Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

October 29, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We write today to thank you for your strong commitment to the preservation of America's natural treasures, and to express our support for the National Blueways Program.

We understand that you are currently reviewing the future of the program, and that you have received an invitation from the Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge to meet and learn firsthand about their experiences working together to implement the Blueways Program in the Connecticut River basin. We believe that the success of the Connecticut River program – the first and currently only designated National Blueway – can provide valuable information and insights that will be critical to your decision-making process. We would encourage you to seek input from these important stakeholders prior to making any decisions on the future of the Blueways program.

We believe that the Blueways designation for the Connecticut River can continue to function as an important asset for the people, the economy, and the environment of the watershed we represent. Reconnecting people with their watershed through expanded access to recreation, water quality protection, and economic development are all enhanced by a watershed-focused approach to conservation.

Thank you again for your attention to this important matter. We stand ready to assist your effort however we are able.

Sincerely,

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

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Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

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Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

Richard Neal
Member of Congress

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JAN - 7 2014

The Honorable Chris Murphy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murphy:

Thank you for your letter dated October 29, 2013, expressing support for the National Blueways System and encouraging the Department seek input from the Connecticut River stakeholders before making a decision regarding the future of the program. We are responding separately to each Member on the letter dated October 29, 2013.

Conversations with Connecticut River stakeholders revealed, as your letter suggests, that the designation is functioning as a significant organizing framework to support conservation of this important watershed and its people, economy and environment.

The completed review of the National Blueways program found that while the original intent is laudable and consistent with the Department's commitment to watershed conservation, budget constraints dictated that we streamline our efforts. For this reason, the Secretary has signed a Secretary's Order to maintain the Connecticut River designation but to otherwise end the National Blueways program. The Department will continue to work with its fellow agencies in support of the Connecticut River National Blueway and its watershed partnership.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Sarah C. Neimeyer

Sarah C. Neimeyer
Director, Office of Congressional
and Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

ORDER NO. 3331

Subject: Supporting Watershed Partnerships

Sec. 1 **Purpose**. This Order recognizes diverse stakeholder partnerships that use a comprehensive watershed approach to resource stewardship. In recognition of its strong watershed partnerships and accomplishments in watershed stewardship, this Order maintains the designation of the Connecticut River as a National Blueway. This Order also affirms the Department of the Interior's (Department) commitment to supporting regionally or nationally significant rivers, their watersheds, and community-based watershed partnerships.

Sec. 2 **Background**. Rivers play a vital role in connecting Americans with the lands and waters that provide economic, recreational, social, cultural, and ecological value to their communities. Healthy rivers are integral to the quality of life for all Americans and their communities. Resilient rivers and watersheds are essential sources of clean water supplies for rural, agricultural, and urban communities alike. Rivers provide important habitat for fish and wildlife species and act as corridors for their migration and dispersal, providing ecosystem connectivity that supports resilience to environmental change. Rivers support our recreation and tourism economy by providing opportunities for boating, fishing, hiking, camping, swimming, and numerous other activities. Rivers offer a focal point for environmental education and outreach that helps communities understand and connect with the great outdoors.

On May 24, 2012, Secretary's Order 3321, established the National Blueways System to recognize and support locally-led efforts to sustain the economic, recreational, and natural values of rivers and watersheds of national significance. The National Blueways System was a voluntary recognition program intended to highlight and support successful collaborative strategies for sustainable river and watershed resources led by diverse stakeholder organizations. Secretary's Order 3321 also designated the Connecticut River as a Model National Blueway in recognition of the diverse partnerships that were developed to sustain the economic, recreational, and natural values of the Connecticut River watershed.

Sec. 3 **Authorities**.

a) This Order is issued in accordance with authority provided under the Take Pride in America Act, Public Law 101-628; the Outdoor Recreation Act, Public Law 87-714; and the Cooperative Watershed Management Program of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11.

b) The bureaus within the Department have a broad panoply of legal authority to carry out their respective missions that support enhancing river recreation, undertaking river restoration, and pursuing river protection initiatives to pass on healthy rivers to future generations. These authorities include: the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.; the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956,

16 U.S.C. 742 et seq.; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 16 U.S.C. 4601-4 et seq.; the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287; the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 U.S.C 1702 et seq.; the Reclamation Act, Public Law 57-161; the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11; and the National Trails System Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. 1241 et seq.

Sec. 4 **Dissolution of the National Blueways System and Committee**. The National Blueways System and the National Blueways Committee are dissolved. This Order supersedes Secretary's Order 3321 Establishment of a National Blueways System, dated May 24, 2012.

Sec. 5 **Connecticut River Blueway Designation**. In light of its successful designation, on-the-ground accomplishments, and ongoing, broad support, I hereby reaffirm the designation of the Connecticut River and Watershed as a National Blueway. The Connecticut River Watershed exemplifies coordinated stewardship of a river and its watershed with diverse partnerships of interested communities including over 40 partner organizations, protection of over 2 million acres of habitat, environmental and educational efforts aimed at urban and rural populations, and recreational access to the river, its tributaries, and public lands. The Department is committed to promoting best practices, sharing information and resources, and encouraging active and collaborative stewardship of the Connecticut River and Watershed.

Sec. 6 **Support for Watershed Partnerships**. Across the Nation, communities and stakeholders have formed partnerships focused on stewardship and sustainability of rivers and their watersheds. When these partnerships work successfully across Federal agencies, with state, local, and tribal governments, and with non-profit organizations, private landowners, and businesses, they are able to accomplish their shared stewardship and conservation objectives. When sought by local communities and stakeholders, Federal agency coordination in support of river systems will inspire and help stakeholders to plan and manage for the resiliency and connectivity of their rivers, to seek cooperation and collaboration among communities and across jurisdictions, and to strive for an integrative, adaptive approach for sustaining the whole river system. The Department is committed to supporting regionally or nationally significant rivers, their watersheds and community-based watershed partnerships.

Sec. 7 **Effect of the Order**. Nothing in this Order is intended to authorize or affect the use of private property. Nothing in this Order is intended to be the basis for the exercise of any new regulatory authority, nor shall this initiative or any designation pursuant to this Order affect or interfere with any Federal, state, local, and tribal government jurisdiction or applicable law including interstate compacts relating to water or the laws of any state or tribe relating to the control, appropriation, use or distribution of water or water rights. Furthermore, nothing in this Order shall be interpreted as amending, revising, or modifying either Executive Order 13061 of September 11, 1997, entitled "Federal Support of Community Efforts Along American Heritage Rivers" or Secretary's Order 3319, dated February 29, 2012, entitled "Establishment of a National Water Trails System."

Sec. 8 **Expiration Date.** This Order is effective immediately. It shall remain in effect until its provisions are converted to the Departmental Manual or until it is amended, superseded, or revoked, whichever comes first.

Sally Jewell

Secretary of the Interior

Date: JAN 03 2014