

Appendix E - Wild and Scenic Rivers

In 1993, the Forest conducted a systematic screening process of all rivers using GIS. The GIS computer program mapped all rivers on the Forest from the USGS quad-base map series at the scale of 1:24,000. An initial determination of free-flowing condition was then made. The forest hydrologist visited each Ranger District to evaluate every free-flowing river found on the district. Rivers were divided into homogeneous sections for analysis based on land form, resources, and land uses. Each segment was evaluated, using regional criteria, to determine if it had any potential outstandingly remarkable values.

Eligibility determination is based on scenic, recreation, geology, fisheries, wildlife, prehistoric, historic and ecological/vegetative criteria. The following guidelines were used in assessing outstandingly remarkable values:

Scenic - The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. Additional factors such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.

Recreational - 1) Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, unique enough to attract visitors from outside the geographic region. Visitors would be willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, sight-seeing, wildlife observations, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. 2) Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the geographic region. 3) The river may provide or have the potential to provide settings for national or regional usage or competitive events.

Geologic - The river or the area within the river corridor contains an example(s) of a geologic feature, process, or phenomena that is rare, unusual, one-of-a-kind, or unique to the geographic region. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development represent a "textbook" example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, and other geologic structures).

Fish - Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations or habitat or a combination of these river-related conditions. Consideration may be given for potential as well existing values.

Populations - the river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or threatened, endangered and sensitive species.

Habitat - the river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federally listed or candidate threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.

Wildlife - Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either wildlife populations or habitat - or a combination of these values.

Populations - the river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique or populations of federally listed or candidate threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could in itself lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat - the river or area within the river corridor provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for federally listed or candidate threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Prehistoric - The river or area within the river corridor contains a site or sites where there is evidence of occupation or use by native Americans. Sites must have unusual characteristics or exceptional human interest value(s). Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; or may have been used by cultural groups for rare or sacred purposes. Of particular significance are sites or features listed in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic - The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) or feature(s) associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare, unusual or one-of-a-kind in the region. A historic site and/or feature in most cases is 50 years old or older. Of particular significance are sites or features listed in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places.

Other Resource Values - While no specific evaluation guidelines have been developed for the "other similar values" category, assessments of additional river-related values consistent with the foregoing guidance will be completed - including but not limited to: hydrologic, paleontologic, botanic, and ecological resources. The relationship of wilderness and/or wilderness study areas to the river and its associated values should be documented as applicable.

Values were judged to be outstandingly remarkable when compared to other rivers on a regional or national level. The regions within the Routt National Forest were considered to be the Colorado River and the North Platte River. The Colorado River includes the upper reaches of the Colorado, White, Yampa, and the Little Snake River watersheds. The North Platte River includes the upper North Platte and the lower Laramie Rivers. For rivers found eligible, an estimate of possible future designation, wild, scenic, or recreational, was made.

In addition to the Elk and Encampment Rivers, the following three rivers were determined to be eligible:

- North Platte River
- Roaring Fork Creek/Red Canyon Creek
- Rock Creek

Descriptions and a map of each are found below.

North Platte River

Location: Jackson County, Colorado; Sections 1 and 2 of T11N, R80W; Sections 23, 26, 35, and 36 of T12N, R80W, 6th P.M.

Outstandingly remarkable values:

Scenic: The river runs north toward the Wyoming/Colorado border through a narrow canyon setting. The river has incised itself in steep canyon walls which has limited access except at the upper terminus of the reach. It is at this location where most of the public enters the river system. The lower 3.5 miles is non-wilderness; the upper 1.5 miles are included in the Platte River Wilderness. The steep rock walls and the large boulders in the river create distinctive scenery. During the spring runoff season with high river flows, the focus is on the sound and spray of rushing white water coursing through the canyon.

Recreational: There are existing guided white water commercial rafting opportunities. Dispersed camping, with some designated camping spots, are located in the canyon. However, due to the steep narrow nature of the canyon, these spots are limited. Fishing for large brown trout is a popular recreational pursuit after spring runoff conditions abate. This occurs mainly through the months of July October.

Fish: The Colorado Department of Wildlife has designated and is managing this river as "wild trout water." In Wyoming, the designation is "gold medal" water. The river has the habitat and the capability of producing large fish. This, coupled with the lack of access, makes it very desirable for those fishermen seeking large trout in a secluded river setting.

Existing management direction: 1983 Plan allocation is 3B. The management direction emphasizes primitive recreation in an unroaded area.

Roaring Fork Creek/Red Canyon Creek

Location: Red Canyon Creek, Jackson County, Colorado; Section 5 of T8N, R82W and sections 32, 33, and 34 of T9N, R82W, 6th P.M. Roaring Fork Creek, Jackson County, Colorado; Sections 27, 28, and 34 of T9N, R82W, 6th P.M.

