



# Foundation Document Overview

## Bluestone National Scenic River

West Virginia



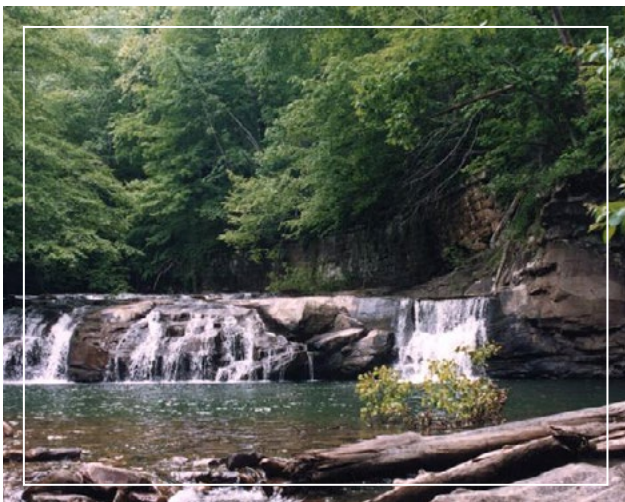
### Contact Information

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## Purpose



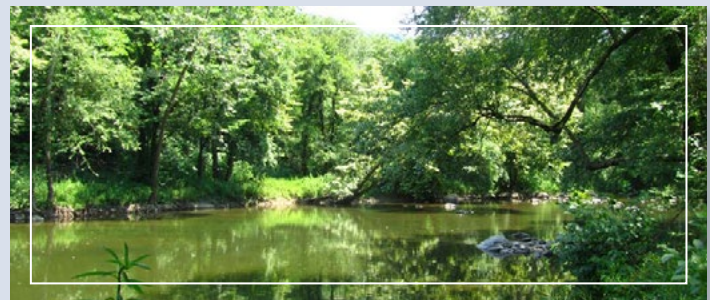
*The purpose of the BLUESTONE NATIONAL SCENIC RIVER is to preserve the free-flowing waters of the Bluestone River, the primitive character and outstanding scenic qualities of the gorge, and a diverse assemblage of natural resources endemic to the Central Appalachian Mountains, while providing for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Bluestone National Scenic River resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

1. As one of the few undammed rivers within the eastern United States, the Bluestone National Scenic River exhibits a natural hydrology that supports a diversity of aquatic and riparian habitats and biological communities due to its variable and seasonal flow regime.
2. The Bluestone gorge is characterized by an expansive continuum of unfragmented river-to-rim forest. The forest surrounding the Bluestone National Scenic River contributes to the larger, globally significant forest system that also encompasses the New River Gorge National River and Gauley River National Recreation Area. This type of unfragmented forest system is uncommon throughout much of the eastern United States, and supports rare and federally threatened species, as well as 22 riparian and upland plant communities, 8 of which are globally rare.
3. The Bluestone National Scenic River contains a state wildlife management area that features an abundant variety of fish, wildlife, and game species, providing important public opportunities for traditional recreation uses such as hunting, fishing, and trapping in a rich scenic landscape that is largely primitive and undeveloped.
4. The geography of the Bluestone River Gorge, with its flat bottomlands, provided an easily navigable landscape that was one of the oldest corridors that American Indians and early settlers used to travel through the Appalachian Mountains, affording linkages to the Tennessee and Ohio Rivers.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Biological Diversity**
- **The Bluestone River**
- **Historic Travel Corridor and Associated Cultural Resources**
- **Recreation Opportunities**
- **Undeveloped Primitive Character**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Diverse and unfragmented forests, extremes in topography and elevation, and the wild, free-flowing waters of the Bluestone River provide for a great diversity of plant and animal species.
- The Bluestone corridor has provided a pathway that connects people and cultures through place and time.
- The Bluestone River Gorge provides a refuge for plants and animals displaced from warmer and lower elevation ecosystems, and will become more vital as global climates change.
- The isolated, primitive character of the Bluestone River Gorge allows people to experience scenic landscapes that have been relatively untouched through time, providing opportunities for solitude and reflection while affording a glimpse into the geologic and historic past.



## Description

Bluestone National Scenic River is a unit of the national park system, and is also a part of the national wild and scenic rivers system. The national wild and scenic rivers system protects rivers throughout the country that are free-flowing and possess “outstandingly remarkable” scenic, natural, cultural, geological, and recreational values. The headwaters of the Bluestone River begin at an elevation of 3,500 feet on East River Mountain near Bluefield, Virginia, and flow for 77 miles to Bluestone Lake near Hinton, West Virginia, at 1,409 feet. The lower 10.5 miles of the Bluestone River, cutting through an impressive and biologically diverse gorge, has been designated as Bluestone National Scenic River, and is bordered by two state parks and a public fishing area. Pipestem Resort State Park provides a year-round resort type facility and Bluestone State Park offers a variety of recreational opportunities. The responsibility of protecting Bluestone National Scenic River is shared between the National Park Service, West Virginia State Parks, and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. A section of Bluestone National Scenic River lies within the boundaries of Pipestem Resort State Park, and the remaining portion is also a West Virginia Wildlife Management Area. Bluestone Dam, located on the New River, impounds 2.4 miles of the Bluestone River.

The Bluestone River, named for the deep blue limestone streambed of its upper reaches in Virginia, has created a gorge 1,000 feet deep. The rugged and ancient gorge is a richly diverse and scenic area of the southern Appalachian Mountains.

More than 700 species of plants grow in several diverse Appalachian forest habitat types along the river. The park provides excellent opportunities for watching many mammal, bird, amphibian, reptile, and insect species. The riverbed habitat is alive with a carpet of macro-invertebrate aquatic species, supports healthy populations of many warm water game and nongame fishes, and is classified as a “high quality warm water stream” by the state of West Virginia.

The bottomland within the gorge of the Bluestone was first used by American Indians. In the late 1700s the Lilly, Meadow, and Farley families built homesteads along the river. Historical records from the 18th century indicate that the route up the Bluestone River and Little Bluestone River was an American Indian trail that later became the Giles, Fayette, and Kanawha Turnpike that passes through modern-day Beckley and Fayetteville, West Virginia. At the confluence of the Bluestone and Little Bluestone Rivers, the community of Lilly once flourished. The Bluestone Turnpike, a riverbank road used by those who farmed and timbered the area until the 1940s, is used today by visitors to the park. Time spent in thoughtful solitude along this little mountain river offers the visitor a vestige of primitive America. The Bluestone Turnpike Trail, which follows the river for nine miles from the Mountain Creek Lodge (at the base of the tram at Pipestem Resort State Park) to Bluestone State Park, is open for hiking, biking, and horses. Opportunities for canoeing and kayaking are usually limited to spring and early summer, depending on water levels.

