Arizona's Wild and Scenic Rivers

Lifeblood of the Desert II

Opportunities to protect Arizona waterways as national Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wilderness Society

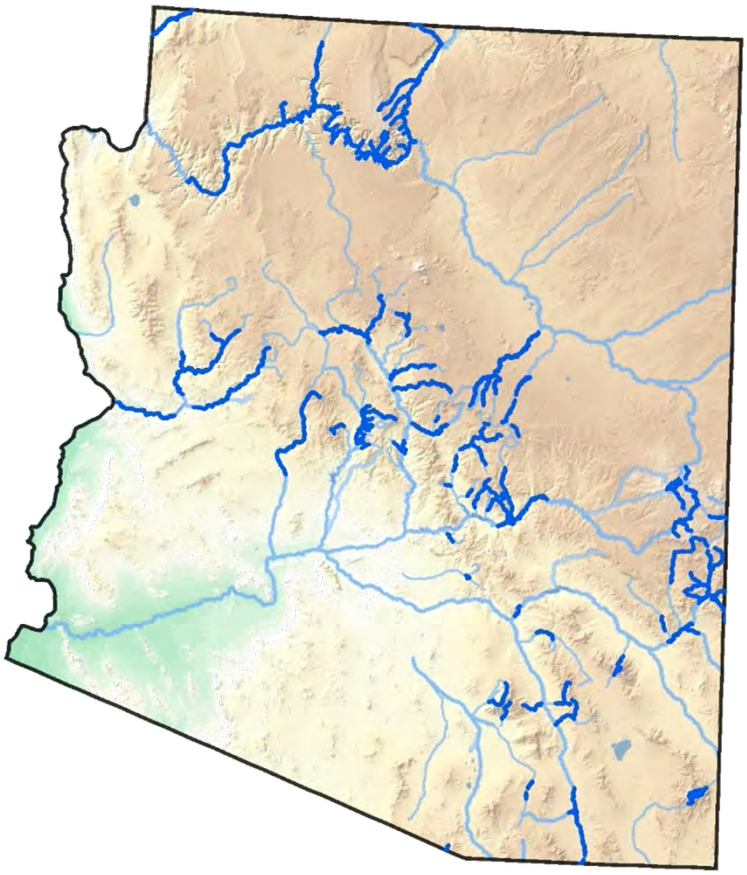
ARIZONA'S WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

LIFEBLOOD OF THE DESERT II

Opportunities to protect Arizona waterways
as national Wild and Scenic Rivers

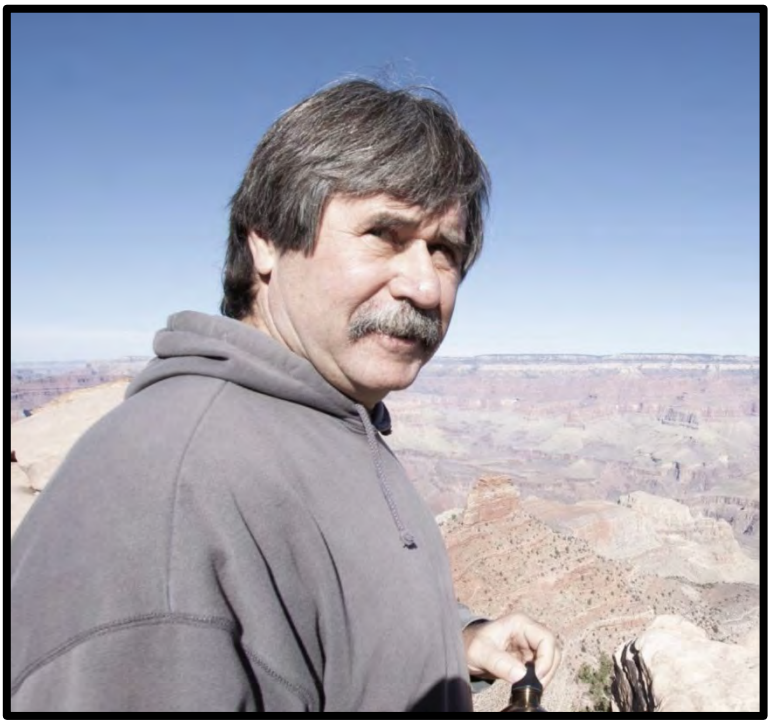
The Wilderness Society

Compiled and Edited by Joe Trudeau, Prescott, Arizona
Cartography by Joe Trudeau, with ArcMap 10.8.2
Published August, 2023 (first printing)
Download this book online at:
https://kinetichorizons.com/Pages/AZWSR23.html



Cover Photos:
Rafting the Salt River, by Harrison Keane
Meadows along the West Fork of the Black River, by Lisa Hankinson
The flowing green artery of the Upper Verde River, by Joe Trudeau
A summer tanager at Aravaipa Creek, by Adrienne McLeod

D E D I C A T I O N



Land and water conservation is the most American of acts. True patriotism is fighting for the very land beneath our feet and water in our rivers. This is our common ground – our shared heritage.

Throughout our history, the fiercest voices for saving nature have come from the softest of souls. Those who have seen the worst of humankind have the ability to see how connected all life really is.

This book is dedicated to Kim Crumbo, a decorated Navy veteran of SEAL Team 1, who saw the worst in Vietnam – and found hope in protecting Arizona's wildest lands and waters.

A loving father and husband, teacher, workhorse, and a son of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, he did not live to see the mending of what's been broken.

In his memory, I dedicate this vision for protecting Arizona's last remaining wild and free rivers.

With gratitude and humility,

Joe Trudeau, Editor

Dear fellow Americans,

The people of Arizona are embroiled in a great debate about water policy – how do we adjust to drought, climate change, and declining deliveries from the Central Arizona Project? And is it time to reform our foundational groundwater management laws – including the bedrock law that I signed as Governor in 1980? These are hard questions that demand our full attention. But in the process, we must not neglect the urgent need to protect our remaining wild and free-flowing rivers. The streams that flow from the highlands of the Mogollon Rim, through the Grand Canyon, in the Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona, and elsewhere, are precious resources that sustain the riparian forests, migratory birds, and fish and wildlife unique to our state – and they nourish our souls and invigorate our communities.

Under the pressure of climate change and increasing economic development, we risk losing the last of these creeks and rivers if we do not act now to protect them in their natural state. Even in our brief history as a territory and then as our nation's 48th state, we have already lost nearly 90 percent of our free-flowing streams to dams, diversions and other forms of development. Our remaining waterways could share the same fate – never to return to their original condition – if we don't take action to save them while we still have the chance.

