

JUSTIFICATION OF PROGRAM AND PERFORMANCE

Activity: Natural Programs

Program Components	2000 Estimate	Uncontr/ Related Changes	Program Changes (+/-)	2001 Budget Request	Change From 2000 (+/-)
A. Rivers and Trails Studies	905	+11	0	916	+11
B. Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance	7,635	+171	+500	8,306	+671
C. National Natural Landmarks	956	+24	0	980	+24
D. Hydropower Recreation Assistance	497	+6	+500	1,003	+506
Total Requirements \$(000)	9,993	+212	+1,000	11,205	+1,212

AUTHORIZATION

16 U.S.C. 1271 - 1287	The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1241 - 1249	The National Trails System Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 460l - 460l-3	The Outdoor Recreation Organic Act
16 U.S.C. 797(e), 803(a)	The Federal Power Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1a-5	National Park Service Organic Act, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1273	Historic Sites Act of 1935
16 U.S.C. 1-5	General Authorities Act of 1970, as amended
16 U.S.C. 1908	Mining in the National Parks Act of 1976
Public Law 104-333	Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996

OVERVIEW

Natural Programs include the development and completion of Congressionally mandated studies of river and trail routes for possible inclusion in the National Scenic and Historic Trails or Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems; programs to increase river and trail opportunities through State and local technical assistance; the national trails programs; the management of the National Natural Landmarks program; and programs to assist in the review of agreements with hydropower facilities/projects that impact public access to river and recreational resources.

APPLICABLE NATIONAL SERVICE MISSION GOALS

- IIIa Natural and cultural resources are conserved through formal partnership programs.
- IIIb Through partnerships with other Federal, State, and local agencies and nonprofit organizations, a nationwide system of parks, open space, rivers, and trails provides educational, recreational, and conservation benefits for the American people.
- IIIc Assisted through Federal funds and programs, the protection of recreational opportunities is achieved through formal mechanisms to ensure continued access for public recreation use.

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A. Rivers and Trails Studies FY 2000 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments

Enacted: \$905,000

River and trail studies are undertaken when authorized by Congress. In order for a river to be eligible for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, it must be in a free-flowing condition and possess one or more of the following values to a remarkable degree: scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values. Suitability is based upon such factors as the extent of public lands in the immediate environment of the river; funds required for acquisition, development, and management; and local or State interest in acting to protect and manage the river and the feasibility and timeliness of such action. Studies may be the responsibility of either Interior, Agriculture, or the shared responsibility of both departments. Studies of rivers are transmitted to Congress with a Presidential recommendation. Congress then decides whether or not to add the river to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

- The Service is currently studying the following rivers: Musconetcong (New Jersey), Merrimack (New Hampshire), White Clay Creek (Pennsylvania and Delaware), and New (Virginia and West Virginia). In addition, the Taunton River (Massachusetts) is expected to be authorized for study during FY 2000. The following studies are complete and the reports are awaiting transmittal by the President: Wekiva (Florida), Delaware (New Jersey and Pennsylvania) and the St. Marys (Florida and Georgia).

Trails are studied to determine whether they are feasible and desirable to include as a unit of the National Trails System. A determination of desirability for the National Trails System is based on the national significance of the route and the recreational or historic resources along the route. A determination of feasibility is based on the practicability of establishing such a trail in consideration of existing trail opportunities, costs that would be entailed, impact on other values of the resource base, and similar factors.

- Trail studies are authorized by section 5(c) of Public Law 90-543, as amended, and may also be the responsibility of Interior, Agriculture or the joint responsibility of both departments. When a trail study is transmitted to the Congress it includes the Secretary's recommendation as to the feasibility of establishing the trail. Congress then decides whether or not to add the trail to the National Trails System.
- The Service is conducting a study of the Old Spanish Trail (New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California). The Old Spanish Trail study will be completed in FY 2000. The Star-Spangled Banner Trail study was recently authorized and this study will begin with FY 2000 funding.

