

*Potential  
Wild & Scenic Rivers  
in California*



*The 2001 Inventory*

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## About Friends of the River

FRIENDS OF THE RIVER was founded in 1973 during the struggle to save the Stanislaus River from New Melones Dam. Following that effort, the organization grew to become California's statewide river conservation group. Today, Friends of the River protects and restores California's rivers, streams, and their watersheds through public education, grassroots organizing, and public policy advocacy. It specializes in flood management, hydropower reform, water policy, and wild and scenic river protection issues.

## About the Author

STEVEN L. EVANS is conservation director for Friends of the River. He has more than two decades of experience with a wide variety of public lands and resource issues, including wilderness protection and river conservation issues. He is a recognized expert on wild and scenic rivers, and on federal land and resource management and planning processes. He currently serves as chair of the steering committee for the California Wild Heritage Campaign, which is a coalition of more than 150 national, regional and local conservation organizations working to protect the state's last wild places.

## Acknowledgments

California Wild Heritage Campaign  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund  
Educational Foundation of American  
Compton Foundation  
Patagonia  
Conservation Alliance

## Cover

Canoeing the middle fork of the American River, which was found eligible for national Wild and Scenic River status by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in 1993.



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915 20th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 442-3155  
[www.friendsoftheriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheriver.org)

*September 2001*

# Contents

Executive Summary .....	5
I. Introduction .....	6
The Need for River Conservation.....	6
The Need for a Wild Rivers Inventory.....	7
Developing the Inventory .....	8
Resources Protected by Wild & Scenic River Designation .....	9
II. River Gems - Examples of outstanding rivers that deserve protection .....	10
III. The 2001 Wild & Scenic River Inventory .....	12
IV. Endnotes & References. ....	17
V. Appendix - A <i>Frequently Asked Questions.</i> ....	18
VI. Appendix - B <i>Chronology of Wild Rivers.</i> .....	20

*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.*

*The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.*

- The National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act of 1968

*“The passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was a watershed moment, helping to turn the tide toward developing a recognition that protection of our waterways is deeply bound up not only with protection of our wildlife and water quality, but with our connection to our natural landscape and heritage.”*

- U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt,  
commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the  
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act  
October 2, 1998



Tim Palmer

*California's exquisite Tuolumne River, designated Wild and Scenic in 1984.*

## *Executive Summary*

It has been said that rivers are the lifeblood of our nation, providing the main arteries of social, economic and natural life. The federal Wild & Scenic Rivers Act represents a recognition of those important values. It is our country's strongest statutory tool for protecting free-flowing rivers from dams, diversions, unwise development and resource extraction.

But the Wild and Scenic Rivers system in California remains incomplete. Key rivers in the state are still at risk. Of the more than 194,000 miles of rivers, streams and creeks in California,<sup>1</sup> less than two percent are protected by federal designation. Entire regions of the state lack representation, including the Modoc Plateau and Great Basin Desert of northeast California, the scenic eastern Sierra, the vast Mojave Desert, and the valleys, mountains, and foothills of Southern California.

Despite having already harnessed nearly every river and creek in the state behind approximately 1,400 dams<sup>2</sup>, the growing population is often used as a reason why new water development projects must be built. The most recent California Water Plan, for example, has identified nearly 60 possible

dam projects.<sup>3</sup> And the current energy crisis has within the past year prompted a 20-fold increase in the number of proposals for new hydroelectric facilities over the previous three years.<sup>4</sup> If these projects were built, they could significantly harm rivers by blocking fish passage and diverting or altering natural river flows.

Friends of the River's inventory of potential Wild & Scenic Rivers in California is the culmination of 15 years of work. The primary source of this first-ever, comprehensive inventory comes from studies conducted by federal agencies such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Local conservation organizations and individuals helped add to the list by identifying rivers and streams that either have been overlooked or not yet studied by land managers.

This inventory consists of 326 river and streams segments totaling 3,992 miles. It represents what remains of the state's once vast heritage of free-flowing rivers and clean water. These waterways — along with potential wild lands and river comprise an outstanding natural legacy that Congress should consider for permanent protection.

## Introduction

Rivers are the arteries of our nation, providing the lifeblood for social, economic and natural life. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 represents a critical turning point in the recognition and protection of those values. This federal policy of preserving important rivers, or portions of rivers, is in sharp contrast to the historic use and abuse of waterways that had for so long dominated our sense of progress and prosperity. The fact streams were being dammed, dredged, diked, diverted, and thus damaged, finally led Congress to specifically mandate river protection as a way to maintain the country's natural and cultural heritage.

Today, the Wild and Scenic Rivers System is one of the nation's primary river conservation tools. Designated rivers and streams are protected from the construction of new dams and major water diversions. Public lands along these waterways are managed to provide outdoor recreation and protect a river's free-flowing character and outstanding natural resource values.



*Horse packing in the southern Sierra.*



Tim Palmer

*Yosemite's wild and scenic Merced River.*

Not only does the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act help protect water quality, endangered species and outdoor enjoyment, in a sense it also preserves aspects of our nation's history, literature, and origins. Consider the Tuolumne and Merced rivers found in the writings of naturalist John Muir. Remember the Delaware River of the American Revolution. Don't forget the Missouri River in Lewis and Clark's opening of the American West, or the North Umpqua of writer Zane Gray's flyfishing affections. These are the bloodlines of a nation, and there are more to consider and protect.

### **THE NEED FOR RIVER CONSERVATION**

Protecting rivers and streams in their free-flowing state is important for many reasons. Rivers flowing

freely provide better water quality than developed rivers. Their ecosystems are healthier, and they generally support more fish, wildlife, and plant species that are sensitive to development. Free-flowing rivers offer important outdoor recreation opportunities for hikers, anglers, whitewater boaters, equestrians, and mountain bike riders. Simply stated, water attracts people. Cleaner water, healthier ecosystems, and outdoor recreation contribute to local and regional economic enhancement. They enhance tourism and contribute to a positive quality of life that attracts growth and economic development.