Fortunately, The Wilderness Society has come forward to prepare this extensively researched inventory of our remaining streams and rivers that can – and should – be preserved for future generations. The means for protection is the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a successful and widely used tool to protect waterways across America. So far, it's been used in Arizona to protect a stretch of the middle Verde River as well as a beloved tributary, Fossil Creek. If you want to see how a Wild and Scenic River designation works, you only need to visit those two inspiring places.

The time is now at hand to review and use this inventory to begin gathering support for additional Wild and Scenic River designations. The first such initiative is already underway. A coalition of Arizona business leaders, local elected officials, Tribal Nations, and river advocates have prepared and presented to our Congressional leaders a proposal to designate the Upper Verde River together with portions of two tributaries, Granite Creek and Sycamore Creek, as Wild and Scenic rivers. And the book you're holding now suggests that many more proposals are to come in the future.

Please join me in endorsing the designation of more Wild and Scenic Rivers in Arizona, and working toward that goal with our elected officials while the opportunities are before us.

Sincerely,

Bruce Babbitt

Arizona's 16th Governor (1978-1987)
47th United States Secretary of the Interior (1993-2001)

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of Arizona

Arizona's potential Wild and Scenic Rivers are organized in this book by watershed, bioregion, or a blend of the two, as labeled above. Ten distinct geographic areas contain more than 140 unique rivers, creeks, and streams - ranging from mountain forests to arid basins. This map illustrates these stunning ribbons of life in dark blue. Full river descriptions and detailed maps are found in each section.

Map data: ESRI, USGS, BLM, USFS, NPS, The Wilderness Society. Mapping by Joe Trudeau, Consultant to the Wilderness Society.

N
W E
S

Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40

1:3,500,000

Introduction

This book is the first comprehensive compilation of more than four decades of inventory and assessment of potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in Arizona. This inventory includes federal agency studies completed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service, as well as proposals and evaluations completed by conservation organizations, volunteer citizens, and educational institutions such as Prescott College. The purpose of this book is to update and expand on the 1991 and 1993 (revised) citizen's proposals for the protection of rivers in Arizona, titled *Arizona Rivers: Lifeblood of the Desert.* Prepared over the course of several years by a team of impassioned – and mostly volunteer – conservationists, that early work was developed concurrent with Wild and Scenic River studies being completed by federal land managers in Arizona.

The 1993 revised printing of Lifeblood of the Desert described 70 streams totaling 1,633 miles. In Lifeblood of the Desert II, we have expanded on the original work by including data and findings from extensive federal agency studies completed since the publication of the original proposal (some as recent as 2022) and from inventories and analyses by conservation organizations and citizen advocates. This book now presents 144 streams totaling 2,150 miles in Arizona that have been found potentially Eligible, Eligible, or Suitable for designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers — by land management agencies or by The Wilderness Society and our conservation partners in Arizona. While this book is an expanded and more recent overview of Wild and Scenic potential, there are still other rivers and creeks in Arizona that are not included here (due to land tenure or other constraints) that may also be worthy of protection. As with earlier editions, we intend this to be a guide and a resource rather than a definitively exhaustive accounting. We acknowledge there may be river segments we have missed or not included that are also worthy and we look forward to future revisions accordingly.

While containing a trove of fascinating ecological information and historical documentary references, this book is also a celebration of Nature's beauty – *and a call to action to protect Arizona's most important creeks and rivers before they are damned, diverted, developed, drained, or trampled to death*.

America's most powerful river protection tool is the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, which states:

"*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*."

Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act at the height of the modern dam-building era in order to ensure that the construction of new dams on rivers is balanced with the protection of free-flowing rivers that possess nationally significant values. This landmark law is the highest form of protection for rivers in the United States.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act protects rivers in five major ways:

- It bans new federally-licensed dams and harmful water development projects.
- It ensures water quality is maintained and, where possible, enhanced.
- It protects each river's outstanding values (e.g., scenery, culture, history, fish, wildlife, recreation, etc.).
- It creates a federally-reserved water right for the flow necessary to maintain a river's outstanding values.
- It requires the development of a Comprehensive River Management Plan to guide river corridor management, providing an opportunity for collaborative community engagement.

The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Council describes the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as "*notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection*."

As of December 23, 2022 (the last Congressional designations), the National Wild and Scenic River System protects 13,484 miles of 228 rivers in 41 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This is less than one half of one percent of the nation's rivers. By comparison, more than 90,000 dams across the country have modified more than 700,000 miles, or about 20%, of American rivers.

In Arizona, just 57.3 miles of the lower Verde River and Fossil Creek have been designated as Wild and Scenic, which is less than 1/10th of 1% of the state's total river miles. As this book demonstrates, many other Arizona rivers and streams qualify for national Wild and Scenic River designation.

Arizona is one of the driest states in the nation. Its streams and wetlands have never occupied more than a tiny fraction of the state's land area. Because of their comparative rarity and their contrast with surrounding lands, Arizona's free-flowing streams and their riparian environments are a treasure; they are ribbons of greenery laid across the arid landscape. Depictions of Arizona's natural heritage, as conveyed to the world through photographs such as those in Arizona Highways, frequently portray the state's surprisingly sylvan streams. These riparian zones have outstanding ecological significance. Over 75% of Arizona's native wildlife species depend upon them, including more than half of the threatened and endangered species. Cottonwood-willow riparian communities in the southwest are home to more bird species than any other ecosystem in the country, and Arizona is famed world-wide for the diversity of its bird populations.

