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Environmental Assessment for the Clarion River Comprehensive River Management Plan

Allegheny National Forest

**Clarion, Elk, Forest, and Jefferson Counties,
Pennsylvania**

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SUMMARY

Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative, Alternative 1, is to delineate the boundaries of the Wild and Scenic River (WSR) corridor and to develop management direction to meet the intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of scenery and recreation, for which the Clarion River was designated. This alternative expands the direction provided in the existing Allegheny National Forest (ANF) Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP or Forest Plan). A Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) will be developed from the management direction contained in the selected alternative and will be incorporated into the existing LRMP as an amendment. This is a programmatic document and site-specific analysis may be required to implement future site-specific decisions. The boundary established by this decision will include National Forest lands, other public lands, and private lands, and will be published in the Federal Record as the official boundary of the Wild and Scenic River designation. The management direction adopted by this decision will apply only to the national forest lands.

Alternative 1—Extended Viewshed

This alternative emphasizes a longer viewshed, the protection of areas of specialist concern, and the ability of other agencies to manage land outside the viewshed according to their directives.

The following criteria were used to determine the boundary for this alternative:

1. Focus on scenic views, particularly as seen from the river surface
2. Focus on areas of specialist concern, particularly archeology, scenery, and riparian areas, due to their sensitivity and potential threats
3. Retain the ability of other agencies to manage their lands according to their directives
4. Exclude private land from within the corridor where possible

Other Alternatives Considered in Detail

Alternative 2 – No Action

The boundary in this alternative is the default ¼-mile boundary established by Section 8(b) of the WSRA.

Alternative 3 – Minimum Boundary

This boundary is a consistent 660 feet (1/8 mile) distance from each bank of the river for its entire designated length.

1. Recognizes a multi-agency concurrence that 660 feet (1/8 mile) is the minimum distance from the riverbank that will protect the river's free-flow, water quality, and ORVs, particularly its scenic quality.
2. Retains the ability of other agencies to manage their lands according to their directives
3. Responds to concerns about the extent of private land that occurs within the corridor

Table 1–Summary of acres within the designated corridor by ownership for each alternative

Ownership	Acres by Ownership by Alternative		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Private Land	3,650	4,464	3,171
Western PA Conservancy	143	300	120
State Game Land	4,321	5,805	3,164
State Park	2,480	2,403	1,442
State Forest	450	327	126
Allegheny National Forest	4,320	3,616	1,780
Total	15,364	16,915	9,803

Table 2–Change of acres in National Forest management areas by alternative

	Change in MA 8.1	Change in MA 2.2	Change in MA 7.2
Alternative 1	Reduce by 403.84 acres	Increase by 109.62 acres	Increase by 294.22 acres
Alternative 2	No Change	No Change	No Change
Alternative 3	Reduce by 1827.74 acres	Increase by 779.33 acres	Increase by 1048.41 acres

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED AND PROPOSED ACTION

Introduction

1968 - Congress passed the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542) establishing a nationwide system of outstanding free-flowing rivers. For a river or river segment to be considered eligible for Wild and Scenic status, it must be “free-flowing” and possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable values” (ORVs).

1992 - Congress enacted Public Law 102-271 which designated portions of the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) and directed the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, to study whether 92 miles of the Clarion River was eligible for designation.

March 1996 - the Forest Service completed the Clarion River Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Eligibility Report acknowledging free-flowing characteristics along segments of the Clarion River and identification of outstandingly remarkable scenic and recreational values.

October 1996 - Congress designated 51.7 miles of the Clarion River as a component of the WSR System under an amendment to the WSRA (Public Law 104-314).

This environmental assessment (EA) documents the results of the analysis used to develop the Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP), which will provide the management direction to protect and enhance Clarion River’s free-flow, water quality, and ORVs. Upon approval, the CRMP will amend the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP or Forest Plan) to include the specific management direction for Clarion River.

Development of this management direction has been a cooperative effort with state agencies with land within the proposed boundary and is consistent with each agency’s mandates. The CRMP will therefore provide consistent river management down the length of the entire river corridor regardless of public land ownership.

Location

The Clarion River flows through Clarion, Elk, Forest, and Jefferson Counties in Pennsylvania, state game lands, state forests, state parks, the ANF, and private lands. See maps.

Wild and Scenic River Boundary

An interim river corridor boundary was established at the time of designation and extends ¼ mile beyond the normal high-water mark on either side of the river to encompass approximately 16,915 acres. The interim corridor boundary and designated reach of the river is shown on the attached maps.

Land Ownership

Table 3 shows the acres in each designated river segment and the portion of those acres that are on private or public lands as designated within the interim boundary.

Table 3–Land ownership and acreage within interim river boundary (Alternative 2)

Segment		Acres By Ownership					
#	Acres	Private Land	Western PA Conservancy	State Game Land	State Park	State Forest	Allegheny National Forest
1	2,851	579	0	1,130	0	0	1,142
2	2,670	232	0	1,194	0	0	1,244
3	8,459	2,973	300	1,369	2,260	327	1,230
4	2,935	680	0	2,112	143	0	0
Total	16,915	4,464	300	5,805	2,403	327	3,616

Note: The acres and private land totals include the river acres (1,386 acres).

Navigability and Riparian Rights

The entire designated segment of the Clarion River is classified as navigable. The Forest Service retains authority to regulate the use of Clarion River and National Forest lands on the shoreline. This jurisdiction may be concurrent with other state and federal agencies.

Wild and Scenic River Classifications

Designated river segments are classified as wild, scenic or recreational. The labels refer to the degree of development and access along the river. The following definitions are from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

“Wild” – Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.

“Scenic” – Those rivers, or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped but accessible in places by roads.

“Recreational” – Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

Rivers in the national system are often referred to as “wild and scenic rivers” without regard to their actual classification. The classification, as wild, scenic, or recreational, determines how the river is administered and whether certain activities on federally owned land within the boundaries are permissible. For the Clarion River, the designated river segments are classified as scenic and recreational. Table 4 identifies the designated reaches and classification by river segment.

Table 4–Classification, river segment and designated reach

Classification	Segment		River Mile	Designated Reach
	#	Miles		
Recreational	1	8.6	91.1 to 82.5	From the Allegheny National Forest/State Game Lands Number 44 boundary located approximately 0.7 miles downstream from the Ridgway Borough limit, to Portland Mills
Scenic	2	8.0	82.5 to 74.5	From Portland Mills to the Allegheny National Forest boundary, 0.8 miles downstream from Irwin Run
Recreational	3	26.0	74.5 to 48.5	From the Allegheny National Forest boundary, 0.8 miles downstream from Irwin Run, to the State Game Lands 283 boundary, located approximately 0.9 miles downstream from Cooksburg bridge
Scenic	4	9.1	48.5 to 39.4	From the State Game Lands 283 boundary, approximately 0.9 miles downstream from Cooksburg bridge, to an unnamed tributary at the backwaters of Piney Dam, located approximately 0.6 miles downstream from Blyson Run

Protection of River Resources

Section 10(a) of the WSRA states: “Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such a manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system...” This is the basis for management of a Wild and Scenic River. Long-term protection of WSR values requires river managers to identify objectives for both water quantity and quality, direction for which is found throughout the Act. Section 13(c) of the WSRA creates a federal reserved water right for WSRs, and Section 1(b) establishes the protection of water quality as one of the threefold purposes of the Act.

Both water quality and quantity in WSRs are controlled pursuant to federal law. Water quality standards stem from the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (referred to as the Clean Water Act; CWA), as amended. Water quantity (in-stream flows) in WSRs is also controlled by federal law—the standards of the WSRA itself and the federal reserved rights doctrine—but is generally determined in a state forum (e.g., state court or basin-wide adjudication).