Here in California, we are surrounded by what is likely the most developed plumbing system in the world. Within the state are more than 1,400 dams, along with several thousand miles of levees, channels and canals that move water from where it falls to where it is desired. This vast hydrologic system certainly provides significant benefits in terms of water supply, power generation, flood control, and reservoir-based recreation. But it also has environmentally damaging consequences.

Those dams have played a major role in the decline and extinction of native fish species. Approximately 67 percent of the California's native fish species are either extinct, in decline, or are of concern to biologists<sup>5</sup> - more than any other state. Dams are so prevalent in California that some experts consider the few remaining free-flowing rivers to be endangered ecosystems.

Dams harm aquatic ecosystems and degrade water quality by altering flows, modifying water temperatures, drowning habitat, and blocking the natural movement of species, nutrients, and sediment. The presence of an upstream dam has often encouraged development downstream, frequently with the construction of homes and

buildings in areas that historically flooded. The dams may also discourage a more efficient use of water and energy resources by instead creating a new but perhaps unneeded supply of water and power.

The adverse impacts of dams on commercial and sport fisheries in California also has been well documented. The Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations has estimated losses during the past 50 years of nearly three-quarters of the vessels in the California fishing industry and some 50,000 salmon-related jobs because of the decline in fish populations.

Streamside development also poses a threat to free-flowing rivers. Extensive road construction, logging, and soil disturbance in watersheds can reduce water quality, and adversely impact fish populations, recreational use, and scenic quality.<sup>4</sup> To the extent that these activities may occur on federally managed public lands, the national Wild & Scenic Rivers Act requires that they be regulated by the appropriate agencies to ensure the protection of the river's natural character and outstanding values.

#### *THE NEED FOR A WILD RIVERS INVENTORY*

There are approximately 16 federally designated Wild & Scenic rivers in California. Added together, they total more than 1,900 miles. While many of these streams would have been further damaged if protection had not been provided, the wild rivers system in the state is not complete.

Only about one percent of the state's 194,000 river miles are permanently protected from dams, diversions, resource extraction, and imprudent development. While designated rivers in the state are located in important areas, entire regions of the state lack representation, including the Modoc Plateau and Great Basin Desert of northeast California, the scenic eastern Sierra, the vast Mojave Desert, and the valleys, mountains, and foothills of Southern California.

Although the identification, study, and recommendation of rivers and streams is an ongoing process, it is critical that the potential for additional river protection be assessed. Some officials and opinion leaders are using California's growing population to increase the political pressure for more dam construction. For instance, the state's 1998 water plan has identified 57 new dam projects throughout the state. The CalFed Bay-Delta Restoration Program is studying at least six new dams or dam enlargements in the Central Valley alone. And California's recent energy crisis has



Steve Evans

*Amargosa River in the Mojave Desert*



*Canoeing on the Sacramento River*

prompted 20 times the number of proposals for new hydroelectric dams than were seen during the previous three years (48 applications in the past year versus six between September 1997 and September 2000). Any of these facilities could affect free-flowing rivers.



*Ukonom Creek, a tributary to the Klamath River and eligible for national protection.*

### *DEVELOPING THE INVENTORY*

Federal land management agencies such as the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service are required by law to identify, study, and recommend rivers for addition to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. For a river to be considered it must be free-flowing and possess one or more outstanding and remarkable features — unique biological characteristics, spectacular waterfalls, cultural sites, outstanding whitewater recreation, and so forth.

The process requires collaboration with local river groups and activists knowledgeable about area watersheds. It also requires conservationists to continually talk with land managers and encourage them to do comprehensive assessments of all potential rivers and streams located on federal lands.

Since the mid 1980s, Friends of the River has done just that; working closely with federal agencies, local river conservation organizations, and individual activists to identify, study, and recommend potential rivers and streams throughout California. Those efforts have paid off, with agencies identifying 289 river and stream segments — totaling nearly 3,115 miles — eligible for addition to the national system.

Nearly 56 rivers and creeks, totaling more than 768 miles, have had formal suitability studies completed and Wild & Scenic recommendations made to Congress. And although agencies have yet to include them in their reports, another 56 rivers and streams, totaling 529 miles, have been identified as potentially eligible for designation by conservation groups and local experts.

These rivers and streams represent an outstanding natural legacy — that should be considered by Congress for Wild & Scenic Rivers designation.

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Tom Heseldez

*Flyfishing on the McCloud, an eligible wild & scenic river in northern California*

## *Resources Protected by Wild & Scenic River Designation*

The 2001 Inventory is not just about wild rivers. There are a number of other important natural resource values to be found and preserved by Wild and Scenic designation.\*

**Endangered Fish** - 67 river and stream segments totaling 1,320 miles that provide critical habitat for sensitive, threatened, or endangered steelhead, chinook salmon, and coho salmon.



C.S. Watson, Jr./Norm

*Steelhead trout*

**Sensitive Ecosystems** - 23 river and stream segments totaling 350 miles that provide critical habitat for several sensitive, threatened, or endangered resident fish species, including the Little Kern golden trout, Lahontan and Piute cutthroat trout, unarmored three-spined stickleback, Santa Ana sucker, arroyo chub, speckled dace, Amargosa pupfish, Owens pupfish, and tui chub.

Another 135 river and stream segments totaling 1,758 miles that provide critical wetland, meadow, and old growth forest habitat for a variety of sensitive, threatened, or endangered amphibian and land-based species, including the mountain yellow-legged frog, red-legged frog, arroyo toad, Yosemite toad, Amargosa vole, southwestern willow flycatcher, California spotted owl, and Pacific fisher.

**Wild Trout Streams** - 39 river and stream segments totaling 602 miles that provide habitat for wild or trophy trout fisheries prized by anglers, including 15 designated State Wild Trout Streams.

