

NATIONAL

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

SYSTEM



"In a country where nature has been so lavish and where we have been so spendthrift of indigenous beauty, to set aside a few rivers in their natural state should be considered an obligation."

Senator Frank Church

THE PAST

By the 1950s, decades of damming, development, and diversion had taken their toll on our country's rivers. During the 1960s, the country began to recognize the damage we were inflicting. Recognition finally led to action by Congress to preserve the beauty and free-flowing nature of some of our most precious waterways.

On October 2, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which established a process for building a legacy of protected rivers. After careful consideration, rivers continue to be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; Congress and the people determine which of our remaining free-flowing rivers will be protected.

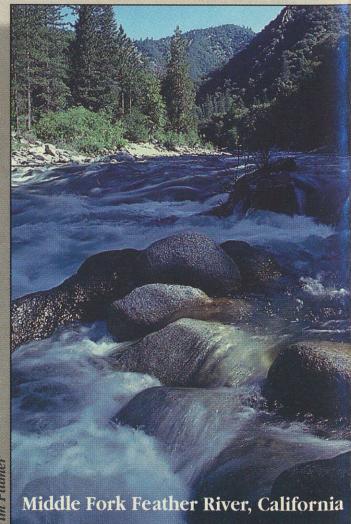
"...the time has also come to identify and preserve free-flowing stretches of our great rivers before growth and development make the beauty of the unspoiled waterway a memory."

President Lyndon Johnson

THE FIRST RIVERS

Passage of the Act provided immediate protection for these eight rivers and identified 27 more for study.

- Middle Fork of the Feather River, California
- Middle Fork of the Clearwater River, Idaho
- Middle Fork of the Salmon River, Idaho
- Eleven Point River, Missouri
- Rio Grande, New Mexico
- Rogue River, Oregon
- St. Croix River, Minnesota and Wisconsin
- Wolf River, Wisconsin

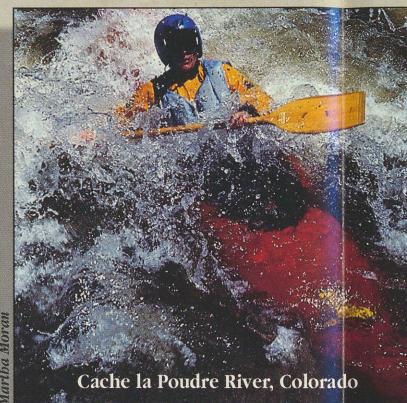
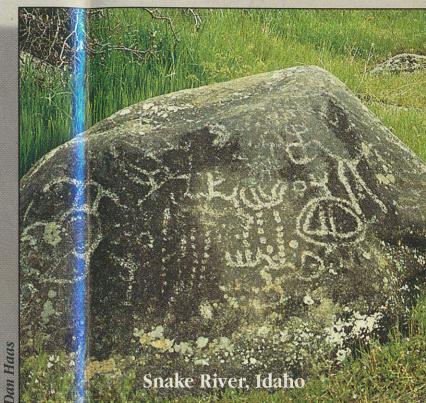


Through 1998, 155 rivers in 37 states had been included in the National System.

THE PRESENT

WHAT MAKES A RIVER WILD & SCENIC?

Rivers or sections of rivers must be free-flowing and possess at least one "outstandingly remarkable" value, such as scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar features. Congress or the Secretary of the Interior add rivers to the growing National System.



WHAT DOES THE ACT DO?

The Act balances demands for hydropower, flood control, and irrigation with the desire to protect some of our most outstanding rivers in a natural and free-flowing state. The Act's underlying principles:

- Keep designated rivers free-flowing.
- Protect outstanding natural and cultural values.
- Allow existing uses of rivers to continue where they do not conflict with river protection.
- Build partnerships among landowners, river users, tribal nations, and all levels of government.