The waters and lands within the river corridor receive protection from federal programs and the Department of Environmental Protection, apart from the WSRA. For example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) is charged with regulating waters of the United States. By definition these waters include coastal and navigable inland waters, lakes, rivers and streams; other intrastate lakes, rivers and streams (including intermittent streams); mudflats; sand flats; wetlands; sloughs; wet meadows; and certain impoundments. The Department of Environmental Protection regulates encroachments to wetlands and watercourses.

Perceived threats to river resources are based on observation by resource specialists and other officials, such as township supervisors or park managers, and/or complaints by the public.

Free-Flowing Condition

“Free-flowing,” as applied to any river or section of a river, means existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, riprapping, or other modification of the

waterway. The existence, however, of low dams, diversion works, and other minor structures at the time any river is proposed for inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system shall not automatically bar its consideration for such inclusion: Provided, that this shall not be construed to authorize, intend, or encourage future construction of such structures within components of the national wild and scenic rivers system. – Section 16(b) of WSRA.

Streamflow of the Clarion River has been regulated since December 1952 by the East Branch Dam and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). This dam is located northeast of Johnsonburg, PA (15 miles upstream from Ridgway) and controls the headwaters of the East Branch of the Clarion River. The annual outflow from this dam represents less than 10 percent of the flow of the Clarion River above Piney Dam. Average daily flow at the USGS Clarion River stream gauge in Cooksburg, PA is 298 cfs. This flow is sufficient to accommodate recreation uses such as canoeing, fishing and swimming in the Clarion River year-round downstream from Ridgway to the backwater of Piney Dam.

The construction of dams, both upstream and downstream of the WSR segments and in tributaries (i.e. Ridgway reservoir on Big Mill Creek), has also had lasting effects on the rivers, including altering flow regimes, channel morphology, and water temperature, among other things. These dams will likely persist for 100 or more years into the future because they provide for flood control and power generation.

Perceived threats to free-flow include:

- Human-made structures
- Truncated tributaries

Water Quality

The water quality of the Clarion River above Piney Dam has been severely degraded in the past as a result of improper industrial and municipal waste disposal and the operations of a past mill in Johnsonburg and chemical plant on Elk Creek (a tributary in Ridgway). Continued efforts improve waste disposal and treatment and recent plant improvements in both operations have resulted in continuing, significant improvements in water quality of this section of the river (PA DEP 1996).

As a result of coal strip mines in the area adjacent to Toby Creek, Henry Run, McGourvey Run, Mill Creek, and the Clarion River below Piney Dam, there is considerable acid mine drainage (AMD) flowing into the Clarion River from its tributaries. This is especially evident from Mill Creek area south, where there are several streams in non-attainment status due to AMD and red staining on the river bottom material in the Clarion River. As of the 2004 Pennsylvania Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report, the Water Quality Network (WQN) station at Cooksburg on Clarion River had a decreasing trend for nitrate (i.e. improving trend) and did not show any trends for any other monitored parameter (PA DEP 2004).

Perceived threats to water quality include:

- Improper disposal of human waste.
- Human-caused erosion

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)

Section 1 of the WSRA lists ORVs to be scenic, recreation, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values. Other similar values, which may be considered, include botanical, hydrological, paleontological or scientific. Professional judgment is used to determine whether values exist to an outstandingly remarkable degree. This is usually based on the value's regional or national significance.

For the Clarion River and Mill Creek Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report (March, 1996), landform, scenic, ecological, wildlife, aquatic, heritage, and recreation were evaluated for their suitability as ORVs. Only scenic and recreational values were considered to be outstandingly remarkable, with landform as a component of each and contributing to its nature. These values were re-evaluated during the CRMP process, but none of the others values were thought to be outstandingly remarkable on a regional or national scale, so there is no recommendation to add more ORVs to the Clarion River for protection under the WSRA

Scenery

The Clarion River valley has a unique visual quality with its diverse and mature vegetation, steep slopes, sinuous channel, and varying water conditions. The river, meandering through this mostly undeveloped scene, provides recreationists with spectacular views and a sense of isolation. The changing character of the water, from smooth to riffing, as the river flows over and around large boulders scattered along the river, adds to the visual quality.

Most development has occurred where small floodplains exist. Seasonal and year-round residential development is usually found in these areas, with minor development found on the upland slopes. This provides the visual contrast of open spaces to the closed-in feeling created by the undeveloped, steep meandering valleys.

Potential threats include:

- Evidence of human influence in scenic sections
- Over-development that is out-of-scale with small communities and river towns in recreational sections
- Loss of natural diversity
- Damage to scenic values by vandalism to facilities and natural features

Recreation

The Clarion River has a high regional draw for floating (canoeing and tubing) because it has a longer season than other rivers in the area, is relatively accessible to the public and is considered a Class I river. The river gets a high amount of use in the summer during times of low flows. People are willing to traverse the river even knowing that they will have to drag their canoes in extremely shallow areas. Opportunities exist for a variety of float trips for people with their own canoes as well as through canoe livery services. Day trips are common as well as overnight trips. Class I rivers are flat flowing rivers with fast moving water with riffles and small waves; few or no obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training; risk to swimmers is slight; and self rescue is easy. This makes the Clarion River attractive to users of all skill levels.

The Clarion River attracts more than canoeists. It is also an attraction for picnicking, sightseeing, camping, watching wildlife, birding, fishing, and hiking. A variety of recreational facilities in the ANF, the Borough of Ridgway, Cook Forest, and Clear Creek State Park support the river-based

recreation. The river may be the focal point, but it would not attract as many people if the support facilities did not exist.

The scenery, the feeling of remoteness, accessibility, the variety of recreation activities possible, and ease of canoeing of the Clarion River for novices combine to provide a significant recreation experience in this region. In addition, the wealth of historic resources (logging, railroads, tanning and chemical wood processing) within the river corridor provides an opportunity for interpretation and education.

Perceived threats to these values include:

Poor trail maintenance contributes to widening or braiding of trails where trails are established. Where trails are not established, they may become established in areas that are unsuitable for trails through repeated use.

Camping conflicts with other uses or resources.

Overuse by recreationists resulting in

- site area growth
- overcrowding at popular sites/areas
- blocking of roads

Large parties disrupt other campers, disturb private land owners and contribute to blocking of local roads.

Improper waste disposal leads to unsanitary conditions.

Fish and Wildlife

While fish and wildlife values, in and of themselves, were not considered outstandingly remarkable for the Clarion River, they are often a valued part of the recreational experience. The fish and wildlife sightings can be considered to enhance the scenery of the viewer. Section 7(a) of the WSRA provides a specific standard for review of developments below or above, or on a stream tributary to, a designated river. Such developments may occur as long as the project “will not invade the area or unreasonably diminish the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values present in the area as of the date of designation ...” This standard applies to projects outside the designated corridor but on the designated river or a tributary of the designated river.

Perceived threats to wildlife include:

Impacts to threatened and endangered species and riparian habitats from riverside structures, campsites, or recreational activities

Non-native species existing within the river valley

Introduction of new non-native species by forest visitors

Perceived threats to fish include:

Impacts to threatened and endangered species and riparian habitats from riverside structures, campsites, or recreational activities

Introduction of non-native species by forest visitors

Unusual siltation above acceptable levels

Flow reduction caused by in-stream diversions and impoundments

Relationship to Forest Plan

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires the preparation of forest plans to direct management of each national forest. The ANF LRMP (or Forest Plan), revised in 2007, is the guiding document for the Allegheny National Forest, including the Clarion River area. The ANF LRMP outlines forest-wide management direction; however, more specific direction for the Clarion River can be found in Management Area (MA) 8.1 - Wild and Scenic River (USDAFS 2007a, pp. 142 - 147). The Final Environmental Impact Statement that accompanies the Forest Plan addressed the need for completion of a river management plan for the Clarion River and acknowledged the possible need for a Forest Plan amendment (USDAFS 2007b, p.3-350).

