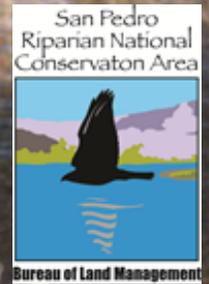


San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area RMP Newsletter

Tracking the development of a collaborative plan for one of the Southwest's most cherished rivers



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Bureau of Land Management,
Tucson Field Office



Where are we now?

Developing a sound plan requires sound information. The BLM planning team is pleased to announce the release of two reports specific to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area:

- **Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Inventory**
- **Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report**

These documents are part of the foundation used to develop a Resource Management Plan. While there is not a public comment period associated with these inventories, they are important pieces of information as the planning process moves ahead.

In step with the completion of these inventories, the BLM is working to finalize the **Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)** which provides a baseline of information about conditions on the SPRNCA. All of these documents will inform the management alternatives contained in the upcoming **Draft RMP/Draft Environmental Impact Statement, scheduled for release in late 2016.**



The Bureau of Land Management's Gila District, Tucson Field Office is currently preparing a Resource Management Plan for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) in southeastern Arizona that will guide the management of the area for the next 15 to 20 years. Located in Cochise County, the SPRNCA protects more than 40 miles of the upper San Pedro River as it flows north from the U.S. - Mexico border near Palominas, to St. David near Benson. It is a key component of the BLM's National Conservation Lands, a system of special places covering 30 million acres nationwide.

Questions about the San Pedro River plan? Contact Project Lead David McIntyre dmcintyre@blm.gov or (520) 258-7200

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics? Can you translate that for me?

The BLM is required by law—the Federal Land Policy Management Act to be specific—to maintain an inventory of all public lands and their resources and other values. Wilderness characteristics are one of those resources.

An inventory for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics is most often completed during the development of an RMP. During the inventory, the BLM must document its findings and release them the public. We are also required to consider inventories completed by outside organizations or citizens. One citizen inventory was received, which is referenced in the full report.

In order for an area to qualify as lands with wilderness characteristics, the area must:

- * **SIZE:** be over 5,000 acres of roadless, contiguous BLM-managed lands. Areas smaller than 5,000 acres may qualify if it is practical to manage them for their wilderness characteristics.
- * **NATURALNESS:** appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature and any work of human beings in the area must be substantially unnoticeable. Minor human impacts such as a water trough or fences may often be considered substantially unnoticeable.
- * **OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR PRIMITIVE, UNCONFINED RECREATION:** offer a visitor the chance to avoid evidence of other people or provide for outstanding opportunities for primitive and an unconfined type of recreation activity like hiking, fishing, etc. Solitude or outstanding primitive recreation opportunities do not have to be available in all portions of the area.



In total, the BLM found that 23,828 acres within the SPRNCA (and 826 adjacent acres of public land) meet these criteria and possess Wilderness Characteristics

What happens next?

After an area is found to possess wilderness characteristics, the BLM must make a decision as to whether the area will be managed for those characteristics or for other priority multiple uses. The final RMP is where this decision is made—after publication of the draft and proposed RMP and associated Environmental Impact Statement, steps that will include opportunities for public input.

For more information on BLM wilderness characteristics policy, head to: <http://www.wilderness.net/BLM>

Wild and Scenic Rivers Study

In 1968, Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in order to “...to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” In that Act, agencies like the BLM are instructed to look closely at other river segments and determine if they would be a good fit for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The first step in this process is to determine whether rivers are “eligible” for the system. An eligible river:

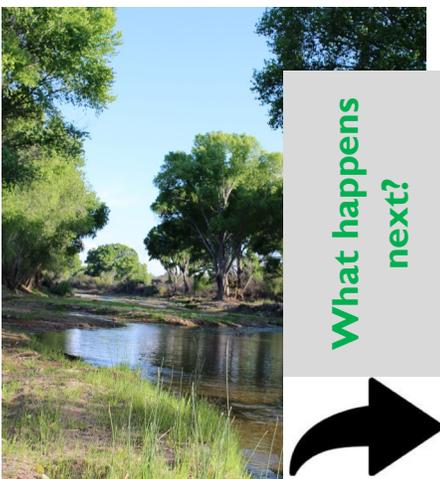
- * **is FREE-FLOWING**
- * **posses one or more OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES**, a river-related value that is unique, rare or exemplary or a regional or national scale



In 1996, the BLM found the main stem San Pedro River to be “eligible” and “suitable” for designation by Congress under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Changes in natural resource condition, level of access and land uses led to a need to re-evaluate these findings, consistent with BLM policy. The **San Pedro River Wild and Scenic Study Area Eligibility Report** looks at available information to determine whether the river is still “eligible”.

Additionally, the report evaluates 4 miles of the lower Babocamari River—a perennial tributary of the San Pedro— for the first time.

If any river is found “eligible” for inclusion, the next step is to determine whether the river is “suitable” for inclusion. This step—which is included in the RMP - takes many other factors into consideration such as other resource uses and existing protections.



While “eligible” is just an inventory finding—meaning the river is free flowing and has outstandingly remarkable values—a finding of “suitable” constitutes a recommendation from the BLM that the river be designated and included in the national system.

The BLM found the **San Pedro River and the Babocamari River eligible** for inclusion National Wild and Scenic River System.

Next, the rivers will be evaluated for their Wild and Scenic River suitability in the Resource Management Plan and EIS. The BLM may or may not find the river “suitable” for inclusion into the national system.