A goal for this program will continue to be the completion of studies within Congressionally authorized study periods, or NPS estimates for dates of completion. The results of the river and trail study program in FY 2000 will be monitored through surveys of study users and the success in achieving enhanced resource protection.

B. Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program FY 2000 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments

Enacted: \$7,635,000

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program provides technical assistance and organizational support for locally led conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives. Staff are based in 25 field locations and work with a variety of nonprofit organizations and local and State governments in all 50 States. National Park Service

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involvement is initiated through formal request of the local partners. The program provides expertise in areas such as public involvement, organization building, trail and greenway design, and river restoration. In FY 1999, over 400 communities requested projects, but less than half of those received assistance.

All projects selected for RTCA assistance are founded on cost-sharing, cooperation, and community initiative. The RTCA program's contribution is limited to staff assistance; no program funds go toward implementation costs. Local partners bear the responsibility for identifying other private and public sources of project funding. The program's results orientation means that NPS assistance typically lasts one to two years, although local implementation efforts often take several years beyond the end of formal NPS involvement. The range of assistance provided includes the following:

- *Trail and Greenway Development* - Local trails and greenways are the primary link to nature and the outdoors for millions of Americans. With 55 percent of adults overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control, America's communities increasingly need close-to-home trails and greenways as places for healthful exercise and auto-free transportation routes. The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program helps communities plan and protect many types of trails and greenways, ranging from urban trails to rugged tracks into the wilderness. The program also helps communities successfully access Federal trail dollars available through TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century) transportation funding.
- *Rail-To-Trail Conversions* - The Service helps communities learn how to recycle abandoned railway corridors by converting them into popular "rail-trails." The Service alerts communities whenever an abandonment of a nearby rail right-of-way is imminent; approximately 400 such notices were provided in FY 1999, giving communities timely opportunities to initiate rail-trail planning for 55 proposed abandonments covering thousands of miles of potential trails. Moreover, nine rail-trail conversion projects are benefiting from intensive NPS technical assistance in 1999.
- *River Conservation Planning* - The NPS offers a variety of services that help communities conserve valuable rivers, watersheds, and floodplains. The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program is helping more than 25 communities plan downtown river greenways, and helping another 24 partners devise river protection strategies that address land management throughout an entire watershed. These projects typically protect or restore important ecological areas, while at the same time promoting improved public access to and appreciation of a community's rivers. The Park Service also helps communities develop prevention strategies to lessen their risk of damage by floods, by leaving flood-prone lands as parklands or planning for reclamation after flooded property owners relocate.
- *Interagency Assistance* - By collaborating with other Federal agencies, the NPS helps bring greater resources to community-based conservation efforts and satisfies its mandate to provide Federal coordination for recreation. Program staff are knowledgeable links between the communities they serve and numerous programs and initiatives including: DOI's livability initiative; the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community initiatives sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development; a Natural Resources Conservation Service partnership that provides streamlined services from six Federal agencies in thirteen cities; the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Initiative; the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council; the Interagency Task Force on Floodplain Management; and the Interagency Trails Council.
- *River Designations* - While most Wild and Scenic River designations confer Federal management authority on the river, RTCA helps States seeking an alternate path in which the State's governor assumes management responsibilities. The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program also maintains the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, a register of more than 3,500 river segments whose outstanding resource values make them potentially eligible for designation as wild and scenic rivers and whose inclusion in the inventory gives them a measure of protection.

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Examples of Long-Term Project Benefits:

Through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program partnerships, the NPS is generally most involved in a project's early stages, helping local partners develop a project vision and a strategy for bringing the vision to life. For this reason, full implementation of RTCA-assisted projects may take place several years following Park Service involvement; GPRA performance measures are thus designed to assess results five years following NPS involvement.