This analysis and any resulting plan amendment are conducted under the authority of the National Environmental Policy Act. The Allegheny National Forest Supervisor will use the procedures of the planning regulation in effect before November 9, 2009 (the '1982 Planning Rule'), which were also used to prepare the 2007 Revised Forest Plan, and will determine whether any resulting plan amendment is significant.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this project is to fulfill the requirements of WSRA Section 3(b), “establish detailed boundaries therefore (which boundaries shall include an average of not more than 320 acres of land per mile measured from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of the river)”; and (d)(1) “For rivers designated on or after January 1, 1986, the Federal agency charged with the administration of each component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System shall prepare a comprehensive management plan for such river segment to provide for the protection of the river values. The plan shall address resource protection, development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of this Act”. The federal agency charged with the administration of the Clarion River is the Forest Service. A secondary purpose for the CRMP is to encourage consistent management on all public lands within the corridor and compatible activities on private lands within the river corridor so as to minimize adverse effects on river values. The CRMP shall be prepared in cooperation with state, local, and tribal governments; interested public individuals; and local landowners.

This analysis will also result in standards and guidelines specifically for management and protection of federal lands within the Clarion River WSR corridor if an action alternative is selected. The Draft CRMP was developed from the management direction contained in the selected alternative and will be incorporated into the existing ANF LRMP as an amendment if needed.

Proposed Action

Alternative 1 – Extended Viewshed

This alternative emphasizes a longer viewshed, the protection of known archeological sites, and the ability of other agencies to manage land outside the viewshed according to their directives.

Boundary

See the attached maps for the extent and designation of each section of the river corridor.

In the first Scenic section (Segment 2), delineation focused on point-to-point, usually a high point on a knob or ridge connecting with a similar feature because there were few man-made features like roads or railroads to follow and because following this method protected many of the higher slopes that would be part of the viewshed that is particularly important in the scenic section.

In the second Scenic section (Segment 4), the boundary follows the 1,400-foot elevation contour line on both sides of the river to capture the majority of the river-facing slopes. On the south side of the river, it follows property lines in some places or goes from contour to peak or some other natural feature because of a need to remain within the acres per river mile constraint and the lack of man-made features to follow. On both sides, the land flattens out above the 1,400-foot elevation, often turning into ridge tops. These ridge tops are less likely to be seen from the river surface and are more likely to be utilized by other agencies or private lands owners to pursue land management practices that fulfill their needs or directives but may not be as compatible with the WSRA.

In the first Recreation section (Segment 1), delineation focused on point-to-point delineation but is never less than 1/8 mile (660 feet) from the river. This created gaps between the original ¼-mile default boundary and the new delineation that on national forest lands will revert to the nearest MA as described in the ANF LRMP. This would be MA 2.2 –Late Structural Linkages below Irwin Run and MA 7.2 – Remote Recreation Areas above Irwin Run. The standards and guidelines of these two MAs would protect the ORVs of the Clarion WSR even though these national forest lands would no longer be within the river corridor.

In the second Recreation section (Segment 3), the boundary on the south side follows the point-to-point method used in the first Scenic section, but the boundary on the north side follows the 1,700-foot elevation contour line on national forest lands to capture the majority of the river-facing slopes, additional archeological sites, and more riparian areas. Where necessary, it follows man-made features to keep within the acres per river mile constraints set by the WSRA. From Dark Hollow Road, below Millstone Creek, to the beginning of the second Scenic section, the boundary returns to River Road and follows this through Cook Forest State Park. This is because there were few resource concerns in this section; there was a need to keep within the legal constraints of acres per river mile; and to ensure that other public land agencies' management directives did not conflict with the WSRA.

Table 5–Land ownership and acreage within Alternative 1 river corridor boundary

Segment		Acres By Ownership					
#	Acres	Private Land	Western PA Conservancy	State Game Land	State Park	State Forest	Allegheny National Forest
1	2,317	423	0	610	0	0	1,284
2	2,613	234	0	1,102	0	0	1,277
3	8,607	2,489	143	1,422	2,344	450	1,759
4	1,827	504	0	1,187	136	0	0
Total	15,364	3,650	143	4,321	2,480	450	4,320

Note: The Acres and Private Land totals include the river acres (1,386 acres).

The following is a general description of the management direction of this alternative. A detailed description of the direction can be found in Appendix B.

Desired Condition

Water quality is enhanced in the Clarion River. The Clarion WSR is maintained in a free-flowing condition, and connectivity of the river and tributaries are enhanced when compatible with other ORVs. Visitors can find distinct variation between the recreational and scenic river segment. There is a range of social encounters from frequent interface to that of little or no evidence between river and shore users. Mostly natural or near-natural conditions prevail. Facilities and on-site development range from rustic and rudimentary to more complex and refined. Because of its relatively long distance and multiple access points, there is good opportunity for a one-day paddle or a several-day canoe and camp trip. The appropriate development level or scale for facilities and on-site development is guided by the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). Primitive overnight camping is allowed at sites that are managed and designated for such use.

An appropriate amount of upland trail opportunities are provided. Trails are designed to protect scenery, natural and cultural resources, enhance the visitor experience, and provide a physically and environmentally sustainable trail system. The focus is to provide a limited amount of high quality trails that enhance use of the outstandingly remarkable river based recreation. All trails are managed for a specified allowed use or multiple uses on designated routes. Undesignated user created social foot trails are managed to protect river resources.

Route markers and other informational, regulatory, and boundary signs may be found along the river provided they do not detract from the setting character and recreation experience. Signs and markers are used to help manage and protect river resources as well as for orientation and education of visitors to appropriate uses and activities. Visitors feel safe while recreating on the river and on land. Public contact and law enforcement helps manage and protect river users.

Outfitters and guides play an important role in providing recreation opportunities and experiences on the river. Outfitters and guides also provide educational opportunities for visitors to learn about river ecology, minimum impact camping and river travel techniques, and Clarion River history. Partnerships with outfitters and guides are encouraged to help ensure river resources are protected. Special use permits are required for both commercial and non-commercial outfitters and guides that utilize the Clarion WSR. Non-commercial groups include schools, universities, churches, or non-profit organizations who lead trips on public land.

The river corridor provides outstanding opportunities for visitor education regarding cultural and historic resources, geology, hydrologic conditions, wildlife, fish, ecological resources, and natural processes that attract visitors from outside the geographic region. Interpretive efforts are designed to enhance recreational experiences, influence proper stewardship behaviors, and protect river resources.

Scenic Segments

Management of the scenic segment of the river corridor will be focused on maintaining the near-natural environment and remote characteristic. The riverbanks will be largely undeveloped, but may be accessible in places by existing roads. Recreation management will be designed to provide a natural-appearing setting with limited improvements. Opportunities for small, shallow-draft powered and non-powered watercraft exist. Management of the scenic river segment is within the semi-primitive motorized ROS class. Developed recreation facilities are limited to access sites; however, there are very few access sites in the scenic section. Access sites within the corridor are primarily for resource protection. They are well maintained and designed to ensure

health and safety of the visitor and accommodate smaller groups using non-motorized and motorized watercrafts. The development level for access sites is limited to development level 2 (DL2) (See Appendix E, pg 13). There is an ability to navigate through long stretches of unmodified landscapes and experience the feeling of remoteness. Low-density visitation is emphasized. There is generally a moderate to fairly high expectation of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of others and visitors seeking solitude may find this opportunity. A high degree of opportunity to interface with the environment exists. There is also a sense of self-reliance through application of outdoor skills in an environment that offers a moderate degree of challenge and risk. Impacts from primitive camping are subordinate to the natural environment and ecosystems operate freely. There are minor modifications of camp areas. Human impacts are generally limited to well-dispersed campsites of moderate size for single small parties or groups up to 10 people with tents. Primitive campgrounds may exist and recreational vehicles (RVs) or pop-up campers may be used if the campground is well screened from the river.

