



Frequently Asked Questions – Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Rivers Tributary Study

Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Rivers Tributary Study Committee

What is a Wild and Scenic River?

According to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, enacted by Congress in 1968, a Wild and Scenic River is a river that possesses **outstandingly remarkable values**, or something special that most other rivers don't have regionally or nationally, and is **free-flowing** without major dams. 'Outstandingly remarkable values' can include amazing scenery, great recreational opportunities, unique geological features, abundant fish and wildlife; or important historic and cultural aspects. The waters of the Lower Delaware Watershed possess all of these attributes. The goal of designating rivers as Wild and Scenic is to preserve their special values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. You can find out more at www.rivers.gov.

What part of the Delaware was originally designated as the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River?

The Lower Delaware was designated in 2000 as a Partnership Wild and Scenic River from

- river mile 193.8 to the northern border of the City of Easton
- from south of the Gilbert Generating Stations to north of the Point Pleasant Pumping Station
- from South of the Point Pleasant Pumping Station to 1,000 feet north of the Route 202 Bridge
- from 1,750 feet south of the Route 202 bridge to Washington Crossing.

Additionally, some of the tributaries in the Lower Delaware were also designated including Tincum Creek (headwaters of two upper branches to the Delaware River confluence), Tohickon Creek (downstream of Lake Nockamixon to the Delaware River confluence), and Paunacussing Creek (portions passing through Solebury Township to the Delaware River).

The Upper Delaware, Middle Delaware and the Musconetcong River (3.5-mile stretch from Saxton Falls to Route 46 and the 20.7-mile stretch from King's Highway Bridget to the railroad tunnels at Musconetcong Gorge) are also designated as separate Wild and Scenic Rivers.

What is the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Rivers Tributary Study?

This is a study to consider whether additional Delaware River tributaries and non-designated segments are eligible and suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. With support and guidance from the National Park Service, the Lower Delaware Management Council has a study committee coordinating the effort that includes members from watershed towns, state agencies, non-profit organizations, and other entities. The Study Committee will identify the special values of noted tributaries. The goal is to submit a bill by 2024 or 2025 to Congress that will add the tributaries and segments to the Lower Delaware River Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

How will the tributary and segments be managed if they are designated?

A model called "Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers" was developed 25 years ago by the National Park Service for designated rivers that flow through privately owned lands, such as the ones in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. As a "Partnership Wild and Scenic River", the Lower Delaware has a Management Council and Steering Committee that are made up of municipal and non-profit partners that work together to administer Federal funds in the region, plan programs, and support the goals of the "Management Plan". Currently, the original Lower Delaware Management Plan identifies what is already in place that protects the rivers' special values, what are some of the threats to these values, and what collective actions could help protect the resources. As part of the Study process, interested communities will help add to this Management Plan. Once your town, watershed, or community group has endorsed being part of the Wild and Scenic River, you are invited to join our existing Wilds and Scenic Steering Committee/Management Council and be part of the discussion.

Does this mean the federal government could take my property if it's on one of the Wild and Scenic Rivers?

Absolutely not! Under the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers System, the rivers and tributaries continue to be managed by the local communities. NPS does not want to own any of the property and will make no effort to acquire it. Property can still be voluntarily sold or donated to local land trusts, towns, or the states in the same manner currently used. Usually, this is through state open space bonds and town or land trust funds. A Wild and Scenic designation may help provide more funds to the towns and counties for property purchases if this is the desired goal.

What are the benefits of Wild and Scenic River designation?

- Draws attention to the special values of the river segments and tributaries and gives them national recognition (could be helpful for tourism).
- Helps protect the river segments and tributaries for present and future generations.
- Assures that the local communities are an important part of managing the river segments and tributaries.
- Provides the capacity to work across town and state boundaries for the good of the river segments and tributaries.
- Provides access to National Park Service funding and expertise to implement the Management Plan.

What can I expect from a Partnership Wild and Scenic River?

- River and land use management continues to be governed by existing local and state laws and regulations, the same as prior to adding the new segment or tributary to our existing LDWSR designation.
- The existing Management Plan – combined with any additional sections that have been drafted - will continue to guide conservation actions of the Management Council, consisting of members from towns, counties, watershed communities, local partner organizations of designated segments.

- Wild and Scenic Rivers status, with the help of NPS funding, leverages additional federal, state, local, and private funding to implement Management Plan and achieve the goals of those involved.
- NPS is available to review potential water resource projects to help protect outstanding resources of the designated segments and tributaries.

What doesn't a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation do?

- Does not put the land under federal control.
- Does not require public access to private land.
- Does not force any changes in local land-use decision-making.
- Does not create new federal permits or regulations.
- Does not change any existing land uses.
- Does not change pre-existing access to or use of the designated segments, tributaries or watershed lands.
- Does not affect hunting and fishing laws.

How would designation affect my property if I own land on the river or in the watershed?

Local land use and property ownership is unaffected; existing state and local regulations that affect land use and development remain in effect. It does have the potential to increase property values.

What happens when the local community (watershed association, township and others)-expresses support to add a segment or tributary?

1. Each municipality along the new segments and/or tributary must show support by way of letter or resolution from a Town committee or appointed representative. Additional letters and/or resolutions from the watershed association, local support groups, county government, and state and federal legislators is encouraged and helpful. The resolution and/or letter will list the qualities making the segment or tributary eligible for designation part of the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River

and/or a Partnership Wild and Scenic tributary under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and should express that the municipality supports the Management Plan.

2. Once the support packet for the new segment or tributary is complete, the National Park Service reviews it for approval and inclusion in the study.
3. The National Park Service will prepare the study for submittal Congress.
4. Our congressional delegates will introduce a bill into Congress that amends the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to include qualifying new segments and/or tributaries of the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River.
5. Each local community will also consider to what degree they wish to be included in the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Steering Committee, which meetings once a month, and the Management Council which meets quarterly. Some amount of participation and two-way communication is a part of being included in the designation.

What financial or other obligations are required of townships, watershed associations, counties etc by supporting new segment or tributary for designation?

None. By supporting the addition of the new segment or tributary it opens your community up to the benefits mentioned; however, participation in and representation on the Steering Committee and Management Council is optional and voluntary.

How do I find out more information?

Websites:

Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Rivers: www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org

Delaware River Greenway Partnership: www.delawarerivergreenwaypartnership.org

Study Coordinators:

Robert McEwan, Solebury Township - robert4solebury@gmail.com

Cindy Kunas, Lower Delaware Coordinator - cindy@delawarerivergp.org