

March 24, 2015

(DRAFT)

Wild and Scenic River Study

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

March 2015

River Inventory

The following inventory of rivers within the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) was developed using the National Stream Inventory layer in the LTBMU Geographical Information System (GIS) database¹. Each river in that layer was checked against the 7.5' Quadrangle topographic map (USDA Forest Service Publication R5-RG-172, 2011) to confirm that all named rivers were included in this inventory. One additional river (Eagle Creek) was added to the inventory even though it was not named in either the National Stream Inventory layer or the quadrangle topographic map. Each River is described by its unique identifier in the GIS database and GIS mileage.

Stream Name	GNIS Number	Miles
Angora Creek	26	3.84
Big Meadow Creek	21	4.23
Blackwood Creek	45	6.65
Bliss Creek	9	1.32
Burke Creek	22	3.48
Burton Creek	15	4.36
Cascade Creek	20	3.37
Cathedral Creek	4	0.96
Cold Creek	42	7.08
Dollar Creek	12	2.42
Eagle Creek	29	3.40
Edgewood Creek	36	5.03
First Creek	9	1.82
General Creek	71	9.08

¹ The Friends of the River website was also checked to ensure that any rivers identified by that group were included in the eligibility evaluation. The only river listed for the LTBMU was the Upper Truckee River, which is already recommended for wild and scenic river status (Potential Wild & Scenic Rivers in California, September 2001).

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Stream Name	GNIS Number	Miles
Glen Alpine Creek	30	3.49
Glenbrook Creek	25	3.87
Grass Lake Creek	19	4.40
Griff Creek	18	3.97
Heavenly Valley Creek	20	4.07
Incline Creek	30	4.87
Lincoln Creek	29	4.01
Logan House Creek	24	3.10
Madden Creek	16	2.78
Marlette Creek	11	1.78
McFaul Creek	43	4.83
McKinney Creek	15	3.96
Meeks Creek	45	6.46
Middle Fork Blackwood Creek	12	1.75
Mill Creek	16	1.60
North Canyon Creek	51	6.92
North Fork Blackwood Creek	12	1.88
North Logan House Creek	19	2.21
Rubicon Creek	11	1.84
Saxon Creek	47	6.45
Second Creek	9	2.45
Secret Harbor Creek	14	1.92
Tallac Creek	11	3.65
Taylor Creek	5	1.90
Third Creek	28	6.99
Trout Creek	63	12.39
Truckee River	32	3.84
Tunnel Creek	14	1.88
Upper Truckee River	141	23.31
Ward Creek	28	6.26
Watson Creek	10	3.17

Currently Eligible and Suitable Rivers

Upper Truckee River Recommended Wild & Scenic River

The Upper Truckee River was determined to be eligible in 1999, as a result of the Eight Eastside Rivers Wild and Scenic River Study Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA Forest Service Tahoe National NF and LTBMU 1999). Forest Supervisor Juan Palma recommended its designation to

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the Wild and Scenic River System as a Wild River. The Acting Regional Forester concurred and forwarded the recommendation to the Chief of the Forest Service.

The Upper Truckee Recommended Wild River has a special mix of recreation, scenic values, and historic values that are considered Outstandingly Remarkable.

A seven-mile segment of the Upper Truckee River on the LTBMU is eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation (see map below). The eligible segment is located in the Meiss/Dardanelles Inventoried Roadless Area, from Carson Pass to south of Upper Truckee Rd. Until designated, the interim corridor includes an approximate ¼-mile buffer on either side.

Formal designation of a Wild and Scenic River requires an act of Congress, similar to wilderness designation. Pending formal designation, the LTBMU must manage the river to protect its free flowing character, specific outstandingly remarkable values, and its Wild classification, in accordance with FSH 1909.12 Chapter 82.5 – Interim Management of Eligible or Suitable Rivers. Formal designation would require the LTBMU to develop a specific management plan for the river and a final boundary for the corridor.