**Whitewater Boating** - 56 river and stream segments totaling 1,514 miles that provide outstanding opportunities for whitewater recreation, including rafting, kayaking, and commercial outfitting, plus

hiking and picnicking.

**Scenic Values** - 156 river and stream segments totaling 2,223 miles that provide outstanding scenery for the public to enjoy undeveloped beauty and relaxation.

In total, this inventory represents what remains of California's once vast heritage of free-flowing rivers and clean water. The time is ripe to determine how much of this legacy will be preserved for future generations.

\* The number of segments and miles identified in these examples add up to more than the total amount in the 2001 Inventory because of overlapping fish, wildlife, ecological, recreation, and scenic values.

## River Gems – *Some examples of the outstanding waterways in the inventory*



Steve Evans

*Smoke Creek in the high desert along the California Nevada border.*

### **Smoke Creek (Northeast California - Great Basin Desert)**

Smoke Creek flows from California into Nevada through the Great Basin Desert, approximately 20 miles northeast of Susanville. A rare year-round stream in the desert, Smoke Creek offers spectacular scenery and rugged wilderness opportunities. It is one of the few perennial streams in northeastern California that supports four native fish species. Springs feeding the stream support a diversity of unique organisms. Native American cultural values are extensive along the creek. Flowing through public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the agency has never studied the creek for potential Wild & Scenic status. Area residents have recommended 12 miles of the creek for Wild & Scenic status.

### **Upper South Fork Trinity River (Northwest California - Coast Range)**

Approximately 23 miles of the lower South Fork Trinity River were added to the National System in 1981. But the upper 26 miles remain unprotected. In recognition of the river's outstanding steelhead fishery and scenery, the Forest Service recommended in 1995 that Congress add the upper river to the system. Local conservationists recently proposed designation of the east fork of the South Fork in order to better protect the river's fishery. The South Fork National Recreation Trail provides access for hikers and anglers.



Steve Evans

*A scenic view of the Sacramento River*

### **Sacramento River (Central Valley)**

The Sacramento River upstream of Red Bluff represents one of the few opportunities to protect a major river in California's vast Central Valley. Here, the river has cut through lava, creating a scenic rim-rock canyon with extensive riparian habitat. This 25-mile-long river segment is a popular destination for anglers, as well as rafters, canoeists, and hikers, and

provides habitat for several runs of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead. Wildlife and Native American cultural values are also outstanding. Determined eligible for Wild & Scenic status by the BLM in 1992, the river is also recommended for designation by many local residents.



Mark Leder Adams—RapidShooters

*Springtime along the north fork of the American River*

**American River - north and middle forks (Western Sierra)**

Best known as ground zero for the ongoing political battle over the infamous Auburn dam, the north and middle forks of the American River are also among the most popular recreational rivers in the state. More than 50 miles of these rare, free-flowing rivers are in the Sierra foothills, which provide hiking, rafting, camping, mountain bike riding, and equestrian opportunities for more than a half-million people annually. The canyons contain Gold Rush era historic sites, as well as provide high quality habitat for several sensitive, threatened, and

endangered species. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation found the river eligible in 1993, working in collaboration with several other federal and state agencies. Designation would preclude the controversial Auburn dam once and for all.

**Upper Owens River (Eastern Sierra)**

The upper Owens River is one of the premier wild trout streams of the eastern Sierra Nevada. Its upper tributaries, Glass and Deadman creeks, provide rare old growth forest and meadow habitat that support a number of threatened and endangered species, including the Yosemite toad. The nine-mile-long river offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including angling, hiking, and camping in a diverse and scenic setting. The Forest Service determined the river to be eligible in 1993. Threats of potential downhill ski development in its upper watershed, coupled with a proposal to pump groundwater that could dry up its source springs, has led local residents to propose Wild & Scenic designation.



Andy Sifers

*Upper Owens River in the eastern Sierra*

**Arroyo Seco River (Central Coast)**

Not to be confused with a river in Pasadena of the same name, this major tributary of central California's Salinas River, flows from the Ventana Wilderness in the Coast Range. The Arroyo Seco River is perhaps the best remaining habitat in the Salinas watershed for the threatened Central Coast steelhead. The scenic river canyon also provides several trailheads into the popular Ventana Wilderness, and is a favorite summer swimming destination for Salinas Valley residents. In response to an appeal of the 1993 Los Padres National Forest plan by Friends of the River and other conservation



*Arroyo Seco River in the California coast range*

groups, the Forest Service agreed to study the Arroyo Seco and 15 other streams for possible Wild & Scenic designation. The agency has determined 18 miles of the river to be eligible but has not completed the necessary suitability study to make a recommendation to Congress.

National Park. Although flowing below ground for much of its length, a 26-mile-segment of the river near the small towns of Shoshone and Tecopa flows above ground, supporting extensive wetland and riparian habitat for several threatened and endangered species, including a rare mammal and a rare bird, the Amargosa vole and the least Bell's vireo. The scenic Amargosa River canyon also has extensive Native American cultural values and several historic sites, including the former route of the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad, now a popular hiking trail. The river is one of the few opportunities to expand the ecological representation in the Wild & Scenic System by including a rare desert waterway, a fact recognized by the Bureau of Land Management when it found the stream to be eligible in 2001.

### **Upper San Diego River (Southern California)**

Just a short distance from the San Diego metropolitan area, the upper San Diego River is one of the most remote and undeveloped river canyons in Southern California. No roads and few trails provide direct access to the rugged and scenic canyon. Its chaparral-covered walls are broken by rocky cliffs that form spectacular spring waterfalls, as the river cascades its way ten miles downstream. Leaving this canyon undeveloped would help protect local water quality for the San Diego area. Rivers and streams in this region were never studied by the Forest Service for Wild and Scenic consideration. But area residents have nominated it for its outstanding recreation, scenic, and watershed values.