Upland trail-related recreation is low key, light-on-the-land in nature, and generally dispersed. New non-motorized trail construction and reconstruction allows for interpretive, bicycle, equestrian, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and backpacking opportunities. Low impact activities, such as hiking, backpacking, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing, are emphasized. Trails are inconspicuous and should not be seen from the river.

Recreational Segments

Management of the recreational segment of the river corridor will be focused on providing river-oriented recreation in a natural-appearing setting that may have cultural modifications (such as roads, utility corridors, private dwellings, bridges, recreation facilities, access sites, etc) which range from being easily noticed to moderately or strongly dominant. From the river, there may be areas of strong evidence of designed roads, substantial human activity, and development along the shore. Opportunities for small, shallow-draft powered and non-powered watercraft exist. Slow-moving watercraft are constantly in view of culturally changed landscapes. Management of the recreational river segment is within the roaded natural ROS class. A number of trails and roads (both paved and unpaved) provide access to the river. Facilities are developed to manage and aid greater numbers of visitors (when compared to the scenic segments) and address user safety, resource protection, and convenience. Additional on-site development and facilities may be appropriate as long as the recreation setting and experience is maintained. Toilets and adequate parking space is provided in order to reduce uncontrolled human waste, littering, and parking overflowing onto roads. The development level for on-site recreation facilities and access sites is limited to DL3. The sights and sounds of other visitors are evident, and opportunities to encounter other visitors are moderate to very high. Roads and road noise may dominate the setting and recreational experience in some locations. Moderate to high-density visitation is emphasized. Natural ecosystems may be modified by human use. Site hardening is provided to minimize impacts and to provide for user convenience. Human impacts may be obvious but subordinate to the natural ecosystem. Campsites may be grouped or well dispersed. Parking for sites must ensure that vehicles are entirely off the road to prevent hazards. Parking should be no larger than enough to accommodate 2 6-passenger vans. Sites are generally moderate to large and may accommodate parties of up to 12 people with tents, pop-up campers, or recreational vehicles.

A wide range of trail opportunities are provided, including short access trails and long-distance opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, biking, and other designated uses. User-created social foot trails are allowed as long as river resources are protected.

The management direction for this alternative differs from the existing direction, applicable in Alternative 2, in the following ways. Additional details are available in Appendix C.

Management Area 8.1.1 would include group size limits for the Clarion River.

The Scenic Integrity Level would be high rather than very high in the scenic sections.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) would be semi-primitive motorized rather than roaded natural on the scenic sections and roaded natural rather than rural on the recreational sections.

New road construction and developed camping would become unsuitable in the scenic section.

All-terrain vehicle (ATV), off-highway motorcycle (OHM), and snowmobile use; and cross-country equestrian use would become unsuitable in MA 8.1.1.

The Clarion River CRMP would be the presiding direction for management specific to the Clarion River designated corridor.

For all federally owned minerals, no surface occupancy shall be allowed in the river corridor

For privately owned minerals under public land, there shall be no waivers for setbacks on perennial streams within the river corridor.

Management Area 8.1.1 includes standards and guidelines specifying recreation management and activities in the WSR sections.

Management Area 8.1.1 incorporates additional direction for managing invasive plants.

Decision to Be Made

Given the purpose and need, the responsible official (the Forest Supervisor) will review the alternatives in order to make the following decision:

1. Select the boundary of the Clarion Wild and Scenic River corridor;
2. Select the management standards and guidelines to be applied to National Forest lands within this boundary.

Should a decision be made to select an action alternative or a modification of an action alternative, the actions would be documented in the Clarion River CRMP and used to amend the ANF LRMP.

The decision being made at this time does not include authorizing implementation of any ground-disturbing actions. In accordance with the Forest Service's two-level planning process, decisions on site-specific, ground-disturbing actions will be made through subsequent environmental analysis and public involvement.

Public Involvement

Public meetings were held in Ridgway, Sigel, and Clarion, Pennsylvania during November 2008. A scoping package was mailed on October 24, 2008 to 218 interested parties and listed on the ANF website. The scoping package was posted on the ANF website and the project has been listed in the ANF Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) since October 2008. Comments were received during the public meetings and by letter, fax, and email.

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CHAPTER 2: ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES

The following issues are considered the major factors driving alternative development in this environmental assessment. The issues were identified by the Forest Service, other agencies, and the public during joint meetings. Although a number of comments address actions on private lands, the Forest Service has management authority only on national forest lands and the Wild and Scenic River below the Ordinary High Water Mark. However, there is an obvious relationship between public and private lands in the Clarion River corridor. Partnerships are needed to help manage all lands in the corridor to meet the intent of the WSRA.

Issue 1: Protection and Enhancement of Clarion River's Outstandingly Remarkable Values, Free-flowing Condition, and Water Quality

The central responsibility of the Forest Service under the WSRA is to protect and enhance the free-flowing condition, water quality, and ORVs of the river. This issue involves how best to protect these conditions. The alternatives give direction for protection as follows:

- Type of management activities allowed on national forest lands in the corridor
- Recreation setting characteristics
- Amount of land included for protection within the corridor

Issue 2: Delineation of the Boundary of the Clarion Wild and Scenic River Corridor

Establishing a WSR boundary that includes identified river-related values is essential as a basis from which to provide necessary protection. Where private lands are involved, the boundary marks the area within which the manager will focus work with local communities and landowners in developing effective strategies for protection. The boundary also defines the area in which the managing agency has land acquisition authority. This issue addresses private landowner concerns about the government directing the use and care of private land, the protection of the river's ORVs and riparian habitat, and the ability to describe the boundary and locate it on the ground as directed by the WSRA.

Issue 3: Protection and Interpretation of Archeological Resources

Many of the values that make the Clarion River important to human society today are the same values that have made it an important area throughout human history. While many of its post-European settlement sites are known, there are still some left to be discovered, and its pre-European settlement history is virtually unknown. The ability to locate, preserve, and interpret these sites to tell the story of the Clarion River's relationship with mankind provides an element of educational tourism. This enhances the recreational experience; promotes better understanding of, and respect for, river resources; and was considered in formulating the alternatives.

Issue 4: Protection of Species of Special Concern

The variety of plant and animal life that inhabit the Clarion River area contribute to its recreation and scenery ORVs. Some species of this plant and animal life are more sensitive to human occupation and use of the river corridor than others. This issue involves how best to protect these plants and animals and their habitat. The alternatives give direction for protection as follows:

- Type of management activities allowed on national forest lands in the corridor.

Sets new standards and guidelines for the development of Forest Service projects consistent with these activities.
Provides for monitoring.

Range of Alternatives

The range of alternatives is driven by the four issues. Alternative 2 provides no change to corridor boundary, desired conditions, suitability, or design criteria from that which currently exists in the ANF LRMP. Alternative 1 and Alternative 3 differ from the ANF LRMP by changing the corridor boundary, desired conditions, suitability, and design criteria. If the standards and guidelines listed under Alternative 1 or Alternative 3 are chosen by the responsible official, the decision will create a Management Area 8.1.1 under the ANF LRMP that will apply only to the Clarion River. Current standards and guidelines for Management Area 8.1 will remain in effect for the Allegheny WSR.

