

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN FOR THE AUSABLE, MANISTEE, AND PINE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

June 12, 2019

Introduction:

The United States Congress created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.¹ That system includes:

- The AuSable River between Mio Dam Pond and 4001 Canoe Landing;
- The Manistee River between Tippy Dam and the Huron-Manistee National Forests administrative boundary; and
- The Pine River between Elm Flats and Low Bridge.

These rivers are among the world's finest cold-water trout fisheries and paddling destinations. They are integral to many northern Michigan communities whose economies depend upon recreational tourism and whose traditions revolve around riverine activities.

The Wild and Scenic sections of the AuSable, Manistee, and Pine Rivers are administered by the USDA Forest Service.² In February 2019, the Forest Service announced its intent to ban alcohol from these river segments to address public safety concerns and mitigate behaviors that threaten their outstandingly remarkable values. The Forest Service later elected to postpone the implementation of the closure order to explore community-driven alternatives.

The Community Working Group for the AuSable, Manistee, and Pine Wild and Scenic Rivers was established in March 2019 for that purpose. The working group is committed to ensuring safe, responsible, and sustainable recreational opportunities on the aforementioned waterways. This action plan shall guide our efforts to fulfill that commitment.

The plan is intended to supplement actions taken by the USDA Forest Service to educate river users, empower good stewardship, and implement the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It does not supersede, establish, alter, or recommend USDA Forest Service policies.

Vision:

Pristine Wild and Scenic Rivers that can be safely enjoyed by present and future generations.

Objectives:

- 1) Educate the public about the benefits of our Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- 2) Ensure a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for all visitors to those waterways.
- 3) Strengthen local economies by attracting visitors to the Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- 4) Empower visitors to be responsible river stewards.
- 5) Protect and enhance the Wild and Scenic Rivers for our children and grandchildren.

¹ Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.; see also <https://rivers.gov/wsr-act.php>

² Although the Wild and Scenic Rivers fall under the jurisdiction of the USDA Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources manages several landings on the AuSable and Manistee Rivers.

Implementation:

Objective(s)	Action	Description	Target Date(s)	Status
1-5	Press Briefing	Announce action plan at joint press briefing with the USDA Forest Service	06/12/2019	In Progress
1-5	Build Partnership Network	Develop a network of community groups, local businesses, and other partners to help share river safety and etiquette messages with residents and visitors.	From 06/12/2019	In Progress
1, 2, 5	Post the River Rules	Make the rules of the river more accessible by: (1) displaying new posters at landings, liveries, and local businesses; and (2) posting infographics to the websites of local businesses, governments and community groups.	From 06/12/2019	In Progress
1, 4, 5	Reduce Littering	Promote the practice of securing mesh bags to all watercraft to reduce litter in the rivers; ensure that all livery canoes and kayaks include affixed mesh bags.	From 06/12/2019	Incomplete
1, 2, 4	Develop Public Service Announcements	Coordinate with the USDA Forest Service, media outlets, and other partners to produce and broadcast public service announcements for radio and television that emphasize river safety and etiquette.	From 06/12/2019	In Progress
1-4	Create a Wild and Scenic Rivers Promotional Video	Partner with the USDA Forest Service to create one or more short videos for social media that promote safe and sustainable recreation on the wild and scenic rivers. The video(s) could also be featured at liveries, visitors centers, and other locations.	06/26/2019	Incomplete
1-4	Share Safety and Etiquette Messages for July 4	Coordinate with the USDA Forest Service and other partners to develop and share content that promotes the wild and scenic rivers as recreation destinations for <i>all</i> Americans.	06/26/2019-07/06/2019	Incomplete
1, 2, 3	Share Safety and Etiquette Messages for Labor Day	Coordinate with the USDA Forest Service to develop and share content that promotes safe and sustainable recreation on the wild and scenic rivers.	08/25/2019-09/02/2019	Incomplete

1, 3, 4, 5	Share Safety and Etiquette Messages for the Fall Salmon Run	Coordinate with the USDA Forest Service to develop and share content that promotes river etiquette and proper waste disposal on the wild and scenic rivers.	From 09/03/2019	Incomplete
1, 4, 5	Organize River Clean Ups	Organize volunteer river cleanups to reduce litter. Invite the participation of partners and community members.	Ongoing	Incomplete
2, 5	Organize River Float	Organize one or more river floats with partners to interact with river users and monitor conditions.	July/August	Incomplete
1-5	Create a River Stewards Program	Explore creating a network of community volunteers to: (1) help educate river users about safety and etiquette; and (2) demonstrate sustainable recreation.	03/01/2020	Incomplete