Many of these streams also offer outstanding recreational opportunities, including fishing, hiking, swimming, birdwatching, river-running, and other water-focused activities. In *The Economic Impact of Arizona's Rivers, Lakes, and Streams*, Arizona Audubon found that water-based outdoor recreation has a greater economic impact than mining or golf, contributing $7.1 billion to Arizona's GDP, providing $4.5 billion in household income, and generating $1.8 billion in tax revenues. And as you probably know yourself, a day relaxing by a creek is *priceless.*

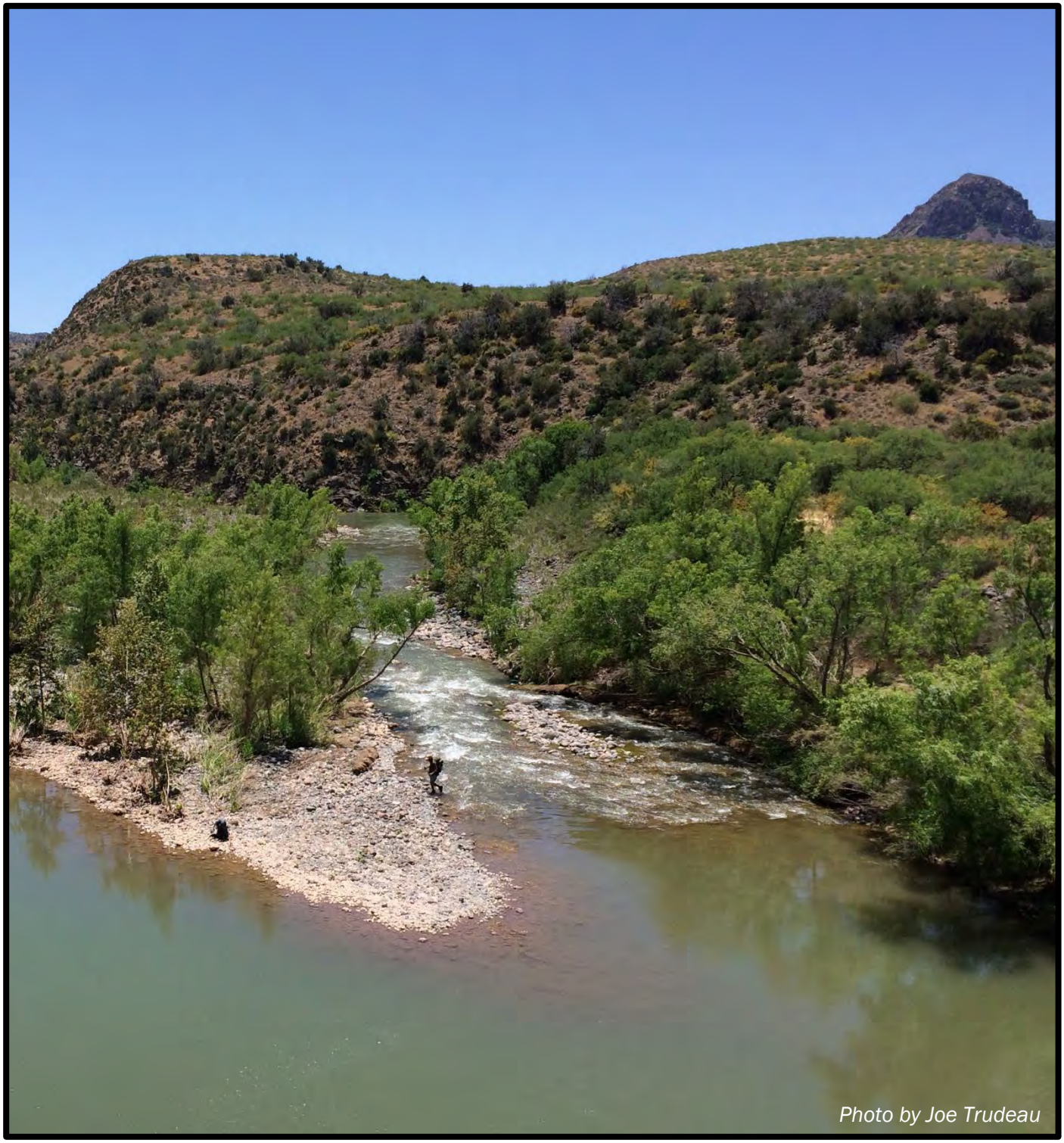
Protecting Arizona's rivers is a priority for people of all political stripes and cultural backgrounds. In *The Arizona We Want: The Decade Ahead*, the Center for Arizona's Future reported that 92% of Arizonans want to preserve and protect Arizona's rivers, natural areas and wildlife, 85% want to put regulations in place to protect rural water supplies, and 82% want to protect and expand open spaces for parks and outdoor recreation. Colorado College's bipartisan *2023 Conservation in the West Poll* found that 86% of Arizonans support a national goal of conserving 30% of America's land and waters by the year 2030, and 69% want elected leaders to put more emphasis on protecting water, air, wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities over maximizing drilling and mining.

In spite of broad support for protecting our rivers, decisive actions are few and far between. Since the release of the original *Lifeblood of the Desert* proposal, only one stream in Arizona – Fossil Creek – has been designated by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River. Some rivers have seen their protections improved, most notably the San Pedro and Agua Fria Rivers which have since been encompassed by Riparian National Conservation Areas, but even in those areas, conflicts with unsustainable and damaging land uses have persisted to this day. The introduction to the 1991 *Lifeblood of the Desert* included a discussion of state-level river conservation activities, which are all but absent in today's political climate. These include:

- The 1986 Governor's Task Force on Recreation on Federal Lands report pressing "vigorously for congressional designation of all qualifying Arizona rivers into the National Wild and Scenic River System."
- The 1989 Arizona State Parks Board Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan that called for adding Arizona rivers to the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Governor Rose Mofford's June 1989 executive order calling for a series of steps to improve protection of riparian areas, including creating a Riparian Habitat Task Force.
- The Task Force's October 1990 report calling for "efforts to designate qualified rivers and streams in Arizona to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System."
- Governor Mofford's February 1991 executive order directing state agencies to "assist in the identification and evaluation of rivers and streams that might be designated as National Wild and Scenic Rivers."

The time is upon us to reinvigorate efforts to protect Arizona's rivers – a move that will benefit wildlife, ecosystems, communities, downstream farmers, Tribal nations, and society as a whole. The threats of drought, rising temperatures, aquifer depletion, new dam proposals, indiscriminate off-road vehicle use, unauthorized livestock grazing, and dewatering for mining, agriculture, and urban sprawl have not abated and in fact are more intense every year. There is no greater tool for mitigating these threats than the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Lifeblood of the Desert II provides a roadmap for where we must focus our efforts in the designation of the next generation of Arizona's Wild and Scenic Rivers – our last free-flowing and outstandingly remarkable streams.



