

Evaluation of Outstanding Remarkable Values for East Fork of Hood River November 2009

The 13.5-mile segment of the East Fork Hood River from Oregon State Highway 35 to the Mount Hood National Forest boundary, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a recreational river. This segment was designated under the 2008 Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (H.R. 146, page 22).

Mileage: 13.5 miles

Free flowing: Yes

Scenic: 2, Moderate

The river flows through and along the edge of a complex series of glacially and fluvial derived deposits before entering into a narrower steep-sided canyon containing a number of cliffs. Debris flow features are visible along the highway, including abandoned stream channels and boulder/cobble deposits in general forest area. Newton, Clark and Polallie Creeks are more active than other streams on Mt. Hood National Forest (NF) with numerous channel changing events. Vegetative pattern along the segment is relatively common in nature for the region. Significant mortality from glacial events of existing timbered stands is relatively evident from Highway 35. There are some rapids in the lower portion of the corridor while elsewhere the stream gradient is relatively low with few substantial water related features. There are places where long distance view of Mt. Hood, Bluegrass Ridge, and Elk Mountain can be seen as well as the steep cliff faces in the lower portion adding to the scenic quality of the corridor. Highway 35 Viewshed Management Plan is complete and recommendations for guardrail replacement, vegetation management, and new road structures (e.g., bridges) are in place. Some of these improvements have been accomplished. Highway improvement projects are visible from the river corridor, making human alterations visible. Highway 35 is a Scenic Byway with high regional use and some national use. There is some timber harvest in the upper portion of the corridor. The combination of these factors, especially the highway improvements, gave this a rating of a 2.

Recreational: 2, Moderate

In winter, the upper portion of the river segment receives heavy Nordic ski use since the glacial outwash provides excellent terrain for ski trail development. The best groomed trail system on Mt. Hood NF is present in the river corridor. A new shelter outside the corridor has caused increased use of this system, and the use continues to grow. There are regional Nordic skiing competitive events and races on the groomed trails. The ungroomed Nordic system receives heavy use because the trails north of the highway have been destroyed by floods or debris flows. The Nordic ski use is non-river related, but occurs within the river corridor at some locations.

A summer hiking trail provides access to the river for part of the segment. This trail provides opportunities to view substantial river activities (e.g., flooding, debris flows, and deposition). Use at this time is moderate to low, but is increasing. Some interpretation of the on-going glacial processes is provided at Tamanawas Trailhead, which is the most popular trail on the Hood River Ranger District. Two campgrounds next to the river receive moderate use,

primarily from local users with some campers coming from other places within the region. One of the few rock climbing areas on Mt. Hood NF exist within the corridor. Easy to extremely difficult are present in the Columar basalt cliffs. Because use is primarily local in nature with some regional use for the directly river related opportunities, recreational values were rated a 2.

Geologic/Hydrologic: 4, Outstanding Remarkable

The river flows through and along the edge of a complex series of glacially and fluvial derived deposits before entering a narrower, bedrock canyon in the lower portion of the segment. Recent frequent debris flows originating from Newton, Clark and Polallie Creek drainages continue to shape the broad valley floor and influence the river's free flowing nature. Although not unique in the Pacific Northwest, it is a relatively observable example of active glacial and geologic processes at the national level. Given the frequency of major debris flow events, this is considered a "textbook" example of this process. Due to the nature of the older and recent debris fan deposits, there are numerous springs, wetlands, and small tributaries that flow into the river. While these features are not "textbook" examples of associated hydrologic features, they still end themselves to relatively easy viewing and interpretation. The lower canyon and associated cliffs can also be found in other locations though the region, but are still considered relatively unique. Based on the above, these values were rated a 4.

Fisheries: 3, Substantial

The river supports Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed steelhead trout, Chinook salmon, and coho salmon. It is also designated critical habitat for steelhead and Chinook. Although habitat quality and productivity is considered moderate, the river is a key component of the Hood River Basin which supports the most diverse assemblage of anadromous fish in the Lower Columbia River. Due to the habitat quality and productivity, fisheries values were rated a 3.