The Upper Truckee River is considered eligible because it has a special mix of recreation, scenic, and historic values that are all considered Outstandingly Remarkable. The largest watershed feeding Lake Tahoe, it has scenic landforms, attractive meadows, and easy access, attracting various backcountry users. In addition, the historic cabin provides a scenic accent to the high-country meadows. The cabin is unique in that it has been maintained over the years so one can see an intact working-ranch cabin instead of the remnants of an old historic cabin. In addition to these values, self-sustaining populations of Lahontan cutthroat trout and highly valued early summer deer fawning habitat provide for special natural values which are also identified as OR values. The combination of these values indicates that this stream can clearly be considered an excellent candidate representing eastside Sierran streams and a worthy addition to the National System of Wild and Scenic Rivers.

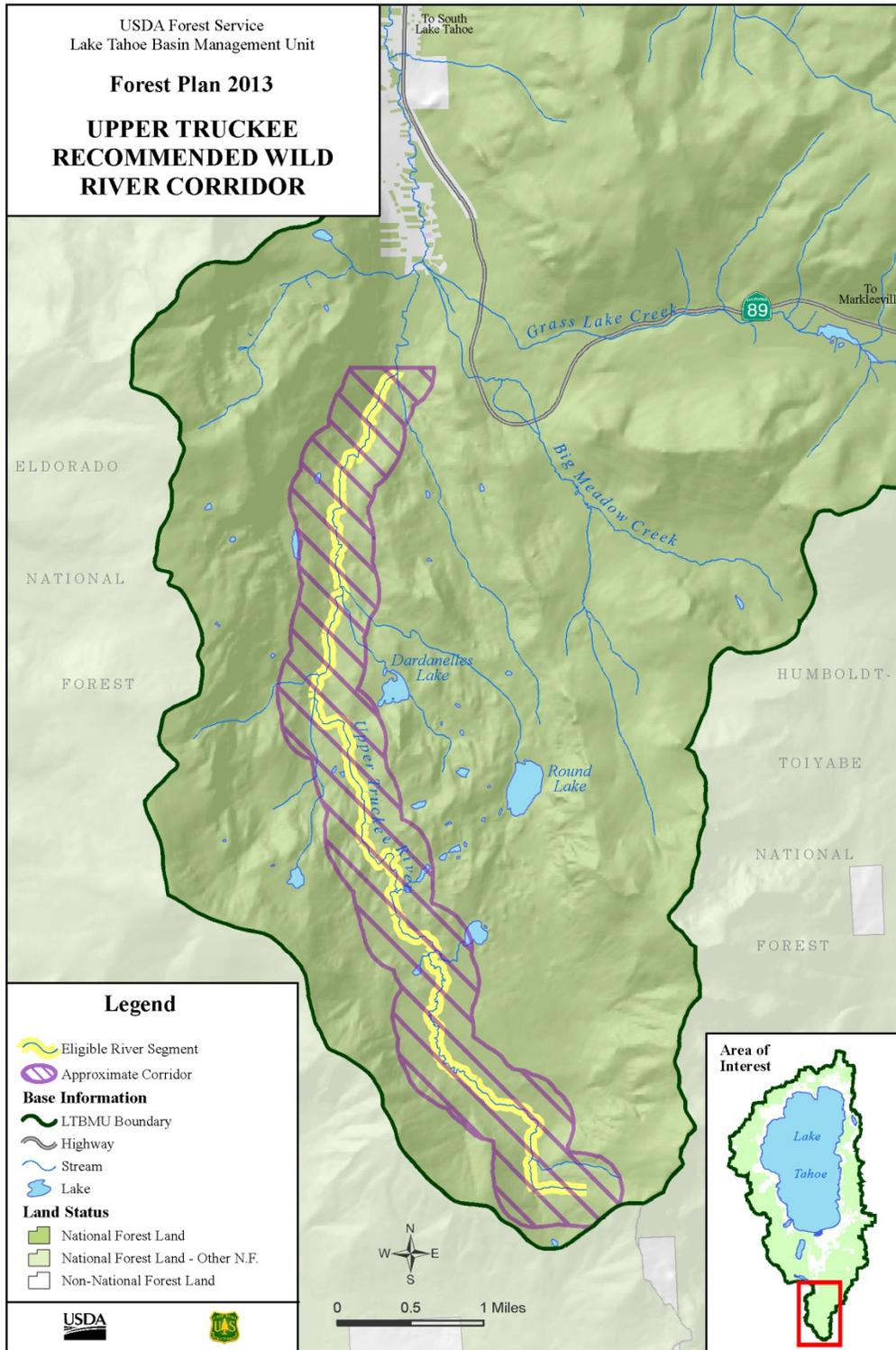


Figure 1. Upper Truckee River – Currently Recommended Wild River

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Rivers Determined to be Not Suitable