A few examples of long-term project benefits related to the Services work with State and local partners include the following: Eight grants helped move the Great Ohio Lakes-to-Rivers Greenway project along, \$5 million were leveraged, and the greenway now serves one (1) million people. In Wisconsin, the Kinnickinic River Protection Strategy conserved 1000 acres of open space. Utah's Ogden Trails Network which serves 30,000 people received RTCA assistance which helped leverage \$150,000 and acquired 25 miles of trail corridor. Similarly, in New York, partners working on the Paumanuk Path leveraged \$150,000, built 102 miles of trail, and conserved 6,000 acres of park and open space.

Performance Goals

Long-term Goal IIIb1	By September 30, 2005, 4,200 additional miles of trails, 6,600 additional miles of protected river corridors, and 223,200 additional acres of parks and open space, from 1997 totals, are conserved with NPS partnership assistance.
Annual Goal IIIb1	By September 30, 2001, an additional 3,100 miles of trails, an additional 2,850 miles of protected river corridor, and an additional 86,800 acres of park and open space, from 1997 totals, are conserved with NPS partnership assistance.
Long-term Goal IIIb2	By September 30, 2005, 85% of communities served are satisfied with NPS partnership assistance in providing recreation and conservation benefits on lands and waters.
Annual Goal IIIb2	By September 30, 2001, 79% of communities served are satisfied with NPS partnership assistance in providing recreation and conservation benefits on lands and waters.

Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Performance Information	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Estimate	FY 2001 Estimate
Miles of trails protected through RTCA assistance	1,409	500	500
Miles of rivers protected through RTCA assistance	418	545	685
Number of acres of open space protected	11,013	14,000	20,000
Percent of communities served satisfied with assistance	95%	>77%	>79%
* Miles and acres protected are counted five years after a technical assistance project is completed, because local initiatives to protect the resources or construct the trails generally take at least five years to complete.			

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Through these and other activities, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program supports the achievement of performance goals IIIb1 and IIIb2: Conservation Assistance and Community Satisfaction. Working on-site with grassroots groups in communities throughout the country helps to build a nationwide system of parks, open spaces, rivers, and trails. The goal for FY 2000 seeks to add miles of trails, miles of protected river corridors, and acres of parkland and protected open space that will enable educational, recreational, and conservation benefits through a nationwide system of parks, open spaces, rivers, and trails.

FY 2001 BUDGET REQUEST

	2001 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)						
▪ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance \$(000)	8,306	+500						
<p>The FY 2001 request for Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance is \$8.306 million, which represents an increase of \$0.671 million over the FY 2000 enacted level. The FY 2000 proposed programmatic increase of \$0.500 million to Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance activities includes:</p> <table style="width: 100%; margin-left: 40px;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: right; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">\$(000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>▪ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program</td> <td style="text-align: right; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Total</td> <td style="text-align: right; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">500</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				\$(000)	▪ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program	500	Total	500
	\$(000)							
▪ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program	500							
Total	500							
Justification for this increase is included at the end of this activity's presentation.								

***C. National Natural Landmarks Program
FY 2000 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments***

Enacted: \$956,000

Qualified sites are evaluated by the National Park Service and designated as National Natural Landmarks (NNL) by the Secretary of the Interior. By 1989, there were 587 national natural landmarks. The Service annually prepares a Section 8 Report to Congress identifying any damaged or threatened national natural landmarks. The legal requirement for a Section 8 Report to Congress ended in 1999.

- In late 1989, a moratorium was placed on NPS consideration of new sites for national natural landmark designation until program improvements could be completed. The Service undertook a management evaluation of the program in 1990 to identify material and other weaknesses and propose measures to address them.
- As a result of the review, proposed revised regulations were published in the Federal Register in November 1991, public hearings were held in January 1992, and final regulations were published May 13, 1999. During this ten-year period, current landmark owners were contacted, and a program handbook was written. An automated database has been developed and distributed to NPS regional offices, data continue to be collected, entered, and quality checked.
- Required field-level program responsibilities include monitoring the condition of designated sites and providing liaison with landowners. Program coordinators keep the national natural landmark ownership profile current and accurate (over 10,000 national natural landmark owners); foster partnerships with Federal, State, local, and municipal

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agencies and conservation organizations; and provide program information to interested parties and technical assistance to landmark owners if requested. A resumption of site evaluation can occur since the revised regulations were released.