Arizona has two designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. Shown here is the Verde River, designated as a Wild River in 1984. The backpacker in this scene is crossing the Verde just below Fossil Creek, which is Arizona's other designated Wild and Scenic River, established in 2009. Just downstream of this photo, the East Verde River joins the mainstem of the Verde. This confluence of outstanding waterways is in the heart of the Mazatzal Wilderness, which, at more than 250,000 acres, is the largest wilderness area in Arizona administered by the U.S. Forest Service. The Verde Watershed, situated in the geographic center of Arizona, features some of the state's most significant Wild and Scenic River opportunities. This includes the lower 10 miles of the Verde, immediately below the designated segment, and the 45-mile Upper Verde River, which is the top priority for conservation organizations working in the state. Together with other iconic streams like the East Verde, Oak Creek, Wet Beaver Creek, and West Clear Creek, this is among the most scenic and biodiverse stream complexes in the American Southwest.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

Q. When was the Act passed?

A. The Act (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271-1287) was signed on October 2, 1968. It has been amended many times, mainly to designate new rivers and authorize additional rivers for study.

Q. What is the purpose of the Act and of designating rivers? How should these rivers be managed?

A. The Act provides a national policy and program to protect selected rivers, or segments of rivers, in their free-flowing condition and to protect and enhance their Outstandingly Remarkable Values, with an emphasis on the protection of aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeologic, and scientific features.

Q. What is the definition of "free-flowing?"

A. Section 16(b) of the Act defines free-flowing as "existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway." The existence of small dams, diversion works, or other minor in-channel structures shall not automatically disqualify a river for designation. Designated segments currently exist that are downstream from or are located between dams.

Q. What is the definition of "Outstandingly Remarkable Value?"

A. In the Act, river values identified include scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. The Act does not further define ORVs. However, agency resource professionals have developed interpretive criteria for evaluating river values (unique, rare, or exemplary) based on professional judgment on regional, physiographic, or geographic comparisons.

Q. What makes a river Eligible for the National System?

A. To be eligible, a river must be free-flowing and have at least one Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV), i.e., scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar value.

Q. When is a river evaluated for eligibility for possible inclusion in the National System?

A. Most commonly, rivers are studied for their eligibility through their respective agency inventory and planning processes. Every river in this book that has undergone eligibility studies was through regular planning processes.

Q. Can intermittent rivers be considered Eligible?

A. Yes. For purposes of eligibility evaluation, the volume of flow is sufficient if it is enough to sustain or complement the ORVs identified within the segment. Rivers with intermittent or nonperennial flows exist within the National System and may be representative of rivers within particular physiographic regions.

Q. What does the term suitability mean?

A. While eligibility is an objective evaluation and documentation of a rivers free-flowing status, water quality, and ORVs, suitability is an agency opinion on whether there are other, often non-conservation, considerations that conflict with Wild and Scenic designation. As such, suitability studies are often influenced by socio-political factors opposed to designation. A suitability finding is not required for Congressional designation and offers no more protective benefits than a finding of eligibility; rather, suitability studies have been used to strip rivers of their agency-determined eligibility.

Q. How are rivers designated?

A. There are two ways rivers are designated into the National System:

- By Act of Congress. This requires legislation to amend Section 3(a) of the Act. Rivers designated by Congress are listed in Section 3(a) of the Act. Congress has designated many rivers that were not previously found eligible for protection, as well as many that have been found eligible or suitable.

- By the Secretary of the Interior. This requires a governor to submit an application to the Secretary of the Interior under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act. This is a less commonly used pathway to protection.

Q. What is the difference between a "Wild," "Scenic" or "Recreational" river?

A. Rivers designated under Section 3(a) of the Act, and most designated under Section 2(a)(ii), are classified in one of three categories depending on development and accessibility along each section. Designated segments are classified and administered under one of the following, as defined in Section 2(b) of the Act:

> **Wild rivers:** 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:** 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. These segments are usually more developed than wild and less developed than recreational. This classification may or may not include scenery as an ORV.
>
> **Recreational river areas:** Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shoreline and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. This classification, however, does not imply that recreation is an ORV or that the segment must be managed or developed for recreational activities.

Distinct segments along the designated reach may contain differing classifications (wild, scenic, or recreational), e.g., a 100-mile WSR may be classified as wild for 50 miles, scenic for 30 miles, and recreational for 20 miles. Importantly, all classifications share the same core protections, and the managing agency cannot let a river slip from one classification to another lower classification.

Q. What are the primary effects of WSR designation?

A. WSR designation seeks to protect and enhance a river's current natural condition and provide for public use consistent with retaining those values. Designation affords certain legal protection from adverse development, e.g., no new dams may be constructed, nor are federally assisted water resource development projects allowed that are judged to have an adverse effect on designated river values. Where private lands are involved, the federal managing agency will work with local governments and owners to develop voluntary protective measures.

Q. What are the effects of WSR designation on private landowners within the river corridor?

A. Under the Act, designation neither gives nor implies government control of private lands within the river corridor. Although many rivers include private lands within the boundaries of the designated river area, management restrictions would apply only to federal lands. WSR designations generally cause property values to remain stable or increase.

Q. How does WSR designation affect agricultural practices on federal lands inside the corridor?

A. Livestock grazing, timber harvesting, and other permitted uses may occur in a WSR corridor as long as the uses do not adversely impact or otherwise degrade the values for which a river was designated. Existing water rights are not affected by designation.

Q. Why should one support WSR designation?

A. Many individuals and communities support designation to help focus management efforts on protecting and enhancing river values. The intent of the Act is to build partnerships among landowners, river users, tribal nations and all levels of governments in developing goals for river protection. Designation provides protection against projects that alter the free-flowing condition, water quality and the values for which the river was designated.

Q. Will WSR designation lead to restrictions on recreational use of rivers?

A. No, not unless necessary to protect public safety, the river's water quality, or other resource values. Whether and how to restrict recreation is a key issue in the development of a Comprehensive River Management Plan, which includes extensive public involvement and must be completed within three years of designation.

For more information see the 75-page *Compendium of Questions & Answers Relating to Wild & Scenic Rivers,* compiled by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, which was drawn upon for the questions and answers here. This document is available online at: https://www.rivers.gov/documents/q-a.pdf

THE GRAND CANYON BIOREGION

The Grand Canyon and the Colorado River need no introduction. The gem of America's National Park System, a focal point in a dozen southwestern Native American cultures, and one of the wonders of the world, this vast ecosystem is without comparison. But to those who know the canyon well, the most extraordinary wonders are deep within the many side canyons that have carved thousands of feet through nearly two billion years of earths tumultuous history. In addition to the Colorado River, this section covers 43 tributaries within Grand Canyon National Park and the adjacent Kaibab National Forest, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Bureau of Land Management lands, plus the Virgin River. These range from lengthy rivers of their own, like the Paria and Little Colorado Rivers, to side canyons like Fern Glen Creek, which is just half a mile long.