Alternatives Considered in Detail

Alternative 2 – No Action

Boundary

The boundary in this alternative is the default ¼ mile boundary, as determined by Section 8(b) of the WSR. This boundary is considered an interim boundary until such a time as a detailed boundary is established, but could become the established boundary if study concludes that it is the boundary best able to protect the qualities for which the river was designated. See Table 3, page 4, for the land ownership and acreage within the existing interim river boundary.

Management of the river corridor under the no action alternative would be according to the existing direction found in MA 8.1 of the ANF LRMP unless the deciding official chooses the new standards and guideline proposed under Alternatives 1 and 3.

Alternative 3 – Minimum Boundary

Boundary

This alternative is based on a multi-agency concurrence that 660 feet (1/8 mile) is the minimum distance from the riverbank that will protect the river's free-flow, water quality, and ORVs. It responds to private landowner concerns about being within the river corridor and the possibility of the federal government acquiring their land through condemnation or dictating what activities may be allowed.

This boundary is a consistent 660 feet (1/8 mile) distance from each bank of the river for its entire designated length. The boundary of 660 feet is based on an assessment of USDA-Forest Service Agriculture Handbook 701, *Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management* (H701). This handbook was referenced as the sourcebook for managing scenic integrity, one of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Clarion Wild and Scenic River. This handbook is also the sourcebook for the 2007 *Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (LRMP) and *Allegheny National Forest Scenery Implementation Guide* (SIG).

The LRMP characterizes the “scenic segments” of Wild and Scenic Rivers as “natural appearing with a very high scenic integrity level; and the “recreation segments” as “natural appearing” with “substantial evidence of human activity and development” (LRMP, pg 142).

The LRMP also characterizes the scenic segments of Wild and Scenic Rivers as within the “Roaded Natural” class of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), and recreation segments

as within the “Rural” ROS class (LRMP, pg 142). When ROS is applied specifically to the Clarion River, the scenic segments classify as “Semi-Primitive Motorized” and the recreation segments as “Roaded Natural”.

To address scenic integrity and ROS classification along the Clarion River, and to respond to public concerns about protecting this integrity, as well as minimizing the extent of private land included in the corridor, Alternative 3 was developed to establish a minimum corridor within which scenic integrity, as seen from the river, would be impacted and/or effectively managed.

Referencing H701, the minimum corridor was developed through use of Landscape Visibility and Scenic Classes (H701, Chapter 4). Landscape Visibility incorporates a number of key considerations, such as context of viewer, duration of view, degree of discernible detail, seasonal variations and number of viewers.

H701 defines distance zones within a viewable landscape, including the “Immediate Foreground”, 0-300’; “Foreground”, 300’ to ½ mile; “Middleground”, ½ mile to 4 miles; and the “Background”, 4 miles to horizon. The Clarion Wild and Scenic River valley is, at its widest, generally no more than 2 miles from ridge to ridge, and, in many places, more narrow. The floodplain is less than 100 feet in some locations to a ¼-mile in others. With such a narrow river valley, the background and middleground are invisible from the river in many segments. Only the immediate foreground and foreground are visible from the river in the narrow segments. This alternative was developed to effectively describe this Landscape Visibility. The minimum width of viewable landscape becomes, in essence, an average that recognizes the first 300’ from the riverbank as the Immediate Foreground, and the next 360’ as the visible Foreground.

Table 6–Land ownership and acreage within Alternative 3 corridor boundary

Segment		Acres By Ownership					
#	Acres	Private Land	Western PA Conservancy	State Game Land	State Park	State Forest	Allegheny National Forest
1	1,586	400	0	596	0	0	590
2	1,545	176	0	698	0	0	671
3	4,892	2,091	120	683	1,353	126	519
4	1,780	504	0	1,187	89	0	0
Total	9,803	3,171	120	3,164	1,442	126	1,780

Note: The acres and private land totals include the river acres (1,386 acres).

Contribution to desired condition and design criteria are the same as for Alternative 1. This alternative would amend the ANF LRMP and create Management Area 8.1.1 specifically for the management of the Clarion WSR with the same policies, standards and guidelines as developed in Alternative 1.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Bank-to-Bank Boundary

Landowners are often concerned about which lands will be included in a WSR boundary, in part due to a fear of government land acquisition and regulation. The concerns about federal land acquisition and regulation have led to proposals for “bank-to-bank” boundaries. The purpose of designation of a WSR is to protect free-flow, water quality, and the river’s ORVs. A bank-to-bank boundary would not provide protection for the Clarion River’s water quality or ORVs of

recreation and scenery, or compliance with laws and regulations. Therefore, this alternative was eliminated from consideration.

Primarily Public Land Boundary

For this version of the boundary, the exclusion of private lands and a physical, locatable feature on the ground were the highest priority, while still taking into account identified concerns.

The following criteria were used to determine the boundary for this alternative:

1. Narrow the boundary on private land but still protect the ORVs
2. Transition points need to be easily located in the field. Those selected include: railroad grades; roads; high points in the topography; boundaries of NFS, state, and private lands; ends of public roads; power-lines or other utility corridors; and intersections of rivers and roads.
3. Protect areas of concern
4. Focus on scenic sections due to sensitivity and importance to river related values

This alternative was eliminated from detailed study. It was developed to use identifiable objects on the ground such as roads, railroads, and property lines in the recreational sections of the river in an attempt to respond to private land owner desires to minimize the amount of private land within the corridor, recognizing that a bank-to-bank boundary was not what Congress had intended when creating the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In the scenic sections of the river, the boundary expanded to cover areas of resource concern and to protect the outstandingly remarkable scenery along the river. Once it was decided that 660 feet was the minimum distance needed to protect the immediate and viewable foreground under the agency's scenery management standards, this alternative had to be eliminated because those sections where the boundary followed the railroad grade, State Route 949, or River Road did not meet this minimum standard.

Include Five Particular Watersheds

An alternative was suggested to configure the WSR boundary to include the watersheds of Clyde, Church, Painter, Elliott, and Lappin Runs. Evaluation of these watersheds was made during the proposed boundary development to include some of the area immediate to their confluence with the Clarion River. Including the entire watersheds would exceed the allowable average of 320 acres per river mile mandated in the WSRA. Parts of the watersheds are located in MA 2.2 and are managed to emphasize late structural qualities, which should not affect the ORVs for the Clarion River. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study.

Comparison of Alternatives

The alternatives were compared based on how well they address the issues and enhance the values for which Clarion River was designated, including free-flowing condition, water quality, and ORVs.

Table 7–Comparison of Alternatives by Issues and Potential Threats

Issues and Potential Threats	Management and Enhancement Opportunities		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Issue 1: Protection and Enhancement of Clarion River’s ORVs			
Management Activities	Enhanced direction and limitations for recreational use to protect water quality, scenery, sensitive habitats, and a recreation experience commensurate with the designated ROS class.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1 except that the direction does not extend as far from the river bank in some places.
Recreation Setting Characteristics	Managed for ROS semi-primitive motorized and roaded natural	Managed for ROS roaded natural and rural	Same as Alternative 1 except that the corridor is narrower and may allow incompatible uses and development to be seen or heard within the river corridor.
Land included in WSR corridor	National forest lands 4,320 acres	National forest lands 3,616 acres	National forest lands 1,780 acres
Free-Flow Water Quality Human-made structures Truncated tributaries	Free flow is the same as Alternative 2. New standards for roads provide enhanced protection for water quality and to mitigate or prevent the proliferation of human-made structures. Current free-flowing tributaries will remain so in scenic sections and will be protected in recreational sections.	The Clarion River is managed under the WSR and, as declared by this Act, free-flowing conditions will be maintained. The WSR boundary provides adequate protection for water quality. The existing ANF LRMP standards and guidelines are designed to minimize effects to water resources and meet or exceed Pennsylvania Best Management Practices (BMPs).	Same as Alternative 1 except that the extension of this protection upstream on the tributary will be less because the boundary is closer to the main stem of the Clarion.

