

Wild and Scenic Rivers on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests

October 2015



Overview – Wild and Scenic Rivers

- Why are we looking at Wild and Scenic Rivers?
- What are Wild and Scenic Rivers?
 - Designated rivers
 - Eligible rivers
 - Outstandingly Remarkable Values
 - Region of Comparison
 - Current Forest Plan
- What has been done so far
- Next Steps
- Questions?



Why reviewing Wild and Scenic Rivers?

Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, October 2, 1968:

“The Congress declares that the established national policy of dams and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.”

Why reviewing Wild and Scenic Rivers?

- 2012 Planning Rule Language
 - Identify existing eligible and designated Wild and Scenic Rivers and identify the eligibility of additional rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Land Management Planning Handbook – FSH 1909.12
 - Chapter 80 – Wild and Scenic River Evaluation



Wild and Scenic Rivers

2012 Planning Rule Definition:

A river designated by Congress as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that was established in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C.1271 (note), 1271–1287).



Wild & Scenic Rivers – Evaluation Process

- Evaluation

1. Determining Eligibility
2. Assigning potential classification
3. Determining suitability



- Agency Recommendation
- Designation by Congress or Secretary of Interior

During the Nantahala and Pisgah forest plan revision process we will be reviewing rivers for eligibility; but will not be conducting suitability studies (FSH 1909.12_83.1).

What is an eligible river?

A river segment that has been evaluated, and found to be free-flowing and, in combination with its adjacent land, possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs).

Rivers found to be eligible will require plan language and management to retain the outstandingly remarkable values.



Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)

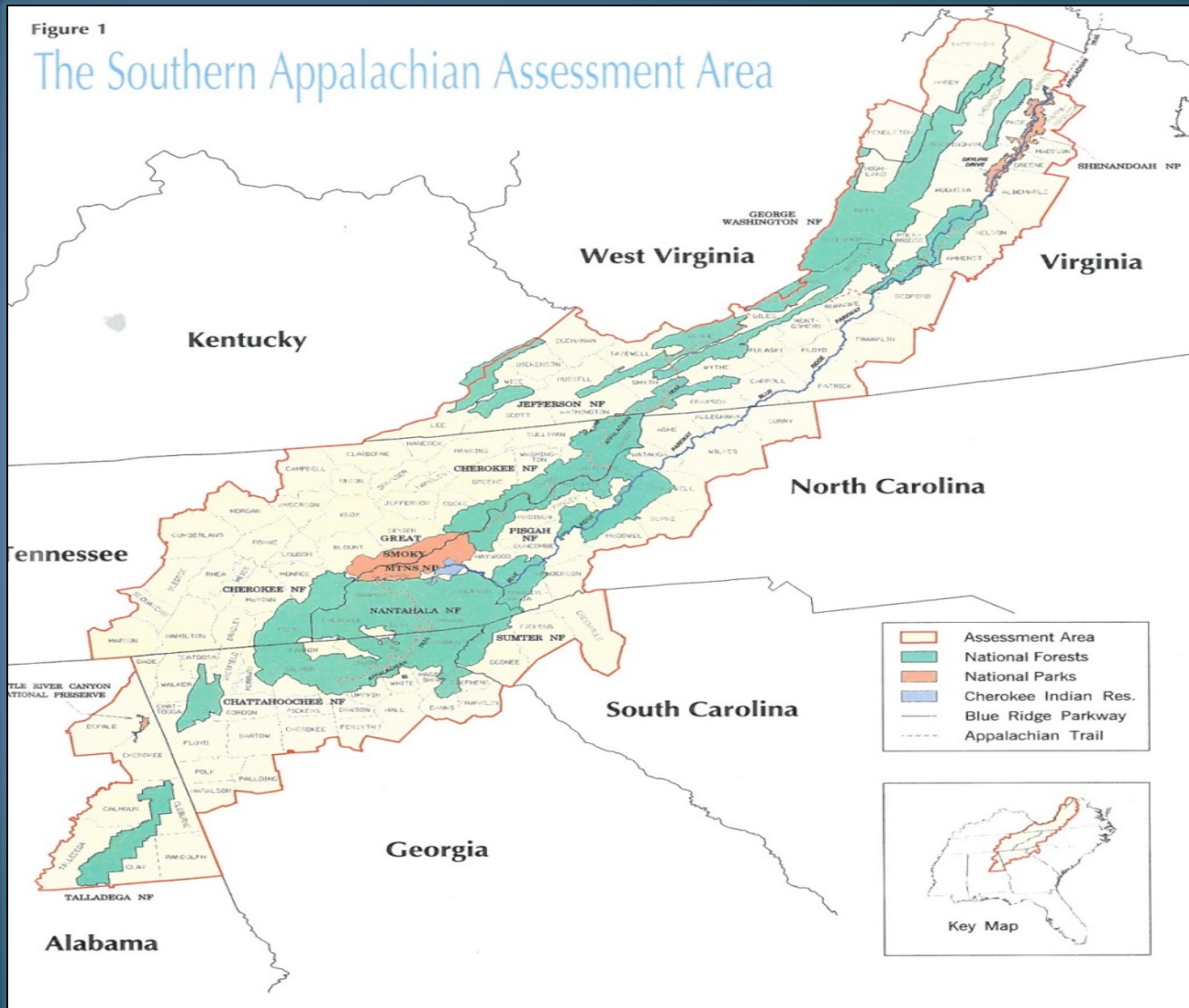
A scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar river-related value that is unique, rare, or exemplary feature and is significant when compared with similar values from other rivers at a regional or national scale.