BOATERS MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH AWE-INSPIRING SCENERY
COLORADO RIVER, GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
PHOTO BY JOE TRUDEAU

The Grand Canyon Bioregion

The Colorado River through the Grand Canyon is distinguished by its scenic splendor, the diversity of its flora and fauna, its display of nearly 2 billion years of geology, and its sheer magnitude. The river today is still a wild torrent, though it is temporarily harnessed by society at Glen Canyon Dam. Though the dam has impacted hydrology, geomorphology, and ecology, the river is always striving to break free, and someday it will. Along its course through the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River is revived by flows and sediments added by dozens of tributaries; each contributing to the renewal of the natural state of the river.

The magnificence of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon is unrivaled; there is no way one section of a book can do it justice. Hundreds of books have been published on the Grand Canyon, and indeed more will come. In this book, we can only provide a brief overview of the potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Grand Canyon. The overview presented here is similar to what was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in their 1991 and 1993 *Lifeblood of the Desert* citizen proposals, although here we expand upon those recommendations through the inclusion of updated information that has since been completed for Grand Canyon National Park, the Kaibab National Forest, and Bureau of Land Management lands in Utah and Arizona.

The definitive source for detailed Wild and Scenic River information on the Colorado River and its side canyons in the Grand Canyon is the 2005 report titled *Protecting Wild Waters in a Dry World: A Proposal for Wild and Scenic Rivers in Grand Canyon National Park*. This exhaustive report was produced by Dr. Joel Barnes, Professor of Environmental Studies and Adventure Education at Prescott College, following four river-based research trips and three land-based research trips between 1998 and 2001. The field research teams were coordinated and mentored by Prescott College faculty Joel Barnes, Paul Sneed, and Steve Munsell, as well as Grand Canyon National Park Science Center staff and Wild and Scenic River experts, including members of the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council. Each trip enrolled 12-15 advanced environmental studies students from Prescott College who were organized into teams of research assistants.

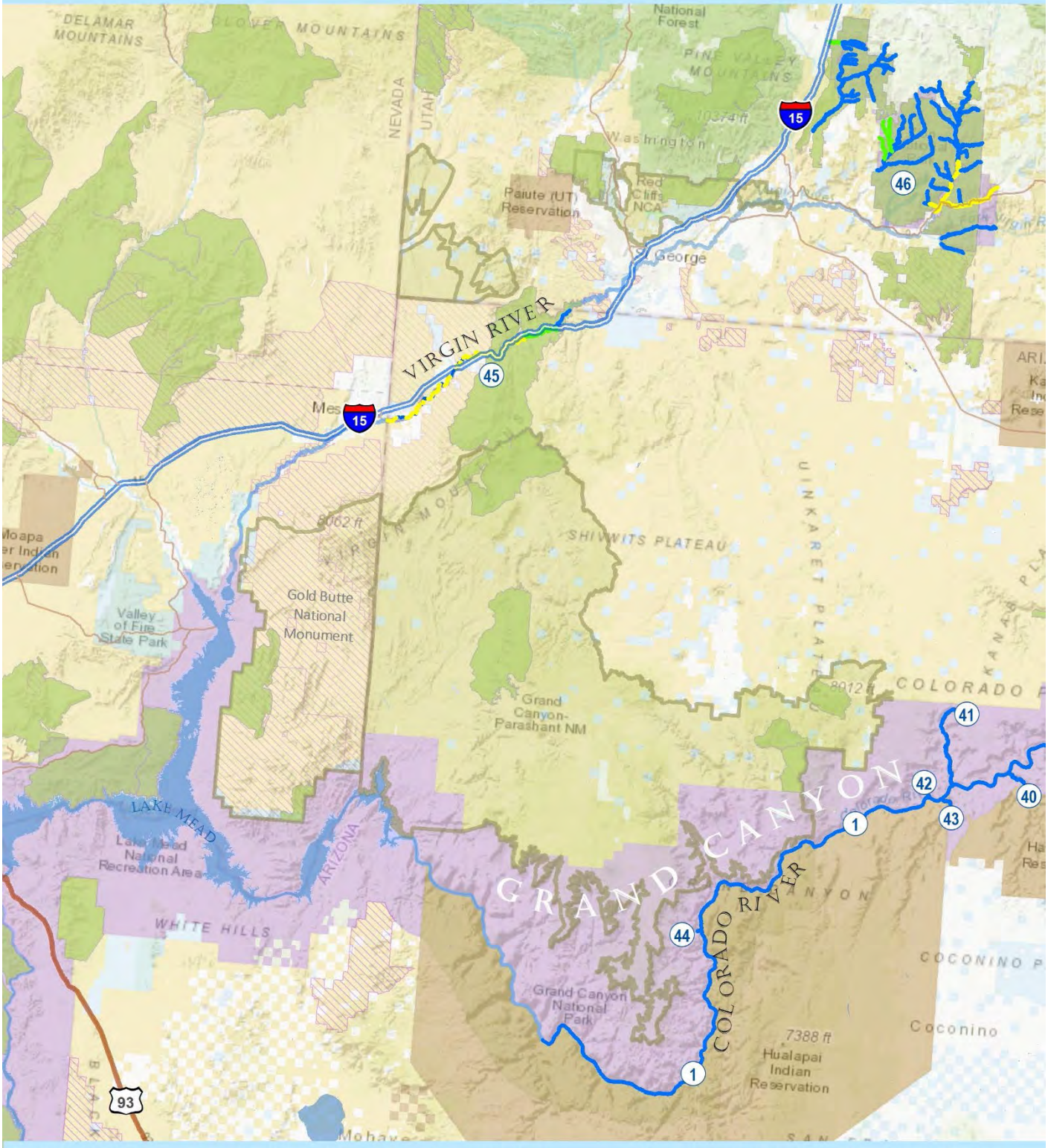
Barnes' findings were adopted by the National Park Service as an eligibility study for Grand Canyon National Park, as noted in the Park's 2015 Backcountry Management Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The map on the following pages illustrates these segments, as well as upstream portions of the Paria River, Kanab Creek, and Virgin River that were evaluated in separate eligibility and suitability studies. A table in Appendix A lists all of the streams shown on the following map along with their mileage, classification, and Outstandingly Remarkable Values, which include recreation, scenery, geology, fish & wildlife, ecology, vegetation, cultural, hydrology, and geomorphology. Detailed descriptions of the National Park segments listed here are provided in Barnes (2005), which is hyperlinked at the end of this book.