Steve Enns

*Amargosa River near Death Valley*

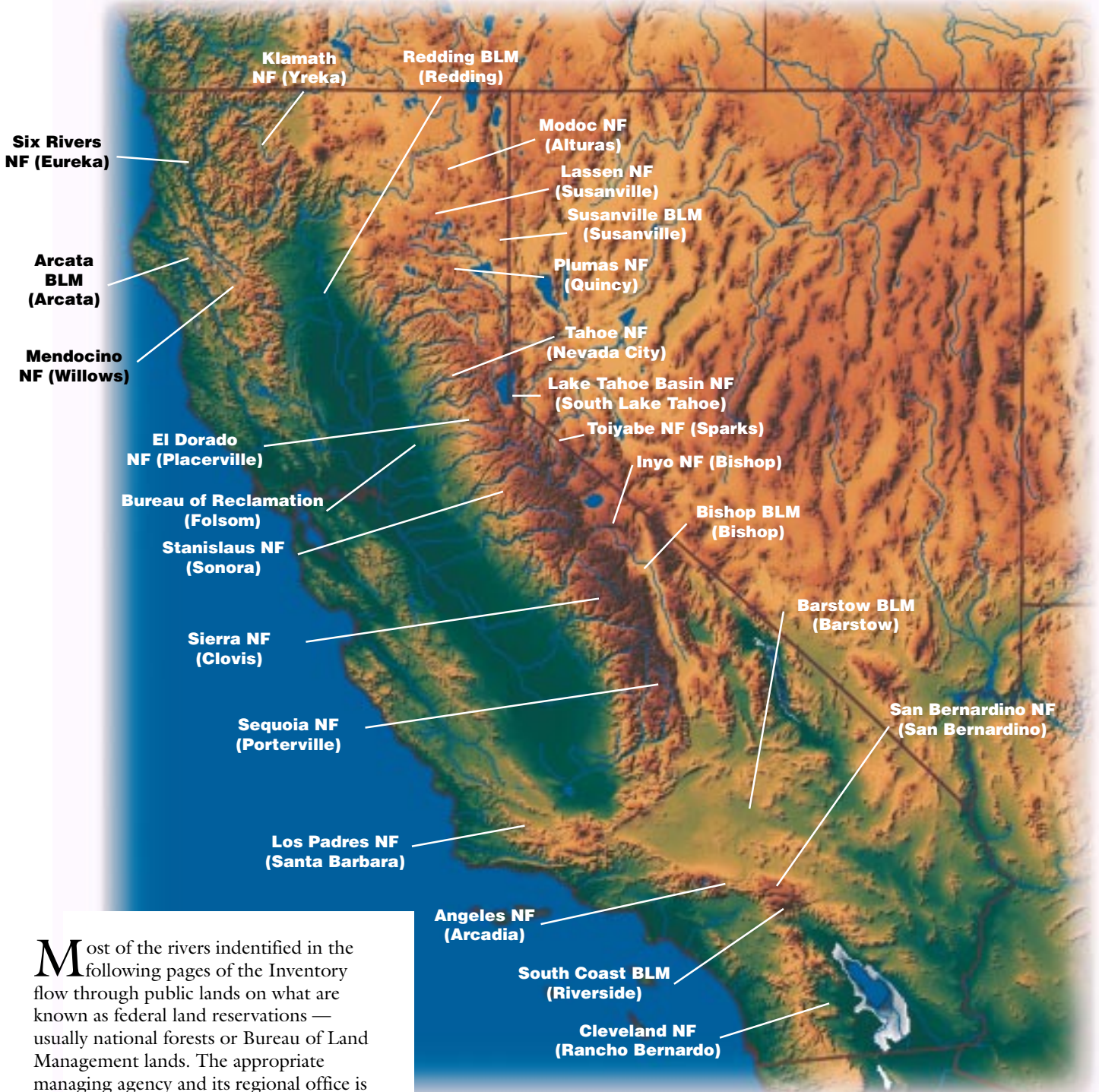
### **Amargosa River (Mojave Desert)**

The Amargosa River is a unique free-flowing river in the Mojave Desert just south of Death Valley



# The 2001 Wild Rivers Inventory

## *Public land management agency locations*



Most of the rivers identified in the following pages of the Inventory flow through public lands on what are known as federal land reservations — usually national forests or Bureau of Land Management lands. The appropriate managing agency and its regional office is listed in the AGENCY column. “NF” means national forest (although NF in the RIVERS column means north fork; likewise MF means middle fork and SF means south fork). “BLM” means U.S. Bureau of Land Management. “BOR” means U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. “NPS” means National Park Service. Rivers listed under the NPS are not necessarily located in national parks. These rivers were included in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, which was compiled by the Park Service.

