



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

White River
National
Forest

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File Code: 2350-4/1920-6

Date: October 31, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The White River National Forest is seeking public input on a Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Study for segments of the Colorado River in Glenwood Canyon and Deep Creek above Dotsero. The river segments being evaluated were determined to meet eligibility criteria under previous studies completed by the White River National Forest.

The requirements of Section 5(d) (1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-542, 82 Stat. 906, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287) direct federal agencies to consider potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in their land and water planning process. The White River National Forest completed the eligibility phase of the wild and scenic rivers study for segments of the Colorado River (Glenwood Canyon) and Deep Creek during its 2002 Land and Resource Management Plan Revision. The Forest Service is now preparing a wild and scenic rivers study report to determine the suitability of these segments for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Section 5(d) (1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act allows for the study of new potential wild and scenic rivers not designated under Section 3(a) or designated for study under Section 5(a) of the Act. Section 5(d)(1) states, "In all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources, consideration shall be given by all Federal agencies involved to potential national, wild, scenic, and recreational river areas." The final wild and scenic rivers eligibility report for the White River National Forest can be downloaded at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver/projects/forest_plan/feis/appendices/Appendix_F.pdf.

The Forest Service is now beginning the second phase of the wild and scenic rivers study called the suitability phase or suitability study. The suitability study is the process of determining whether each segment identified as eligible would be a worthy addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. The suitability study will be completed for two eligible segments of Deep Creek and two eligible segments of the Colorado River. Study of these segments within the White River National Forest is being done in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Glenwood Springs and Kremmling Field Offices Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision process. The BLM is already in the process of performing suitability studies on adjacent BLM-managed portions of the Colorado River and Deep Creek. (See Attachment 1, titled:



Eligibility and Suitability, What's the Difference?, for more information on eligibility vs. suitability.)

During the initial stage of the suitability process, the Forest Service is considering a number of suitability criteria such as manageability of each segment, land ownership, use tradeoffs, conflicts, use levels and availability of other methods for protecting values, to name a few. (See the complete list of criteria in Attachment 2.)

The results of the suitability study will be analyzed and incorporated into the Bureau of Land Management's Environmental Impact Statement for their Resource Management Plan Revision. All issues raised during public scoping will be taken into consideration. As directed by FSH 1909.12, Chapter 80, the Forest Service and BLM will, at a minimum, analyze the following alternatives:

- No action (continuation of current management),
- National designation of all eligible segments of the river,
- Protection of eligible segments by means other than national designation, and
- Designation of some eligible segments.

Public input is critical for developing a thorough draft suitability analysis. The information most beneficial to the Forest Service is that which directly addresses the suitability criteria identified in Attachment 2. This information will be used in making draft suitability determinations during the draft alternatives analysis process. While the Forest Service will accept opinions on whether specific segments are suitable, data regarding each of the suitability criteria will be relied upon most heavily in making the draft suitability determinations. The Forest Service is soliciting information from the public through December 2, 2008 on each of the eligible stream segments.

The Forest Service is aware that many questions will likely be regarding the effects of this study and potential future designation on water rights. Attachment 3, included with this letter, is intended to assist in answering some questions that may you may have on this subject.

Public open houses will be held in Glenwood Springs on November 20, 2008, and in Eagle on November 24, 2008. Both open houses will be held from 4:30pm – 6:30pm. Below is specific information regarding the meeting locations.

Glenwood Springs November 20, 2008 Glenwood Springs Community Center 100 Wulfsohn Rd.	Eagle November 24, 2008 United Methodist Church of Eagle Valley 138 Howard St
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Written comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- Fax: (970) 468-7735
- E-mail: wrfn_scoping_comments@fs.fed.us

- Hard copy: Forest Service, White River National Forest c/o Peech Keller, NEPA Coordinator, PO Box 620 Silverthorne, CO 80498.

The lead agency for this effort is the Bureau of Land Management, Glenwood Springs Field Office and Kremmling Field Office. The USDA Forest Service, White River National Forest is a cooperating agency. When the BLM Draft RMP/Draft EIS is published (tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2009) the public will have 90-days to comment on the draft suitability determinations. When the EIS is finalized, separate Records of Decision will be issued from the Forest Service as well as the Bureau of Land Management.

Also included for your information is a Question and Answer document regarding Wild and Scenic Rivers Analysis and Water Rights/Water Projects (Attachment 3).

If you have any questions, please contact Peech Keller at (970) 262-3495.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mary G. Morgan
MARY G. MORGAN
Acting Forest Supervisor

cc: Cynthia P Keller
Brian A Lloyd
Andrea Holland-Sears
Samuel Massman