Issues and Potential Threats	Management and Enhancement Opportunities		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Improper disposal of human waste	Enhanced limitations on number of people per site and in the same river mile should decrease the amount of human waste distributed within the river corridor.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1
Human-caused erosion	Enhanced limitations on number of people per site and in the same river mile should decrease human caused loss of vegetation and compaction of soil, decreasing sediment sources.	The uncontrolled trampling and loss of vegetation would continue and subsequent erosion of material into the river because of human activity would affect water quality and riparian habitats.	Same as Alternative 1
Recreation			
Widening trails Overcrowding of popular sites and areas Unsanitary conditions	Enhanced limitations on number of people per site and in the same river mile should decrease trail widening as fewer people spread out less while hiking. These limitations will make popular areas feel less crowded and will make the experience described in the associated ROS easier to attain. Unsanitary conditions will decrease as noted above.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1, except that there is a narrower corridor in which to fit people, and therefore the ability to attain the appropriate ROS experience may also be limited.

Issues and Potential Threats	Management and Enhancement Opportunities		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Campsite expansion Blocking open roads Noise disturbance	<p>Smaller groups and fewer people at one time means that groups will more easily fit a smaller campsite and expansion will be slower to occur. Blocking roads will not occur as the vehicles of smaller groups may more easily fit onto the parking provided, and noise should also decrease.</p>	<p>Per existing ANF LRMP direction</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 1</p>
Scenery	<p>Manage for High Scenic Integrity Level throughout the river corridor. This brings the area into alignment with national standards for recreational and scenic class rivers.</p>	<p>Currently designated as Very High and High Scenic Integrity Levels.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 1</p>
Evidence of human influence in scenic sections Out-of-scale development in recreational sections Vandalism damage to facilities and natural features Loss of natural diversity	<p>Development scale will be decreased, limiting the visibility and intrusion of human influence and preventing out-of-scale development. Fewer facilities of a lower development level means more human presence around existing facilities, decreasing the likeliness of vandalism.</p> <p>Natural diversity will be retained by a more aggressive management of non-native invasive species.</p>	<p>Per existing ANF LRMP direction</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 1</p>

Issues and Potential Threats	Management and Enhancement Opportunities		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Wildlife			
Impacts to threatened and endangered species and riparian habitats from facilities and activities	Per existing ANF LRMP direction		
Non-native species in the river valley Introduction of new non-native species	More aggressive management of non-native invasive species will decrease the introduction and spread of these species.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1, although there may be a decrease of the amount of land that will be inventoried and treated if the river corridor is considered of higher priority than other nearby management areas.
Fish			
Impacts to threatened and endangered species and riparian habitats from facilities and activities Introduction of new non-native species	Enhanced direction and limitations on placement and type of facilities and activities can decrease or eliminate impacts to TE species. More aggressive management of non-native invasive species will decrease the introduction and spread of these species.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1, although there may be a decrease of the amount of land that will be inventoried and treated if the river corridor is considered of higher priority than other nearby management areas.

Issues and Potential Threats	Management and Enhancement Opportunities		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
<p>Unacceptable levels of siltation</p> <p>Flow reduction from in-stream diversions and impoundments</p>	<p>The wider corridor protects more of the upper stretches of some tributary streams from road-building and other projects which may increase sedimentation by eliminating them within the river corridor. It also adds standards and guideline restricting the number of people and the size of campsites, which also contribute to vegetation loss, soil compaction, and the movement of soil towards streams.</p> <p>The wider corridor in some sections provides enhanced protection under Section 7 for tributary streams, which would be analyzed under the “invade or unreasonably diminish” standard to determine if the effects of the action will impact the ORVs of the Clarion River.</p>	<p>The ANF follows PA DEP regulations for water quality and de minimis flow.</p> <p>Diversions and impoundments are prohibited on the designated river; those on tributary streams within the WSR corridor are analyzed under Section 7(a) of the WSRA.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 1 for water quality and de minimis flow.</p> <p>The narrower corridor means less protection from diversion or impoundment under Section 7 of the WSRA. Streams outside the corridor that have such activities proposed for them will not have the effects of the action analyzed, which could be detrimental to the ORVs of the Clarion River.</p>
Issue 2: Acres by ownership within WSR boundary – Forest Service vs Non-Forest Service			
Forest Service	4,320 acres	3,616 acres	1,780 acres
State or Conservancy	7,394 acres	8,835 acres	4,852 acres
Private Owner	3,650 acres	4,464 acres	3,171 acres

Issues and Potential Threats	Management and Enhancement Opportunities		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Issue 3: Protection and Interpretation of Archeological Resources			
Protection and Interpretation of Archeological Resources	Emphasis on educational tourism may enhance the recreational experience of visitors and increase business opportunities in the area.	Existing ANF LRMP direction and standards and guidelines protect archeological resources and allow interpretation.	Emphasis on educational tourism may enhance the recreational experience of visitors and increase business opportunities in the area.
Issue 4: Protection of Species of Special Concern			
Protection of Species of Special Concern	Enhanced direction and limitations on numbers of campers per group/river mile and the number and development scale of facilities may better protect habitats and populations of plants, wildlife, fish, and aquatic animals.	Existing standards and guidelines for Protection of Species of Special Concern	Same as Alternative 1, except that the limitations exist within a narrower corridor and may be expanded or increased outside the corridor and still have a detrimental impact on the Clarion River and its environment.
Management Activities Sets new Standards and Guidelines	Enhanced direction and limitations on numbers of campers per group/river mile and the number and development scale of facilities may better protect habitats and populations of plants, wildlife, fish, and aquatic animals.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1, except that the limitations exist within a narrower corridor and may be expanded or increased outside the corridor and still have a detrimental impact on the Clarion River and its environment.
Provide for Monitoring	Enhanced indicators and standards in Appendix B.	Per existing ANF LRMP direction	Same as Alternative 1

CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Effects relative to significant issues (for all alternatives)

The four significant issues raised during scoping include the protection and enhancement of the river's ORVs, free-flowing condition, and water quality; the boundary location of the WSR corridor and the implications of the boundary location on landowners; protection and interpretation of archeological resources; and the protection of species of special concern. The range of alternatives provided options for the boundary location which also determines the area of protection of ORVs. The other issues have been addressed with the development of management direction and are discussed in the following factors.

Effects relative to significance factors (for all alternatives)

Following are the effects relative to 10 significance factors required in the FONSI [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)]:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

Short term – For the short-term (within the next year), there will be little change from existing conditions except the creation of the Clarion River CRMP. Site-specific projects, such as closing or rehabilitating certain campsites according to the parameters in Appendix B may occur. Signs designating existing campsites as open or closed may also be installed.

Long term – For the long-term (greater than a year), there will be increased management direction to protect and enhance the ORVs within the river corridor in Alternatives 1 and 3. The selection of Alternative 1 or 3 would result in an amendment to the ANF LRMP, instituting MA 8.1.1 management direction which reduces the scenic integrity level (SIL) in the scenic river sections, lowers the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) level, and changes the suitability of some activities. Reducing the SIL in the scenic sections from very high to high makes the scenery management objectives consistent for the entire WSR corridor. In a very high SIL the landscape character is unaltered. In a high SIL the landscape character appears unaltered. Scenery changes may take place in a high SIL if the change appears to conform to the view. The lower ROS level would direct facility management and policies to provide a more remote setting and private experience than the higher level. The change in suitability would result in no commercial gathering of special forest products, no new snowmobile trails, and no cross-country travel on horses in the WSR corridor. In Alternatives 1 and 3 new road construction and camping becomes unsuitable in the scenic river sections. If Alternative 2 is selected, the LRMP direction of MA 8.1 applies to the Clarion River WSR corridor. The SIL in the scenic sections would remain very high. The ROS would remain Rural in the recreation sections and roaded natural in the scenic sections. New road construction and camping could take place in the scenic sections of the river; and commercial special forest product collection and cross-country riding of horses could continue in the river corridor.

