interior Document provided to Congressional Stakeholders, January 2013 (Attached).

and its watershed and how well that partnership or association has contributed to and promoted conservation, education, recreation, and sustainable economic opportunities." It continues, "the diversity of the partnership, having a shared vision, goals and objectives, the condition of the river and watershed, and having a strategy to integrate land and water management actions to achieve shared outcomes are the key elements of the evaluation, rather than the mix of public and private land." To further clarify this statement, please provide:

a. A list of measurable or quantifiable factors, standards, or thresholds that are used to determine whether a "committed, diverse, stakeholder partnership or association" exists.

b. A description of the "vision for the river and its watershed" that was used to justify the White River designation.

c. A description of efforts undertaken by the Department to determine the extent to which the "vision for the river and its watershed" is shared by citizens and stakeholders who are not members of the "stakeholder partnership or association."

10) Again, each of the following items are described as "key elements of the evaluation." Please explain each of these elements and provide any criteria used to measure these characteristics:

a. "The diversity of the partnership."

b. "Having a shared vision, goals and objectives."

c. "The condition of the river and watershed."

i. In evaluating the "condition of the river and watershed" element, what types of conditions make it more likely that a Blueways designation will occur?

ii. Specifically, with regard to the White River, what steps did the Department take to evaluate the "condition of the river and watershed"?

d. "Having a strategy to integrate land and water management actions to achieve shared outcomes."

11) The attached DOI responses state that "the Secretary will not designate National Blueways that lack diverse support from government agencies within the watershed. Local communities and businesses will be valued members of successful stakeholder partnerships and will determine their own roles and extent of engagement." The document further states that "watershed partnerships submitting nominations for National Blueway designation are evaluated for the diversity of stakeholders participating in the partnership and for the extent of support they can demonstrate from civic leaders at the local and state levels."

a. According to a Fish and Wildlife Service website, the watershed is "home to 1.2 million people."[3] What level of municipal participation should be exhibited in a "stakeholder partnership" to meet the criteria outlined above, specifically, that the nomination will be "evaluated... for the extent of support they can demonstrate from civic leaders at the local and state level"?

[3] http://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2013/001.html, accessed on June 11, 2013.

b. It appears that no municipal governments in Missouri participated in the nomination. Did this raise concerns as the evaluation was considered? If not, what steps are being taken to facilitate their inclusion in the management of the Blueway?

c. On January 7, 2013, the Department provided a document to Congressional stakeholders, titled "White River Watershed National Blueway Support Organizations," dated October 16, 2012. This document lists 26 "support organizations." Eleven of these entities are listed as "Federal Agencies & Ventures" (i.e., four USDA entities, two USGS entities, two NPS entities, the USFWS Southeast Region, the USACE Memphis District, and the Lower Mississippi River Valley Joint Venture). Five of the "support organizations" are "State and Local Government." When over 60 percent of the "support organizations" listed are governmental entities and fewer than 10 percent (2 of 26) come from the business community, do you believe this meets the "diversity of stakeholders" criteria outlined in the DOI document referenced above?

d. Of the 26 "support organizations" listed on the document dated October 16, 2012, please provide a list of the organizations and entities that were initially approached by the Department to encourage participation in the White River nomination.

We recognize that the attached DOI document was prepared and provided to Congress prior to your confirmation as Secretary. If you would like to update, modify, or elaborate on any of the Department's responses in this document, we would welcome the opportunity to hear your views.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these concerns, issues, and questions. We expect to receive responses to this letter as soon as possible, preferably no later than July 10, 2013. At a minimum, we request responses to Questions 1 through 4 (including sub-questions) no later than July 10, but sooner if at all possible. Furthermore, we request that response be provided on a rolling basis, if necessary, as they are prepared – with a final, comprehensive response sent upon completion. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns, or if we can be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

John Boozman,
U.S. Senator

Roy Blunt,
U.S. Senator

Rick Crawford,
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzler,
Member of Congress

Tim Griffin,
Member of Congress

Billy Long,
Member of Congress

Steve Womack,
Member of Congress

Jason Smith,
Member of Congress

Tom Cotton,
Member of Congress

Copy: The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Asst. Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), Corps of Engineers
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Enclosures (2).