Outstandingly remarkable values (these features apply to both rivers):

Scenic: Red Canyon Creek is a tributary of Roaring Fork Creek. The confluence of Red Canyon Creek with Roaring Fork Creek occurs at the boundary of the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area. The lower 0.75 miles of Roaring Fork Creek is outside of the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area. The scenic qualities of these rivers are tied to the glaciated features of the steep red canyon walls. At the lower terminus, near the Forest boundary, is a cascading falls on Roaring Fork Creek.

Geologic: The canyon was formed by mountain glaciation and not by the erosive power of these small mountain rivers. The canyon walls create a sense of awe in visitors and makes them feel very small and insignificant by comparison.

Wildlife: The canyon walls are peregrine falcon habitat, with prairie falcon nesting now occurring.

Existing management direction: 1983 Plan allocation is 8B for Red Canyon Creek. The emphasis is on maintaining or improving the wilderness recreation setting with high levels of solitude. The allocation for Roaring Fork Creek is 8B, 8A (emphasizes maintaining or improving wilderness character in a pristine wilderness setting), and 3A which emphasizes semi-primitive, nonmotorized recreation on the nonwilderness reach of Roaring Fork Creek.

Lower Rock Creek

Location: Routt County, Colorado; Sections 14, 23, 26, 34, and 35 of T1N, R83W, 6th P.M.

Outstandingly remarkable values:

Scenic: An isolated canyon setting with limited access provides the visitor with views of basalt cliffs and talus slopes, interspersed with sagebrush, aspen, and conifer vegetation.

Geologic: The canyon was carved by the river's power as it works its way to the Colorado River. The river gradient increases where the canyon walls start to close in upon the river. Here the river is characterized as pocket water amongst large boulders and bedrock.

Fish: Habitat has the potential for producing large fish of various species, i.e., rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout and cutthroat trout. The isolated canyon gives a feeling of solitude for those fishermen seeking out this type of angling experience. Currently, this is a popular destination fishing location for front range anglers.

Prehistoric Cultural: There are numerous aboriginal camp sites in the valley indicating that Rock Creek was a major travel corridor for movement from the Colorado River onto the Forest. In addition, the Rock Creek stage stop and other early homesteads are located nearby. The stage stop is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Existing management direction: 1983 Plan allocation is 3A, which emphasizes semi-primitive, nonmotorized recreation, and 9B, which emphasizes increased water yield through vegetative treatments.

Elk River

Location: Elk River, Routt County, Colorado; Sections 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17 in T9N, R84W; Section 3, 4, and 5 in T10N, 84W; Section 11, 12, 14, 23, 26, and 35 in T10N, R84W.

Outstandingly remarkable values:

Scenic: Elk River is characterized by remarkable scenery, with very steep, rocky, rugged mountains setting on the west side of the Continental Divide. Lower on the river system, there are many open rolling parks with interspersed groups of spruce/fir. The North Fork has steep canyons with waterfalls.

Recreational: Recreationists are attracted to the Elk River for a wide variety of activities. Hiking, camping, and fishing are some of the main activities. Driving for pleasure is common along the main stem. The main stem offers an advanced - intermediate kayaking experience and some possibilities for rafting during late spring-early summer.

Existing management direction: The 1975 amendment to the Wild and Scenic River Act designated this river for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System. Management was applied to the river to protect the values which cause them to be eligible for classification until Congressional action is taken to determine the river status. The 1983 Plan allocation is 2A and 8C. 2A emphasis is semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities. Under the 8C allocation, the emphasis is on maintaining or improving the wilderness recreation setting with a moderate level of solitude.

Encampment River

Location: Encampment River, Jackson County, Colorado; Sections 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 34, and 36 of T12N, R84W; Sections 1, 3, 10, 14, and 15 of T11N, R84W; Sections 17, 20, 21, 27, 28, and 34 of T11N, R83W.

Outstandingly remarkable values:

Fish: The Encampment is an excellent fishing stream. It supports self-sustaining populations of brook and brown trout. The stream's ideal pool-riffle ratio of 50/50 and flow through numerous meadows, which warm the waters by several degrees above the temperatures in most mountain streams, have produced ideal habitat for trout. The pools are deep, often with undercut the streambanks; they provide ideal resting areas for trout. The riffle areas contain adequate numbers of aquatic insects upon which the trout feed. Due to the steep sideslopes adjacent to the two forks of the river, spawning is usually limited to that portion of the tributaries within 1,000 feet of the main streams.

Wildlife: The area provides high quality habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. The area contains important elk migration routes and calving areas. There is good habitat for bighorn sheep, and a few have been seen. There are many hawks and owls in the area, and it may be visited by peregrine falcon and bald eagle.

Existing management direction: The 1975 amendment to the Wild and Scenic River Act designated this river for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System. Management was applied to the river to protect the values which caused them to be eligible for classification until Congressional action is taken to determine the river status. The 1983 Plan allocation is 2A, 3B, and 8C. 2A emphasis is semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities. 3B emphasizes primitive recreation in an unroaded area. 8C emphasis is on maintaining or improving the wilderness recreation setting with a moderate level of solitude.

