

THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS INVENTORY PROCESS BLM SPOKANE DISTRICT OFFICE

What is the Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Process?

A wild and scenic rivers study process is composed of **two main components**: the **inventory/eligibility phase** and the **study/suitability phase**.

- At this time, BLM is conducting only the **inventory/eligibility phase**.
- If, upon completion of the inventory/eligibility phase, any segments are found eligible, a suitability study (study phase) will be conducted as part of the District Offices' Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision process.

What is the Inventory/Eligibility Phase?

The inventory/eligibility phase is the process of evaluating rivers and river segments in the BLM Field Offices' boundaries to determine whether they are eligible for consideration as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

The inventory/eligibility phase includes determining whether rivers and river segments are **free flowing** and contain at least one **Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV)**.

The inventory/eligibility phase concludes when the BLM determines whether or not individual rivers and/or river segments are eligible. Eligible segments are then assigned a **tentative classification** (Wild, Scenic, or Recreational). The BLM will manage all eligible river segments as necessary to ensure appropriate protection of the values supporting the eligibility and classification determinations; this will be done until a suitability determination is made as part of the RMP process.

Reference **Fact Sheet #2**: Outstanding Remarkable Values, for a list of ORVs and their Regions of Comparison.

What is Free Flowing?

Segments under consideration should represent a reasonably natural condition; however, stretches with small obstructions may also be considered. Often these obstructions form the endpoints of a potential segment.

- A river below a dam or impoundment can still be eligible;
- A river need not be navigable by watercraft to be eligible; and
- There are no specific requirements concerning the flow of an eligible river segment. Flows are sufficient if they sustain or complement the outstandingly remarkable values for which the segment would be designated. As such, intermittent and ephemeral streams can be eligible.

What is an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV)?

The determination of whether a river area contains “outstandingly remarkable” values is a professional judgment and is documented in the eligibility report. In order to be considered as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. While the spectrum of resources that may be considered is broad, **all values should be directly river related.**

That is, they should have the following characteristics:

- Be located in the river or on its immediate shorelands (for the purposes of this study, the preliminary boundary is 0.25-mile on either side of the river);
- Contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem; or
- Owe their location or existence to the presence of the river.

To be eligible for designation, a river must be free flowing and contain at least one Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV) that is scenic, recreational, geological, fish related, wildlife related, historic, cultural, botanical, hydrological, paleontological, scientific, or other values.

What Happens if a River Segment is Eligible?

Once rivers are considered eligible as a result of applying the free-flowing and ORV criteria, river segments are assigned a **tentative classification**.

Classification categories are **Wild, Scenic, or Recreational** and are based on the type and degree of human development and access associated with the river and adjacent lands at the time of the inventory. The classification does not reflect the types of values present along a river segment. Each segment can only be assigned **one** classification. Reference **Fact Sheet #3: Classification Criteria for Wild, Scenic and Recreational Designations**.

Determination of eligibility triggers protective management until completion of the study/suitability phase.

What is the Study/Suitability Phase?

If, upon completion of the inventory/eligibility phase, any river or stream segments are found to be eligible, a **suitability study (study phase)** will be conducted as part of the Field Offices' RMP revision process, which will begin in late 2006.

The suitability study is a process of determining the actual manageability of a river segment. The process will consider land ownership, use tradeoffs and conflicts, usage levels, and availability of other methods for protecting values, to name a few.

Suitability recommendations will be developed by the BLM using input from our partners and the public during alternative development of the RMP revision. A reasonable range of alternatives will be considered in the RMPs. River segments identified as “suitable” at the end of RMP process will be managed to protect identified ORVs until Congress either rejects or approves the recommendation for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System, or until BLM readdresses the suitability recommendation in future planning efforts.

At no time in this process or the RMP revision process will the BLM be designating Wild and Scenic River segments. Only Congress or the Secretary of Interior can make that designation.