Wildlife: 3, Substantial

The area within the corridor, especially in the upper portion, provides very important habitat of high quality which meet the needs of big and small game. The area provides critical elk calving/deer fawning habitat and is part of a seasonal migration route for big game. The mid elevations of the corridor consist of suitable nesting habitat for the Northern spotted owl, a federally listed threatened species, and includes portions of 2 historic home ranges and 2 one-hundred acre late successional reserves. Past timber harvest has fragmented suitable habitat in the remainder of the corridor for this species. Harvest units do provide good habitat diversity for big game species. Within the lower portion of the segment, important habitat is very limited due to the steepness of the slopes within the canyon. While wildlife values are considered low in the lower portion of the corridor, importance of the mid and upper sections gives a rating of 3 for wildlife values.

Ecological/Botanical: 2, Moderate

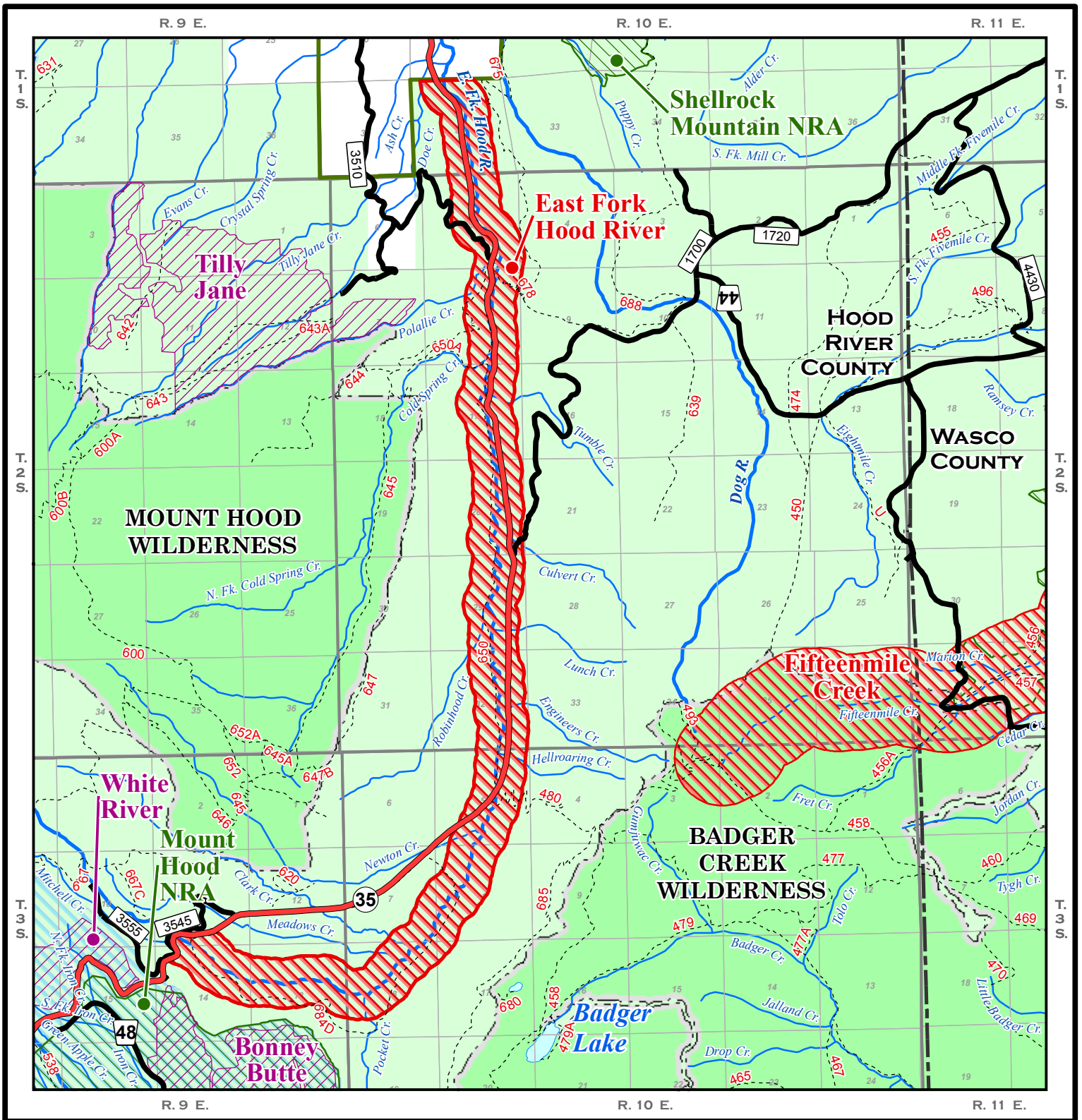
In the upper corridor, the river and its immediate environment provides important riparian habitat in quantities greater than that usually found along other rivers throughout the region. This habitat is generally high in quality though some past management practices has lowered quality in specific locations. Important riparian habitat is very limited in the lower corridor due to canyon narrowness and presence of State Highway 35 and associated structures, and often heavily impacted by debris flow in the upper corridor. The debris flows from Pollalie,