ATTACHMENT 1

National Blueways Briefing
Senate Energy & Natural Resources Minority Staff
Follow-Up Questions

1. Please outline the legal impact of a National Blueway Designation on private property?

National Blueway designation has no legal impact on private property. The National Blueways System (NBS) was established by Secretary's Order No. 3321 to recognize river systems conserved through diverse stakeholder partnerships and to promote cooperation in support of these river systems. The Order expressly states that designation does not authorize or affect the use of private property; nor does it affect or interfere with any Federal, state, local and tribal government jurisdiction or applicable law. National Blueway designation is intended to recognize and support local and regional conservation, outdoor recreation, education and sustainable economic development activities.

2. Please define "sustainable economic development" that will be promoted by the National Blueway designation?

The generally accepted definition of sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. For a particular National Blueway, any economic development activities would be identified and led by local stakeholders. In general, we would expect to see economic development that promotes local business ventures that are connected with the river system, such as economic opportunities related to outdoor recreation, education and conservation, including tourism-related ventures, such as restaurants, lodging, camp grounds, guide services, and outdoor recreational equipment supplies and rentals.

3. Can private landowners opt out of a National Blueway designation on private property?

The National Blueway program is entirely voluntary and private landowners are free to choose to not participate in any assistance programs or initiatives undertaken by the stakeholder partnership. A National Blueway is a designation that encompasses a river and its watershed, but is not specific to any parcel of land. The NBS recognizes and supports diverse watershed-based stakeholder partnerships that are working together to conserve their river system.

4. Will the Blueways Committee provide notice, no later than the pre-proposal stage of a nomination, to the Washington, D.C. offices of all congressional delegations that would be impacted by a proposed Blueways designation?

The NBS Committee will provide notice to delegations of states included in a National Blueway nomination when a qualified pre-proposal is received. In addition, the NBS Committee will strongly encourage the stakeholder partnership that is submitting the nomination to be in contact with their local Congressional offices, indicating their interest and intention of pursuing the designation and/or seeking their support.

5. Will the Secretary commit that the stakeholder nomination process must include a state sponsoring agency from each state that would be impacted by a Blueways designation, as opposed to allowing either a Federal or state agency to sponsor a nomination?

The Department commits that the stakeholder nomination process will require the recruitment of a state sponsoring agency. In addition, if the nominated river and its watershed include land in more than one state, the nomination process will also require a letter of support from states with a significant portion of the watershed within their borders be submitted with the full nomination.

6. What role will a Blueways designation play in water-rights applications (e.g., severance and transfer, change of use, change of point of diversion, etc.) filed by entities that have water rights on a designated river?

The Secretary's Order is explicit that the designation has no such role: "nor shall this initiative or any designation pursuant to this Order affect or interfere with any Federal, state, local, and tribal government jurisdiction or applicable law including interstate compacts relating to water or the laws of any state or tribe relating to the control, appropriation, use or distribution of water or water rights."

7. Will the federal government reference or rely on a Blueways designation if it asserts an objection to a water-rights application (e.g., severance and transfer, change of use, change of point of diversion, etc.) along a designated river?

As stated in the previous answer, designation does not affect or interfere with applicable water law.

8. Could a Blueways designation be used to create a water right (e.g., reserved right or instream flow right)?

No.

9. Will the federal government support Blueways stakeholders that file objections to a water-rights application?

Decisions of the federal government to support or object to water-rights applications will not be based on designation of a river system as a National Blueway.

10. Please provide documentation of the Missouri constituencies (especially Missouri Department of Conservation) supporting the designation.

Letters of support for the White River Watershed National Blueway from the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Audubon Missouri and The Nature Conservancy--Missouri are attached.

11. What specific statutory authorization (Code and Section(s)) supports establishing of this program?

The statutory authorities for the NBS are set forth in Section 3 of Secretary's Order No. 3321.

> "Sec. 3 **Authority**. This Order issued in accordance with authority provided under the Take Pride in America Act, Public Law 101-628; the Outdoor Recreation Act, Public Law 87-714; and the Cooperative Watershed Management Program of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11. The bureaus within the Department of the Interior (DOI) have a broad panoply of legal authority to carry out their respective missions that support enhancing river recreation, undertaking river restoration, and pursuing river protection initiatives to pass on healthy rivers to future generations. These authorities include the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.; the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742 et seq.; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 16 U.S.C. 4601-4 et seq.; the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287; the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 U.S.C 1702 et seq.; the Reclamation Act, Public Law 57-161; the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11; and the National Trails System Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. 1241 et seq."