# 2001 Inventory

RIVERS	AGENCY	MILES			
EF San Gabriel River	Angeles NF	17	George Creek	Bishop BLM	3.75
Big Tujunga Creek	Angeles NF	21	Mill Creek	Bishop BLM	1.35
Little Rock Creek	Angeles NF	13	Fish Slough	Bishop BLM	2
WF San Gabriel River	Angeles NF	9	Independence Creek	Bishop BLM	2.5
NF San Gabriel River	Angeles NF	9	NF American River	BOR-Folsom	16
White Rock Creek	Arcata BLM	6	MF American River	BOR-Folsom	23
Tomki Cree k	Arcata BLM	10.3	NF American River	BOR-Folsom	5
SF Elk River	Arcata BLM	7	Cedar Creek	Cleveland NF	8
Woodman Creek	Arcata BLM	5	Pine Valley Creek	Cleveland NF	25
Rattlesnake Creek	Arcata BLM	1.1	SF San Luis Rey River	Cleveland NF	6
Casoose Creek	Arcata BLM	4	San Diego River	Cleveland NF	12
Tenmile Creek	Arcata BLM	3.6	Noble Canyon	Cleveland NF	4
Shell Rock Creek	Arcata BLM	5.5	Cottonwood Creek	Cleveland NF	5
Honeydew Creek (all forks)	Arcata BLM	14	San Mateo Creek	Cleveland NF	27
Lacks Creek	Arcata BLM	4	Lake of the Woods Creek	Cleveland NF	3
Bridge Creek	Arcata BLM	1.7	Silver Fork American River	Eldorado NF	13
SF Bear Creek	Arcata BLM	12	Caples Creek	Eldorado NF	10
Mad River	Arcata BLM	3.8	NF Cosumnes River	Eldorado NF	24
Jewett Creek	Arcata BLM	2.4	MF Cosumnes River	Eldorado NF	22
Cedar Creek	Arcata BLM	11.5	Rubicon River	Eldorado NF	29
Mattole River	Arcata BLM	0.75	Upper Rubicon River	Eldorado NF	9
Coleman Creek	Arcata BLM	4.3	Pyramid Creek	Eldorado NF	2
Charleton Creek	Arcata BLM	3	SF American River	Eldorado NF	30
Little SF Elk River	Arcata BLM	5	Beaver Creek	Eldorado NF	3
Salmon Creek	Arcata BLM	5	Cole Creek	Eldorado NF	6
Butte Creek	Arcata BLM	7	Green Creek	Eldorado NF	2
Bell Springs Creek	Arcata BLM	7	Lower Bear River	Eldorado NF	3
Deep Hole Creek	Arcata BLM	6.5	NF Mokelumne River	Eldorado NF	6.5
Hulls Creek	Arcata BLM	16	NF Mokelumne River	Eldorado NF	10.5
Fish Creek	Arcata BLM	5.5	Summit City Creek	Eldorado NF	10
Pipe Creek	Arcata BLM	5	NF Merced River	Folsom BLM	6
Indian Creek	Arcata BLM	5.7	Lee Vining Creek	Inyo NF	10.2
Eden Creek	Arcata BLM	6	Golden Trout Creek	Inyo NF	16.9
EBSF Eel River	Arcata BLM	8	Walker Creek	Inyo NF	3.5
Elk Creek	Arcata BLM	8	Upper Parker Creek	Inyo NF	7.1
Elder Creek	Arcata BLM	7	SF Bishop Creek	Inyo NF	8.9
SF Kern River	Bakersfield BLM	0.8	Cottonwood Creek (SN)	Inyo NF	12.9
EF Kaweah River	Bakersfield BLM	2.4	Cottonwood Creek (WM)	Inyo NF	17.4
MF Kaweah River	Bakersfield BLM	0.2	Big Pine Creek	Inyo NF	8.6
Chimney Creek	Bakersfield BLM	16.9	Lone Pine Creek	Inyo NF	9.5
Salinas River	Bakersfield BLM	1	SF Mill Creek	Inyo NF	2.8
NF Kaweah River	Bakersfield BLM	4	Convict Creek	Inyo NF	6.4
Lower Kern River	Bakersfield BLM	3.5	Hot Creek	Inyo NF	2.6
Amargosa River	Barstow BLM	26	Upper Owens River	Inyo NF	1
Cottonwood Creek	Barstow BLM	4.7	Rock Creek	Inyo NF	21.2
Surprise Canyon	Barstow BLM	5	Mill Creek	Inyo NF	5.8
Dog Creek	Bishop BLM	3	Laurel Creek	Inyo NF	3.6
Hot Creek	Bishop BLM	1	McGee Creek	Inyo NF	6.8
Atastra Creek	Bishop BLM	1.75	Glass Creek	Inyo NF	5.8
Green Creek	Bishop BLM	0.75	Deadman Creek	Inyo NF	2.8
Rough Creek	Bishop BLM	2.1	Clear Creek	Klamath NF	22.9
Rock Creek	Bishop BLM	1.5	Tenmile Creek	Klamath NF	6.8
Virginia Creek	Bishop BLM	7	Antelope Creek	Klamath NF	8.3
			Granite Creek	Klamath NF	4.5

