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## News Release

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### **Salazar Highlights 9 Projects in Southwest and Great Plains States under America's Great Outdoors Rivers Initiative** *Interior will leverage resources to support River Initiatives in every state and District of Columbia*

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today highlighted projects in nine Southwest and Great Plains states to serve as models of the America's Great Outdoors River Initiative to conserve and restore key rivers across the nation, expand outdoor recreational opportunities and support jobs in local communities.

The river projects are part of a list of 51 ongoing projects that the Secretary is highlighting nationwide, one in each state and in the District of Columbia. Ranging from restoration of the Rio Grande Watershed in Texas to recreational access improvements at Gimlet Creek in South Dakota, the projects were selected to provide examples of how communities across America can restore and reconnect with the rivers in their backyards.

“Across the country, we are working hand in hand with states, tribes, local communities and other partners to revitalize our nation's rivers and expand the opportunities for people to fish, swim, boat, and otherwise connect with the great outdoors,” Salazar said. “These on-going projects demonstrate how the federal family can be an effective conservation partner for community-led efforts to improve our rivers, which are the lifeblood of our communities and our economies.”

A map and more detailed descriptions of the river initiatives highlighted by Salazar can be accessed [here](#).

#### **The America's Great Outdoors Rivers identified today are:**

##### **Arizona: San Pedro River – [San Pedro Watershed](#)**

The Bureau of Land Management is using private-public partnerships to remove Tamarisk and other invasive species, recover native fish, and develop education programs in the San Pedro River watershed, which provides habitat for more than 400 migratory and resident bird species.

**Kansas: Kansas River – [Connecting the Kansas River](#)**

The National Park Service and other agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens are collaborating to promote river stewardship and recreational access to the river, and to obtain a National Water Trail designation for the Kansas River, the longest prairie river in the nation.

**Montana: Missouri River – [Upper Missouri River](#)**

The Bureau of Land Management; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; other federal, state and local agencies and non-governmental organizations are improving outdoor recreation and restoring important habitat along the Missouri River by reestablishing historic cottonwood grove trees, which were present when Lewis and Clark explored this area more than 200 years ago.

**Nebraska: Platte River – [Platte River Recovery Implementation Program](#)**

The Bureau of Reclamation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; other federal, state and local agencies and non-governmental organizations are implementing a basin-wide, cooperative, conservation and recreation program that will improve habitat for the recovery of whooping cranes, interior least terns, piping plovers, and pallid sturgeon, all threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

**New Mexico: San Juan River – [San Juan River Habitat Restoration](#)**

The Bureau of Reclamation and other federal, tribal and state agencies are working together to recover the Razorback Sucker and other endangered species on the San Juan River, at more than 300 water development projects in Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. This collaboration will benefit habitats on national parks, tribal, and private lands enjoyed by outdoor recreationists.

**North Dakota: Missouri River – [Pallid Sturgeon Recovery](#)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal, state and local agencies are working to restore and conserve habitat at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers and to support the recovery of the endangered pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River.

**Oklahoma: Blue River – [Blue River Landscape](#)**

The National Park Service and the Chickasaw Nation are working with other federal, state and non-governmental organizations to acquire a 500 acre parcel for a land management demonstration project that will provide landowners a “how to” educational resource for riparian restoration while enhancing recreational and educational opportunities on the Blue River.

**South Dakota: Gimlet Creek – [Gimlet Creek Stream Crossing Rehabilitation](#)**

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal and state agencies as well as non-governmental organizations are installing new bridges crossing Gimlet Creek to improve recreational opportunities while protecting native fish species by providing alternative all-terrain vehicles access.

**Texas: Rio Grande– [Rio Grande Watershed Landscape Conservation](#)**

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with domestic and international agencies and non-governmental organizations to implement riparian, wetland, and stream restoration projects that will benefit endangered species, migratory birds, and rare plants on the Rio Grande. These projects will also support a number of rare ecosystems, including the sky islands and desert grasslands.

“America has more than 3.6 million miles of rivers and streams, and nearly every American lives within a mile of a river or stream, making them some of the nation’s most important recreational and ecological assets,” Salazar added. “America’s Great Outdoors Rivers will help fulfill President Obama’s vision for healthy and accessible rivers as we work to restore and conserve our nation’s treasured waterways.”

Rivers are economic engines for many local communities, supporting recreation and tourism industries by providing opportunities for boating, fishing and hunting, hiking, camping, swimming, and numerous other outdoor activities. Salazar noted that the outdoor industry creates an estimated 6.5 million jobs in the United States and pumps an estimated \$730 billion a year into our nation’s economy.

Salazar unveiled America’s Great Outdoors Rivers in January as part of President Obama’s overall America’s Great Outdoors Initiative to work with communities across the country to establish a conservation and recreation agenda for the 21st century and to reconnect people, especially young people, to the great outdoors.

The goals of America’s Great Outdoors Rivers include protecting and restoring America’s rivers for people and wildlife and enhancing river recreation that supports jobs in tourism and outdoor recreation.

Under the initiative, Salazar issued a Secretarial Order in February establishing a [National Water Trails System](#), creating a network of designated water trails on rivers across the country that will help facilitate outdoor recreation, especially around urban areas, and provide national recognition to existing, local water trails. Using his authority to designate recreational trails, he named the Chattahoochee River Water Trail, which encompasses 48 miles of river within the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in Georgia, as the first trail of its kind under the new system.

In March, Salazar, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Secretary of Commerce John Bryson signed a memorandum of understanding implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to assist state and local governments, landowners, and community groups in protecting and restoring waterways and fisheries.

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