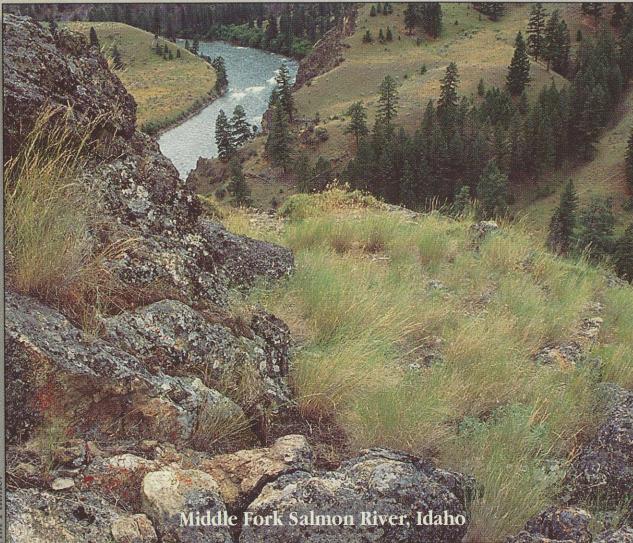
The Act may also:

- Encourage basinwide management that crosses political boundaries.
- Promote public participation in developing goals for river protection.
- Offer technical assistance for river conservation.
- Improve understanding of river values and processes.
- Deepen awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of river conservation.

THE WILD & SCENIC RIVERS ACT (PL. 90-542)

"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. . . ."





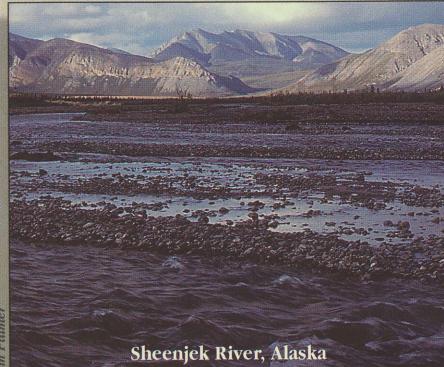
Middle Fork Salmon River, Idaho

"In spite of the durability of rock-walled canyons and the surging power of cataracting water, the wild river is a fragile thing — the most fragile portion of the wilderness country."

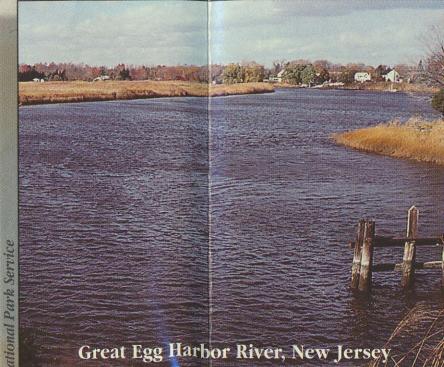
Biologist John Craighead

ALLAGASH TO THE UNALAKLEET: A NATION OF RIVERS

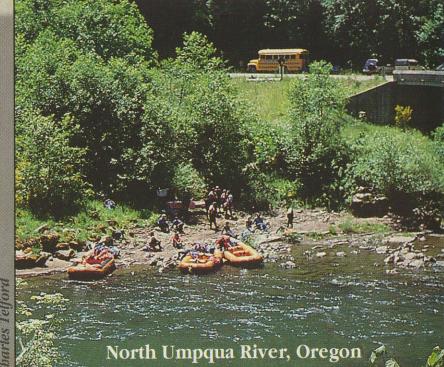
Wild and scenic rivers capture the essence of all waterways that surge, ramble, gush, wander, and weave through our country. From the remote rivers of Alaska, Idaho, and Oregon to rivers threading through the rural countryside of New Hampshire, Ohio, and Massachusetts, each preserves a part of the American story and heritage.



Sheenjek River, Alaska



National Park Service
Great Egg Harbor River, New Jersey



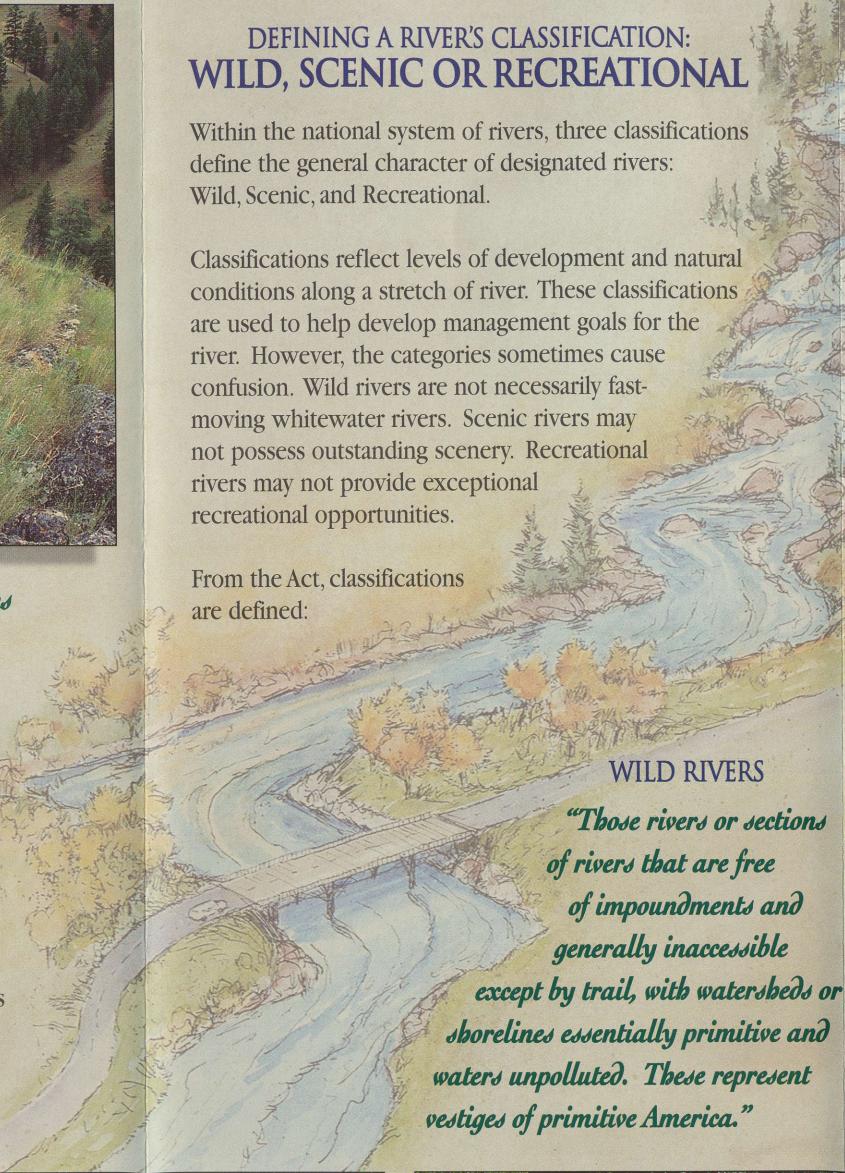
Charles Telford
North Umpqua River, Oregon

DEFINING A RIVER'S CLASSIFICATION: WILD, SCENIC OR RECREATIONAL

Within the national system of rivers, three classifications define the general character of designated rivers: Wild, Scenic, and Recreational.

Classifications reflect levels of development and natural conditions along a stretch of river. These classifications are used to help develop management goals for the river. However, the categories sometimes cause confusion. Wild rivers are not necessarily fast-moving whitewater rivers. Scenic rivers may not possess outstanding scenery. Recreational rivers may not provide exceptional recreational opportunities.

From the Act, classifications are defined:



WILD RIVERS

"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."

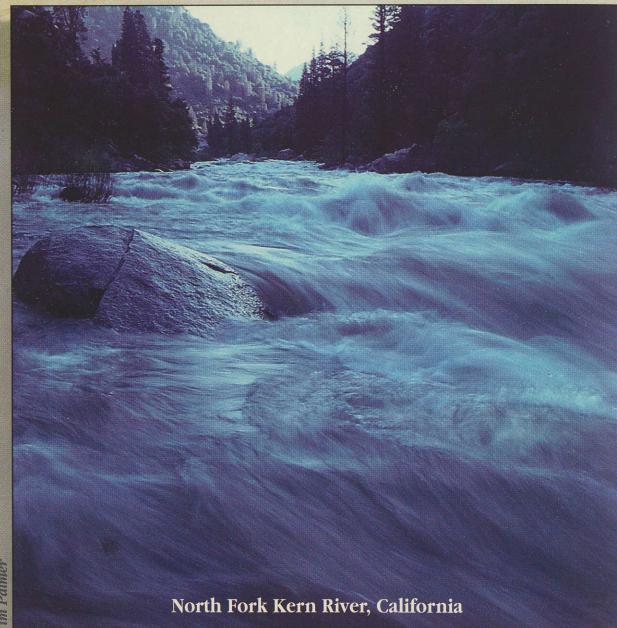


SCENIC RIVERS

"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."

RECREATIONAL RIVERS

"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."



Tim Palmer
North Fork Kern River, California

PROTECTING RIVERS THROUGH SECTION 7

While the Act provides numerous measures to protect and enhance the values of rivers in the National System, none are more significant than the restrictions provided in Section 7. Here, the Act specifically prohibits federally assisted or sponsored water resources projects that would impede a wild and scenic river's free flow, or cause direct and adverse effects on its outstandingly remarkable values.

MANAGING WILD & SCENIC RIVERS TAKES TEAMWORK

"Boundaries don't protect rivers, people do."

Brad Arrowsmith, landowner along the Niobrara National Scenic River, Nebraska

Rivers do not follow neat property lines. They cross public and private lands and define borders. The Snake River forms the boundary between Idaho and Oregon. The Rio Grande separates Mexico from the United States. It takes teamwork to protect a wild and scenic river.

The task of a river manager is to protect and enhance wild and scenic river values without limiting other uses, unless those uses are incompatible with the purposes of the Act. The focus for management is not to prevent development, but to safeguard water quality, free-flowing condition, and natural and cultural values.

Stewardship is a responsibility shared by numerous government agencies and partners. The framers of the Act recognized this; Sections 11 and 12 encourage cooperative management of designated rivers among agencies and the public.

FEDERAL

Where rivers flow through federal lands, the responsible agency takes the stewardship role. Federal managers include:

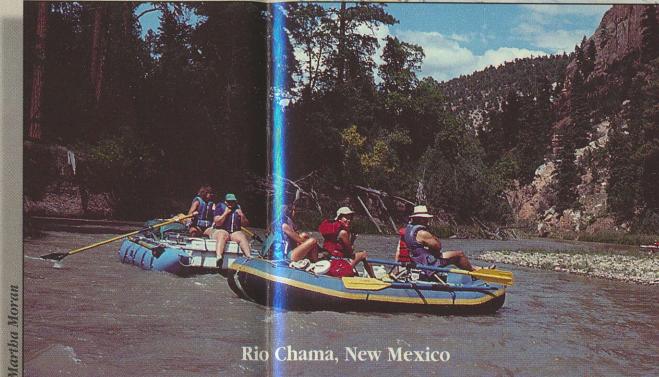
- Bureau of Land Management
- National Park Service
- U.S.D.A. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

STATE

For a state-administered river, designated by the Secretary of the Interior at a Governor's request, a state agency manages the river, sometimes in concert with local governments.

PARTNERSHIP

For some rivers not primarily in federal ownership, stewardship is provided through partnerships among private landowners, conservation organizations, and all levels of government.