WF Clear Creek	Klamath NF	4.5	Colorado River	National Park Service	42
SF Russian Creek	Klamath NF	5.9	Fall River	National Park Service	21
Ukonom Creek	Klamath NF	8.7	Feather River	National Park Service	33
EFSF Salmon River	Klamath NF	10	Gualala River	National Park Service	68
NF Salmon River	Klamath NF	8.4	Mattole River	National Park Service	69
SF Salmon River	Klamath NF	19.3	Navarro River	National Park Service	60
Dillon Creek	Klamath NF	13.6	Pit River	National Park Service	49
NF Dillon Creek	Klamath NF	10	Redwood Creek	National Park Service	57
Rainey Valley Creek	Klamath NF	3	Sacramento River	National Park Service	104
Toms Valley Creek	Klamath NF	2.5	Sulphur Creek	National Park Service	14
Grider Creek	Klamath NF	5.9	East Branch Nelson Creek	Plumas NF	5
Elk Creek	Klamath NF	21	Little Jamison Creek	Plumas NF	2
Burney Valley Creek	Klamath NF	3.4	Nelson Creek	Plumas NF	5
Wooley Creek	Klamath NF	11.9	West Branch Nelson Creek	Plumas NF	7
EFSF Salmon River	Klamath NF	2.7	Onion Valley Creek	Plumas NF	11
French Creek	Klamath NF	2.9	McCarthy Creek	Plumas NF	2.5
Grider Creek	Klamath NF	9.9	Dixon Creek	Plumas NF	3
Kelsey Creek	Klamath NF	3.6	Jamison Creek	Plumas NF	5
Kelsey Creek	Klamath NF	3	Indian Creek	Plumas NF	3
SF Antelope Creek	Lassen NF	7	Squirrel Creek	Plumas NF	2
NF Antelope Creek	Lassen NF	7	Chips Creek	Plumas NF	2.5
Deer Creek	Lassen NF	30	NF Feather River	Plumas NF	32.5
Mill Creek	Lassen NF	32	East Branch NF Feather River	Plumas NF	16
Hat Creek	Lassen NF	17	Yellow Creek	Plumas NF	6
SF La Brea Creek	Los Padres NF	8	Mill Creek	Plumas NF	4
Manzana Creek	Los Padres NF	15	Squaw Queen Creek	Plumas NF	8
SF Sisuoc River	Los Padres NF	4	Little Last Chance Creek	Plumas NF	4
NF La Brea Creek	Los Padres NF	15	Frazier Creek	Plumas NF	5
Sespe Creek	Los Padres NF	10.5	Silver Creek	Plumas NF	4
Upper Piru Creek	Los Padres NF	38	Indian Creek	Plumas NF	5.5
Matilija Creek	Los Padres NF	16	Last Chance Creek	Plumas NF	6.5
Sespe Creek	Los Padres NF	1	SB MF Feather River	Plumas NF	15
Arroyo Seco River	Los Padres NF	18	Bear Creek	Plumas NF	4.5
Santa Ynez River	Los Padres NF	25	Slate Creek	Plumas NF	22.5
Santa Cruz Creek	Los Padres NF	18	Fall River	Plumas NF	7
Tassajara Creek	Los Padres NF	11	Little NF Feather River	Plumas NF	11.5
Mono Creek	Los Padres NF	21	SF Battle Creek	Redding BLM	16
Little Sur River	Los Padres NF	24	Paynes Creek	Redding BLM	6.7
Carmel River	Los Padres NF	9	Clear Creek	Redding BLM	5.3
Lower Piru Creek	Los Padres NF	14	Battle Creek	Redding BLM	23.7
Lopez Creek	Los Padres NF	11	NF Cottonwood Creek	Redding BLM	10.1
Indian Creek	Los Padres NF	18	Butte Creek	Redding BLM	14.2
Santa Paula Creek	Los Padres NF	12	Mill Creek	Redding BLM	14
MF Eel River	Mendocino NF	14.5	Shasta River	Redding BLM	7
Black Butte River	Mendocino NF	23.1	Upper Klamath River	Redding BLM	5
Cold Creek	Mendocino NF	6.2	Big Chico Creek	Redding BLM	8.5
Thomes Creek	Mendocino NF	11	Deer Creek	Redding BLM	8.2
MF Stony Creek	Mendocino NF	17	MF Cottonwood Creek	Redding BLM	12.4
Balm of Gilead Creek	Mendocino NF	8.8	SF Cottonwood Creek	Redding BLM	17.4
Boles Creek	Modoc NF	11.5	Beegum Creek	Redding BLM	4.4
Willow Creek	Modoc NF	14	Bear Creek	Redding BLM	9.7
SF American River	National Park Service	19	Sacramento River	Redding BLM	25
Big River	National Park Service	39	Jenny Creek	Redding/Medford BLM	17.6
Big Sycamore Canyon	National Park Service	8	Santa Margarita River	Riverside BLM	1.5
Cosumnes River	National Park Service	50	SF Lytle Creek	San Bernardino NF	4.5

