

Snake Headwaters



Wild and Scenic Comprehensive River Management Plan



Summer 2010

Bridger-Teton National Forest

Greetings from the Planning Team!



We are excited to be part of this river management planning process with *you*, our river neighbors, people who earn your livelihoods on and near these rivers, and people who visit them when you can, whether that means once a week or once in a lifetime. What an opportunity for us to learn what is special to each of us about these magnificent places!

Wyoming's Senator Thomas gave us the legacy of the Snake Headwaters Act. Now it is up to all of us to safeguard the health and resilience of these waterways for future generations. We are committed to collaboration and inclusiveness not just during the planning phase, but into the future. Your knowledge and experiences are relevant and vital to our mutual success.

The extent of the Snake Headwaters as a single designation is itself extraordinary. With over 400 miles, these connected waterways are the nation's second largest single-system designation. The working farms and ranches that are part of this landscape have helped sustain nature's benefits not just for people, but also for the fish and wildlife which are so much the essence of this place.

As we move into a complicated 21st century, we need everyone working together to continue conserving the many benefits these rivers and streams offer. For clean drinking water in our communities, for wild raft rides through a deep canyon, for contemplative solitude beside a tributary's source spring, we value the Snake Headwaters in their vibrant diversity.

Why is Wild and Scenic Rivers designation important?

Decades of damming, development, and diversion have taken a toll on our nation's rivers. Currently, 600,000 miles of waterways lie behind an estimated 70,000 dams. Congress was persuaded to balance this history with passage of legislation to preserve forever in a free-flowing condition some of the nation's most precious rivers. This legislation—the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—was signed into law in 1968. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System now includes over 11,400 river miles.

Supporters of the Snake Headwaters Act believed these rivers need to count among those protected and worked across political boundaries to bring about this designation.

Every river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System must be administered so as to protect and enhance the values that made it eligible for inclusion, but without limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. For more information on the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, visit www.rivers.gov



Snake River Canyon
(see map on page 7)

Our Vision

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is home to world-class headwaters, wildlife, wilderness and wildlands. Conserving these values, in concert with providing for sustainable uses, is our legacy. We are leaders committed to service, action, and excellence.



What is the Comprehensive River Management Plan?

The Forest Service, as well as the National Park Service and the National Elk Refuge, will prepare a *Wild and Scenic Comprehensive River Management Plan (Snake Headwaters Plan)* for all the rivers covered by the Snake Headwaters Legacy Act.

This planning process is an intensive effort, involving professionals from all aspects of river and forest management, in consultation with elected officials, agency partners, visitors and neighbors, culturally associated tribal groups, national and local advocacy groups, and gateway communities. The Snake Headwaters Plan and its environmental analyses will help us evaluate the range of reasonable approaches for managing the rivers. Once the plan is complete, it will guide federal activities that affect these rivers.



Willow Creek (see map on page 7)



What kinds of decisions will be made by the Snake Headwaters Plan?

Over the next few years—through an extensive involvement process of meetings, workshops, and opportunities to submit written or verbal comments—Forest Service staff will define the range of issues to be addressed in planning for the Snake River Headwaters, which might include the following:

- What are the most appropriate uses along various segments of this river system?
- What are the most appropriate natural and cultural resource management strategies within the Snake Headwaters corridor?
- What are the implications of various management approaches in terms of visitor capacity?
- How can land managers protect the unique character of the areas designated by this system?
- What facilities might be needed to achieve the vision established by the Snake Headwaters Plan?
- Are existing facilities located in the most suitable areas for protecting resources and providing services?

- What is the minimum amount of flow necessary to sustain the values identified for each stream segment?
- What values might be most affected by changing climate, and what mitigations might be most effective to sustain those values?

be done to maintain and enhance the desired conditions specified in the plan. In this way, the plan will profoundly influence all the work that is done throughout the river corridor and ensure that activities are focused on our shared vision and goals.



Harlequin duck
(© worldwildlifewonders)

How will the plan be used?

