

Chapter 6 Introduction – WRNF

The WRNF has assessed the suitability of four river segments, two on the Colorado River and two on Deep Creek, in conjunction with the CRVFO assessment on adjoining river segments. The following report is the Final Wild and Scenic Suitability Report. This study evaluated four segments, previously determined to meet eligibility criteria (Forest Service 2002) to determine whether they would be appropriate additions to the NWSRS. This report describes the ORVs, suitability factors, and suitability determinations for each of the segments.

Because this study is being conducted in conjunction with the BLM study on adjacent segments, the following report references the BLM report (Part I), where applicable, to avoid redundancy. Where the Forest Service study process is not consistent with the BLM process, the differences are described. For an overview of the entire report structure, refer to the Readers Guide following the Table of Contents.

6.1 Project Area

The Forest Service project area for this suitability study included four WRNF-managed river segments that have been determined to meet the eligibility criteria for WSRs. In 2002, the WRNF determined two segments of the Colorado River eligible as part of its Land and Resource Management Plan (White River LRMP) revision process (Forest Service 2002). Deep Creek was determined eligible in a joint Forest Service and BLM study completed in 1995 (Forest Service and BLM 1995). [Figure 1-1](#) displays the four segments being studied as part of this WSR suitability analysis.

6.2 Why Conduct a Suitability Study and Why Now?

The BLM is conducting a suitability study for 41 individual segments as part of their RMP revision process, in accordance with Section 5(d)(1) of the *WSR Act*. The four eligible Forest Service WRNF segments being evaluated in this study are part of the same river systems being evaluated by the BLM. Specifically, the two WRNF Colorado River segments are contained within the upstream and downstream ends of BLM Colorado River Segment #7, and the two WRNF Deep Creek segments (1 and 2a) are immediately upstream of the two BLM Deep Creek segments. The WRNF was invited by BLM to participate in a joint study of these rivers. By jointly examining eligible segments of the Colorado River and Deep Creek, the federal agencies can comprehensively assess the suitability of these segments, and avoid conflicting determinations which would result in management challenges. In addition, by jointly assessing suitability, the Forest Service can meet its requirements under NEPA as part of the BLM RMP/EIS. The Forest Service will be preparing a separate *ROD* specific to its portion of the suitability study.

Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholder Group Management Plan

Before publication of the *Draft WSR Suitability Report* for this planning effort, the BLM and Forest Service received a proposal from the Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholder Group for a management plan designed to protect the ORVs associated with the Colorado River between Gore Canyon and No Name (BLM's Colorado River Segments 4 through 7 and Forest Service Colorado River Segments 1 and 2). The BLM and Forest Service included the *Stakeholder Plan* in the Draft RMP under Alternative B2 for impact analysis and public comment purposes. In addition, the *BLM Draft RMP/EIS* included a copy of the full text of the *Stakeholder Plan*, which identifies members of the stakeholder group and actions proposed to maintain the ORVs. The BLM and Forest Service have made a decision to adopt the *Stakeholder Plan*. As part of that decision, the BLM and Forest Service have elected to defer any suitability determination for the river segments addressed by the plan.

6.3 Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Process

A general description of the WSR study process and its two phases (eligibility and suitability) is in Sections [1.4](#), [1.5](#), and [1.6](#) of Part I of this report. The following discussion highlights WSR study process items particular to the Forest Service.

At this point, the WRNF has completed the eligibility phase and is completing the suitability phase for two segments being evaluated in this study. In addition, the Forest Service is providing the rationale for deferring any suitability determinations for the segments it manages along the Colorado River in Glenwood Canyon and adopting the Management Plan proposed by the Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholders Group. The eligibility and suitability phases were conducted in accordance with the *WSR Act* of 1968, *Forest Service Handbook* 1909.12, Chapter 8 (Forest Service 1992), *Forest Service Handbook* 1909.12, Chapter 80 (Forest Service 2006), and *The Wild and Scenic River Study Process Technical Report* (Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council 1999).

6.3.1 Eligibility Phase

The WRNF previously determined as eligible the four segments being evaluated for this study. The Deep Creek Segments were determined eligible as part of a joint study conducted by the Forest Service and the BLM (1995). In 2002, the Forest Service determined as eligible the two segments on the Colorado River, as part of the WRNF's Land and Resource Management Plan revision (Forest Service 2002).

A determination of eligibility includes identifying the river segment's ORVs, free-flowing nature, and preliminary classification. A summary of segments identified as eligible in the WRNF and that were evaluated for suitability in this report is provided in [Table 6-1](#).

Table 6-1 White River National Forest Eligible Segments Studied for Suitability

| River or Creek | Segment | Total Segment Length (miles) | Length on National Forest Land (miles) | Preliminary Classification | Outstandingly Remarkable Values |
|--|------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Colorado River | Segment 1 | 3.35 | 2.97 | Recreational | Recreation, Scenic, Geologic |
| <i>Note:</i> Suitability Determination Deferred | Segment 2 | 3.13 | 2.46 | Recreational | Recreation, Scenic, Geologic |
| Deep Creek | Segment 1 | 0.24 | 0.24 | Scenic | Ecologic, Scenic, Geologic |
| | Segment 2a | 10.53 | 10.53 | Wild | Ecologic, Scenic, Geologic |

6.3.1.1 Suitability Phase

The general suitability phase is described in Section 1.6 (Part I) and 7.1 (Chapter 7) of this report. Rivers found not suitable by the managing agency conducting the suitability study would be dropped from further consideration and would be managed according to the objectives and specific management prescriptions outlined in the White River LRMP (Forest Service 2002). As part of this NEPA process a range of alternatives was analyzed. Under alternative D, all 4 study segments were analyzed as not suitable and therefore would no longer be eligible and the study process would be complete. Subsequently under Alternative D, new management prescriptions were prescribed and analyzed as the forests current management prescriptions would no longer be applicable as they are tied to the segments' eligibility determinations. Consequently, alternative D would have resulted in amending the White River LRMP to provide revised management prescriptions for the study segments (*BLM Draft EIS*, Chapter 4, page 4-729). Alternative D management prescriptions are described in Appendix B of this report.