

**Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study for
National Forest System Lands in Utah
Final Environmental Impact Statement**

Counties: Box Elder, Cache, Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, Garfield, Grand, Kane, Millard, Piute, Salt Lake, Sanpete, San Juan, Sevier, Summit, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, Washington, and Weber Counties, Utah; Montrose County, Colorado; Uinta County, Wyoming

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

Cooperating Agencies: State of Utah; Bureau of Land Management (Utah State Office); Sweetwater County Conservation District; Uinta County Conservation District; and Sweetwater and Lincoln County, Wyoming

Responsible Officials:

KEVIN B. ELLIOTT, FOREST SUPERVISOR
Ashley National Forest, 355 North Vernal Avenue
Vernal, Utah 84078

ROB MACWHORTER, FOREST SUPERVISOR
Dixie National Forest, 1789 North Wedgewood Lane
Cedar City, Utah 84720

ALLEN ROWLEY, FOREST SUPERVISOR
Fishlake National Forest, 115 East 900 North
Richfield, Utah 84701

PAMELA BROWN, FOREST SUPERVISOR
Manti-La Sal National Forest, 599 West Price River Dr.
Price, Utah 84501

BRIAN A. FEREBEE, FOREST SUPERVISOR
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, 88 West 100 North
Provo, Utah 84601 or 125 South State Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138

For Information Contact: **CATHERINE KAHLOW, USFS WSR TEAM LEADER**
8236 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84138
Phone: 801-733-2675

Abstract: The Forest Service is conducting an environmental analysis to evaluate the suitability of 86 eligible river segments (840 miles) on the National Forests in Utah for recommendation for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The area affected by the proposal includes National Forest System lands on the Ashley, Dixie, Fishlake, Manti-La Sal, and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests in Utah. Portions of those National Forests extend into Colorado and Wyoming, and those areas will be included in this study. The Forest Service evaluation also considered the cumulative impacts of designation of eligible river segments managed by other agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service.

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 7) recommends a suitable determination be made for 10 river segments including 74 miles classified as Wild, 22 miles classified as Scenic, and 12 miles classified as Recreational.

Summary

The Forest Service is conducting an environmental analysis to evaluate the suitability of 86 eligible river segments on the National Forests in Utah for recommendation for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The area affected by this study includes National Forest System lands on the Ashley, Dixie, Fishlake, Manti-La Sal, and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests in Utah. Portions of those National Forests extend into Colorado and Wyoming, and those areas were included in this study. The Forest Service evaluation also considered the cumulative impacts of designation of eligible river segments managed by other Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS). The purpose of this study is to assess the suitability of 86 eligible river segments (840 miles) and then make a preliminary administrative recommendation on which river segments on the National Forests in Utah are suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

National Forests in Utah have evaluated river segments on the National Forest System lands for their potential eligibility for designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The eligibility inventory and tentative classification for 78 of the segments took place during forest land and resource management plan revision processes. In addition, eight stream segments on the Dixie National Forest were found eligible for suitability consideration by an interagency planning process that included the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (BLM) and the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (NPS). Interim protection for the resulting 86 eligible river segments is contained in Forest Plan standards, guidelines, and/or agency policies for those Forest Plans that do not contain direction on wild and scenic rivers.

From scoping comments on the Notice of Intent published in the *Federal Register* on April 30, 2007, and 17 public meetings held around the State of Utah, including two meetings in Wyoming and Colorado, six key issues emerged as a concern and were analyzed in depth in Chapter 3 of this FEIS. These six key issues that guided the development and evaluation of the alternatives are:

Issue 1 – Designation of river segments into the National Wild and Scenic River System may affect existing and future water resource project developments.

Issue 2 – Uses and activities may be precluded, limited or enhanced if the river segment and its corridor were included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System).

Issue 3 – Designation of a Wild and Scenic River could change the economy of a community.

Issue 4 – Designation offers long-term protection of resource values.

Issue 5 – Consistency with wild and scenic river studies conducted by the BLM and NPS.

Issue 6 – Consistency with state, county, and local government laws and plans.

On December 7, 2007 a Notice of Availability was published in the *Federal Register* announcing the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Ten public meetings were held January to February 2008 in Utah and Wyoming with the comment period for the Draft EIS ending February 15, 2008.

The Forest Supervisors decided to develop a seventh alternative based on the issues analyzed in depth described in Draft EIS, Chapter 1, comments received during public open houses and over 2,500 written comments from Draft EIS reviewers, and on an assessment of factors documented in the Suitability Evaluation Reports (see Final EIS, Appendix A – Suitability Evaluation Reports). The Forest Service developed seven alternatives to the proposed action including: 1) No action, maintain eligibility of all river segments, 2) No rivers recommended, 3) Recommend rivers that best represent Utah ORVS while having the least affect on existing or reasonably foreseeable future water resources projects and other developmental activities, 4) Recommend rivers that best represent Utah ORVs that could be adversely affected by existing or reasonably foreseeable future water resources projects and other developmental activities, 5) Recommend rivers with low cost for management that are consistent with other Federal wild

and scenic studies and which have limited negative impact to community economic development, 6) Recommend river segments recognized by public groups that represent a diversity of river systems in Utah and those that face future threats, and 7) Recommend river segments that reflect the broad range of public comments and emphasize specific suitability factors.

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 7) recommends a suitable determination be made for 10 river segments totaling approximately 108 miles (74 miles classified as Wild, 22 miles classified as Scenic, and 12 miles classified as Recreational). Based upon the effects of the alternatives, the responsible officials will decide: Which, if any, of the eligible river segments under consideration should be recommended to the Congress of the United States for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

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