- Scenery
- Recreation
- Geology

- Fish
- Wildlife
- Ecological
 - Populations
 - Habitat

- Historic & Cultural
 - History
 - Prehistory
- Other

Region of Comparison



Current Forest Plan

Congressionally Designated WSRs:

- Chattooga River
- Horsepasture River
- Wilson Creek



Eligible WSR segments:

- Big Laurel Creek
- Davidson River
- East Fork Pigeon River
 - Dark Prong
 - Yellowstone Prong
- French Broad River
- Linville River
- Nantahala River (above & below lake)
- Nolichucky River
- Mills River System
 - North Fork
 - South Fork
- Snowbird Creek
- Tellico River

What we have done so far...

- **Spring 2014** – Completed the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan Assessment
 - Review of current situation
 - Received public comments with proposals for new eligible WSRs
- **Summer 2014** – Received public comments on proposals for additional eligible WSRs
- **Fall 2014** – Received an additional 2 rivers to be considered for eligibility
- **Spring/Summer 2015**– Preliminary evaluation of rivers on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest

What we have done so far...

Preliminary evaluation began with all potential wild, scenic, and recreational rivers flowing wholly or partially on NFS lands as identified in the National Rivers Inventory, public input, and all named rivers on a standard U.S. Geological Survey 7.5 minute USGS quadrangle map (FSH 1909.12_82.2)



What we have done so far...

- Approximately 1300 rivers including:
 - Rivers from National Rivers Inventory
 - Currently eligible rivers
 - Public proposals
- District personnel & planning team reviewed rivers
 - Public comments
 - ORV trigger questions
- Resulted in 53 rivers

What we have done so far...

- Developed draft evaluation form
 - Questions developed using Chapter 80 definitions (FSH 1909.12_82.2)
- Three major areas on the form:
 - Free-flowing & outstandingly remarkable values
 - Determination of eligibility
 - River segment classifications – Wild, Scenic, & Recreational
- Now we would like more input from you

Information we would like from you

- Review the draft blank evaluation form & let us know if we missed any evaluation considerations
- Provide information on rivers
- We will consider your input as we evaluate rivers



Tools available to you

- Maps
- Blank evaluation forms
- Definitions of outstandingly remarkable values
- List of rivers with potential outstandingly remarkable values
- Example evaluation form
 - Not intended to decide or imply a decision has been reached for any river
- Your input will be most helpful if shared with us by **December 15, 2015**

Evaluation Form

- River Information
- Eligibility Analysis
 - Free-flowing
 - Outstandingly Remarkable Values
- Analysis of Eligibility
- River Classification

It is important describe in detail the outstandingly remarkable values and to explain how they are unique, rare or exemplary features significant at the region of comparison.

Evaluation Form

Is the river free-flowing?