12. What is the cost associated with implementing this initiative, and from which accounts is the department drawing funds to support these efforts? What offices and bureaus of the Interior Department will have staff activities focused on these efforts?

The NBS focus on watershed protection and restoration is fully consistent with DOI core mission objectives – it is not a redirection of existing effort but a complementary approach to ongoing efforts in landscape protection and restoration. Many of DOI's bureaus and offices have responsibilities for river, estuarine and wetland protection and restoration; water sustainability; fisheries management; and river and trail resource protection; and outdoor recreation and education.

Resources supporting the NBS initiative are derived from participating DOI bureau and office appropriated funds. Since NBS works to align existing activities and programs in support of blueways and associated resource benefits, there is not a dedicated stream of funding.

The Deputy Secretary is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Secretary's Order establishing the NBS. Each DOI bureau and office will appoint members to the

NBS Committee (Committee) as well as the NBS Working Group (Working Group) which performs "staff work" for the Committee.

13. What role will the states and local governments play in the administration and implementation of this program? Will the department designate "Blueways" without broad support from the state and local governments impacted by the designation? What will be the role of local communities and businesses in the designation of "Blueways?"

Participation by public or private stakeholders is entirely voluntary. States, local and tribal governments will determine their level of participation. The Secretary will not designate National Blueways that lack diverse support from government agencies within the watershed. Local communities and businesses will be valued members of successful stakeholder partnerships and will determine their own roles and extent of engagement.

14. Who, within the department's offices, will be primarily responsible for overseeing and administering this initiative/program? What reporting on the initiative can Congress expect to receive on a regular basis?

The Deputy Secretary is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Secretary's Order establishing the NBS. Each DOI bureau and office will appoint members to the NBS Committee (Committee) as well as the NBS Working Group (Working Group) which performs "staff work" for the Committee. Each agency outside DOI that is voluntarily participating is invited to identify an agency representative for the Committee and for the Working Group. Reports can be assembled to meet the needs of the participating agencies, partners, as well as Congress that could include whatever relevant information is desired.

15. Does the Administrative Procedures Act apply to the process of considering a National Blueway designation? If not, what opportunity for public comment exists within the framework of a National Blueway?

Designation as a National Blueway does not involve the grant of a license or similar approval, or the promulgation of regulations, either of which involves actions that are subject to the procedural and other requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act. Watershed partnerships submitting nominations for National Blueway designation are evaluated for the diversity of stakeholders participating in the partnership and for the extent of support they can demonstrate from civic leaders at the local and state levels. Creating opportunities for public engagement would be the mark of a strong nomination.

16. Is there any limit to the size of National Blueway designation?

It is anticipated that National Blueway designation will be for large river systems, with a hydrologic unit code (HUC) of 4-6. To date, National Blueway designations range in size from a few million acres to a system of nearly twenty million acres.

17. In considering a National Blueway at the landscape level, how does the participating agencies and partners evaluate federal land, state land, and private land within a watershed?

The watershed evaluation is based on the presence of a committed, diverse, stakeholder partnership or association that has developed a vision for the river and its watershed and how well that partnership or association has contributed to and promoted conservation, education, recreation, and sustainable economic opportunities. The diversity of the partnership, having a shared vision, goals and objectives, the condition of the river and watershed, and having a strategy to integrate land and water management actions to achieve shared outcomes are the key elements of the evaluation, rather than the mix of public and private land.

18. Can a dissenting private landowner, county, or state stakeholder prevent a designation from occurring?

One of the key criteria for being recognized as a National Blueway is that a diverse stakeholder partnership representing interests from across the watershed has come together to seek the recognition. Stakeholder partnerships will be encouraged to seek out and consider the views of a diverse array of individuals and public entities. Successful nominations for recognition as a National Blueways will include statements of diverse support from businesses, organizations, federal and state agencies, and local and tribal governments within the watershed.

19. What agencies make up the committee?

Members of the committee from DOI include representatives of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Reclamation. Other members of the committee include the U.S. Forest Service, the National Resources Conservation Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Membership may expand to include representatives of other Federal agencies that can contribute to the goals and objectives of the NBS for the benefit of the American people.