Truckee River

In the FEIS for the Eight Eastside Rivers Wild and Scenic River Study Report (USDA Forest Service, 1999) the Truckee River is described as being eligible for Recreational classification as a Wild and Scenic River because of the Outstandingly Remarkable recreational and cultural values. However, the Record of Decision for the Eight Eastside Rivers Wild and Scenic River Study Report (USDA Forest Service, 1999) describes the rationale for the determination that the Truckee River is not suitable as:

“Truckee River: The lower, or mainstem, Truckee River has Outstandingly Remarkable recreation and prehistoric values. The recreation values were considered significant due to the high levels of general recreation use, the orientation of most of this use towards the river, and the opportunity for the public to raft without guides in a high-mountain environment. The prehistoric values relate to several recorded village sites of the Native American Washoe who used the Truckee River as a transportation corridor and as a source of fish, a critical food supply for the Washoe.

While recognizing the Outstandingly Remarkable values for the Truckee River, we do not consider the river suitable for the following reasons. The Forest Service's ability to manage the Truckee River is limited. This river is one of the most adjudicated in America over water rights. These cases have been complicated, controversial, and lengthy in resolution. In addition, National Forest System lands along the Truckee River, commonly referred to as "Landfar Lands," have reserved rights retained by Sierra Pacific Power that allow power development and power lines along the bed and banks for 100 feet adjoining the river. These rights are claimed beyond 100 feet of the river but have not been contested to date. The Truckee River is also a corridor for powerlines, sewage lines, water lines, and a bicycle trail, as well as paralleling Highway 89. The utility lines have no alternative locations in this area. Designation could create difficult or costly requirements for future infrastructure modifications or improvements. For this strategic corridor we do not believe it would be appropriate to create additional administrative requirements or limitations that would occur with designation.

The 27 percent of the river corridor that is in private ownership is concentrated on the banks of the river in small parcels. These small holdings would require high levels of administrative time if the Truckee River is designated. These private holdings also have 11 private bridges in 13 miles. While these bridges do not eliminate the river from consideration, they suggest additional administrative costs and various obstacles in the river from bridge supports. The Town of Truckee indicated by letter that it did not support designation of the Truckee River because they felt city zoning would be more effective for managing the river than national designation. The Town was also concerned about retaining future options for the utility corridor parallel to Highway 89 and the Truckee River.”

The conditions described in the rationale for determining that the Truckee River is not suitable still apply to the river corridor; so therefore, this determination will be carried forward.

Evaluation

Each of the remaining rivers were evaluated by the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). First, the evaluation considered whether each river was free-flowing. Then, the IDT considered the inventory of rivers and identified potential outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) and assigned each value a scale of importance. The scale of importance was considered on three levels, National, Regional and Less Than Regional. National scale was considered as the entire United States, regional scale is discussed below in the region of comparison section of this report and the less than regional scale was considered the LTBMU. The ORVs and scale of importance for each river is compiled on a spreadsheet (ORV evaluation spreadsheet, 2015). There were several creeks that were found to possess ORVs, but at a scale that was less than regional (ORV evaluation spreadsheet, 2015). These additional creeks that possessed less than regional ORVs were not considered further in the evaluation.

The following creeks were identified by the IDT as possessing one or more outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) at the regional or national scale. The remaining creeks or rivers in the inventory were either already recommended, not suitable or did not possess any ORVs at the regional or national scales (ORV evaluation spreadsheet, 2015).

River/Segment Name: Eagle Creek

River/Segment GIS Number: 29

Location:

- County: El Dorado County, CA
- Beginning point Description: Dicks Lake in Desolation Wilderness.
- End Point Description: Emerald Bay of Lake Tahoe near Vikingsholm.