Evaluation Form – Remarkable Values

- Scenery
- Recreation
 - Fishing as an activity – not populations
- Geology



Evaluation Form – Remarkable Values



- Fish
 - Populations
 - Habitat
- Wildlife
 - Populations
 - Habitat
- Vegetative/Ecological
 - Populations
 - Habitat

Evaluation Form – Remarkable Values

- Historic & Cultural
 - Historic
 - Prehistoric
- Other Values
 - Hydrology
 - Scientific



Evaluation Form

ANALYSIS OF ELIGIBILITY COMPONENTS RIVER/SEGMENT CLASSIFICATION



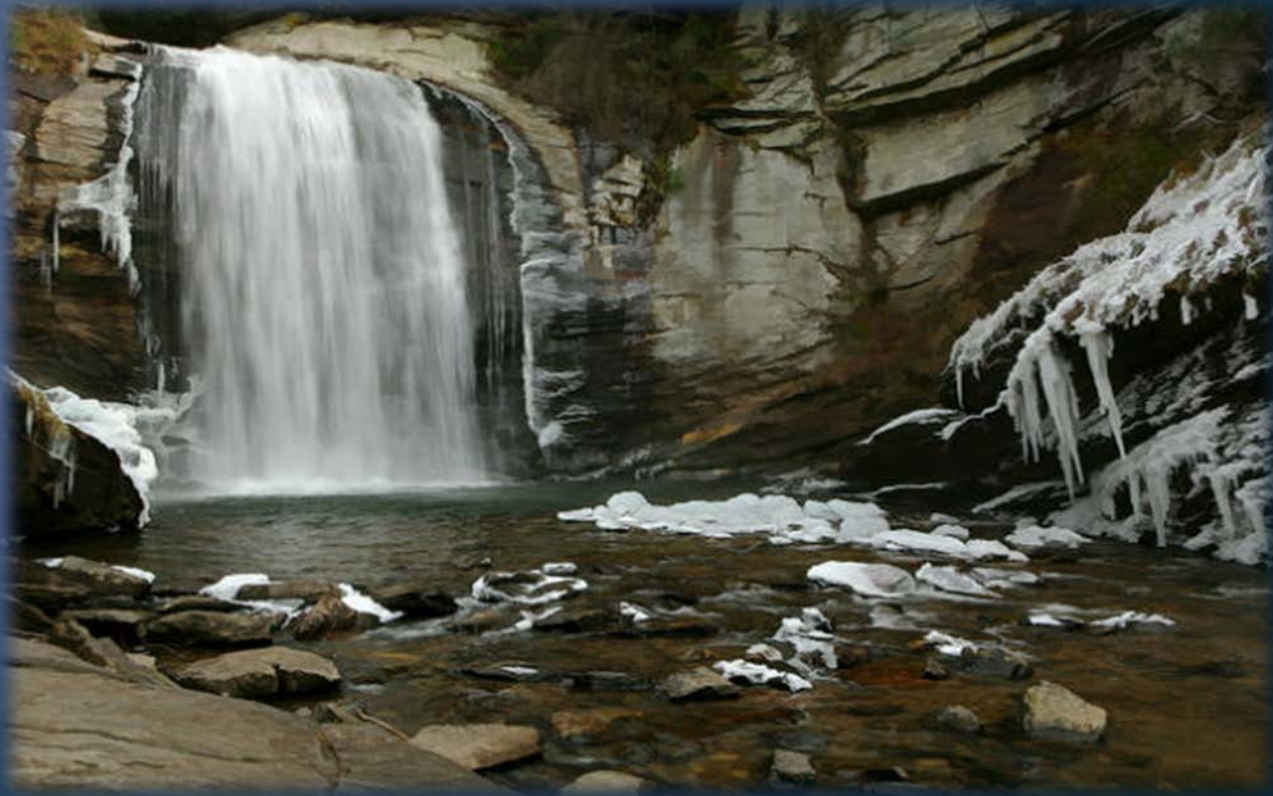
Responses to these sections is not required. This question will be completed by the USFS after considering input from the public and FS specialists on the answers to the questions above.

After we hear from you, we will:

- Apply questions on the evaluation form to rivers with potential outstandingly remarkable values
- Analyze eligibility components (answers to the ORV questions) and determine if the river is eligible or not eligible
- If eligible, decide what classification would be applied to the river?
 - Wild
 - Scenic
 - Recreational



Questions?



Future opportunities to provide input
will be available during the Draft
Environment Impact Statement 90 day
comment period – Spring 2016

Thank you!