

## Briefing Paper on Wild and Scenic Rivers

11/7/2014

- In 1968, Congress created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition.<sup>1</sup> Designation protects the selected river and its immediate environments from federal support for activities that may degrade the values that caused it to be designated, including the construction of dams. Congress designates qualifying sections of rivers which are then administered by a federal or state agency. There are three classifications:
  - o Wild River Areas – those sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive.
  - o Scenic River Areas – those sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with watersheds or shorelines still largely primitive but accessible by roads in places.
  - o Recreational River Areas – those sections of rivers readily accessible roads that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.
- In Washington, three rivers are in the National system: the Klickitat, the Skagit, and the White Salmon.
- The Washington State Legislature developed a Scenic River System in 1977. Similar to the national WSR, this act protects rivers and their immediate environs which possess outstanding natural, scenic, historic, ecological, and recreational values of present and future benefit to the public<sup>2</sup>. The act preserves those sections named in as natural a condition as practical and discourages overuse of the rivers. The state Parks and Recreation Commission carries out the selection and designation of rivers that meet the criteria. Portions of the Skykomish, the Beckler, the Tye, and the Little Spokane have been added to the state system.
- The YBIP Watershed Lands Conservation Subcommittee proposed in 2012 that new designations under the Wild and Scenic River Act of select river corridors within the Yakima Basin could help promote conservation. The subcommittee listed portions of the North, Middle, and West Forks of the Teanaway on USFS lands as being proposed. Portions of these rivers currently in the Teanaway Community Forest (TCF) are under consideration.<sup>3</sup>
- With the purchase of the TCF by the Washington State Legislature in 2013, the watershed has those protections afforded by the enabling legislation. Five overarching goals protect the watershed, wildlife habitat, working lands, and provide for recreational access.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rivers.gov/wsr-act.php>. Accessed on 10/24/2014

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 79A.55 RCW

<sup>3</sup> Watershed Land Conservation Subcommittee Proposal. January 4, 2012. In “Yakima Basin Study, Proposed Integrated Water Resource Management Plan.”