THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

Designation of the Connecticut River National Blueway

Whereas: President Obama announced an America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative to achieve lasting conservation of the outdoor spaces that power the Nation's economy, shape its culture, and build its outdoor traditions.

Whereas: The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Act of 1991 established the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in the Connecticut River watershed to conserve, protect, and enhance native fish and wildlife populations and the ecosystems on which they depend; protect threatened, endangered, and candidate species; restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of its waters; and provide opportunities for scientific research, environmental education, and fish and wildlife-oriented recreation and access.

Whereas: The Connecticut River and its 7.2 million-acre watershed includes National Forests, National Historic Sites, National Wildlife Refuges, National Scenic Byways, Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Recreation Trails, National Natural Landmarks, Important Bird Areas, and segments of the New England National Scenic Trail; the Appalachian National Scenic Trail; the East Coast Greenway Trail; the Northern Forest Canoe Trail; Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail, a Ramsar wetland site, and an American Heritage River, and approximately two million acres of public and private land conserved for wildlife and people;

Whereas: The efforts of over 40 partner organizations, including the Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and the Connecticut River Watershed Council, have led to restoration of the River and its watershed, protection of about two million acres of habitat in the watershed, environmental education efforts aimed at the urban and rural populations within the watershed, and recreational access to the River, its tributaries, and public lands in the watershed.

Whereas: Through a collaborative process, the Department of the Interior and the States of Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, have prioritized conservation, recreation, and restoration in the Connecticut River Watershed in a way that models designation of National Blueways in the future.

Therefore: It is with great pleasure that I hereby designate the Connecticut River and its Watershed, as the Nation's first National Blueway.

Signed this 24 day of May 2012:

Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior