



free-flowing
FOREVER

We are a nation rich in rivers.

Charles Kuralt, *On the Road with Charles Kuralt*, 1995

Coursing more than three million miles, America's streams and rivers lend life to landscapes and communities as varied as the waters themselves. While these waterways nourish the people and ecosystems they flow through, only a relatively small number have received the national distinction of "Wild and Scenic River."

Above: St. Croix River, Minnesota. © CHRIS BLACKLOCK

A National System



By the 1950s, many rivers in the United States had been irreversibly altered to accommodate the growing needs of modern civilization. Dams were impeding fish passage. Diversions were depleting flows of life-giving streams. Urbanization had modified channels. Industrial pollution was ruining water quality.

An environmental awakening in the 1960s led to the enactment of a national law to protect some of the most exceptional rivers and streams in the United States. Crafted by leaders who sought to undo decades of damage, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 created an enduring process to protect certain waterways with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values

in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Passage of the Act established the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and granted immediate protection to eight rivers while encouraging growth of the national system through future addition of other rivers and streams.

River supporters today encourage officials to consider additional wild and scenic river designations. Congress can authorize a study or new designation; or a state governor may request the Secretary of the Interior to designate a river. Federal river administering agencies also seek public input through their planning processes.

Above: Boating on the Owyhee River, Oregon.

Caring for Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act strives to balance demands for hydropower, flood control, water supply, and irrigation with the desire to keep certain rivers free-flowing and natural. Existing uses may continue where no conflict with river protection occurs, but special designation protects waters where human activities could affect free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values. Shoreline development, access, and natural conditions determine designated river classifications as *wild*, *scenic*, or *recreational*, which then form the basis for how river corridors are managed in perpetuity.

The Act enables all levels of government to work with landowners, river users, tribal nations, and private organizations to plan, protect, and manage river values. Stewardship strategies include technical assistance, cooperative management, and agreements. The Bureau of Land Management, National



Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manage designated rivers that flow through federal lands and work cooperatively with partner organizations and stakeholders on both federal and non-federal rivers.

Clockwise from top: Andreafsky River salmon monitoring, Alaska; Namekagon River inventory, Wisconsin; Cleanup, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska.



Lasting Benefits



Teamwork by private and public stewards alike protects and enhances river values for the future. Collaborative river protection promotes increased appreciation and grass-roots support for river conservation. Such partnerships help provide communities with the benefits of clean water, health, prosperous economies, recreational opportunities, jobs, and natural and cultural resource conservation for many years to come.

Cooperative river management and stewardship are long-term commitments that contribute both to water quality and to quality of life. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act prohibits new dam construction and water projects implemented with

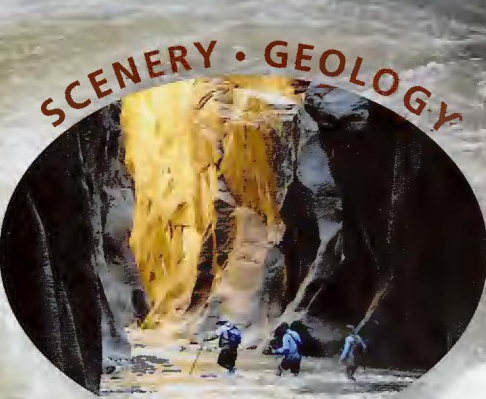
federal funds, permits, or assistance that would negatively affect a river's free flow, water quality, or its outstandingly remarkable values. Fifty years after passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, public participation and awareness remain essential to safeguarding river values and identifying potential additions to the national system.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System now protects nearly 13,000 miles of over 200 rivers in 40 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico—still only slightly more than one-third of one percent of all the nation's rivers. Many more miles of waterways remain eligible for this special designation.

Above: Planting, Snake Rivers Headwaters, Wyoming.



Outstandingly remarkable values make a river worthy of special protection. Each wild and scenic river must have at least one of these or other similar values that are river-related and unique, rare, or exemplary on a regional or national scale.



Inspiration abounds. Designated river corridors may feature highly diverse landscapes, landforms, other visual attractions, and notable geologic features or processes.



River-dependent wildlife and their habitats can be outstandingly remarkable values based on important populations of indigenous wildlife species, habitat or species diversity, and use of aquatic or terrestrial habitat as migration corridors.



A river's outstandingly remarkable fish value may be judged on the relative merits of fish populations, diversity, and habitat. Wild stocks of resident and migratory species are considered.



Wild and scenic river designation preserves important river-related historic and cultural resources including evidence of ancient human activities like petroglyphs, pre-contact dwellings, and other important archeological sites.



Special designation means enjoyment for all. Outstanding river-related recreation can include a wide range of offerings from highly social settings to opportunities for solitude.

RIVER PROTECTION MILESTONES

Pre-contact

1750–1800s

1900–1950s

1960–1980s

1990–2018



For thousands of years, indigenous people gain both physical and spiritual nourishment from rivers—a sustainable coexistence that enables human settlement, exploration, trade, and travel.



Industrial Revolution processes use energy from flowing water. Mechanization advances from waterwheels and steam engines to hydroelectric power from reservoir-fed turbines.



New dams provide hydropower, irrigation, flood control, and water storage to support urban and industrial growth. Depression-era floods and drought propel construction of major multipurpose impoundments like Hoover Dam.



Public opposition builds toward certain dam proposals like Spruce Park Dam on the Flathead River in Montana. Conservationists led by John and Frank Craighead call for a law to protect free-flowing rivers from damage by dams.



Ecological awareness increases with publications like Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" in 1962. Environmental and outdoor recreation movements result in the passage of the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act in 1964. President Lyndon B. Johnson calls for "a wild rivers bill" in 1965.



Senator Frank Church and Representative John Saylor spearhead efforts to pass the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, signed by President Johnson in 1968. Eight "instant" designations are included, with additions by Congress throughout the 1970s. The system grows in the 1980s through state-specific rivers bills, such as for Alaska and Oregon.

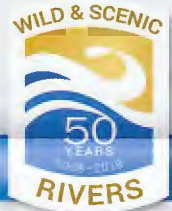


The National Park Service and local jurisdictions join together to protect and enhance Great Egg Harbor River, the first designated wild and scenic "partnership" river. The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council forms in 1995 to improve coordination among the four federal agencies administering the Act.



Work to remove and decommission dams increases in the new millennium, restoring flows, fish populations, and natural conditions. By 2017 wild and scenic designations protect 208 rivers. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System flourishes as it celebrates its fiftieth anniversary on October 2, 2018.

To us, water is sacred. —Jamie Fullmer, Tribal Chairman, Yavapai-Apache Nation, 2005



Clackamas
Collawash
Crooked
Eagle Creek
East Fork Hood
Elkhorn Creek
Fifteenmile Creek
Fish Creek
Middle Fork Hood
Mckenzie
Metallus
North Fork Crooked
Quartzville Creek
Roaring
Salmon
Sandy
South Fork Clackamas
South Fork Roaring
White
Whychus Creek
Zigzag

