

Bluestone

National Scenic River
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Bluestone National Scenic River

A ten-mile segment of the Bluestone River was designated a National Scenic River under the administration of the National Park Service in 1988. This river was the first in West Virginia to enter the Wild and Scenic River System which protects free-flowing rivers throughout the United States.

To be eligible for inclusion under the Wild and Scenic Act of 1968, a river must possess "outstandingly remarkable" values. The Bluestone qualifies with its beautiful scenery, many recreational opportunities, and wildlife.

The Bluestone begins on East River Mountain in

Virginia and flows 77 miles to its confluence with the New River at Bluestone Lake near Hinton, West Virginia.

The section preserved as a National Scenic River flows through the Bluestone Gorge between Pipestem and Bluestone State Parks. This rugged gorge offers many inspiring views.



New River Gorge National River

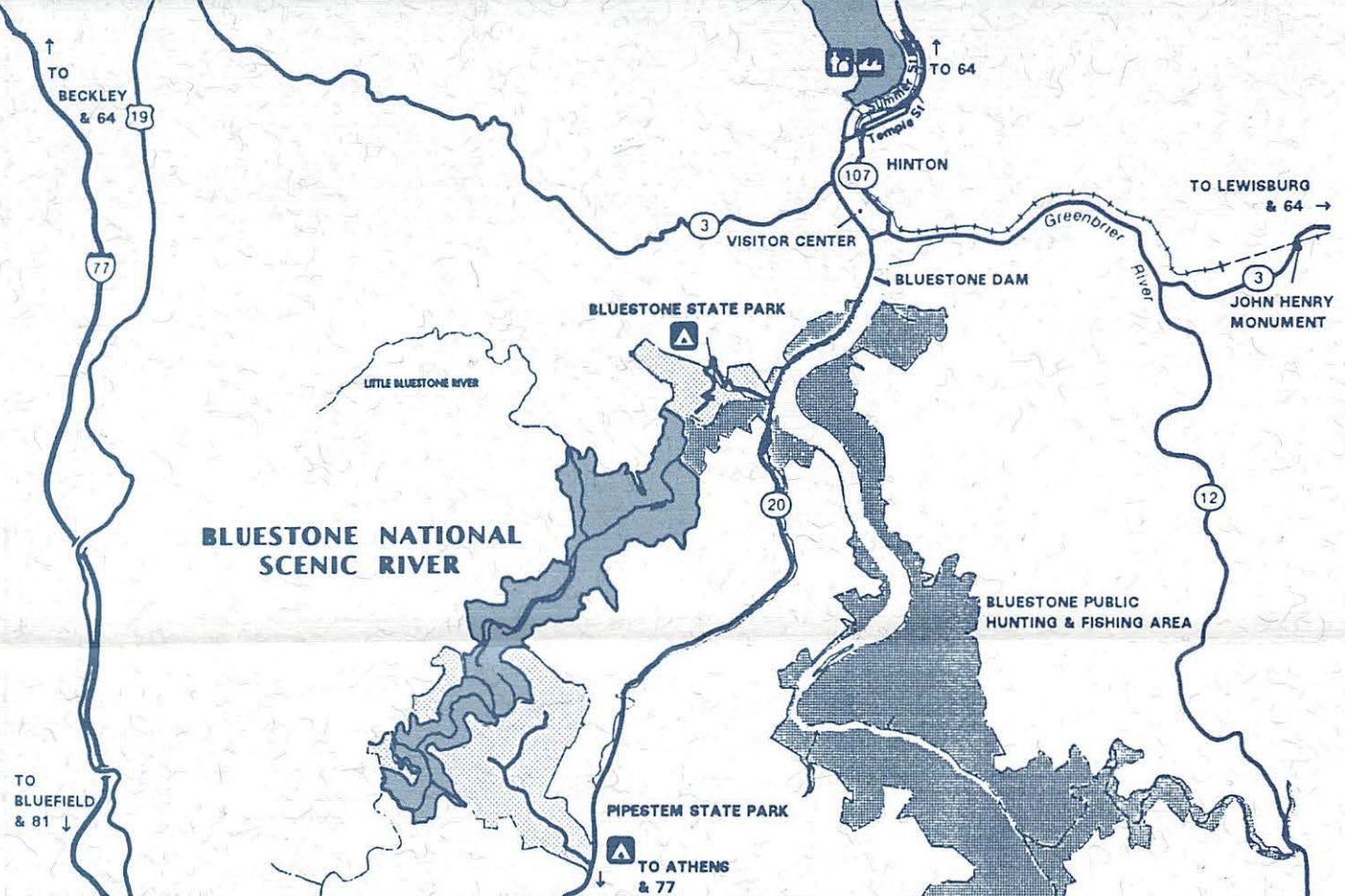


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Access

The Bluestone National Scenic River flows north parallel to Route 20 between Bluestone and Pipestem State Parks. For access from the north, enter Bluestone State Park and follow signs for the Old Mill Campground; the trail begins at the iron gate. Access from the south is at the Canyon Rim Center of Pipestem State Park. Take the aerial tramway or the River Trail to reach the river and the Bluestone Trail.

Recreation

The Bluestone may be viewed from many scenic overlooks in Pipestem State Park. Intermediate canoeing and rafting is possible during higher water levels; however, the river is infrequently paddled. The eight-mile Bluestone Trail fords the shallow Little Bluestone River and connects Pipestem and Bluestone State Parks. There are opportunities for birdwatching and wildlife observation along this trail.

Much of the Bluestone is managed as a public hunting and fishing area by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. Hunting is permitted during the fall, winter, and spring in accordance with state laws. Be sure to wear blaze orange. Fishing is also permitted, although a license is required. Anglers may catch smallmouth bass, bluegill, and catfish. Camping is not permitted within the Bluestone National Scenic River.

History

Native Americans established trails in the Bluestone area. European exploration of the area began in the mid-1700s, when a land company followed the Bluestone to its source. In the early 1800s the Lillys and the Meadors settled at the confluence of the Bluestone and Little Bluestone rivers establishing the community of Lilly. Timbering and farming were the primary industries of the area. The Bluestone Trail follows the old Bluestone Turnpike, a route used by Civil War troops and the people who lived in the gorge until the 1940s.

Nature

The Bluestone is a warmwater stream with an abundance of aquatic life that attracts birds such as kingfishers and great blue herons. The river and its gorge support a variety of mammals including beaver, fox, bobcat, and white-tailed deer. During the winter months turkey are often sighted in large flocks.

A diverse mix of Southern Appalachian forest types, from the oaks and hickories of the ridgetops to the birch and sycamores of the riverbanks, can be found along the Bluestone. Mushrooms and wildflowers thrive throughout the area.