This updated compendium combines Barnes' study with the Bureau of Land Management's 1997 Statewide Wild and Scenic River Study Report and the Kaibab National Forests' 2014 Forest Plan, resulting in 245 miles of the main stem of the Colorado River, from Lee's Ferry to Spencer Creek Canyon (the upper extent of Lake Mead's backwaters), as well as 43 Eligible tributary side canyons totaling more than 286 miles. This section profiles a few of these tributaries in more detail because of their significance, including the Paria River and Kanab Creek which join the Colorado in the Grand Canyon, plus 28.2 miles of the Virgin River, which joins the Colorado River in present-day Lake Mead. On top of this, an additional 100 miles of the Paria River and its tributaries in Utah, and an additional 165 miles of the Virgin River and its tributaries in Utah, are mentioned in their respective sections.

"Just as we become captivated by a candle flame or campfire, moving water in the smallest stream or a raging river can capture our imagination and carry us away to our subconscious world. That the wild waters of Grand Canyon can lure us into such listening is one nugget of wisdom they have to share. Of course, the question is not "Can we save these wild places?", because we know how and we have the legal tools, but rather "Do we have the courage to save them?" Grand Canyon can inspire the courage we need to find that elusive balance between preservation and development, and to protect the remaining wild waters of the American Southwest."

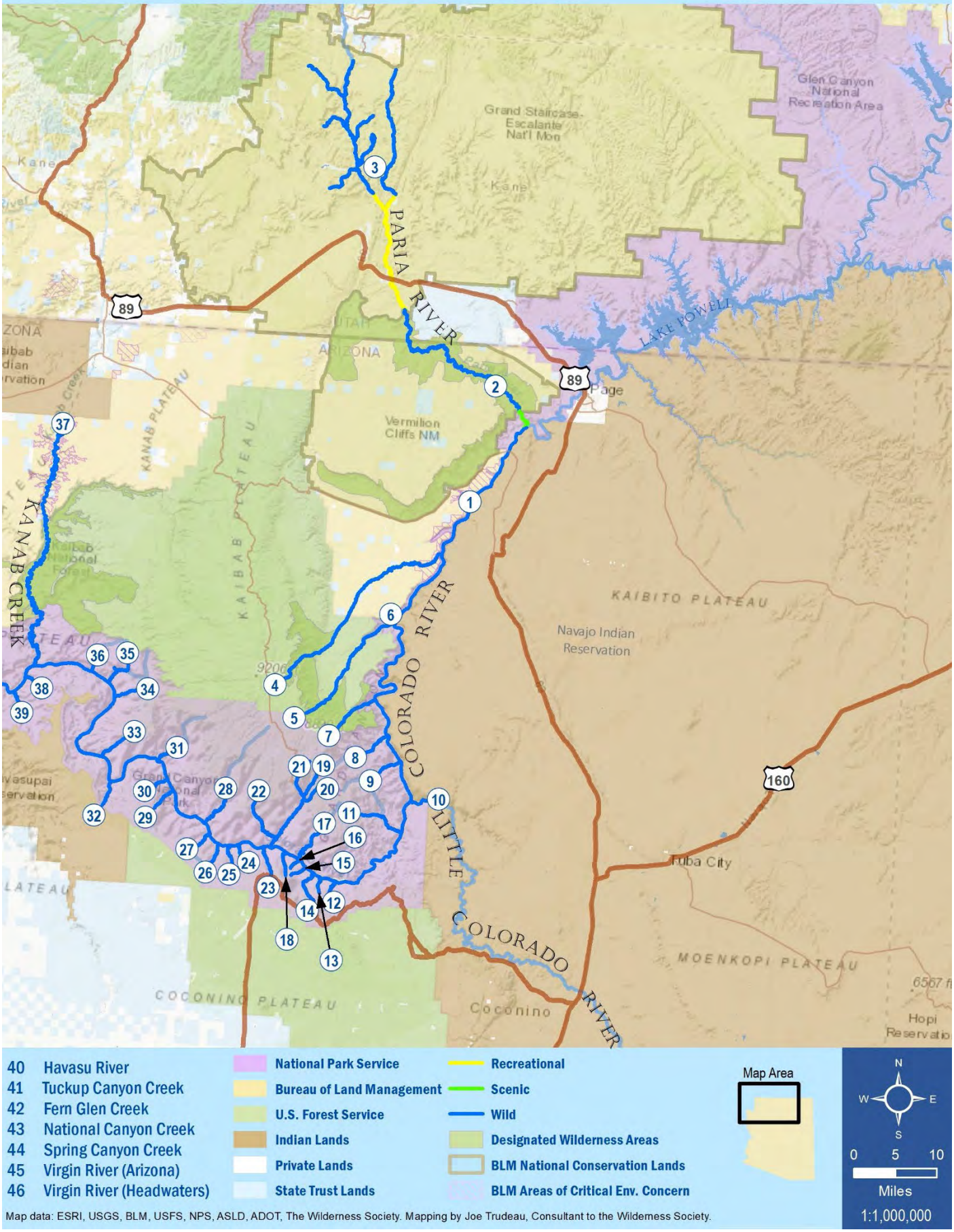
Joel Barnes, from Protecting Wild Waters in a Dry World

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers



1	Colorado River	9	Kwagunt Creek	17	Clear Creek	25	Monument Creek	33	Blacktail Creek
2	Paria River (Arizona)	10	Little Colorado River	18	Cremation Creek	26	Hermit Creek	34	Stone Creek
3	Paria River (Headwaters)	11	Lava Chuar Creek	19	Bright Angel Creek	27	Boucher Creek	35	Tapeats Creek
4	North Canyon Wash	12	Hance Creek	20	Manzanita Creek	28	Crystal Creek	35	Thunder River
5	South Canyon Creek	13	Cottonwood Creek	21	Roaring Springs Creek	29	Ruby Canyon Creek	36	Deer Creek
6	Vasey's Paradise	14	Grapevine Creek	22	Phantom Creek	30	Serpentine Canyon	37	Kanab Creek
7	Saddle Canyon Creek	15	Boulder Canyon	23	Pipe Creek	31	Shinumo Creek	38	Olo Canyon Creek
8	Nankoweap Creek	16	Lone Tree Canyon	24	Salt Creek	32	Royal Arch Creek	39	Matkatamiba Creek