The NPS will continue to ensure that information on the revised regulations is available to interested landowners, and that landowners have the option of withdrawing from the NNL program. Boundary adjustments and database modifications will be made where withdrawals are requested.

D. Hydropower Recreation Assistance FY 2000 Estimated Program and Anticipated Accomplishments

Enacted: \$497,000

Through a collaborative settlement process with hydropower companies and local recreational interests, the Park Service is involved during various stages in the hydropower licensing/relicensing process. Full implementation of recreation related mitigation efforts may take place several years following NPS involvement; GPRA performance measures within this component are designed to examine local results following settlement and/or the signing of a new hydropower operation license.

In recent years, Park Service staff have assisted in the negotiation of a number of Federal operating licenses for hydroelectric facilities along the rivers throughout the Nation. These settlement agreements have brought about the protection of hundreds of miles of river corridor and acres of open space. The licensing agreements have also improved recreational access to rivers and protected recreational experiences for all users.

In FY 1999, the Park Service worked on 22 hydropower relicensings in ten States, participating in a process established by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The NPS facilitates negotiations, designs whitewater boating studies, and works with power companies and user groups to lessen conflicts among industry, boaters, and anglers.

One recent success, the Wilderness Shores Settlement Agreement in Wisconsin and Michigan, was a landmark agreement that addressed eight hydropower projects prior to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's licensing process. The agreement was a collaborative one between Wisconsin Electric, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Michigan Relicensing Coalition, and the River Alliance of Wisconsin. The licensee realized significant savings; resource protection and enhancement benefits are noteworthy. Among the resource protection benefits promoted by the Hydropower Recreation Assistance program are:

- 22,000 acres will be protected, 4,850 of them outside of the project boundary
- 160 miles of riparian land will be protected with a 200 ft. or larger natural buffer
- instream flows for whitewater boating will be returned to two key river segments
- recreational facilities and access to the water will be developed or improved
- a water trail will be developed throughout the eight projects
- other benefits realized include a fish protection fund, a mitigation and enhancement fund for aquatic habitat restoration, instream flows to protect habitat, and angler access.

In summary, the benefits of the collaborative approach to relicensing include strong relationships among stakeholders, significant resource protection and enhancement, and major savings of time and money.

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With the increase in FY 2000, the Park Service will be hiring a number of new employees to provide assistance in regions of the country which currently have a high demand. These regions include Alaska, the West Coast, Pacific Northwest, Midwest, and Southeast.

FY 2001 BUDGET REQUEST

	2001 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)						
▪ Hydropower Recreation Assistance \$(000)	1,003	+500						
<p>The FY 2001 request for Hydropower Recreation Assistance is \$1.003 million, which represents an increase of \$0.506 million over the FY 2000 enacted level. The FY 2000 proposed programmatic increase of \$0.500 million to Hydropower Recreation Assistance activities includes:</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>\$(000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>▪ Hydropower Relicensing Assistance</td> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black;">500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Total</td> <td style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">500</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Justification for this increase is included at the end of this activity's presentation.</p>				\$(000)	▪ Hydropower Relicensing Assistance	500	Total	500
	\$(000)							
▪ Hydropower Relicensing Assistance	500							
Total	500							

JUSTIFICATION OF FY 2001 BUDGET REQUEST FOR NATURAL PROGRAMS

	2001 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)
Natural Programs \$(000)	11,205	+1,000