Mileage:

- Studied: 3.4
- Eligible: 3.4

Eligibility Findings:

- **Determination of Free Flow:**
The study reach is found to be free-flowing.
- **Determination of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:**

Geo/Hydro - Waterfall into Emerald Bay of Lake Tahoe created by geologic faulting and glaciation (Eagle Falls). There is very high visitor use to these features. Lower falls drops into Emerald Bay and is accessible by car. The upper falls is accessed by a relatively short and accessible hiking trail. Because of backdrop of Emerald Bay and Lake Tahoe to

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the lower falls, this feature has been photographed extensively and likely recognized at the National level.

Scenic - Waterfall into Emerald Bay of Lake Tahoe created by geologic faulting and glaciation (Eagle Falls). There is very high visitor use to these features. Lower falls drops into Emerald Bay and is accessible by car. The upper falls is accessed by a relatively short and accessible hiking trail, with popular views from the bridge located along the trail. Because of backdrop of Emerald Bay and Lake Tahoe to the lower falls, this feature has been photographed extensively and likely recognized at the National level.

Recreation - This area is located above Emerald Bay and experiences very high visitor use to these unique geologic features and waterfall.

These values were found to be outstandingly remarkable.

River/Segment Name: Glen Alpine Creek

River/Segment GIS Number: 30

Location:

- County: El Dorado County, CA
- Beginning point Description: Jabu Lake in the Desolation Wilderness.
- End Point Description: South end of Fallen Leaf Lake.

Mileage:

- Studied: 3.49
- Eligible: 3.49

Eligibility Findings:

- **Determination of Free Flow:**
The study reach is found to be free-flowing.
- **Determination of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:**

Aquatic - Regionally important for federally listed endangered and threatened species occupy and utilize creek for reproduction and other life history requirements. The headwaters of this river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for the federally endangered Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged frog, which is indigenous to the region of comparison. The lower portion provides spawning habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout, which is indigenous to the region of comparison. These values were found to be outstandingly remarkable because federally listed species use this creek for reproduction.

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River/Segment Name: Taylor Creek

River/Segment GIS Number: 5

Location:

- County: El Dorado County, CA
- Beginning point Description: Fallen Leaf Lake.
- End Point Description: Lake Tahoe at Tallac Point.

Mileage:

- Studied: 1.90
- Eligible: 1.90

Eligibility Findings:

- **Determination of Free Flow:**
There is a dam on Fallen Leaf Lake which regulates the flow of Taylor Creek. However, Taylor Creek is considered to be free-flowing beyond the dam.
- **Determination of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:**

Scenic - Popular views of stream and marsh ecosystem from both land and from Lake Tahoe. Associated with USFS Taylor Creek Visitor Center, trail access is easy. During autumn months, creek is popular destination for viewing kokanee salmon spawning and fall colors of riparian vegetation.

Heritage - Location of historically significant Washoe summer habitation associated with fisheries resources.

Wildlife - high wildlife diversity and habitat diversity: bald eagle (FSS) wintering habitat and management zone (known use by bald eagles), waterfowl management zone, bird viewing platform off Rainbow Trail to see birds using Taylor Creek marsh area (including bald eagle), Willow flycatcher (FSS) emphasis habitat and nests along creek corridor, osprey nests, known use by FSS bats, native beaver presence and active dam building, lots of use by bears (and unsafe viewing by humans).

Recreation - The recreation opportunities surrounding Taylor Creek, including the Taylor Creek Visitor Center, Stream Profile Chamber, Rainbow Trail, etc. have been developed in that location because of the setting provided by the creek. Wildlife viewing (including bears, beavers, songbirds, birds of prey, deer, native Lahontan cutthroat trout and other native fish species, Kokanee Salmon, and other wildlife species) as well as scenic viewing are extremely popular due to the Taylor Creek's unique location and lagoon ecosystem. These recreation opportunities are dependent on the setting of Taylor Creek.

These values were found to be outstandingly remarkable.

Region of Comparison

The Region of Comparison (ROC) that was selected for most resources (Hydrological, Geological, Recreation, and Scenery) in this Wild and Scenic River Eligibility study is depicted in Figure 2. This ROC consists of subsections of The Terrestrial Ecologic Unit Inventory (TEUI) which describes ecological types over a wide range of scales in a nested framework. Subsections are the broadest classification units at the Forest level. The Lake Tahoe Basin includes portions of six ecological subsections (Figure 2; Miles and Goudy, 1997 - USDA Forest Service Report No. R5-EM-TP-005).