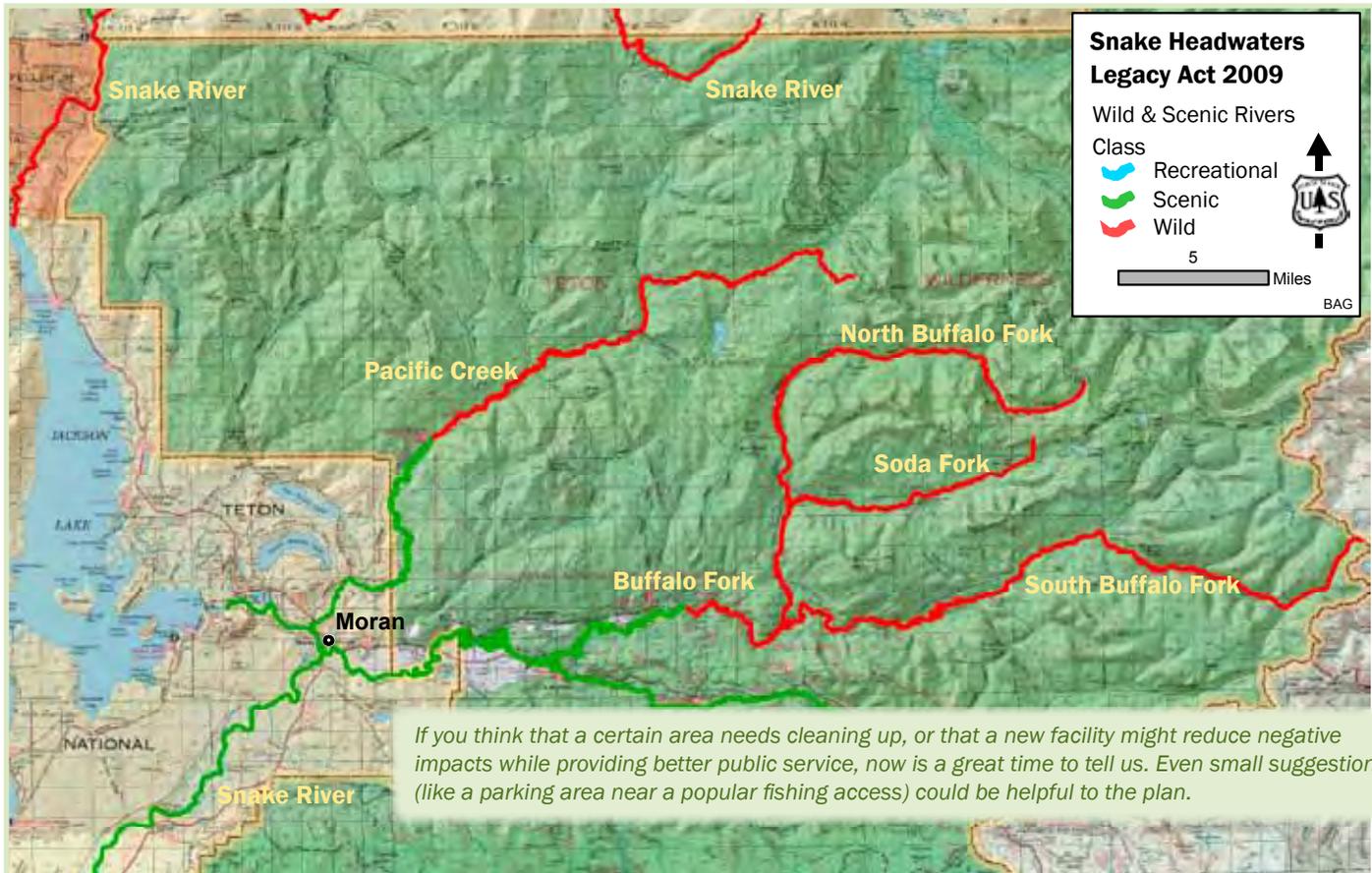
The Snake Headwaters Plan will be the guiding document for all federal (or federally-related) activities that occur along the 16 designated river and stream sections. Before a project affecting the bed and banks can proceed, land managers will use the Snake Headwaters Plan for guidance on uses and activities that are allowed in the river corridor.

When managers consider work and funding priorities, they will look to the Snake Headwaters Plan and assess what needs to



Pacific Creek (see map below)

Northern Bridger-Teton NF Headwaters





Gros Ventre River (see map on page 6)

What will the plan accomplish?

The purpose of the Snake Headwaters Plan is to establish the vision and goals for the river. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act specifies that the plan must address two general goals:

1. Maintain the water quality and free-flowing condition of the river, and
2. Protect and enhance what the act calls the river's "*Outstandingly Remarkable Values.*" These values can be scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, historic, archeologic, or other values.

The Snake Headwaters Plan will establish specific ways to measure desired natural resource health, cultural resources protections, and opportunities for visitor experiences, and it will outline methods for maintaining these conditions.