The FY 2001 request for Natural Programs is \$11.205 million and 119 FTE, which represents an increase of \$1.212 million and 10 FTE above the FY 2000 enacted level. The programmatic increase of \$1.0 million for the Natural Programs activity is justified by the proposed changes that follow:

▪ **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (+\$500,000; +5 FTE):** The NPS is requesting an increase of \$0.5 million and 5 FTE in FY 2001 to provide additional technical assistance for river and trail conservation. The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program provides technical assistance and organizational support for locally led conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives. The program provides expertise in areas such as public involvement, organization building, publications, trail and greenway design, and site restoration. Funds support technical assistance only; projects are implemented using local, State, and private funds, with the value of NPS staff assistance typically being leveraged many times over.

Program staff work from 25 field locations and seek to serve a wide variety of nonprofit organizations and local and State governments in all 50 States. In FY 2000, communities made over 400 project requests, but less than half of those received assistance. This increase would allow the Service to:

- Satisfy 25 additional new projects requested annually, thereby allowing the RTCA to establish a significant presence in new areas currently under-served;

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- Provide RTCA staff to help communities find appropriate strategies for preserving their sense of place by protecting historic landscapes, rivers, and watersheds or creating new parks and trails;
- Achieve a “critical mass” for program capability in all parts of the country, putting staff closer to the people and communities they serve, and decreasing travel costs;
- Forge strategic partnerships to achieve Service goals through cost-effective cooperative agreements, and create local linkages with existing Federal programs and funding sources to maximize their effectiveness;
- Meet or exceed the Service’s GPRA goal of protecting 4,200 miles of trails, 6,600 miles of river corridors, and 223,200 additional acres of open space by 2005, and in so doing give partner communities and organizations the skills and confidence they need to handle conservation projects without additional Federal assistance; and
- Provide a range of RTCA technical assistance offerings such as community consensus-building, visioning, and organizational development to efforts like the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water trails network, and the Star Spangled Trail in Maryland; the Gulf Coast Heritage Trail in Florida; and the Little Colorado River Watershed Project in New Mexico.

The proposed increase will expand the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance base program and allow it to meet a growing demand for services in all States. Increased services would be made available by adding new staff in existing offices and by opening new field offices in high-demand locations currently hard to serve.

▪ **Hydropower Recreation Assistance (+\$500,000; +5 FTE):** The NPS is proposing an increase of \$500,000 and 5 FTE in FY 2001 for hydropower relicensing assistance. This increase will provide well trained, dedicated staff in various geographic areas of increased demand over the next decade: California, Alaska, the Southeast, the Northwest, and the Northeast.

The NPS is one of the many Federal resource agencies with which a hydropower applicant must notify in preparing an application for a license. In selected hydropower projects, National Park Service staff provide technical assistance to citizen’s groups, hydropower applicants, and various levels of government on subjects that include meeting present and future public outdoor recreation demands (e.g. access, instream flows, facilities), and maintaining and enhancing the quality of the project’s environmental setting, particularly riparian areas. Additionally, The National Park Service provides initial review of hydropower proposals for potential interaction with program areas under its purview such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Historic Landmarks, Long Distance Trails, National Park Service units, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and rivers on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory.

The NPS plays a significant role in the relicensing of the Nation’s private dams operating under the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Park Service has been a key player in a number of precedent-setting settlement agreements, which have achieved major gains for conservation and recreation (acres of open space protected, river banks restored, wildlife and recreation releases provided, access sites established, and funds dedicated for long-term management, for example). A trend in the number of FERC licenses expiring -- from five in 1997 to 36 in 2000 and 236 in the next decade -- will result in a dramatic increase in requests for NPS assistance in negotiating settlement agreements.

This increase will enhance the Park Service’s ability to meet the long-term goal of providing educational, recreational, and conservation benefits on important river resources undergoing hydropower relicensing before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The additional funding is expected to result in the protection of a minimum of fifty river miles, and 1500 acres of open space.