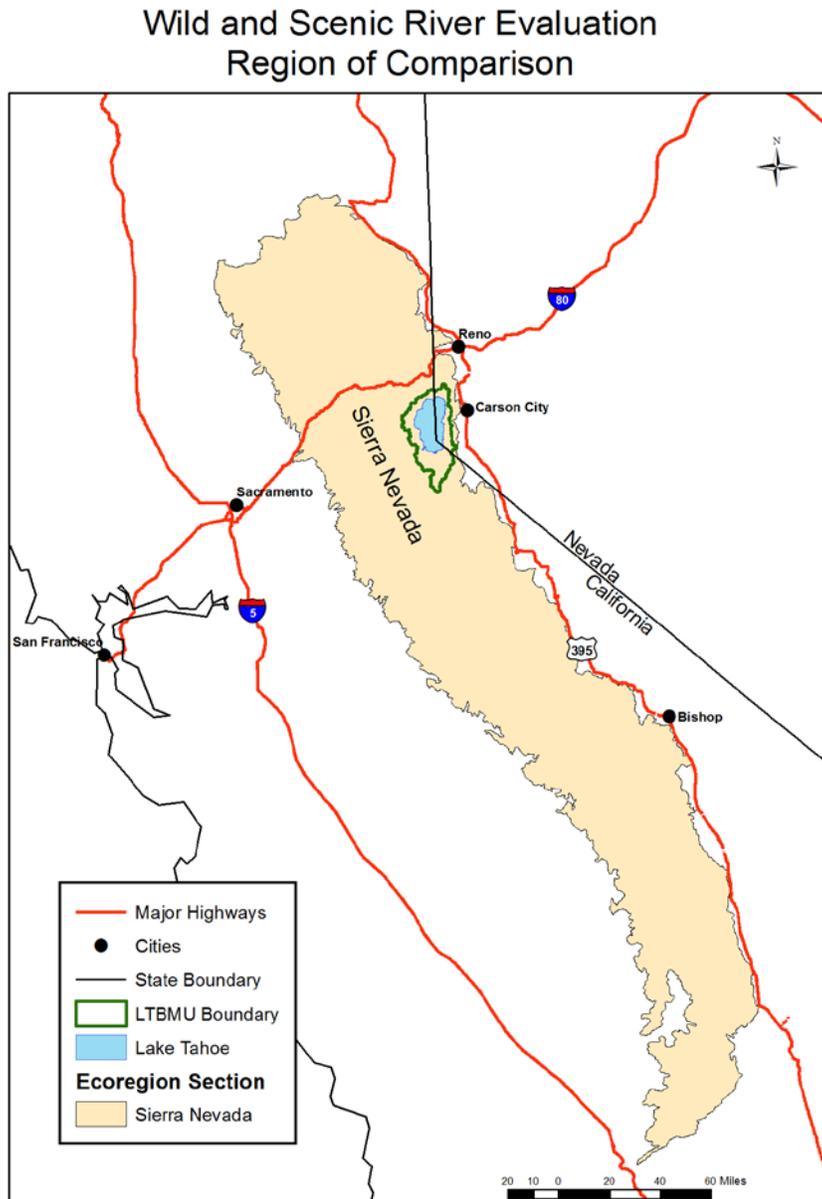


Figure 2. Ecological subsections of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (TEUI).

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The ROC for wildlife species differed from the general ROC above. The habitat and distribution of threatened, endangered and sensitive species was considered as the ROC. Species considered included Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, Sierra Nevada Yellow Legged Frog, Northern Goshawk, Spotted Owl, Bald Eagle, Willow Flycatcher, Townsend's Big Eared Bat, Pallid Bat, Fringed Myotis (bat) and others. Maps of the habitat considered can be found in the project record.

The ROC for cultural resources also differed from the map shown above. The LTBMU was considered for the Comstock logging and the Washoe Tribal area for tribal related values.

Existing Wild and Scenic Rivers Nearby

Existing Wild and Scenic Rivers within and nearby this ROC include the North Fork of the American River, Middle Fork of the Feather River and the Tuolumne River (<http://www.rivers.gov/maps/conus.php>, accessed February 4, 2015).

