

Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Partnership Funding 2019



Overview

In 2019, with support from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), River Network launched the inaugural Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Partnership Funding. Modeled after the successful Wilderness Stewardship Performance Program partnership with the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, the program was designed to foster a shared stewardship approach between local groups and the federal management agency, and ensure that values of designated rivers are both protected and enhanced. In the first round of this program, we provided funding to seven organizations working to increase stewardship on USFS administered wild and scenic rivers. In total, **\$51,235 in funding was awarded, which leveraged an additional \$82,761, and directly engaged over 2,000 people in projects and programs across the seven wild and scenic rivers and their communities.**

Selection Process

River Network developed a web-based application form and shared the opportunity via social media, River Voices and through other organizations, coalitions (notably the Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition) and agencies, including USFS. Demand for stewardship funding was higher than we anticipated: we received 22 applications requesting a total of \$192,929 for \$50,000 of available funding. To qualify, projects had to take a shared stewardship approach on a designated wild and scenic river administered by USFS. A review team with staff from River Network, USFS and American Rivers evaluated and ranked all applications.



Snake River trail crew – photo courtesy of Snake River Fund

Themes and Successes

Each project involved various impactful work, but several themes emerged around common successes.

- Engaging Youth
- Reaching New Audiences & Increasing Partnerships
- Community Watershed Science
- Getting People Outside to Enhance Wild and Scenic River Values



Mulberry River Watershed Leadership Academy – photo courtesy of Native Expeditions



Rafting on the Skagit Wild & Scenic River designation - photo courtesy of Glacier Peak Institute

Awards

- **Chattooga Conservancy** – increased public awareness and involvement to address threats to the Chattooga River in Georgia and South Carolina through water quality monitoring, educational outreach, and managing invasive species (Chattahoochee and Sumter National Forests - Region 8).
- **Glacier Peak Institute** – introduced and connected kids from rural and mostly low-income backgrounds in Darrington, Washington, to the Sauk and Skagit Rivers through STEM education and time on the river (Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest - Region 6).
- **Illinois Valley Watershed Council** – expanded their community engagement program through restoration and education events with a focus on resource-limited, low-income community members to increase stewardship of Oregon's Illinois River (Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest - Region 6).
- **Kern River Conservancy** – created and implemented an education awareness platform for responsible public land use and native trout preservation on the Kern River in California (Sequoia National Forest - Region 5).
- **Native Expeditions** – worked to develop youth watershed leaders to steward Arkansas's Mulberry River through community water science and Leave No Trace awareness (Ozark St. Francis National Forest - Region 8).
- **New Mexico Wild** – undertook invasive species monitoring along the Rio Chama while also engaging local, diverse youth in Wild and Scenic River ecosystem education and conservation (Santa Fe National Forest - Region 3).
- **Snake River Fund** – used funds to improve the visitor experience along a highly used path to the Snake River in Wyoming through trail restoration and educational signage (Bridger-Teton National Forest - Region 4).



Leave No Trace – photo courtesy of Kern River Conservancy

Looking Ahead

We consider this first year of the Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Partnership funding, which was rolled out and implemented in a relatively short timeframe, to be a success. As this was the first year of this program, River Network and USFS are evaluating how to improve the process in future years. Feedback from award recipients and local USFS river managers will help to inform efforts to build on these successes in 2020 and beyond.