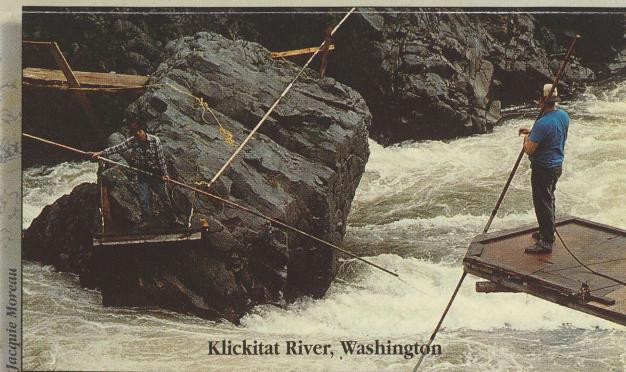
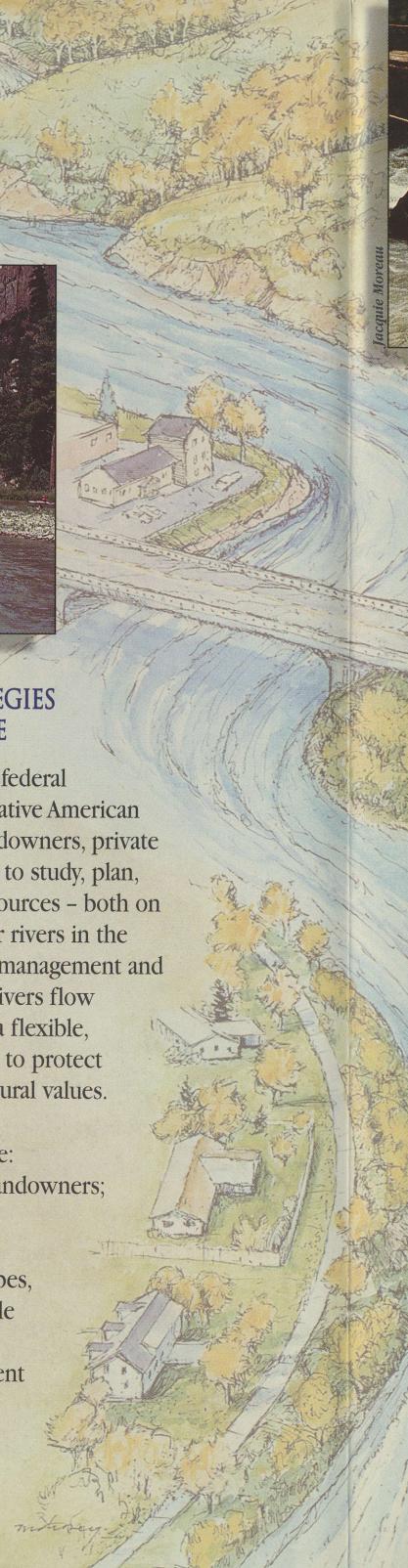
Martha Moran

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR RIVER CARE

The Act encourages state and federal agencies to cooperate with Native American tribes, local governments, landowners, private organizations, and individuals to study, plan, protect, and manage river resources – both on designated rivers and all other rivers in the country. Cooperation guides management and conservation efforts. Where rivers flow through private lands, taking a flexible, collaborative approach serves to protect free flow and natural and cultural values.

Such an approach may include:

- Incentive programs for landowners;
- Local zoning;
- Limiting development in floodplains, on steep slopes, and on other incompatible lands;
- Acquisition of development rights by land trusts;
- Voluntary stewardship agreements by landowners.



