

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS PROCESS

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the 2012 Planning Rule, the Forest Service is required to “identify the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS)” during forest plan revision. To be eligible for inclusion, a river segment must be free-flowing and, in combination with its adjacent land area, possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable values.”

What is an outstandingly remarkable value (ORV)?

A scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar river-related value that is a unique, rare, or exemplary feature and is significant when compared with similar values from other rivers at a regional or national scale.

How does the Wild and Scenic River process work?

The Forest Service follows a three-step process:

- **Eligibility** - Evaluate the free-flowing condition of each river segment and identify outstandingly remarkable values.
- **Preliminary classification** - Classify eligible rivers as wild, scenic, or recreational, based on the condition of the river and the development level of adjacent lands as they exist at the time of the study.
- **Suitability** - Determine which eligible rivers or river segments should be recommended to Congress as potential additions to the NWSRS. The appropriate timing for conducting a study to determine if eligible rivers are suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS may vary. Rivers may be studied for suitability as part of a plan development or revision, as part of a plan amendment, in conjunction with a project decision, or in a separate study.

INCORPORATING THE PRIOR WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY INTO THE 2012 PLANNING RULE

The Blue Mountains Forests conducted WSR eligibility studies in 2018 as part of the previous plan revision process. Through this process, 18 river/stream segments were identified as eligible across the three National Forests. Because the plan was never signed and implemented, no management direction for those segments were established. Moving forward and where feasible, the Forest Service will use data from the previously withdrawn plans to inform the studies.

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Visit our website by scanning the QR code below or by visiting www.fs.usda.gov/r06/umatilla/planning/blue-mountains-forest-plan-revision



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WILDERNESS AND WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman
National Forests
May 2026



LANDS THAT MAY HAVE WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS PROCESS

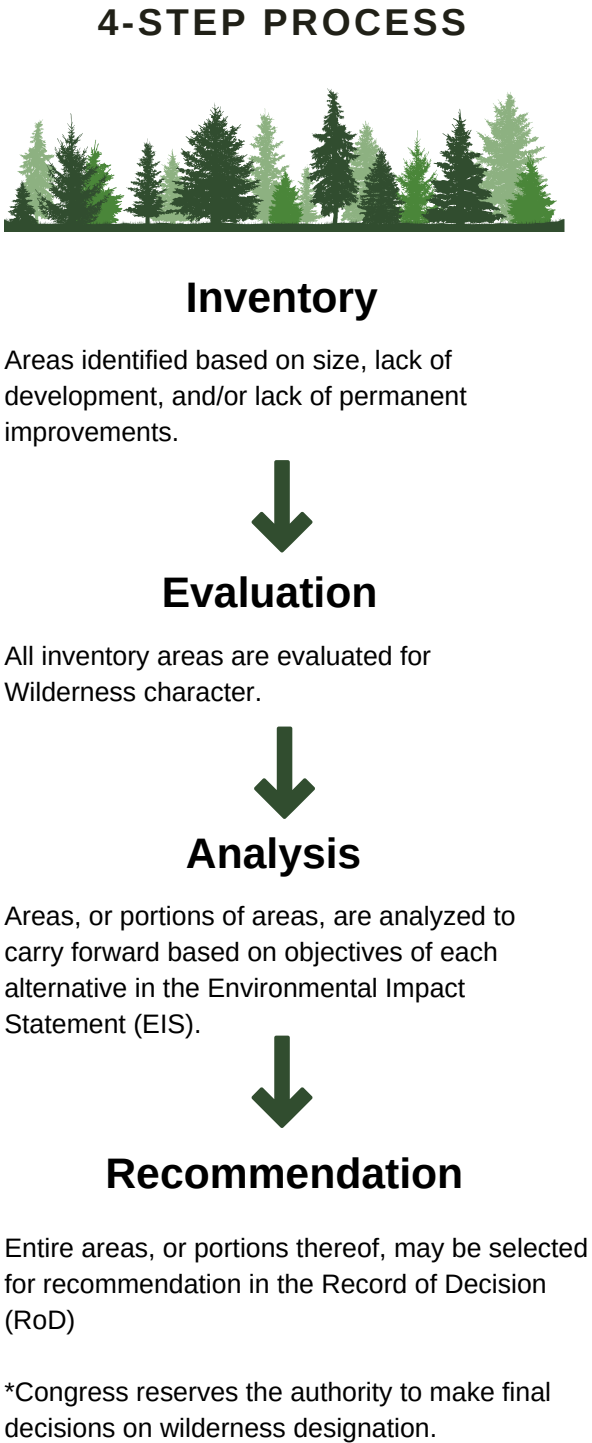
Why is the Forest Service undertaking a Wilderness study?

Under the 2012 Planning Rule, the Forest Service is required to: “identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation.” **There is no obligation to make a recommendation and only Congress can designate wilderness areas.**

How does this process work?

The wilderness recommendation process occurs in four primary steps. Each step requires public participation, Tribal consultation, and intergovernmental coordination with state and local governments.

- **Inventory** - Identify and create an inventory of all lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the NWPS.
- **Evaluation** - Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of lands in the inventory.
- **Analysis** - The Forest Supervisor will determine which areas to further analyze for recommendation as part of one or more alternatives in the applicable National Environmental Policy Act document.
- **Recommendation** - The Forest Supervisor will decide which areas, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the NWPS



What does that actually mean?

The first step, Inventory, divides the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests into areas that can then be Evaluated for their wilderness characteristics (including “manageability”). Some of these areas, or portions thereof, will be Analyzed in one or more alternatives in the planning process. Finally, the Forest Supervisor may Recommend areas for wilderness designation



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Stay connected! Find out more about these processes and how you can participate by visiting the Blue Mountains Forests Plan Revision website, join our mailing list, and getting involved.
- Do you understand the distinction between Wilderness and other forest lands?
- What do you value about Wilderness?
- What do you value about Wild and Scenic Rivers?