

WATERWAYS (2000, R2001, R2007)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes waterways are vital corridors of natural and cultural value, comprised of and sustained by diverse biological resources of terrestrial and aquatic origin. In addition, they also contain compelling elements of our heritage while providing recreational potential. The Society supports the protection, enhancement and/or rehabilitation of waterways and their corridors through wise planning and use of best management practices. In addition, the designation of national, state and local river systems and greenways ensures their integrity and function as well as use by all citizens for present and future generations.

Rationale

Waterways may be streams, rivers, canals, ponds, lakefronts, and act as both repository and conveyance of the byproducts resulting from natural and man-induced change in upland areas. Waterways have been used and abused in America for centuries. Recent efforts to improve water quality have met with widespread, if not complete, success. Most urban rivers and streams are now cleaner than they have been in centuries. However, public access to and corridors along them are discontinuous. Many suburban rivers and streams have been identified as greenways and are being acquired by local agencies through purchase or subdivision requirements. Appropriate development for public recreation and preservation of historic and prehistoric sites remains to be accomplished. Existing wild and scenic rivers programs at the national and state levels have designated thousands of miles of rivers to various levels of protection. However, in many cases, designation has not been followed by planning, acquisition and protection from adjacent land uses. The acquisition of lands, prohibition of construction in flood plains, the establishment of greenways and trail linkages as well as stimulating heritage tourism in the historic towns along waterways should be aggressively pursued. Waterways should be managed from a multi-use approach, including scenic and cultural values, wildlife resources, recreational potential as well as appropriate commercial development potential. Planning for an entire watershed, designation of appropriate land uses near waterways and management of upland vegetation as well as riparian buffers to protect stream-bank erosion and filter adjacent agricultural runoff is required to protect water resources. These also aid in better regulating runoff and flooding, enhancing base flow, limiting nutrient loading from point and non-point sources and enhancing recharge of affected aquifers.

Non-designated rivers with wild, scenic and recreational potential face continuing threats from flood control projects, industrial uses, dams, and diversion for irrigation. More than 600,000 miles of the nation's 3.5 million river miles are now impounded behind dams. More proposals to impound more miles are pending. Many thousands of miles are drained, polluted or the setting for inappropriate shoreline land uses. Removal of obsolete dams and the provision for fish passages in required dams is encouraged.