Potential Wild & Scenic Rivers in California

THE 2001 INVENTORY

MF Santa Ana River	San Bernardino NF	14.5	NF Cherry Creek	Stanislaus NF	13
Deep Creek	San Bernardino NF	21	NF Merced River	Stanislaus NF	11
MF Lytle Creek	San Bernardino NF	2	SF Tuolumne River	Stanislaus NF	2
Holcomb Creek	San Bernardino NF	20	SF Tuolumne River	Stanislaus NF	27.4
NF San Jacinto River	San Bernardino NF	10	Buck Meadow Creek	Stanislaus NF	8
SF Santa Ana River	San Bernardino NF	3	Cherry Creek	Stanislaus NF	10
NF Whitewater River	San Bernardino NF	5	Clavey River	Stanislaus NF	29
SF Whitewater River	San Bernardino NF	9.5	SF Stanislaus River	Stanislaus NF	14
MF Whitewater River	San Bernardino NF	4.5	Niagara Creek	Stanislaus NF	1
EF Whitewater River	San Bernardino NF	3	Bourland Creek	Stanislaus NF	11
Bear Creek	San Bernardino NF	7	Lily Creek	Stanislaus NF	11
NF Tule River	Sequoia NF	6	Bell Creek	Stanislaus NF	7
SF Kern River	Sequoia NF	1	Willow Creek	Susanville BLM	7.5
Lower Kern River	Sequoia NF	31	Smoke Creek	Susanville BLM	12
NF MF Tule River	Sequoia NF	15	Susan River	Susanville BLM/Lassen NF	24
Little Kern River	Sequoia NF	25	Upper Truckee River	Tahoe Basin	7
McCloud River	Shasta Trinity NF	47	Upper S. Yuba River	Tahoe NF	16
Beegum Creek	Shasta Trinity NF	2.5	Lower Castle Creek	Tahoe NF	4
NF & SF Beegum Creek	Shasta Trinity NF	13	Macklin Creek	Tahoe NF	2
Squaw Valley Creek	Shasta Trinity NF	10.5	Oregon Creek	Tahoe NF	4
Upper Sacramento River	Shasta Trinity NF	37.3	Lower Truckee River	Tahoe NF	13
SF Trinity River	Shasta Trinity NF	26.3	Martis Creek	Tahoe NF	8.4
Hayfork Creek	Shasta Trinity NF	14	Fordyce Creek	Tahoe NF	10
NF Trinity River	Shasta Trinity NF	11.7	Humbug Creek	Tahoe NF	7
Canyon Creek	Shasta Trinity NF	21.5	East Fork Creek	Tahoe NF	4
Virgin Creek	Shasta Trinity NF	11.7	Downie River	Tahoe NF	12
EBSF Trinity River	Shasta-Trinity NF	10	Lavezzola Creek	Tahoe NF	15
NF San Joaquin River	Sierra NF	14	North Yuba River	Tahoe NF	45
Dinkey Creek	Sierra NF	27	Canyon Creek	Tahoe NF	30
MF San Joaquin River	Sierra NF	22	New York Ravine	Tahoe NF	2
San Joaquin River	Sierra NF	2	Middle Yuba River	Tahoe NF	39
Kings River	Sierra NF	12	Pauley Creek	Tahoe NF	15
San Joaquin River	Sierra NF	12	Empire Creek	Tahoe NF	9
SF San Joaquin River	Sierra NF	17	Little Granite Creek	Tahoe NF	1.4
Redwood Creek	Six Rivers NF	0.5	Big Granite Creek	Tahoe NF	4
Blue Creek	Six Rivers NF	13	NFNF American River	Tahoe NF	5.6
Red Mountain Creek	Six Rivers NF	7	Upper Rubicon River	Tahoe NF	11
Kennedy Creek	Stanislaus NF	8	Grouse Creek	Tahoe NF	1
Deadman Creek	Stanislaus NF	8	Screwaufer Canyon	Tahoe NF	3
Clark Fork Stanislaus River	Stanislaus NF	17	NF MF American River	Tahoe NF	14
Eagle Creek	Stanislaus NF	7	New York Canyon	Tahoe NF	4.2
Relief Creek	Stanislaus NF	3	Perazzo Canyon	Tahoe NF	3.2
Summit Creek	Stanislaus NF	7	Little Truckee River	Tahoe NF	14
Disaster Creek	Stanislaus NF	5	Cold Stream	Tahoe NF	5.2
NF Stanislaus River	Stanislaus NF	23	Sagehen Creek	Tahoe NF	8
Highland Creek	Stanislaus NF	5	Alder Creek	Tahoe NF	6.4
Pacific Creek	Stanislaus NF	6	Independence Creek	Tahoe NF	2
NF Mokelumne River	Stanislaus NF	27	Lower South Yuba River	Tahoe NF/Folsom BLM	39
MF Stanislaus River	Stanislaus NF	11	EF Walker River	Toiyabe NF	35
MF Stanislaus River	Stanislaus NF	25.5	WF Walker River	Toiyabe NF	45.8
Stanislaus River	Stanislaus NF	1.5	EF Carson River	Toiyabe NF	57.5
Long Valley Creek	Stanislaus NF	4	Cache Creek	Ukiah BLM	34
West Fork Cherry Creek	Stanislaus NF	15	NF Cache Creek	Ukiah BLM	13.5
East Fork Cherry Creek	Stanislaus NF	14			3992.75



# Endnotes

- 1 The figure of 194,000 miles represents rounding and summing the lengths of the California Hydrographic Dataset (a compilation of U.S. Geological Survey digital line graphs with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency River Reach File conflated attributes at the 1:100,000 scale) that have been subsetted to create a “naturally occurring waterways” river delineation. This data was obtained from what used to be the state’s Teale Data Center see <http://www.gis.ca.gov>.

The data includes some ephemeral streams, and it may exclude some others. The methods for creation of this dataset may be found in “California Rivers Assessment: Assembling Environmental Data to Characterize California’s Watersheds,” by Joshua Viers, et al. <http://ice.ucdavis.edu/papers/p570.htm>.

- 2 California Department of Water Resources, Division of Safety of Dams. “Dams Within the Jurisdiction of the State of California” (Bulletin 17-93), Sacramento, 1993. Jurisdictional dams are defined as “artificial barriers, together with appurtenant works, which are 25 feet or more in height or have an impounding capacity of 50 acre-feet or more. Also see data and maps from the California Rivers Assessment (CARA): <http://endeavor.des.ucdavis.edu/newcara/>
- 3 California Department of Water Resources. “California Water Plan” (Bulletin 160-98), Sacramento, 1998.
- 4 Hydropower “preliminary permit” applications. See [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov) or list of applications at [www.friendsoftheriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheriver.org).
- 5 Moyle, Peter B., R. M. Yoshiyama, et al. “Fish Species of Special Concern in California.” Published by the California Department of Fish and Game, Inland Fisheries Division, Sacramento. June 1995.
- 6 Mount, Jeffrey F. *California Rivers and Streams - The Conflict Between Fluvial Process and Land Use*. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1995.



Tim Palmer

*Long Valley Creek, tributary to the north fork Stanislaus River*

## For Further Reference

Coyle, Kevin J. *The American Rivers Guide to Wild and Scenic River Designation*. American Rivers, Washington, D.C. 1988. [www.amrivers.org](http://www.amrivers.org)

California State Lands Commission. *California Rivers — A Public Trust Report*. Sacramento, 1993.

Palmer, Tim. *The Wild and Scenic Rivers of America*. Island Press, Washington, D.C., 1993.

FOR ADDITIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS INFORMATION, VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

Nationwide Rivers Inventory (National Park Service — July 2001) [www.ncrc.nps.gov/rtca/nri/CA.htm](http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/rtca/nri/CA.htm)

Interagency Wild & Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council [www.nps.gov/rivers](http://www.nps.gov/rivers)



Tim Palmer

*Indian Creek, a tributary to an eligible wild & scenic segment of the north fork American River*

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### ***What does National Wild & Scenic River designation mean?***

A national wild and scenic river is a federally protected waterway, safeguarded from the construction of hydroelectric dams or major water diversions. Federal agencies are also barred from assisting in any water resource projects that may directly affect a designated river segment. “Wild and Scenic” typically means a quarter-mile corridor along both sides of a river. That stream area is then managed to preserve the outstanding scenery, recreation, historical, ecological, and other resource values.