of the Grand Canyon Bioregion



Colorado River and Tributaries

Top left: The namesake feature in Royal Arch Canyon. Photo by Chris Grove.
Top right: A canyoneer stops along his voyage down Olo Canyon. Photo by Pete Hathaway.
Bottom: The Colorado River as seen from an overlook at the confluence with Badger Creek. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Below are Outstandingly Remarkable Value descriptions for the Colorado River and tributaries as written in the Arizona Rivers Coalition's 1991 *Arizona Rivers: Lifeblood of the Desert* proposal. These words are no less true today than when put to ink more than three decades ago. The only exception being the status of species listed under the endangered species act. Those are corrected here: the razorback sucker was listed as endangered later in 1991; the California condor was reintroduced to the Grand Canyon region in 1992; the peregrine falcon was removed from the endangered species list in 1999; and the humpback chub was downlisted to threatened in 2021. Otherwise, like the Grand Canyon itself, these descriptions have stood the test of time.

Scenic: Words fall short in attempting to describe the awesome majesty of the Grand Canyon. Viewing the canyon while floating down the Colorado River is a particularly special way to see its many moods--absorbing the ever changing scene as each bend of the river, cloud shadow, and changing angle of light reveals a different form, hue, and texture. The many, intimate hiking opportunities up pristine tributaries provide a dramatic contrast to the grandeur of the main canyon itself.

Recreation: The Colorado River within the Grand Canyon is one of the world's premier white-water rafting rivers, offering the longest stretch of recreational whitewater in the world. The river falls 1,900 feet between Lees Ferry and Lake Mead; half of this drop takes place in more than 160 rapids, which make up only 9% of the distance.

Geologic: The Grand Canyon offers a beautifully layered record covering nearly 2 billion years of geologic time. It is one of the most complete records of geologic history exposed anywhere in the world.

Fish and Wildlife: The Colorado River cliffs are home to bands of desert bighorn sheep, as well as the endangered peregrine falcon and other raptors. Large numbers of bald eagles have foraged in Nankoweap Creek in the winter due to the availability of trout. The Grand Canyon has been designated as a proposed location for reintroduction of the endangered California condor within the next two years. All of the raptor species utilize a large home range, and consequently many forage over an expanse of the Colorado River corridor through the Grand Canyon.

The humpback chub has been listed as a federally endangered species since 1973, and lives in the mainstem Colorado River. The species has been forced into a smaller environment and today is focused in the vicinity of the confluence of the Little Colorado River. The humpback chub population in the Grand Canyon is the most important of the six remaining populations in the Colorado River basin, due to its physical isolation in the Grand Canyon and its genetic integrity. Another native fish to the Colorado River, the razorback sucker is currently proposed for federal listing as an endangered species.

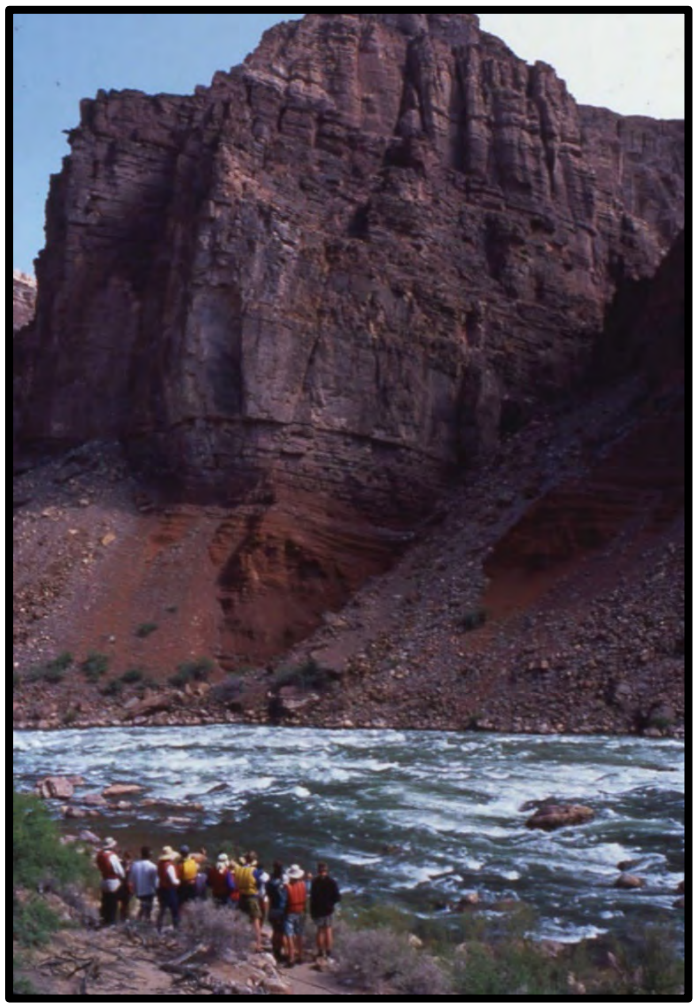
Ecological: Within Grand Canyon National Park, the river passes through three of North America's four deserts: Great Basin, Sonoran, and Mojave. The riparian zone that exists along the Colorado River corridor represents the longest stretch of uninterrupted riparian vegetation in the southwest. The importance of having an intact riparian ecosystem is underscored through the preservation of (1) continuity of important vegetation species, (2) avian corridors for migration, (3) the maintenance of ecological integrity, and (4) as an intact natural laboratory for studying the diversity of life and its processes.

Cultural: The Colorado River corridor in the Grand Canyon has been home to possibly six Native American cultures over the last ten thousand years, including the Hopi who are the direct descendants of the Anasazi. These peoples used the Colorado River corridor in the Grand Canyon for several reasons: survival, growing crops, religious ceremony, transportation (as a migration route), protection, and cultural exchange.

Colorado River and Tributaries

Top left: Thousands of springs, such as this along Nankoweap Creek, feed Grand Canyon tributaries. Photo by Jim Dublinski.
Top right: Deer Creek is one of the most popular side hikes for Grand Canyon river-runners. Photo by Jim Dublinski.
Bottom: The muddy Little Colorado River is an important source of sediment to the Colorado River. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Colorado River and Tributaries



Top left: A Prescott College group scouts Hance Rapids during a 1998 Grand Canyon eligibility survey. Photo by Joel Barnes.
Top right: Shinumo Creek has carved a massive gorge into the 1.8-billion-year-old Vishnu schist. Photo by Jim Dublinski.
Bottom: Boaters hike the trail from the Colorado River up to the explosive grandeur of Thunder River. Photo by Jim Dublinski.