20. What funding is being used to evaluate potential watersheds for consideration?

Bureaus and offices in DOI are using existing base funds to improve the alignment of programs and activities in order to identify opportunities for protection and enhancement of watershed resources, as well as enhancing the abilities of bureaus and offices to effectively implement existing authorities. The NBS provides a forum and a focus for these efforts. DOI bureaus and offices and other Federal agencies and partners participate in review of stakeholder-generated National Blueway nominations, as part of the Administration's AGO initiative. These efforts contribute to meeting overall agency objectives and priorities for employing a partnership approach for landscape level stewardship, and outdoor recreation, education.

21. What are the minimum requirements for consideration?

The minimum requirements for consideration as a National Blueway include the following:

1) a large river from headwaters to mouth with watershed at the hydrologic unit code (HUC) 4-6 level;

2) natural, cultural, recreational resources of national significance;

3) a diverse stakeholder partnership that has developed a shared vision and long-term goals for the river and its watershed; and

4) federal and state sponsor(s).

22. What role, if any, do actual elected officials (County Commissioners and Governor) play in determining if a watershed is designated or not?

The support of state, local and tribal governments will be sought by the stakeholder partnership as part of the process of nominating a river and its watershed as a National Blueway. The Secretary will not designate National Blueways that lack diverse support from state, local and tribal governments within the watershed. Furthermore, the Department commits that the stakeholder nomination process will require the recruitment of a state sponsoring agency. In addition, if the nominated river and its watershed include land in more than one state, the nomination process will also require a letter of support from states with a significant portion of the watershed within their borders be submitted with the full nomination.

23. If a watershed is crosses one or more state lines, is a unanimous consent from each state required for designation?

If a nominated river and its watershed includes land in more than one state, the nomination process will request that letters of support from states with a significant portion of the watershed be submitted with the nomination.

24. The Secretarial order and DOI press release make two counterintuitive claims: 1) there are no additional rules or regulations associated with the land or water designated a National Blueway– in short no management changes, and 2) the designation of a Nation Blueway will help achieve the stated purpose of the President's Initiative to "protect, enhance and restore" America Great Outdoors. ...Provided there is <u>voluntary</u> participation by other public and private entities. The participating agencies, incentives, and other assistance will be available should landowners, communities, and others choose to participate.

a. How does a designation that makes no management changes to existing land protect or restore the same land in question?

To be successful in securing a National Blueway designation, any nationally significant watershed will already have in place mechanisms, programs, and organizations that have a track record of success in the protection and restoration of natural resources. Recognition of a watershed as a National Blueway will highlight these existing conservation efforts and facilitate their increased efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the designation of the Connecticut River National Blueway has stimulated an increase in the number of organizations participating in Connecticut's stakeholder partnership. Consequently, the designation as a National Blueway has enhanced communication, cooperation, collaboration, and leveraging of resources with respect to this Blueway.

b. If land is protected or restricted for current use, is that not a departure in some form from current management?

The aforementioned is an outcome based on voluntary participation. It is not a product of the designation; however, it may make voluntary participation easier due to better access to financial and technical assistance.

c. If there is no actual management change, is not a national blueway label unnecessary and potentially misleading?

There is no change to management that results from designation. Recognition as a National Blueway is based on the presence of nationally significant attributes in the areas of outdoor recreation, conservation, education, and a diverse watershed partnership with a shared vision to sustain these attributes. As the partnership evolves and takes voluntary steps forward to better integrate land and water management, change will occur in a more strategic, sustainable, and consensus-based manner.