Jacquie Moreau

THE FUTURE

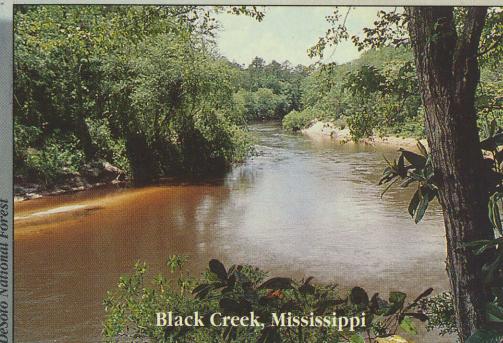
HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

HELP ADD RIVERS TO THE NATIONAL SYSTEM

The National System is still growing. Supporters of river conservation often persuade Congress to authorize a wild and scenic river study, or convince a Governor to ask the Secretary of the Interior to designate a river. Before a river is added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, you can be part of the study process to identify important river values and key management issues.

HELP PROTECT AND MANAGE RIVERS

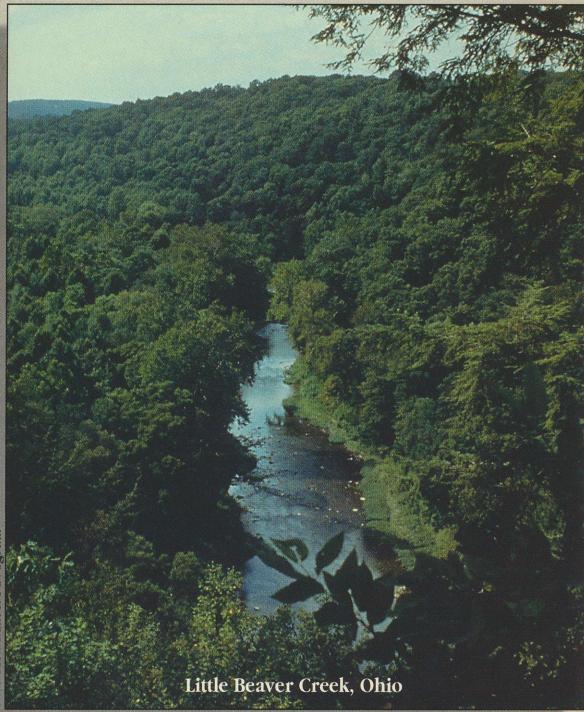
All of us can help chart the course of protection for our nation's irreplaceable waterways. Agencies managing rivers want your ideas, expertise, and help to do the best job possible in protecting wild and scenic river values. To get involved, please contact the agencies listed on the back.



DeSoto National Forest

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS: FREE-FLOWING FOREVER

From the waterwheels of New England's textile factories to the massive hydroelectric dams of the Pacific Northwest, America has been built on the backs of its rivers. But our rivers represent more than that. Hearing the names of our great rivers recalls daydreams half forgotten - dreams of adventure, of discovery, of our roots. Lewis and Clark's Missouri River, the Allagash, Snake, Allegheny, Rio Grande, Rogue, and the Delaware - images of our country - all belong to a family of more than 150 National Wild and Scenic Rivers flowing free forever.



Little Beaver Creek, Ohio

"The river is the center of the land, the place where the waters, and much more, come together. Here is the home of wildlife, the route of explorers, and recreation paradise. . . Only fragments of our inheritance remain unexploited, but these streams are more valuable than ever."

Tim Palmer, *Endangered Rivers and the Conservation Movement*

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit our web site at <http://www.nps.gov/rivers> or contact any of these river administering agencies. For rivers administered by states under Section 2(a)(ii), contact your state's river conservation agency.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Rivers and Special Areas, LS 204
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-9998



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Park Planning and Special Studies
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001



U.S.D.A. FOREST SERVICE
Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness
201 - 14th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20250



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Division of Refuges
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, Virginia 22203

"There is no rushing a river. When you go there, you go at the pace of the water and that pace ties you into a flow that is older than life on this planet. Acceptance of that pace, even for a day, changes us, reminds us of other rhythms beyond the sound of our own heartbeats."

Jeff Rennicke, *River Days: Travels on Western Rivers*



River Management Society

This brochure was developed in partnership with the River Management Society, an organization devoted to the sound management of our nation's rivers (www.river-management.org).

Cover: Owyhee River, Oregon; photo: Larry Olson