### ***How does Wild & Scenic affect private property?***

Because the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act confers no federal authority over private land use or

local zoning, there is no practical impact on private property. Riverside land owners cannot be told what to do with their property or have their land confiscated by the federal government. The Act does encourage, but doesn’t require, county and city governments to adopt zoning and land use practices that preserve the qualities that originally made the river eligible for designation in the first place.

### ***Can private land be condemned?***

Wild & Scenic designation actually limits federal condemnation authority. The Act prohibits fee title condemnation (meaning the acquisition to *all rights* to a piece of land) if a majority of lands along a designated segment is already publicly owned. While condemnation for scenic easements is allowed, its

use is extremely constrained by both public opinion and limited agency budgets. Indeed, no fee title or easement condemnation has ever occurred on a national Wild & Scenic River in California.

***How does Wild & Scenic status affect public lands?***

Public lands within an average of one-quarter mile on each side of a river are managed to protect a river's free-flowing character and natural resource values. Federal agencies in charge of public lands are responsible for this management. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act encourages coordination between agencies that may manage different parts of a river, as well as cooperation with other regulatory entities and local governments. Once designated, the appropriate federal agency develops a plan to guide future management of a wild river.

***What does Wild, Scenic, or Recreational classification mean?***

In addition to protecting a designated river's free-flowing character and outstanding values, federal agencies are also required to manage the public lands along designated segments according to certain classifications. Those categories are based on an existing level of development along a river. The following guidelines are used to establish classification:

**WILD** - These segments are wild, undeveloped, and without roads. Logging, road building, new mining claims, developed campgrounds, and motorized access are generally prohibited on Wild segments. All other activities associated with public lands such as grazing, mining of valid existing claims, hunting and other forms of non-motorized recreation are permitted subject to the protection of outstanding values.

**SCENIC** - These segments are generally undeveloped, but may have occasional road crossings and riverside structures which are visually screened from the river. Motorized use on trails may or may not be permitted. All other activities normally associated with public lands are permitted, as long as visual quality and outstanding values are protected.

**RECREATIONAL** - These segments are generally developed, with parallel roads, bridges and structures. All activities normally associated with public lands are permitted subject to the protection of outstanding values.

***Does Wild & Scenic status affect lands beyond the designated segments and river corridors?***

The Act specifically prohibits water resource

projects within, upstream, or downstream of designated segments that may "unreasonably diminish" the outstanding values for which the river was originally designated. This legal mandate also requires a river's managing agency to regulate federal activities within a watershed which may adversely affect a wild river's qualities and characteristics.

***Does Wild & Scenic status affect water rights?***

The state's authority to regulate water rights remains unaffected by designation. However, activities such as rights-of-way, diversions, or drilling required to exercise water rights on federal lands — or that may require some kind of federal permit — could be regulated to ensure protection of the river's free-flowing character, outstanding values, and classification.

***How are rivers added to the Wild & Scenic System?***

Congress may designate rivers outright through legislation or may direct federal agencies to conduct studies and make recommendations concerning designation. In addition, the Act requires federal agencies to identify potential Wild & Scenic Rivers in all land, water, and resource planning programs. State-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers may be added to the federal system upon the request of a state's governor and approval by the Interior Secretary.

***Isn't there also a state Wild & Scenic Rivers Act? What's the difference?***

Four years after Congress established the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System, California's Legislature created a state version as a way to immediately protect some spectacular North Coast rivers from water development proposals. Similar to the protections afforded under the federal act, the state's 1972 Wild & Scenic Rivers law prohibits dams on designated rivers. Such designation, however, does not apply to federal projects and is only effective to the first line of vegetation along a river rather than the one-quarter mile corridor under the national system.

The latest addition to the state system occurred in 2001 when the South Yuba River near the gold rush town of Northern California's Nevada City finally achieved designation. Unfortunately, the state does not actively manage any of the rivers in its system. This means that such rivers do not receive the recognition or thoughtful planning that a more active resource management system would dictate.



*Fishing on the north fork of the Stanislaus River in the central Sierra*

## *Chronology of Wild & Scenic Rivers in California*

**1968:** Congress passes and President Lyndon Johnson signs the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. The bill instantly designates nine rivers across the nation, including the Middle Fork Feather River in California. Designation of the Middle Fork ends the imminent threat of hydroelectric power development on this remote and highly scenic river, which is prized by anglers for its wild trout fishery.

**1978:** The North Fork American River upstream of the proposed Auburn dam inundation zone is added to the system. The designation ends speculation over at least one proposed hydroelectric dam site.

**1980:** Legislation proposed by Friends of the River to add the Stanislaus River to the national system is defeated in Congress. Then the most popular whitewater river in the West, the Stanislaus is subsequently drowned by the New Melones Reservoir in 1981.

**1981:** Responding to a request from Governor Jerry Brown, Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus adds the Smith, Klamath, Scott, Salmon, Trinity, Van Duzen, Eel, and lower American rivers to the federal system. The primary intent of the designation was to protect the state's most important salmon and steelhead fishery rivers from

a vast system of proposed water supply dams.

**1984:** The Tuolumne River is added to the system with the passage of the California Wilderness Act, foreclosing on yet another dam proposal by local irrigation districts. The Act also marks one of the first legislative combinations of wild river and wilderness designations.

**1987:** Segments of the Merced, Kings, and Kern rivers are added to the national system after an intense campaign by Friends of the River and other local conservation groups spanning three watersheds. The legislation permanently ends a dam threat on the Merced.

**1990:** The Smith River and its various forks and tributaries are legislatively designated as National Wild & Scenic Rivers as part of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act.

**1992:** Congress passes legislation adding the lower Merced River, Big Sur River, Sisquoc River, and Sespe Creek to the federal system in response to recommendations by federal agencies and lobbying by Friends of the River and other conservation groups. The bill forecloses on two potential dam sites on Sespe Creek, and also marks the first inclusion of Central Coast rivers.