One of the many ways we value the Snake Headwaters

River Classification

River Classification reflects levels of development at the time of designation.

- **Wild**—free of impoundments; accessible only by trail
- **Scenic**—free of impoundments, accessible by trail or road;
- **Recreational**—accessible by road, some shoreline development, impoundments, or diversions.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

1. The value must be river related. To be considered river related, a value must:
 - Be located in the river or on its immediate shorelands, and
 - Contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem, or
 - Owe its location or existence to the presence of the river
2. The value must be rare, unique, or exemplary in a regional or national context. To be as such, a value should be a conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary.

Table 1 on the next page shows each Bridger-Teton NF designated river segment, its length, classification, and currently identified Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV).

Defining the Boundary

When Congress designated the Snake Headwaters in 2009, Forest Service staff mapped draft boundary lines. As directed by the Wild and Scenic Act, we drew a standard ½ mile buffer (¼ mile on each side) from the ordinary high water mark of the designated segments.

A Bridger-Teton NF interdisciplinary team reviewed the standard buffer and made some preliminary adjustments of the boundary to (a) incorporate areas with identified examples



Gros Ventre River (see map on page 6)



designated waterway, averaged over the entire Snake Headwaters system. We will review these boundaries with stakeholders (including private landholders) throughout our planning. Discussions with landowners will continue as public and specialist input is gathered about the specific Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) of the Snake Headwaters.

After hearing from stakeholders and specialists, the Forest Service will dedicate a boundary that best protects the rivers' ORV.

of outstanding resource values or (b) exclude areas that did not make sense for corridor designation, such as decreasing acreage to match an already identified boundary line, like a road, a Wilderness boundary, or an elevational contour.

The maximum size of the Wild and Scenic River corridor is 320 acres per linear mile of

When the well's dry, we know the worth of water.
(Benjamin Franklin)



Table 1

RIVER	MAP PAGE	CLASSIFICATION and REACH	LENGTH (miles)	ORV ¹
¹Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) Key:				
S —Scenery; R —Recreation; G —Geology; F —Fish; W —Wildlife; H —History; O —Other Values (such as ecological or paleontological)				
Bailey Creek	7	Wild —Source to Snake River confluence	7	G, F, W, R
Blackrock Creek	3	Scenic —Source to Forest Boundary	22	S,R, H,W,O
Buffalo Fork	3	Scenic —Turpin Meadows to GTNP boundary	14	S,R,W
		Wild —North, South, Soda Forks, and main stem from mouth of South Fork to Teton Wilderness	70	S,R,W
Crystal Creek	5	Scenic —Crystal Creek trailhead to Gros Ventre R.	5	S,W,G
		Wild —source to Wilderness boundary/trailhead	14	S,W,G
Granite Creek	7	Scenic —1 mile upstream of Hoback to Hot Springs	9.5	S, R, G
		Wild —Source to Granite Hot Springs	12	S, R, G
Gros Ventre River	5	Scenic —Darwin Ranch to Forest boundary	39	S, R, G, W, H
		Wild —Source to Darwin Ranch	16.5	S, R, G, W, H
Hoback River	7	Recreational —10 miles upriver of Snake confluence	10	S, R, G, W
Pacific Creek	3	Wild —Source to Teton Wilderness boundary	22.5	R,G, W, O
		Scenic —Wilderness boundary to Forest boundary	7	R, G, W, O
Shoal Creek	7	Wild —Source to Riling Trailhead	8	R, S, G, F, W
Snake River	3 & 7	Recreational —Hoback to 1 mile upstream of Alpine bridge	23	S, R, W, H
		Wild —Source to Yellowstone NP boundary	7	H, R
Willow Creek	7	Wild —Source to Hoback River confluence	16.2	R, S, W, O
Wolf Creek	7	Wild —Source to Snake River	7	R, S



River otter (© Andreas Gradin)

Craig Thomas Snake Headwaters Legacy Act of 2009

To protect for current and future generations ... the outstandingly remarkable scenic, natural, wildlife, fishery, recreational, scientific, historic, and ecological values of the rivers and streams of the headwaters of the Snake River System, while continuing to deliver water and operate and maintain valuable irrigation water infrastructure.”

