



WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

Submit information and comments by September 30, 2010.

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Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area
Bureau of Land Management
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, CO 81506

By FAX to:
970-244-3083
Attention: Wild and Scenic Rivers

By E-mail to:
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What is the Wild and Scenic River Study Process?

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires the BLM to assess river segments under its management as part of its resource management planning process. The study and designation of rivers consists of a multi-step process: *eligibility* → *suitability* → *congressional action*. Only Congress or (under certain circumstances) the Secretary of the Interior may designate a river for inclusion in the WSR system. The Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area currently does not manage any WSR-designated segments.

WHEN IS A STREAM A RIVER?

In the WSR Act, a *river* refers to a flowing body of water or estuary or a section, portion, or tributary thereof, including rivers, streams, creeks, runs, kills, rills, and small lakes.

What Makes a Segment Eligible for WSR Consideration?

The first step in the WSR study process is to determine which river segments meet eligibility criteria. To be eligible, a river segment must be *free-flowing* and possess one or more *outstandingly remarkable values* (ORV). ORVs may be scenic, recreational, geological, fish or wildlife related, historic, cultural, botanical, hydrological, or paleontological. ORVs must be of a quality or scarcity that makes them unique, rare, or exemplary within the region. In addition, rivers must have sufficient water quality to support those values.

What are the Eligibility Results for the D-E National Conservation Area?

Since the National Conservation Area includes BLM-administered public lands within the Uncompahgre and Grand Junction Field Offices, eligibility for streams in the D-E National Conservation Area was determined through the eligibility reports for each field office's planning process. The findings of the two eligibility reports determined 11 segments on eight streams to be free-flowing and possessed one or more ORVs and met the WSR eligibility requirements. View both eligibility reports online:

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ufo/wild_and_scenic_river.html

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp/Wild_Scenic_River.html

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What is meant by “free-flowing”?

Free-flowing means that there are no dams or diversions along a river segment that impound a significant amount of water for extended periods. It is not necessary for a river to have a completely natural flow regime to be considered free-flowing. For example, Congress has designated WSR segments immediately below major water storage projects.

What’s next?

The next step will be to combine the findings of the Uncompahgre and Grand Junction Field Office Final Eligibility report and create a stand-alone eligibility report for the D-E National Conservation Area. The final report will identify and address any inconsistencies between the two field office reports as they apply to the National Conservation Area.

How does the BLM manage eligible segments?

BLM policy is to protect ORVs identified in an eligibility study until a decision on suitability can be made. The BLM must protect the free-flowing character, preliminary classification, and ORVs of eligible segments. Future management actions will comply with these interim protective measures until a decision on suitability is made.

Then What?

The BLM will then evaluate *suitability*. This phase determines which of the eligible segments the BLM will recommend to Congress for inclusion in the National WSR System. This is done as part of the planning process. During the suitability phase the BLM will ask for stakeholder help to analyze various management prescriptions, and positive and negative impacts of various designations for each segment. Together we will work to identify how stream-related values can best be protected and enhanced, and consider potential impacts to other values such as water supply. As part of the process, BLM will consider alternatives to WSR designation for managing water-related values.

The suitability phase addresses several management considerations, including:

- Should the river’s flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected, or are one or more other uses important enough to warrant doing otherwise?
- Is protection of identified ORVs within management control? River segments with adjacent private lands may not be appropriate for WSR designation.
- Will historical or existing rights be adversely affected?
- Will the river’s free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected through designation? Is it the best method for protecting the river corridor? The benefits and impacts of WSR designation must be evaluated, and alternative protection methods considered.
- Is there a demonstrated commitment to protect the river by any non-federal entities that may be partially responsible for implementing protective management?
- How will stakeholder and public involvement be incorporated into the suitability determination?