



Wild and Scenic Rivers:

River Recreation & Economics

Overall, 81% of all Wild and Scenic Rivers have recreational value. Access to Wild and Scenic Rivers is a delicate balance between ensuring enjoyment and preventing damage from overuse.

Management responsibilities are spread between four federal agencies and their state affiliates. Some tribes, like the Menominee Tribe near the Wolf River in Wisconsin, are also involved in management.

Recreation Opportunities Along Wild and Scenic Rivers

As a vital part of the outdoor recreation economy, rivers offer unique opportunities for Americans. Residents and visitors alike can enjoy activities ranging from day hikes and sightseeing to floating by day and camping at night on designated and eligible rivers. Below are a few of the many ways to enjoy nature on Wild and Scenic Rivers.



Boating

Raft, canoe, kayak and other watercraft travel is possible when rivers are free-flowing and unobstructed by dams or other artificial barriers. Some of the most popular rivers hold annual lotteries for float trips. In the western United States, 11 rivers host lotteries to distribute permits for launches. The Selway River in Idaho is the most exclusive of these lotteries. Only one public launch party per day is permitted during the season, so visitors can truly experience this wild wilderness river.

Photo: Zachary Collier



Hiking & Camping

Camping is permitted in designated zones along riverways, since many Wild and Scenic Rivers flow through a mixture of private and public lands. Many first encounters and lasting memories of nature involve being near water. Without the added draw of the water, more than one-third of recreationists would decrease their overall outdoor activity.

Photo: Bob Wick



Fishing

Anglers, along with boaters, engage most directly with the unique character of Wild and Scenic Rivers. Rivers offer critical habitat to many species of fish. These inhabitants display different ways of living and reproducing in the water. Anglers must adapt to the demands and habits of each species while practicing legal and ethical fishing. For many anglers, a Wild and Scenic River is defined by and inseparable from the fish that populate it.

Photo: Bob Wick

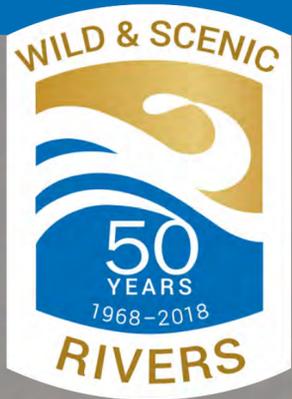


Wildlife Viewing & Hunting

Not only do rivers draw animals to a plentiful source of fresh water, but many rivers are home to species that are seldom found elsewhere. Riparian habitats boast unique communities of species compared to other ecosystems and offer vastly different opportunities for observing wildlife on their terms. Seasoned hunters know the value of riparian habitats to game species.

Photo: Bob Wick

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



Wild and Scenic Rivers and their immediate environments possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historical, cultural, or other similar values.

Dollars and Cents...



Outdoor Recreation Economy

Outdoor recreation is a massive and growing industry supporting 7.6 million jobs. It saw a 37% increase in annual consumer spending from 2015 to 2016 from \$646 billion to \$887 billion. River recreation accounts for up to one-third of this spending, including activities both on and around waterways.

Idaho

With 22 designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, or 10.5% of all designations, Idaho encourages waterway recreation. Outdoor consumer spending totals \$7.8 billion annually, and 78,000 jobs relate in some way to outdoor recreation. Wild and Scenic Rivers contribute significantly to these figures by providing a strong draw for local and out-of-state visitors.

Salmon River, Middle Fork

Floating on the Middle Fork Salmon Wild and Scenic River draws thousands of people during each annual season. The majority of launches take place in the middle five months of the year (May-September). In 2016, 11,528 people floated the river on 810 permits issued to the general public and commercial outfitters. Demand dwarfs access granted, as 45,000 applications were filed for less than 400 permits in 2017.

Photo: John Webster



Ecosystem Services

Healthy rivers serve important functions beyond just recreation. Humans would otherwise need to pay for these "ecosystem services." Services include access to water for irrigation, water table replenishment, water purification in wetlands, and erosion-resistant banksides that provide flood control. Nearly 84% of Wild and Scenic Rivers are designated for ecosystem services and other non-recreational benefits.

Oregon

Oregon has slightly more than 1,900 miles of its total river mileage designated as Wild and Scenic, spread across 59 different rivers [8]. Many of these rivers are protected for their recreational value as well as values such as hydrology, water quality, and traditional use. Oregon also shares the Columbia River Basin with Washington, which is estimated to provide \$198 billion annually in water, habitat, flood reduction, food production, and other benefits.

Imnaha River

The Imnaha River, within the basin, is protected for a wide range of values, including its role in supporting recreation, traditional living, and historic agricultural practices. Farming and ranching continues today near the water the river provides for irrigation and drinking, alongside habitat for unique plant communities.

Photo: Bob Wick