
APPENDIX C. WILD AND SCENIC RIVER OVERVIEW

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act established legislation for a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS) to protect and preserve designated rivers throughout the nation in their free-flowing condition, as well as their immediate environments. It contains policy for managing designated rivers, and created processes for designating additional rivers into the national system. Section 5(d) of the Act directs federal agencies to consider the potential for national wild, scenic and recreational river areas in all planning, for the use and development of water and related land resources. A “Wild and Scenic River (WSR)” review is being conducted as part of the Vernal Resource Management Plan Revision.

The first phase of the review is to inventory all potentially eligible rivers within the planning area, to determine which of those rivers are eligible for designation into the NWSRS. In order to be eligible, a river must be “free-flowing,” and possess at least one “outstandingly remarkable value.” The inventory to determine eligibility is part of the “analysis of the management situation.”

Next, all eligible rivers are taken through the land use planning process to determine their suitability for Congressional designation into the NWSRS. One planning alternative would manage all eligible rivers as suitable, another alternative would manage no eligible rivers as suitable, and other alternatives would manage some rivers or river segments as suitable and other rivers or river segments as not suitable. Actual “suitability” determinations will be made in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the land use plan.

There is also a reporting phase where “suitability” determinations are reported to Congress. There is no specific time requirement for completion of this phase; however, it is assumed that reporting will be done some time following completion of the land use plan. Only the Congress or the Secretary of Interior, upon an official request by a state, can designate a river into the NWSRS.

CURRENT GUIDANCE

- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968
- Wild and Scenic River Reference Guide,
- Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordination Council
- Wild and Scenic Rivers - Policy and Program Direction for
- Identification, Evaluation, and Management; BLM Manual 8351
- Wild and Scenic River Review in the State of Utah,
- “Process and Criteria” for Interagency Use, July 1996

IDENTIFICATION OF ELIGIBLE RIVERS

To determine eligibility, the Vernal Field Office (VFO) conducted an inventory of “all potentially eligible rivers.” This included all rivers nominated during the “scoping” process or that appeared on local or national river lists. These rivers were automatically identified and considered as potentially eligible. In addition, all rivers within the planning area were mapped

and reviewed by agency and non-agency subject matter specialists and members of the interested public to identify any additional rivers that could be potentially eligible. All rivers determined to be eligible are considered further for suitability in the planning process.

To be eligible, a river must be free flowing. The WSR Act defines “free-flowing” as any river or section of river, existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping. However, minor structures existing at the time any river is proposed for inclusion in the NWSRS will not automatically bar its consideration from such inclusion, provided that it will not be construed to authorize, intend, or encourage future construction of such structures within components of the NWSRS.

Another screening criterion to determine if a river segment may be eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS is that the river must possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable” scenic, recreational, geological, fish, wildlife, historical, cultural, or other similar values including ecological value(s).

The size of a river is NOT a criterion of eligibility. To be eligible, rivers do not have to be outstanding white-water or boatable. Flow must simply be sufficient to sustain the outstandingly remarkable value that makes a river or river segment eligible for consideration.

A “tentative classification” of wild, scenic or recreational is determined for any eligible river. Tentative classifications are based on the evidence of man’s activities and the condition of the river and the adjacent lands at the time of the inventory.

A “wild” river is “free of impoundments,” with shorelines or watersheds essentially primitive, and unpolluted waters. A “scenic” river may have some development, and may be accessible in places by roads or railroads. A “recreational” river is considered as a river or section of river accessible by road or railroad, may have more extensive development along its shoreline, and may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1. Classification Criteria for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River Areas.

Attribute	Wild	Scenic	Recreational
Accessibility	Generally inaccessible except by trail.	Accessible in places by road.	Readily accessible by road or railroad.
	No roads, railroads or other provision for vehicular travel within the river area. A few existing roads leading to the boundary of the river area is acceptable.	Roads may occasionally reach or bridge the river. The existence of short stretches of conspicuous or longer stretches of inconspicuous roads or railroads is acceptable.	The existence of parallel roads or railroads on one or both banks as well as bridge crossings and other river access points is acceptable.
Shoreline Development	Essentially primitive.	Largely primitive and undeveloped.	Some development.
	Little or no evidence of human activity.	No substantial evidence of human activity.	Substantial evidence of human activity.

Attribute	Wild	Scenic	Recreational
	The presence of a few inconspicuous structures, particularly those of historic or cultural value, is acceptable.	The presence of small communities or dispersed dwellings or farm structures is acceptable.	The presence of extensive residential development and a few commercial structures is acceptable.
	A limited amount of domestic livestock grazing or hay production is acceptable.	The presence of grazing, hay production or row crops is acceptable.	Lands may have been developed for the full range of agricultural and forestry uses.
	Little or no evidence of past timber harvest.	Evidence of past or ongoing timber harvest is acceptable, provided the forest appears natural from the riverbank.	May show evidence of past and ongoing timber harvest.
Water Resource Development	Free of impoundment.	Free of impoundment.	Some existing impoundment or diversion.
			The existence of low dams, diversions or other modifications of the waterway is acceptable, provided the waterway remains generally natural and riverine in appearance.
Water Quality	Meets or exceeds Federal criteria or federally approved State standards for aesthetics, for propagation of fish and wildlife normally adapted to the habitat of the river, and for primary contact recreation (swimming) except where exceeded by natural conditions.	No criteria prescribed by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 have made it a national goal that all waters of the United States be made fishable and swimmable. Therefore, rivers will not be precluded from scenic or recreational classification because of poor water quality at the time of their study, provided a water quality improvement plan exists or is being developed in compliance with applicable Federal and State laws.	