ATTACHMENT 2

American Canoe Association * American Rivers *Appalachian Mountain Club * Audubon California * Audubon Connecticut * Audubon Vermont * Cahaba River Society * Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation, Inc. * Chattahoochee Riverkeeper * Citizens Water Advocacy Group * Committee on the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River * Connecticut Forest & Park Association * Connecticut Land Conservation Council * Connecticut Ornithological Association * Connecticut River Watershed Council * Delaware Highlands Conservancy * Eightmile Wild & Scenic Committee * Franklin Land Trust, Inc. * Freshwater Future * Friends of Pondicherry * Friends of St. Sebastian River * Friends of the Connecticut River Paddlers Trail * Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge * Friends of the Upper Delaware River * Georgia River Network * Gulf Restoration Network * Highstead * Idaho Conservation League * Kentucky Waterways Alliance * Living Rivers Group of the Sierra Club * Mass Audubon * Milwaukee Riverkeeper * Minnesota River Watershed Alliance * National Committee for the New River * National Wildlife Federation * National Wildlife Refuge Association * Natural Lands Trust * Nature Abounds * North Carolina League of Conservation Voters * Neuse River Foundation * New Jersey Audubon Society * Northern Forest Canoe Association * NorthWoods Stewardship Center * Ohio Environmental Council * Openlands * Paddling.net * Pamlico-Tar RIVERKEEPER * PennFuture * Pioneer Valley Planning Commission * Potomac Riverkeeper * Riparian Systems Consulting * River Network * River Partners * Rivers of Virginia * San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust * Save The River, Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper * Scenic America * South Dakota Serra Club * Sustainable Arizona * Susquehanna Greenway Partnership * Susquehanna River Water Trail Association * Tennessee Clean Water Network * Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association * Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council * The Nature Conservancy * The Stewardship Network * Town of Clarkdale * Verde River Institute * Verde River Valley Nature Organization * Verde Valley Birding Trail * Verde Valley Land Preservation * Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization * Vermont River Conservancy * Washington Water Trails Association * Waterkeeper Alliance * West Virginia Land Trust * Western Resource Advocates * Winyah Rivers Foundation * Yavapai County

Sen. Jack Reed
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Sen. Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we write to urge your support in appropriating $3.3 million in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service budget for the National Blueways System.

The National Blueways System recognizes and supports a new generation of river and watershed partnerships that connect communities to our shared natural heritage, to outdoor recreation opportunities, to sustainable economies, and to each other.

The program focuses on large rivers and watersheds, which cross multiple and diverse geographical and jurisdictional boundaries. Participation in the National Blueways System is entirely voluntary, locally-led and non-regulatory, with no effect on private property rights, water rights or governmental authorities.

The National Blueways Program promotes cooperation and collaboration among public and private partnerships and across jurisdictions. The program promotes government efficiency by encouraging federal agencies to work together to utilize successful programs that already exist. The program coordinates technical assistance and expertise from a number of federal and state agencies. For a river to be designated it requires both federal and state support.

Outdoor recreation is an important economic engine for the U.S. and sustainable economic development and outdoor recreation are major components of the National Blueway Systems. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation annually generates:

- 6.1 million American jobs
- $646 billion in outdoor recreation spending each year
- $39.9 billion on federal tax revenue
- $39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue

With 3.5 million rivers across our country, we have only scratched the surface when it comes to establishing Blueways. There is tremendous potential to expand existing trails and create new ones.

We take pride in our rivers and natural areas and share a responsibility to leave the next generation healthier and better connected to our nation's the great outdoors.

Respectfully yours,

National (alphabetic order by organization):

Greg Rolf
Stewardship Coordinator
American Canoe Association

Bob Irvin
President
American Rivers

Grant LaRouche
Regional Representative
National Wildlife Federation

Desiree Sorenson-Groves
Vice President of Government Affairs
National Wildlife Refuge Association

Brian Van Drie
Co-Founder
Paddling.net

Todd Ambs
President
River Network

Mary Tracy
President
Scenic America

Robert Bendick
Director of U.S. Governmental Relations
The Nature Conservancy

Alan Rowsome
Director of Conservation Funding
The Wilderness Society

Peter Nichols
National Director
Waterkeeper Alliance

State and Regional (alphabetic order by organization):

Susan Arnold
Vice President for Conservation
Appalachian Mountain Club
Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC

Meghan Hertel
Associate Director of Public Policy
Audubon California

Sandy Breslin
Director of Governmental Affairs
Audubon Connecticut

Jim Shallow
Conservation and Policy Director
Audubon Vermont

Beth Stewart
Executive Director
Cahaba River Society
Alabama

Rick Gaskins
Executive Director and Catawba Riverkeeper
Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation, Inc.
North Carolina

Sally Bethea
Director
Chattahoochee Riverkeeper
Georgia

Chris Hoy
President
Citizens Water Advocacy Group
Arizona

Clark Bullard
Director
Committee on the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River
Illinois

Eric Hammerling
Executive Director
Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Amy Blaymore Paterson
Executive Director
Connecticut Land Conservation Council

