

Wilderness Characteristics and Wild and Scenic Rivers

Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan



Wilderness Characteristics



What are wilderness characteristics?

- Apparent naturalness; and,
- Outstanding opportunities for solitude; or,
- Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Management of lands with wilderness characteristics

OBJECTIVE: Manage to maintain naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation, and supplemental values so that these lands retain their wilderness characteristics for the life of the RMP.

Consistent with allocation decisions in the RMP, allow other multiple-uses on lands where wilderness characteristics would be maintained, while applying management restrictions to avoid or minimize impacts to wilderness characteristics and meet the objective retaining wilderness characteristics over the life of the RMP.

For all action alternatives, the following activities, uses, and decisions could occur in areas identified for maintenance of wilderness characteristics:

- Snowmobile travel with adequate snow cover
- Motorboat and airplane use
- Temporary structures and equipment placement related to hunting, fishing, and trapping
- Public use cabins and other small facilities
- Summer OHV use on designated or existing trails
- Cross-country summer OHV use in the Upper Black River Subunit
- Locatable mineral location and entry

Comparison of Alternatives – Wilderness characteristics

Acres and percent of the subunit where wilderness characteristics would be actively maintained in each subunit and Alternative.

Subunit	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Fortymile	none	994,000 acres (49%)	487,000 acres (24%)	54,000 acres (3%)
Steese	none	1,199,000 acres (94%)	647,000 acres (51%)	483,000 acres (38%)
Upper Black River	none	2,357,000 acres (100%)	621,000 acres (26%)	Wilderness characteristics not explicitly maintained
White Mountains	none	509,000 acres (50%)	312,000 acres (31%)	205,000 acres (20%)
Total	none	5,059,000 acres (76%)	2,067,000 acres (31%)	742,000 acres (11%)

How were these areas chosen?

- Areas closed to certain uses to protect other values. For example, in the Fortymile Subunit, we recommend closing lands to mineral entry (staking of new mining claims) in order to protect caribou calving.
- Areas where we are managing to provide a primitive or semi-primitive recreation experience.

Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR)

Current Status Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR)

- There are three designated wild and scenic rivers in the planning area. These three rivers were designated by the Alaska National Lands Interest Conservation Act (ANILCA).
 - Birch Creek WSR
 - Beaver Creek WSR
 - Fortymile WSR

Additional Eligible Rivers

The RMP considers if there are other rivers in the planning area that might be eligible for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

To be considered eligible rivers must:

- Be free-flowing
- Have at least one outstandingly remarkable value

Five additional rivers in the planning area were found to be eligible. These five rivers are considered suitable for designation under Alternative B. Only Congress can designate wild and scenic rivers. The BLM can only recommend rivers for designation.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) may include scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. The ORVs are evaluated in the context of regional and/or national significance, and must be river-related.

ORVs help guide management of the rivers. When Birch Creek, Beaver Creek, and the Fortymile WSR were designated by ANILCA. ORVs were not identified. Therefore, the ORVs for these rivers are being identified in the Draft RMP.

Comparison of Alternatives – Wild and Scenic Rivers

Subunit	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Fortymile	None	Dome Creek (five miles) recommended suitable for classification as "recreational."	No rivers recommended suitable	
		Gold Run (four miles) recommended suitable for classification as "wild."	No rivers recommended suitable	
		Identify Outstandingly Remarkable Values for the Fortymile WSR as scenic, recreation, geologic, historic, and wildlife. Specific ORVs are identified by river segment in Appendix E.		
Steese	None	Big Windy Creek (14 miles) recommended suitable for classification as "wild."	No rivers recommended suitable	
		Identify Outstandingly Remarkable Values for Birch Creek WSR as scenic, recreation, and fisheries.		
Upper Black River	None	Salmon Fork (52 miles) recommended suitable for classification as "wild."	No rivers recommended suitable	
White Mountains	None	Fossil Creek recommended suitable for classification as "scenic" (23 miles)	No rivers recommended suitable	
		Identify Outstandingly Remarkable Values for Beaver Creek WSR as scenic, recreation, geologic, fisheries and wildlife.		

Questions to Consider

Are there any additional rivers in the planning area that should be considered for designation?

Are there other outstandingly remarkable values for the identified rivers?