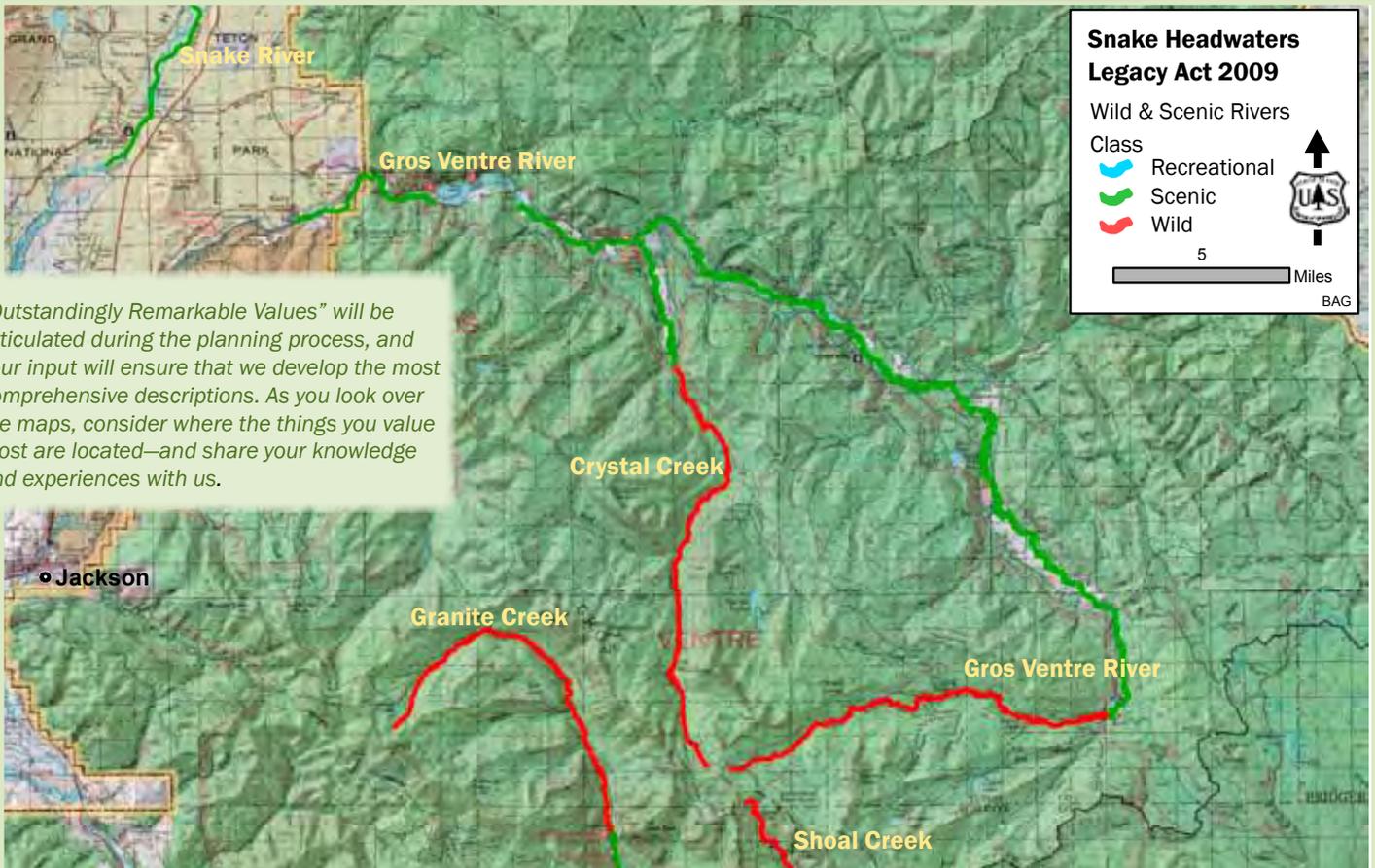


Granite Creek at confluence with Little Granite (see map on page 7)

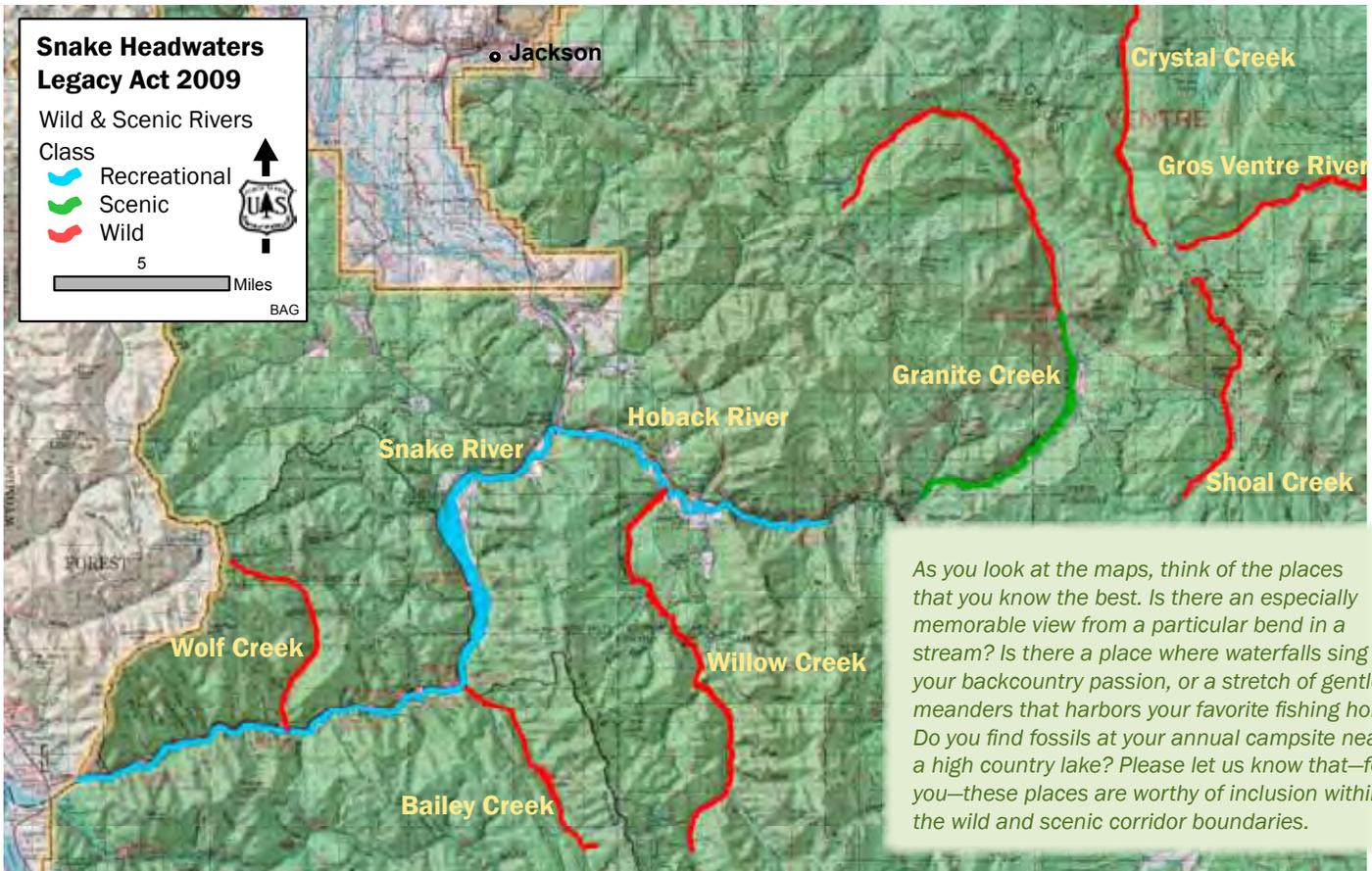


Snake River (see map on page 7)

Central Headwaters



Southern Headwaters



As you look at the maps, think of the places that you know the best. Is there an especially memorable view from a particular bend in a stream? Is there a place where waterfalls sing to your backcountry passion, or a stretch of gentle meanders that harbors your favorite fishing hole? Do you find fossils at your annual campsite near a high country lake? Please let us know that—for you—these places are worthy of inclusion within the wild and scenic corridor boundaries.

For More Information

- ☎ Contact the Planning Team at (307) 739-5532
- ☎ Email us at: BTNF-WSRivers@fs.fed.us
- ☎ Watch for updates at www.snakeheadwatersact.com, or www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf/wild_scenic

For National Park Service river sections, contact:
 ☎ Jennifer Carpenter, 307.739.3465
 ☎ Jennifer_Carpenter@nps.gov



Wolf Creek (see map above)

We invite you to get involved in the Snake Headwaters Wild and Scenic River Plan. You can participate in the planning process, and/or become a part of potential stewardship groups as the plan is implemented. If workshops and planning aren't your style, you may like hands-on work projects, events assistance or resource monitoring.