Tina Green
President
Connecticut Ornithological Association

David Deen
River Steward
Connecticut River Watershed Council

Sue Currier
Executive Director
Delaware Highlands Conservancy
New Jersey, New York

Anthony Irving
Chair
Eightmile Wild & Scenic Committee
Connecticut

Richard Hubbard
Executive Director

Franklin Land Trust, Inc.
Massachusetts

Jill Ryan
Executive Director
Freshwater Future
Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New York

Tim Glover
President
Friends of St. Sebastian River
Florida

Patrick Comins
Chairman
Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont

David Govatski
President
Friends of Pondicherry
New Hampshire

Noah Pollock
Friends of the Connecticut River Paddlers Trail
New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts

Sherri Resti
Executive Secretary
Friends of the Upper Delaware River

April Ingle
Executive Director
Georgia River Network

Cyn Sarthou
Executive Director
Gulf Restoration Network
Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida

Emily Bateson
Conservation Director
Highstead
Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island

Justin Hayes
Program Director
Idaho Conservation League

Judy Petersen
Executive Director
Kentucky Waterways Alliance

James Heisinger
Chair
Living Rivers Group of the Sierra Club
South Dakota

Wayne Petersen
Director
Mass Audubon
Massachusetts

Cheryl Nenn
Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Wisconsin

Brad Cobb
Green Corridor Projects
Minnesota River Watershed Alliance

George Santucci
National Committee for the New River

Oliver Bass
Vice President of Communications and Engagement
Natural Lands Trust
Pennsylvania, New Jersey

Melinda Hughes-Wert
President
Nature Abounds
Pennsylvania

Matthew Starr
Program Coordinator
Neuse River Foundation
North Carolina

Kelly Mooij
Vice President of Government Relations
New Jersey Audubon Society

Kate Williams
Executive Director

Northern Forest Canoe Association
New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine

Dan Crawford
Director of Governmental Relations
North Carolina League of Conservation Voters

Luke O'Brien
Trails Director
NorthWoods Stewardship Center
Vermont

Jack Shaner
Deputy Director and Senior Director of Legislative and Public Affairs
Ohio Environmental Council

Lenore Beyer-Clow
Policy Director
Openlands
Illinois

Heather Jacobs Deck
Pamlico-Tar River Foundation
Pamlico-Tar RIVERKEEPER
North Carolina

Joy Bergey
Federal Policy Director
PennFuture

Christopher Curtis
Chief Planner
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Massachusetts

Matthew Logan
President and Potomac Riverkeeper
Potomac Riverkeeper
Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, District of Columbia

Doug Von Gausig
Principal
Riparian Systems Consulting
Arizona

Julie Rentner
Central Valley Regional Director

River Partners
California

Bill Tanger
Chair
Rivers of Virginia

Dave Koehler
Executive Director
San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
California

Lee Willbanks
Executive Director
Save The River, Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
New York

James Heisinger
Chair
South Dakota Serra Club

John Neville
President
Sustainable Arizona

Trish Carothers
Executive Director
Susquehanna Greenway Partnership
Pennsylvania

James McNulty
President
Susquehanna River Water Trail Association
Pennsylvania

Renee Hoyos
Executive Director
Tennessee Clean Water Network

Charlie Wilkerson
President
Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association

Jennifer McKay
Policy Specialist
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Michigan

Lisa Brush
Executive Director
The Stewardship Network
Michigan

Doug Von Gausig
Mayor
Town of Clarkdale
Arizona

Dennis Tomko
Verde Valley Birding Trail
Arizona

Doug Von Gausig
Executive Director
Verde River Institute
Arizona

Susan Beach
President
Verde River Valley Nature Organization
Arizona

Bob Rothrock
President
Verde Valley Land Preservation
Arizona

Mary Chicoine
Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization
Arizona

Stephan Syz
Board of Directors
Vermont River Conservancy

Elen Ward
Project Director
Washington Water Trails Association

Brent Bailey
Executive Director
West Virginia Land Trust

Linda Stitzer
Senior Water Policy Advisor

Western Resource Advocates
Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Wyoming, Idaho

Christine Ellis
Waccamac Riverkeeper
Winyah Rivers Foundation
South Carolina

Chip Davis
Yavapai County Supervisor
Yavapai County
Arizona

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee