

# News Release

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March 28, 2007

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## Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study results available for Glenwood and Kremmling Field Offices

**Glenwood Springs, Colo.** – The Bureau of Land Management today released the results of its Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study for the Glenwood and Kremmling field offices.

The study details which river and stream segments occurring on BLM lands within the two field offices meet the criteria to be eligible for federal Wild and Scenic River designation.

The study, prepared in advance of the two field offices revising their Resource Management Plans, evaluated 244 river and stream segments and found 27 were eligible, including seven segments of the Colorado River. The study is available at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/kfo-gsfo>

“This eligibility study gives us a list of the river and stream segments within our management boundaries with regionally or nationally significant values,” said Glenwood Springs Field Manager Jamie Connell. “We will now use this information to conduct a suitability study to determine whether a stream segment would make a worthy addition to the national Wild and Scenic Rivers system.”

This next step – the suitability study – will analyze current and future uses of the eligible stream segments with close coordination from a variety of stakeholders. The suitability study will be included in the Resource Management Plan revisions, which will analyze a range of possible alternatives. BLM may or may not actively recommend suitable segments for Wild and Scenic River designation, based on input from stakeholders and the public.

“It’s important to remember that Congress, not BLM, actually makes the decision about including segments in the Wild and Scenic River System,” said Acting Field Office Manager Peter McFadden.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1968 to preserve selected rivers or sections in their free-flowing condition to protect “the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.” To be eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation, a river or stream segment must possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable values,” have sufficient water quality to support those values, and be free-flowing.



River segments determined to be eligible are afforded interim protective management under BLM authorities until a suitability study is completed. The Resource Management Plan revision process and suitability analysis is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009.

Public involvement in the suitability study will continue through the Resource Management Plan revision process. More information about this process is available at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/kfo-gsfo>

The Cache La Poudre River is the only river in Colorado with segments currently included in the Wild and Scenic River system. For more information on Wild and Scenic Rivers, visit <http://www.nps.gov/rivers/>

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## **Glenwood Springs and Kremmling Field Offices Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study**

### **FACT SHEET**

#### **What is Wild and Scenic River Designation?**

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1968 to preserve selected rivers or sections in their free-flowing condition to protect “the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.” Only Congress can make Wild and Scenic River designations.

#### **Why is BLM conducting this Wild and Scenic River Evaluation?**

BLM is required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to assess river and stream segments under its management jurisdiction as part of its Resource Management Plan revision process.

#### **What is the difference between the eligibility study and the suitability study?**

To be designated as Wild and Scenic, a segment must have been determined to be both eligible and suitable. The eligibility study was done as baseline data for the RMP revisions. It focused on the specific eligibility criteria described below. The suitability study will incorporate analysis of current and future uses (see below) of the eligible stream segments and will be included in the Draft RMP revisions. The Draft RMP revisions will include a wide range of possible alternatives.

#### **What are the criteria for a stream segment to be eligible?**

To be eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation, a river or stream segment must possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable value,” have sufficient water quality to support those values, and be free-flowing. Outstandingly remarkable values could be scenic, recreational, geological, fish related, wildlife related, historic, cultural, botanical, hydrological, paleontological, or scientific.

## **How will BLM management change as a result of this eligibility determination?**

BLM's policy is to protect any outstandingly remarkable values identified in the eligibility study until a decision on suitability can be made. BLM must protect the free-flowing character, tentative classification of the segment (based on the level of stream corridor development), and identified outstandingly remarkable values of eligible segments. Future BLM management actions will conform with interim protective management until a decision on suitability is made.

## **How does BLM define "free-flowing"?**

Free flowing does not mean that the stream has a completely natural flow regime. It means that within the analyzed stream segment, there are no dams or diversion structures that impound a significant amount of water for extended periods of time. Congress has designated Wild and Scenic Rivers immediately below major storage projects, even though the natural flow regime has been changed significantly by the project.

## **What specifically will be looked at during the suitability study?**

During the suitability phase, the BLM will analyze all of the potentially competing uses for each segment, potential management prescriptions for each segment, and the positive and negative impacts of various management approaches. The process identifies how stream-related values can best be protected and enhanced. It fully considers the impact possible to other values, such as water supply. During this process, the federal agencies consider alternative approaches to managing water-dependent values, fully recognizing that wild and scenic river designation may not be the only way to protect these values.

## **How will stakeholder and public involvement be incorporated into the suitability determination?**

The suitability process is designed to be a highly inclusive process. Personnel with knowledge in oil and gas development, grazing, water rights and water supply, and policy analysis must be involved for this analysis to be successfully completed. The suitability process will be conducted as part of the RMP revision process. There are numerous opportunities for stakeholders and the public to get involved in this process. The first opportunity is during the scoping process which is currently underway. The BLM will be holding scoping meetings on April 10, 11, and 12. For more information, visit the following address: <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/kfo-gsfo>.

## **When will the suitability phase be complete?**

The suitability phase is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009 with the completion of the RMP revisions.

## **Do BLM's eligibility and suitability determinations create any federal water rights to protect the outstandingly remarkable values?**

No. A federal water right is not created unless Congress designates a stream segment as a Wild and Scenic River.

## **How could a BLM suitability determination affect a future water supply project?**

If BLM determines that a stream segment is suitable, it cannot take any actions that would significantly impact the outstandingly remarkable values, water quality, and free-flowing nature of the stream segment. If a proposed water supply project is located within a suitable stream segment, the project proponent can request that BLM amend its resource management plan to allow the project to be built. BLM may or may not grant that request, based upon an analysis of the importance of the water supply project relative to the impact it would have on outstandingly remarkable values, water quality, and free-flowing nature of the stream segment.