

Glossary for the Wild and Scenic Rivers Policy

Acronyms and abbreviations used in this glossary:

Act: Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

BLM: Bureau of Land Management

Council: Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council

NPS: National Park Service

Refuge System: National Wildlife Refuge System

Rivers System: National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

Service: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

USFS: U.S. Forest Service

Definitions:

2(a)(ii) river. Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act allows the Secretary of the Interior to designate rivers into the Rivers System at the request of a Governor, provided certain prerequisites are met (see *Designating Rivers Through Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act* on the [Rivers System website](#)). Such rivers must be managed by the State(s) through which they run, are not made part of the Refuge System, and typically receive no Federal funding for management.

Classification. Rivers in the Rivers System are classified as wild, scenic, or recreational according to Section 2(b) of the Act. The classifications refer to the degree of development along the river at the date of designation, not to wilderness, scenery, or recreational activities. Rivers in the Rivers System are referred to as “wild and scenic rivers” without regard to actual classification. However, classification is an important distinction as it has a direct effect on how the river is administered and whether certain activities on federally owned land within the boundaries are permissible (see Wild, Scenic, and Recreational entries below for classification standards). One or more classification(s) for a river, or segments of a river, is determined either by Congress in the river’s designation legislation or by the Federal administering agency after the river is designated.

Comprehensive River Management Plan. Section 3(d)(1) of the Act requires managers of rivers designated after January 1, 1986, to prepare a management plan to address resource protection, development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary to comply with the Act (see Newly Designated Wild and Scenic River: Interim Management and Steps to Develop a Comprehensive River Management Plan on the [Rivers System website](#)). Pre-existing management plans developed for rivers designated before this date had to be reviewed for compliance with Section 3(d)(1) of the Act by 1996.

Congressionally designated river or congressionally designated wild and scenic river. Rivers Congress designates through amendment of Section 3(a) of the Act into the Rivers System.

Department of the Interior Manual (DM) chapters 245 DM 1 and 710 DM 1. In the context of this policy, 245 DM 1 delegates the authority for conducting studies under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act to the NPS, regardless of land ownership. Departmental Manual chapter 710 DM 1 conveys the responsibilities of the former Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to the NPS, including maintenance of the Nationwide Rivers Inventory.

Designation. The process of adding rivers to the Rivers System by an act of Congress, or, for Secretarially designated rivers, by administrative action of the Secretary of the Interior.

Desired conditions. The resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that will protect and enhance river values and classification(s) while allowing for uses consistent with the Act.

Eligible, eligibility, or potentially eligible. Qualification of a river for inclusion into the Rivers System through the determination that it is free flowing and, with its adjacent land area, possesses at least one river-related outstandingly remarkable value (see definition below). Potentially eligible rivers are those that we suspect are free flowing and possess outstandingly remarkable values but have not gone through a determination process yet.

Free flowing or free flow. Existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway as defined by Section 16(b) of the Act. Free-flowing character, along with the existence of one or more outstandingly remarkable value(s), makes a river eligible for wild and scenic river designation.

Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council. A multi-agency body formed through a charter signed in 1995 by the Assistant Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to improve interagency coordination in administering the Act. The Council consists of representatives of the four main Federal wild and scenic river-administering agencies (BLM, NPS, USFS, and the Service). The Council addresses a broad range of issues, including, but not limited to, management concerns on rivers presently in the Rivers System, potential additions listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, State designations, and the provision of technical assistance to other governments and nonprofit organizations.

Nationwide Rivers Inventory. A source list of rivers that the NPS and other Federal land-managing agencies have determined as being eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion in the Rivers System.

Non-degradation and enhancement. Section 10(a) of the Act mandates that each river will be managed to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated, while providing for public recreation and resource uses that do not adversely impact or degrade those values.

Outstandingly remarkable values. These are necessary component(s) of a wild and scenic river and are river-related resources that are rare, exemplary, or unique within a stated region of comparison (e.g., the region or nation). Such resources are a necessary component of eligibility for designation of a river into the Rivers System as defined by Section 1(b) of the Act. These

include “scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historical, cultural, or other similar values...” Other similar values that we often consider include customary and traditional indigenous uses and botanical, hydrological, paleontological, or scientific value.

Recreational or recreational river area. These are defined by Section 2(b) of the Act as “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.” See definition of “classification.”

River-administering agencies (Federal). In the context of the Act, the four Federal agencies with primary responsibility for implementation of the Act and management of the rivers in the Rivers System are the Service, BLM, NPS, and USFS.

River area or river corridor. This is a river and the adjacent area within the boundaries of a designated river, or a river and the adjacent area within a quarter mile of the banks of a congressionally authorized study river (within one-half of a mile for designated/study rivers authorized under provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act specific to administration of wild and scenic rivers).

River values. These are the free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of each component of the Rivers System, as identified in Section 1(b) of the Act. Under the Act, Comprehensive River Management Plans for designated rivers must “provide for the protection of” these river values [Section 3(d)(1)], and each river component must “be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance” river values (Section 10(a)).

Scenic or scenic river area. These are defined by Section 2(b) of the Act as “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.” See definition of “classification.”

Section 7 review. Section 7 of the Act imposes restrictions on certain Federal water resources projects and Federal Power Act projects to protect wild and scenic rivers. Section 7 requires Federal river-administering agencies to review certain projects using the specific procedures and standards it defines.

Study report. This is the required report on the eligibility and suitability of a study river for inclusion in the Rivers System for rivers that Congress includes through Section 5(a) of the Act. Section 4(a) requires the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture, or both, to prepare and submit the report to the President. The President transmits the report with the Secretaries’ recommendation(s) to Congress.

Study river. This is a river identified in Section 5 of the Act for study as a potential addition to the Rivers System. Section 4 of the Act outlines the process for conducting the study.

Suitability. The final step in the river assessment process is the determination that a river is suitable for inclusion in the Rivers System. This subjective, time-bounded finding provides the basis for determining which rivers should be recommended for addition to the Rivers System. The suitability phase of the river assessment process evaluates the benefits and impacts of wild and scenic river designation and considers alternative protection methods.

Water quality. Within the context of the Act, water quality may be a value for which a river is designated and also refers to safeguarding water in a condition sufficient to protect the values for which a river is designated into the Rivers System. Water quality on wild and scenic rivers is protected under Federal law, and the standards stem from the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, for the purpose of eliminating or diminishing the pollution of river waters.

Water quantity. Within the context of the Act, water quantity refers to ensuring stream flows sufficient to protect the values for which a river is designated into the Rivers System.

Water resources projects and project works under the Federal Power Act. These include any project that involves Federal assistance, including loans, grants, licenses, or permits, or staff support, upstream, downstream, or within the corridor of a designated or congressionally authorized study river. The Council technical report, entitled Wild and Scenic Rivers Act: Section 7 of the Act, available on the [Rivers System website](#), provides essential definitions, identifies standards and evaluation procedures for determining effects, and defines in detail such projects.

Wild or wild river area. These are defined by Section 2(b) of the Act as: “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.” See definition of “classification.”