Under all alternatives a CRMP will be developed and implemented. The CRMP will be developed in cooperation with other land management agencies to establish programmatic management direction for the river corridor. The CRMP will include the boundaries of the WSR corridor; guidance for development, management, and restoration activities on public lands within the corridor; management and development goals and objectives for the river corridor;

desired characteristics of specific river segments with standards and guidelines for all segments; and a monitoring program with probable actions. Site-specific projects may require a separate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis prior to implementation. The effects of the proposed project on ORVs and compatibility with the CRMP would be evaluated in such an analysis.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The management direction contained in all alternatives will have no negative affect on public health or safety. Health and safety continue to be emphasized in Forest Service signing and BMPs. All alternatives may have a positive effect on public health and safety by emphasizing improved interpretive and educational signs and materials. Users may be better informed and prepared for their river outings.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The ORVs identified for the Clarion WSR constitute the unique characteristics of this geographic area, particularly the scenery and the land formations, and would be protected under all alternatives. The differences between the boundaries established in the three alternatives determines how much of the scenery and land formation is managed and protected under the WSR. The narrow corridor of Alternative 3 may negatively impact the characteristics of the Clarion River valley by decreasing protection of scenic resources in the middle and background, depending on the kind of management applied to these areas outside the river corridor boundary. Alternative 1 may result in greater opportunities for enhancement of the unique characteristics that became outstandingly remarkable values of the Clarion WSR because it protects more of the middle and background scenery in some areas and protects a further distance up some tributary streams than do the other alternatives.

At this time, there is insufficient documentation to consider the heritage resources within the CRMP boundary as “Outstanding” according to the WSR ORV assessment criteria. There are few heritage resources formally determined eligible for the NRHP. This may be more due to the limited amount of heritage resource work conducted in the area (and lack of eligibility determinations on known sites), rather than a lack of heritage resources. It is possible that future work may lead to the designation of heritage resources as an ORV for the Clarion River. The substantial heritage resources within the WSR boundary include cultural resources ranging from pre-contact Native American occupations to the numerous historic sites representative of the logging industry. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, requires state and federal agencies to avoid degradation or destruction of sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Sites that are NRHP eligible and unevaluated sites must be protected.

4. The degree to which the effects on the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Public scoping for this project and the interactive public meetings during November, 2008 has not indicated that the preparation of the CRMP to enhance the natural values of the Clarion WSR would be controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The potential projects developed from Alternatives 1, 2 or 3 are considered to be common and routine and do not involve any unique or unknown risks. This project is a planning document. The possible effects for proposed actions from the plan from either alternative will be analyzed in the future on a project-specific basis.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The CRMP that would be developed from Alternative 1, 2, or 3 will provide direction that encourages protection and enhancement of the ORVs for which the Clarion WSR was designated. The CRMP will provide direction for future actions but does not represent a decision for future actions. Neither alternative is expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Site-specific actions in the future will require separate NEPA analysis.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

The temporal boundary used to assess cumulative effects (CE) of the alternatives for all resources, except scenery, is from 1989, which includes the time when the designation was made, to 2029 when the LRMP is likely to be revised again.

Land Use

Within the boundaries set by Alternative 1 there are three oil and gas wells near the Painter Run area. The smaller boundaries existing in Alternative 2 or set by Alternative 3 include no wells. There has been no oil or gas development since 1989, and no future development is anticipated.

Commercial timber management is suitable activity on the ANF, state game lands, state forests, and private lands. In the last decade, commercial logging has occurred on industrial forestlands near Cline Run, and on private residential property (lot clearing) on a small scale. State Game Lands 28 and 44 routinely alter forest environments to benefit white-tailed deer, black bear, wild turkey, and a variety of small game animals. Records indicate no timber harvesting has occurred on national forest lands within the corridor in the last 20 years.

Water Quality and Free-Flowing Conditions

The spatial boundary used to address cumulative impacts is the federal, state, and private property within the WSR corridor. The U.S. Forest Service has management authority only on national forest lands. However, there are also state and private lands within the WSR corridor. Activities on these lands could have impacts to free-flow and water quality, and therefore were considered.

The WSRA requires that the water quality and free-flow be protected and enhanced. Cumulative effects are not anticipated. Any site-specific project proposals will be evaluated for individual and cumulative impacts under separate analyses.

Scenery

The scenery CE analysis area is a 5,000-acre area 1/4 mile north of the Clarion River within the ANF proclamation boundary. It includes the Concern Level 1 (CL1) corridors for the Clarion River and road corridors, State Route 3002 and Township road 301, adjacent to the river and within the current 1/4 mile boundary. The CE analysis time period starts 10 years prior to the development of the river management plan and extends 20 years into the future.

Past, present, and proposed Federal actions will meet or exceed the scenic integrity levels (SILs). Impacts of natural events like wind or insect and disease damage may benefit from salvaging the down dead woody debris to reduce the visual contrast. Private oil and gas development, as viewed from concern level 1 corridors, may require short-term rehabilitation to meet or exceed the SILs in Alternative 2. Any impacts of future development or natural disturbance would probably be absorbed into the surrounding vegetative pattern within 5-10 years.

Wildlife

The spatial boundary used to address cumulative impacts is the federal, state, and private property within the WSR corridor because the uses of these lands and vegetative conditions provided share a role in directly or indirectly impacting individuals or habitat of rare species.

No substantial changes in land use on private, state or federal land in the CE area are anticipated over the next 20 years. Cumulatively, there are no new or unexpected effects from these changes in the environment within the river corridor. All these effects have been recognized by the ANF LRMP Final Environmental Impact Statement on a landscape scale and are not expected to have an adverse effect on species with viability concerns. The implementation of the current ANF LRMP standards and guidelines, as well as the conservation and preservation measures associated with state land and BMPs encouraged on private property are expected to reduce or eliminate adverse effects of future activities on these species.

Botany

The spatial boundary used to address cumulative effects is all lands within the 51.7-mile WSR boundary by alternative. Assumptions for non-native invasive plant (NNIP) species prevention and treatment on private and other public lands:

1. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, State Game Lands, State Forests, and State Parks (collectively referred to as 'other agencies') direction and management plans include goals for NNIP species treatment; however, treatment is based on available funding. It is assumed that these other agencies would do more prevention and treatment of NNIP species than would occur on private lands.
2. NNIP species treatment on private lands is based on owner or occupant knowledge of NNIP species identification, recognition of their impacts and willingness or ability to treat NNIP species.
3. Alternative 2 has the largest amount of acres within WSR boundary and Alternative 3 the least.
4. The change in the amount of private land versus other agencies within the WSR boundary by alternative is not anticipated to hamper or improve the prevention and treatment of NNIP species by alternative.
- 5.

Figure 1 displays the general trend in the number of acres by ownership within the WSR boundary by alternative, with Alternative 2 having the most acres and Alternative 3 the least (minimum boundary) within the WSR boundary.

Figure 1–Trend in Acres within WSR boundary by Alternative.

