

From the Nation Park Service Website

Wild and Scenic Rivers, Eligibility Descriptions

In order to be listed on the NRI, a river must be free-flowing and possess one or more Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs). Thus, the eligibility analysis consists of an examination of the river's hydrology, including any man-made alterations, and an inventory of its natural, cultural, and recreational resources. There are a variety of methods to determine whether certain resources are so unique, rare or exemplary as to make them outstandingly remarkable. The determination that a river area contains ORVs is a professional judgment on the part of the interdisciplinary study team (IDT), based on objective, scientific analysis. Input from organizations and individuals familiar with specific river resources should be sought and documented as part of the process.

In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Dictionary definitions of the words "unique" and "rare" indicate that such a value would be one that is conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary. One possible procedure would be to list all of the river's special values and then assess whether they are unique, rare or exemplary within the state, physiographic province, eco region, or the other area of comparison. Only one such value is needed for eligibility.

The area, region or scale of comparison is not fixed, and should be defined as that which serves as a basis for meaningful comparative analysis; it may vary depending on the value being considered. Typically, a "region" is defined on the scale of an administrative unit, a portion of a state, or an appropriately scaled physiographic or hydrologic unit.

While the spectrum of resources that may be considered is broad, all values should be directly river-related. That is, they should:

- Be located in the river or on its immediate shorelands (generally within 1/4 mile on either side of the river);
- Contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem; and/or
- Owe their location or existence to the presence of the river.

Potential Classification

The Act and Interagency Guidelines provide the following direction for establishing preliminary classifications for eligible rivers:

- **Wild rivers (W):** Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.
- **Scenic rivers (S):** Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational rivers (R):** Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)

The following eligibility criteria are offered to foster greater consistency within the federal river-administering agencies. They are intended to set minimum thresholds to establish ORVs and are illustrative but not all-inclusive. If utilized in an agency's planning process, these criteria may be modified to make them more meaningful in the area of comparison, and additional criteria may be included.

1. **Scenery (S):** The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors -- such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed -- may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.
2. **Recreation (R):** Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison or are unique or rare within the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing and boating.
 - Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from outside the region of comparison.
 - The river may provide, or have the potential to provide, settings for national or regional usage or competitive events.
3. **Geology (G):** The River, or the area within the river corridor, contains one or more example of a geologic feature, process or phenomenon that is unique or rare within the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a "textbook" example, and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, or other geologic structures).
4. **Fish (F):** Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations, habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.
 - *Populations:* The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or

sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."

- *Habitat:* The river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."
5. **Wildlife (W):** Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations or habitat or a combination of these conditions.
- *Populations:* The river, or area within the river corridor, contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, and/or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."
 - *Habitat:* The river, or area within the river corridor, provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, and/or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."
6. **Prehistory (P):** The river, or area within the river corridor, contains a site(s) where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must have unique or rare characteristics or exceptional human interest value(s). Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; and/or may have been used by cultural groups for rare sacred purposes. Many such sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is administered by the NPS.
7. **History (H):** The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) or feature(s) associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare or one-of-a-kind in the region. Many such sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A historic site(s) and/or features(s) is 50 years old or older in most cases.
8. **Cultural (C):** The river or area within the river corridor contains archaeological sites or areas significant to traditional cultures. Examples might be American Indian burial grounds, petroglyphs, the oldest known human use site in a region, or streams that support traditional agriculture, subsistence fishing, or religious ceremonies.
9. **Other Values (O):** While no specific national evaluation guidelines have been developed for the "other similar values" category, assessments of additional river-related values consistent with the foregoing guidance may be developed -- including, but not limited to, hydrology, paleontology and botany resources.