Newton and Clark Creeks removed or smothered riparian vegetation. This area now provides what is considered a locally important opportunity to observe early successional stages of riparian habitat. Throughout the river corridor there are numerous wetlands, streams, and side channels that support diverse plant communities, some within late-seral forest habitat suitable for a variety of rare special status species.

In the lower-mid river corridor basalt rock outcrops provide high quality habitat for Suksdorf's violet (*Suksdorfia violacea*). Suksdorf's violet is a Region 6 Sensitive Plant and is also listed by the Oregon Natural Heritage Program as "...threatened with extirpation in Oregon" (List 2) and "Critically imperiled because of extreme rarity (Rank S1). The species is a disjunct endemic known to only grow in Oregon, a few populations in Washington, and a few unverified populations at the western edges of Idaho and Montana. In Oregon, there are two known populations; one site in the Wallowa mountains, and the largest (and southernmost) population grows in the moist shaded cracks of columnar basalt and rock outcrops in the lower-mid river corridor. Similar suitable habitat is present throughout the river corridor and is extremely important for the dispersal and viability of the species at the peripheral edge of its range. Because of the high incidence and quality of the riparian habitat in the upper segment, opportunity to observe successional processes taking place in the lower segment, and the habitat for Suksdorf's violet, ecological/botanical values were rated as 2.

Historic/Cultural: 3, Substantial

Sites within the corridor include Native American peeled cedar, blazed trees with initials, historic homestead remains, historic campgrounds, historic guard station remains, segments of the historic Mt. Hood Loop highway, historic trails, an historic trash dumps, historic mines, and a historic quarry. Although the Sahalie Falls Bridge is situated outside of the corridor, it is prominently visible from the corridor. Most of these sites lack integrity and have been determined to be historically insignificant. Sites in very good interpretable condition include the Sahalie Falls Bridge, Hood River Meadows segment of the Mt. Hood Loop highway, and Sherwood Campground. The Sahalie Falls Bridge has been determined to be historically significant, and the Hood River Meadows segment of the Mt. Hood Loop highways retains a high degree of function and integrity. Both of these resources, together with the Sherwood campground, provide interpretative opportunities for the historic Mt. Hood Loop highway and are easily accessible from State Highway 35. Both the historic highway and its modern replacement follow the East Fork of Hood River. Based on the above, the historic/cultural values were rated a 3.



Wild and Scenic Rivers - East Fork Hood River

Prepared at the request of U. S. Senator Wyden - February, 2007

Additions

- East Fork Hood River
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness Areas
- National Recreation Areas

Existing US Forest Service

- Mt. Hood NF
- Wilderness
- Lakes
- River
- Creeks
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Trails: 685

Base Data

- County Lines
- Highways 35
- Private Land



- Paved Roads
- Collectors: 4860
- Arterials: 48



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