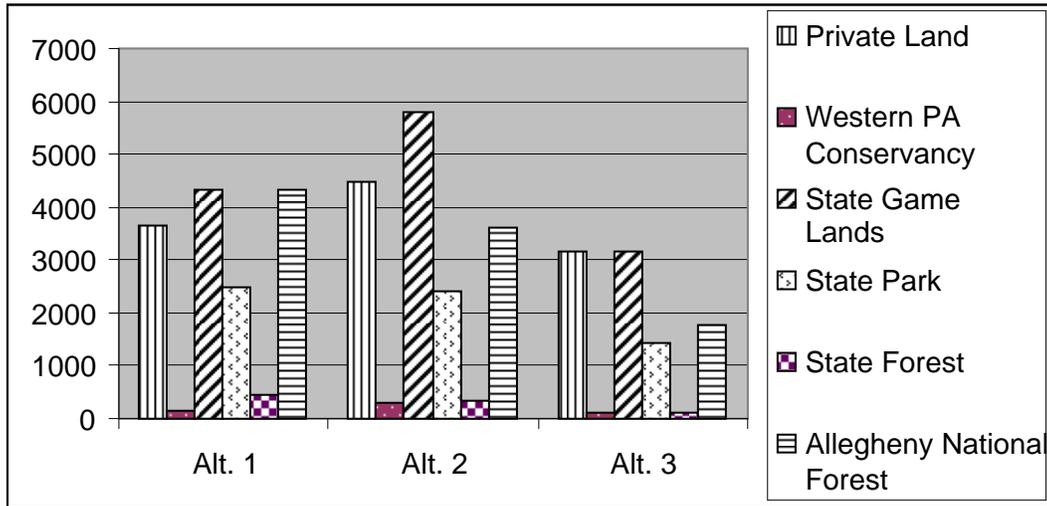
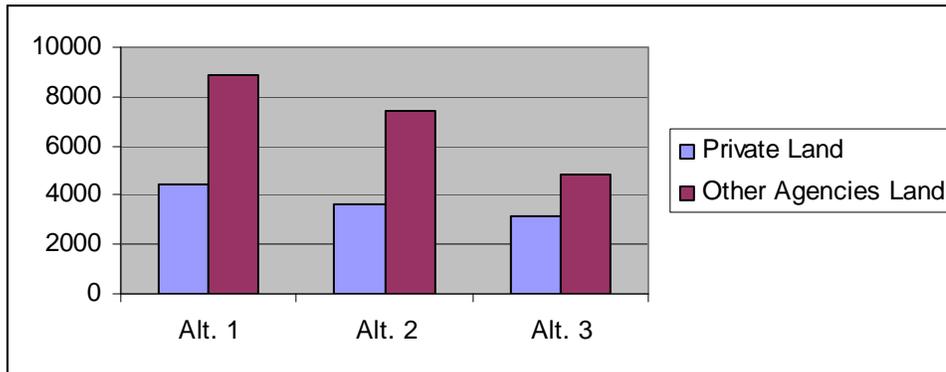


Figure 2 displays the amount of private versus other agencies land by alternative.

Figure 2–Private and other agency land within the WSR boundary by alternative.



Under Alternative 2, there are 8,835 acres classified as other agencies and 4,464 acres of private land within the current WSR boundary. Under Alternative 1, there are 7,394 acres classified as other agencies and 3,650 acres of private land within the proposed WSR boundary. Under Alternative 3 there are 4,852 acres classified as other agencies and 3,171 acres of private land within the proposed WSR boundary. Based on the assumptions above, the differences in acres within the WSR boundary by ownership should not have appreciable differences in the prevention and treatment of NNIP species between alternatives.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of a project on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Section 106 of the National

Historic Preservation Act also requires federal agencies to afford the State Historic Preservation Office and Tribal Historic Preservation Office a reasonable opportunity to comment on agency undertakings. The Archeological Resources Protection Act applies to the discovery and protection of historic properties (prehistoric and historic) that are excavated or discovered on federal lands. It affords protection of archaeological resources and sites that are on public and Indian lands. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act pertains to the discovery and protection of Native American human remains and objects that are excavated or discovered on federal lands. It encourages avoidance of archaeological sites that contain burials or portions of sites that contain graves through “in situ” preservation, but may encompass other actions to preserve these remains and items.

The heritage resources are not listed as an ORV for the Clarion WSR; however, the WSRs Act requires that these values be protected and enhanced. The LRMP provides for preservation and interpretation of existing sites. There is no anticipated adverse effect on significant scientific, cultural or historical resources that would result from any alternative.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

In compliance with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Forest Service prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) of this decision’s potential effects on the Indiana bat, small-whorled pogonia, northeastern bulrush, northern riffleshell mussel, clubshell mussel, rayed-bean mussel and sheepsnose mussel, which is incorporated by reference. In summary, three of the five threatened and endangered species (Indiana bat, small-whorled pogonia and northeastern bulrush) have suitable habitat within the analysis area, but have not been documented in the Clarion River corridor. The remaining two endangered species (northern riffleshell mussel and clubshell mussel) and the two candidate species (rayed-bean and sheepsnose mussels) are not present and have no suitable habitat in the analysis area. There is no federally designated critical habitat for any of the federally listed threatened, endangered or candidate species (16 USC 1532 (5)(A)) within the ANF and therefore within the analysis area (see project BA in project file). A may affect, not likely to adversely affect determination was reached for the Indiana bat. A no effect determination was reached for the small-whorled pogonia, northeastern bulrush, northern riffleshell mussel, clubshell mussel, rayed-bean mussel and sheepsnose mussel.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or other requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species, Management Indicator Species, Species with Viability Concern, Clean Air Act, and Clean Water Act

None of the alternatives would threaten a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed activities considered in this analysis are consistent with the ANF LRMP.

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act requires national forests to preserve and enhance the diversity of plant and animal communities to meet multiple use objectives based on the suitability and capability of the land. All alternatives are consistent with the National Forest Management Act.

Endangered Species Act

The alternatives, action or no action, would be consistent with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In compliance with the requirements of ESA, the Forest Service prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) of this decision's potential effects on the Indiana bat, small-whorled pogonia, northeastern bulrush, northern riffleshell mussel, clubshell mussel, rayed-bean mussel and sheepsnose mussel, which is incorporated by reference. In summary, three of the five threatened and endangered species (Indiana bat, small-whorled pogonia and northeastern bulrush) have suitable habitat within the analysis area, but have not been documented in the Clarion River corridor. The remaining two endangered species (northern riffleshell mussel and clubshell mussel) and the two candidate species (rayed-bean and sheepsnose mussels) are not present and have no suitable habitat in the analysis area. There is no federally designated critical habitat for any of the federally listed threatened, endangered or candidate species (16 USC 1532 (5)(A)) within the ANF and therefore within the analysis area (see project BA in project file). A may affect, not likely to adversely affect determination was reached for the Indiana bat, based on potential actions on private lands or other public lands. A no effect determination was reached for the small-whorled pogonia, northeastern bulrush, northern riffleshell mussel, clubshell mussel, rayed-bean mussel and sheepsnose mussel. All alternatives will protect threatened, endangered and sensitive species. The ANF LRMP was developed with the responsibilities concerning conservation of listed species (WSRA Section 7 (a)(1)) foremost in mind.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The no-action or action alternatives are consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the provisions of the memorandum of understanding between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service to integrate conservation measures for migratory birds into comprehensive land management and project planning. The alternatives balance the long-term benefits to migratory birds provided by the delineation of the WSR corridor on the Clarion River and possibly the revision of the LRMP against the short-term adverse effects that may occur during future vegetation or ground-disturbing actions projected to occur in the river corridor within a variety of ownerships over the analysis period.

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Consultation and Coordination

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (State Historic Preservation Office in Pennsylvania)

Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Historic Preservation Office

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Clarion River Municipal Partnership

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MAPS

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