



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **West Branch Susquehanna Water Trail Recognized as Newest National Recreation Trail in Pennsylvania**

On June 2 Deputy Secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes announced the designation of the Susquehanna River Water Trail – West Branch as a National Recreation Trail, one of 41 trails totaling almost 650 miles being added to the National Trails System. These land and water trails provide opportunities for communities to connect with nature and enjoy the great outdoors as part of a healthier lifestyle, the core principles behind President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors* and First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move Outside!* initiatives. The West Branch water trail was recognized as one of only two National Recreation Trails designated this year in Pennsylvania. The trail joins a statewide network of 67 National Recreation Trails totaling more than 2300 miles.

The announcement was timed to coincide with National Trails Day on Saturday, June 4. The designation of the Susquehanna River Water Trail – West Branch is part of a larger vision, outlined in the *America's Great Outdoors report*, to create connected water trails along America's waterways with a network of public access points.

"Today's new National Recreation Trails, built through partnerships with local communities and stakeholders, provide great opportunities for people to get outside, get active and have fun," said Deputy Secretary Hayes. "The trails establish a strong link in our urban and rural communities alike to a conservation legacy for future generations to build upon."

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership (SGP) is the Water Trail Manager for the West Branch and worked with public access owners last summer and fall to apply for the National Recreation Trail (NRT) designation. Starting as a narrow stream near Cherry Tree in the Allegheny Mountains, the West Branch of the Susquehanna River falls 228 miles through dense forests, rolling farmland, and historic towns to its confluence with the North Branch in Northumberland. The trail passes through the Pennsylvania Wilds and Lumber Heritage Region where paddlers enjoy the benefits of decades of conservation: mile after mile of forested mountains and valleys, deer, bear, elk, and birds in abundance. Hang gliders take off and soar above the river from Hyner View State Park. Continuing downstream, the West Branch and its

surrounding mountains begin to widen and flatten out while meandering between state forest, farm land and small historic towns.

“Paddling along the large remote stretches of the forested upper West Branch evokes the landscape as Native Americans may have seen it,” said Trish Carothers, Program Director of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership. “Yet the water trail is within six hours drive of 50 million people. This is a rare resource in our part of the country which should be enhanced and protected for our use and for future generations. We are thrilled that the National Park Service has bestowed this designation, and we plan to celebrate with a river sojourn, dinner and NRT ceremony on Saturday, June 25.”

The sojourn will paddle from Jersey Shore to the Linden access. Dinner, music, and a NRT ceremony at Haywood’s on the Water will follow. Registrants will receive a Woolrich gift bag and have a chance to win a new Emotion kayak provided by Woolrich. Anyone interested in registering for the sojourn or purchasing a dinner ticket should go to [www.susquehannagreenway.org](http://www.susquehannagreenway.org) for more information, or call Erin Pierce at 570-522-7244.

The West Branch Susquehanna Water Trail is part of a larger Susquehanna Water Trail network. With the addition of the 228 mile West Branch water trail, the Susquehanna Water Trail now totals 494 miles, and is the largest river-based water trail system in the National Recreation Trail program. Key partners that have helped the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership to make the water trail a reality include, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, and the numerous public boat access owners along the Susquehanna.

The National Recreation Trail program is jointly administered by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the U.S. Forest Service in conjunction with a number of other federal and nonprofit partners, notably American Trails, which hosts the national recreation trails website at <http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails>.

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