The Snake Headwaters are important to me. Count me in!

I would like to be considered for: Planning Council Monitoring
 Field projects volunteer Peer educator Events Volunteer
 I'm not sure yet, but please keep me posted

Name: _____

Email: _____

Alternative contact if no email: _____

YOUR VOICE WANTED!

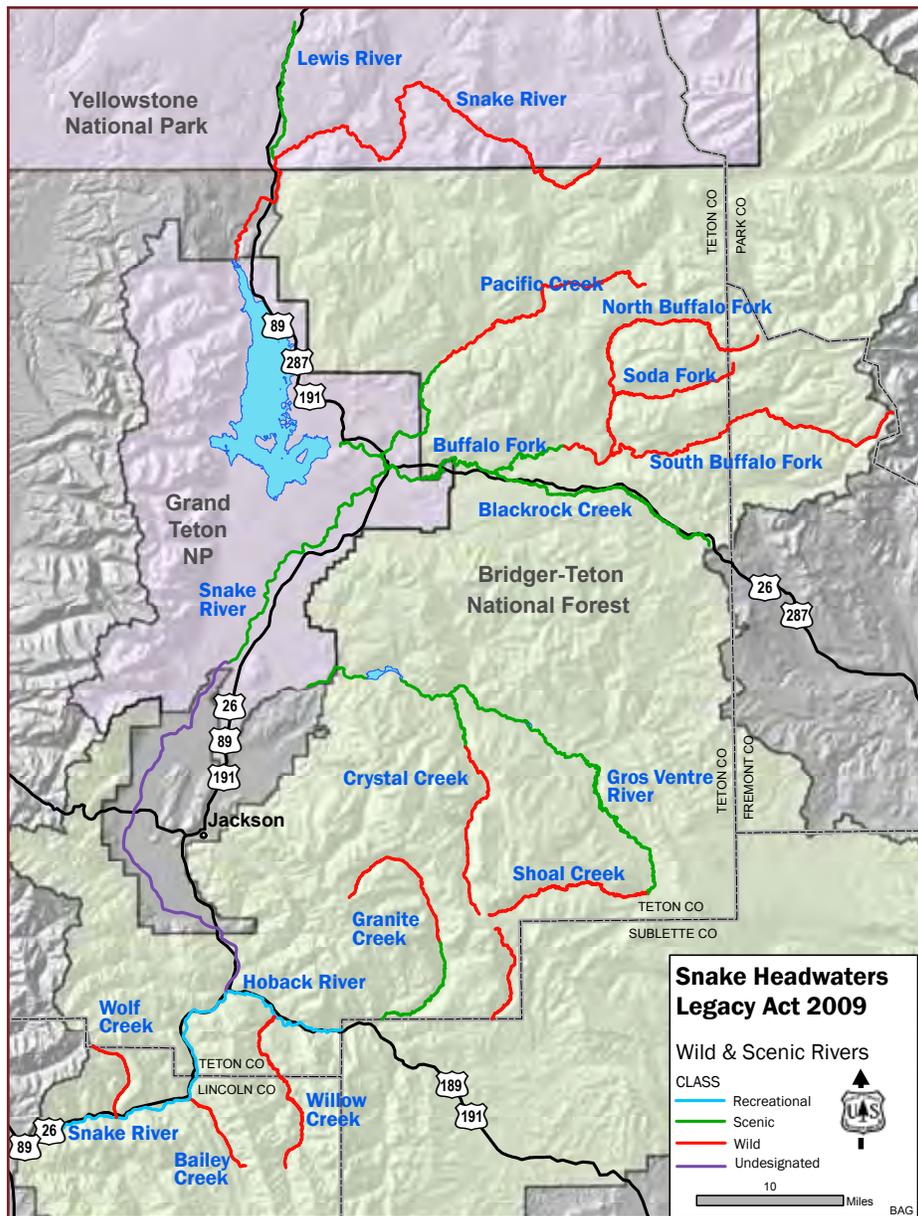
Help create the Snake Headwaters Plan

The Forest Service, as well as the National Park Service and the National Elk Refuge, will prepare a *Wild and Scenic Comprehensive River Management Plan (Snake Headwaters Plan)* for all the rivers covered by the Snake Headwaters Legacy Act.

The Snake Headwaters include 16 distinct rivers/tributaries and 400 miles of designated waterways.



Hoback River (see map on page 7)



Place stamp here

Snake River Headwaters Wild and Scenic River Planning Team

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