

Wild and Scenic River Frequently Asked Questions:

1. *What is a Wild and Scenic river?*

Wild and Scenic refers to rivers designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development.

A Wild and Scenic River (WSR) is a river or segment of river that is protected to remain free-flowing (without dams) and to preserve its outstandingly remarkable values (scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values). Rivers are categorized in three ways:

- a. **Wild** - generally inaccessible except by trail, and representing vestiges of primitive America.
- b. **Scenic** - shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive, and largely undeveloped but accessible in places by roads.
- c. **Recreational** - readily accessible by road or railroad.

2. *Q. How is a WSR established?*

WSRs are designated by Congress.

3. *What is the effect of the Wild and Scenic designation?*

Regardless of classification, each river in the National System is administered with the goal of protecting and enhancing the values that caused it to be designated. Designation neither prohibits development nor gives the federal government control over private property. Recreation, agricultural practices, residential development, and other uses may continue. In most cases not all land within boundaries is, or will be, publicly owned, and the Act limits how much land the federal government is allowed to acquire from willing sellers. Visitors to these rivers are cautioned to be aware of and respect private property rights.

The Act purposefully strives to balance dam and other construction at appropriate sections of rivers with permanent protection for some of the country's most outstanding free-flowing rivers. To accomplish this, it prohibits federal support for actions such as the construction of dams or other instream activities that would harm the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, or outstanding resource values. However, designation does not affect existing water rights or the existing jurisdiction of states and the federal government over waters as determined by established principles of law.

Plan Alternatives:

If a river or river segment has been found eligible, it will move forward in all forest plan alternatives.

Management Activities:

Rivers legislatively mandated for study (sec. 5(a) of the Act), and other rivers the Forest Service determines to be eligible or suitable for inclusion in the National System (sec 5(d)(1) of the Act), must have certain interim protection measures. Forest Service-identified eligible and suitable rivers must be protected sufficiently to maintain free flow and outstandingly remarkable values unless a determination of ineligibility or non-suitability is made. A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities on National Forest System lands within legislatively mandated study river corridors, or within Forest Service-identified eligible or suitable river corridors when the project and activities are sufficient to maintain free flow and outstandingly remarkable values. **See Forest Plan Directives sections 84.3 and 84.4 for more details.**

4. *What recreation activities occur in WSRs?*

Recreational uses in WSRs include a wide variety of non-motorized and motorized activities. Each area is unique and offers different opportunities and different restrictions, but common activities include rafting, fishing, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, camping, nature study, photography, and driving off-highway vehicle routes.

5. *Are motor vehicles allowed in WSR corridors?*

Typically, motor vehicles are allowed only on routes designated for such use. Motor vehicle use in WSRs is typically not allowed.

6. *Is hunting and fishing permitted in WSRs and WSR corridors?*

Yes. Hunting and fishing is allowed in WSRs and WSR corridors, subject to applicable state and federal laws. Fishing activities must be properly licensed, as required by state laws.

7. *Can roads be constructed?*

Motorized travel and new travel ways on land or water may be permitted, prohibited, or restricted to protect the outstandingly remarkable river values.

8. *Are fires allowed to burn in WSR corridors?*

In cases where fire plays a key function in the areas ecology, the Forests will work to maintain the role of fire. However, all fires must be controlled to prevent loss of human life or property within the Forests or on lands adjacent to the Forests.