

AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVER DESIGNATION PROCEDURE:  
THE NEW RIVER HEADWATERS,  
NORTH CAROLINA, VIRGINIA, AND WEST VIRGINIA

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## ABSTRACT

In 1997, President Bill Clinton announced a new initiative, the American Heritage Rivers program, which would designate American rivers for the purpose of revitalizing watershed areas. With his announcement, communities throughout the United States began a scramble to find out more about the designation and the benefits that could occur.

One of these communities, Sparta, North Carolina, began a crusade to have the New River designated an American Heritage River. A tri-state river that runs northward, the New River played a crucial role in the development of many communities in the Appalachian region of North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. As a link between communities, the river is held dear to many including the families that have owned the land along the river for generations as well as others who appreciate the way of life that grew up throughout the watershed area.

This paper will trace the development of the National American Heritage River initiative. It will also trace the development of the nomination of the New River and the effects of the nomination on the headwaters region of the New River. And, finally, this paper will discuss the process used to create a work plan to be implemented under the auspices of the New River American Heritage River designation.