



Fifty years ago, on October 2, 1968, with foresight, Congress passed and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the [Wild & Scenic Rivers Act](#).

In the days of fur trappers and pioneers, free-flowing rivers were the lifeblood of commerce, transportation and fisheries across America. Today, they are critical yet often-overlooked sources of clean water, critical habitat, and rejuvenating recreation for Americans seeking a break from the frenetic world of technology and reconnection with the deep flow of time and nature. The [original law](#), (PL90-542) designated 8 sections of the Clearwater, Eleven Point, Feather, Rio Grande, Rogue, St. Croix, Salmon (Idaho), and Wolf rivers for inclusion under act..

According to the National Park Service Wild and Scenic Rivers website, 1968 was:

*"...a year of profound progress in environmental protection. "Sustainability" enters the lexicon with the publication of *The Population Bomb* and *The Whole Earth Catalog*. "Earthrise" from Apollo 8 defines a new perspective and brought the world into focus as a whole rather than the little parts we could see and traverse. Six new national park units were created in one year, and over 800,000 acres of wilderness protected."*

There are approximately 3.6 million miles of streams in the United States; 1.1 million are at least five miles in length. Only 12,734 miles are protected by the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act—only 0.35% of the rivers in the U.S.

But what a wonderful 12,734 miles! Allagash. Salmon. Snake. Missouri. Concord. Fortymile. Trinity. As the Act nears a half-century of protecting some of our greatest rivers, we hope you'll join us in celebrating its accomplishments—and in working for its future. While there is much, we have to do, there is much we have done, and to the thousands of people across the country that have worked tirelessly to save their local river, it's time to take a moment to celebrate, to congratulate each other, to look forward. It's also time to make plans to add to the 12,734 miles.

[The Digital Outdoorsman](#) and [Recreation Law](#) are joining together to create a photo memory book to share with the world that recognizes and celebrates this 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic River Act. Whether your river memory is from private river trips or commercial river trips, whether it's from fly fishing, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, tubing or hiking along them, whether you are a newbie to enjoying our nation's rivers or a seasoned guide or outfitter, we welcome you sharing your memories.

Each experience we have with a river in our lives usually involves the use of some type of equipment. Originally the equipment used to cross and then travel along these waterways was

made by the people who wanted to go somewhere. That added a personal touch to moving on the water. It also created limits to the waters that could be navigated and for how long.

Eventually, third parties provided that equipment. Manufacturers who sought out a better, faster cheaper way to make things in many cases created new ways to travel, cross, view or enjoy our rivers. Bill Parks and the Bill's Bag, Bill Masters and the whitewater hard shell kayak, Jack Kloepher, and the Paco Pad, Mark Thatcher and the Teva all made river trips easier and possible in our busy worlds. Add to that list of names the outfitters who opened up the boundary waters, Georgie White in the Grand Canyon, George Wendt for the California Rivers and the Hatch Brothers on the Yampa and the Green opened these rivers with the new equipment for all to experience.

Without equipment ranging from simple hiking shoes, a travel chair, fishing pole, a backpack, a self-bailing raft, and other watercraft, the opportunities would have been more significantly limited. Outdoor industry manufacturers over the years have provided equipment to allow us all to experience our rivers. These companies have provided innovation in design, materials and construction that should be recognized and celebrated in conjunction with the 50-year anniversary. What are the pieces of equipment that have facilitated your river experience?

We want to celebrate the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act and the people who help make it possible to enjoy those rivers and the Equipment manufacturers, equipment users, outfitters and guides and the occasional solo boater who just has to go, as well as your family sitting on the bank beside a river or wetting a line in a pond.

In an effort to celebrate the 50th anniversary, over the next five years, [American Rivers](#) is working to protect 5,000 miles of new Wild and Scenic Rivers and one million acres of riverside land. The National Park Service has a [link](#) you can access to plan a 50th anniversary event, host a 50th anniversary event, and purchase Rivers 50th anniversary product.