Kanab Creek

Managing Agencies: Bureau of Land Management, Kaibab National Forest, and Grand Canyon National Park
County: Coconino
Watershed: Kanab Creek
Region: Grand Canyon Bioregion

Status:	Eligible (USFS & NPS), Proposed (BLM)			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	55.3	0	0	55.3
Non-federal land:	Less than 1 mile on State Trust land			

Kanab Creek flows southward into Arizona from Utah. It is a tributary to the Colorado River and forms a deeply cut canyon across the Arizona Strip into the Grand Canyon. It is one of the most beautiful and rugged canyons in Arizona and offers ideal habitat for peregrine falcons and desert bighorn sheep. Its aesthetic and ecological values are characterized by hanging gardens, sheer rock walls, and vast solitude. Kanab Creek is an essential feature within the Grand Canyon Bioregion. It provides riparian, desert, and woodland habitats which are a contiguous and integral part of the interrelated flora and fauna of the Grand Canyon. Approximately 13.4 miles of lower Kanab Creek are in Grand Canyon National Park; 20 miles are within the Kaibab National Forest Kanab Creek Wilderness Area; and 21.9 miles are within the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed the entire length of Kanab Creek, from the Kaibab Paiute Indian Reservation to the Colorado River, as a Wild-classified river in 1991. The U.S. Forest Service and Grand Canyon National Park have found their segments Eligible/Wild, but the Bureau of Land Management did not study Kanab Creek in its statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers study. In this review, we carry forward the original Arizona Rivers Coalition proposal, including 33.4 miles of Eligible stream on the National Forest and National Park, and proposing the 21.9 miles through Bureau of Land Management land below the Kaibab Paiute Indian reservation.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC), National Park Service (NPS), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, NPS, USFS): Dramatic topography, multicolored sedimentary rocks, spectacular waterfalls, and verdant riparian vegetation contribute to Kanab Creek's incredible scenery. It's a photographer's and backpacker's paradise.

Geology (ARC, NPS, USFS): Over a billion years of geologic history are exposed in Kanab Creek, including fossils, faults, unconformities, examples of diverse depositional environments, and hanging gardens and unique spring ecosystems.

Recreation (ARC, NPS, USFS): Rugged hiking, camping, rock climbing, bird watching, hunting, and other activities are available along the entire creek. Pools and springs occur along the canyon, and the creek flows year-round in wetter years.

Wildlife (ARC, NPS, USFS): The lower segment is important spawning habitat for native fish found in the Colorado River. The endemic Grand Canyon pink rattlesnake occurs here. Mexican spotted owl has been observed.

Ecology (ARC, NPS): Kanab Creek showcases a continuity of diverse ecological communities which remain unfragmented and intact for species that depend on seasonal movement between a variety of habitats.

Cultural (ARC, NPS): Rock art and dwelling sites are abundant in the higher cliffs. Havasupai, Hualapai, and other modern descendants of prehistoric people of the Grand Canyon regard the entire region as their sacred and spiritual homeland.

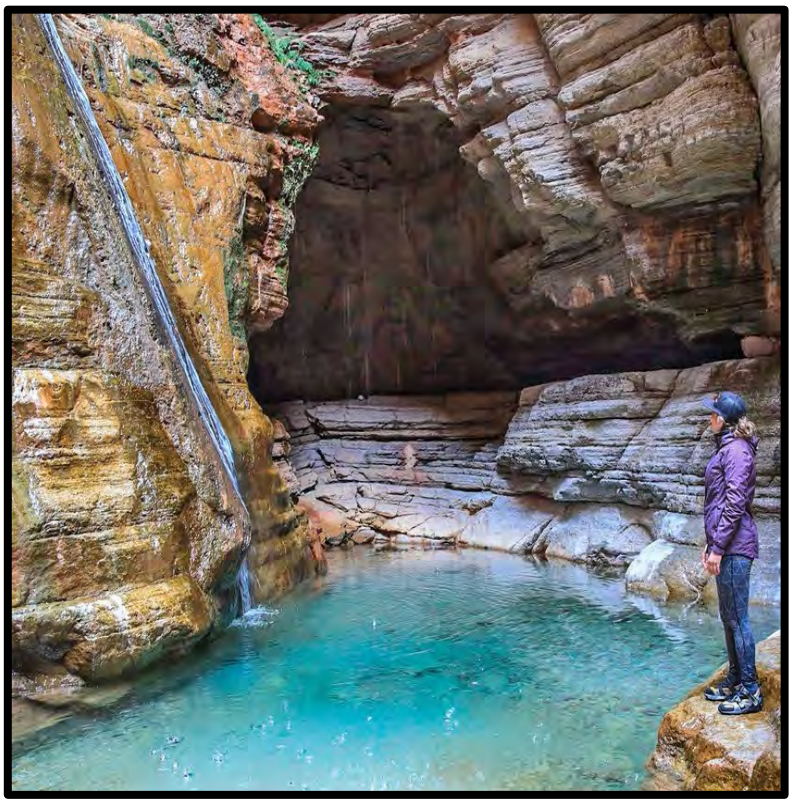
Hydrology/Geomorphology (NPS): Excellent examples of geomorphic processes can be found throughout Kanab Canyon, including evidence of ancient debris flows, scarp retreat, sediment transport, and rotational slumping.

Vegetation (NPS): Five special status plants inhabit Kanab Creek, three of which are endemic to the Grand Canyon.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Entire U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service reaches listed in 1993 as potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The upper 20.2 miles flows through the Kanab Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern, with 13 miles of that segment within the Kanab Creek Addition #1 Proposed Wilderness (Arizona Wilderness Coalition, 2002), which was later formally identified by the Bureau of Land Management as possessing wilderness characteristics.
- ✓ The middle 20 miles flows through the Kanab Creek Wilderness on the Kaibab National Forest, designated in 1984. The National Forest segment was found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report, a decision that was carried forward in the Kaibab's 2014 Management Plan.
- ✓ The lower 13.4 miles flows through Recommended Wilderness in Grand Canyon National Park. The segment was found Eligible for designation by the Park Service based off the 2005 Prescott College eligibility report titled "Protecting Wild Waters in a Dry World: A Proposal for Wild and Scenic Rivers in Grand Canyon National Park."

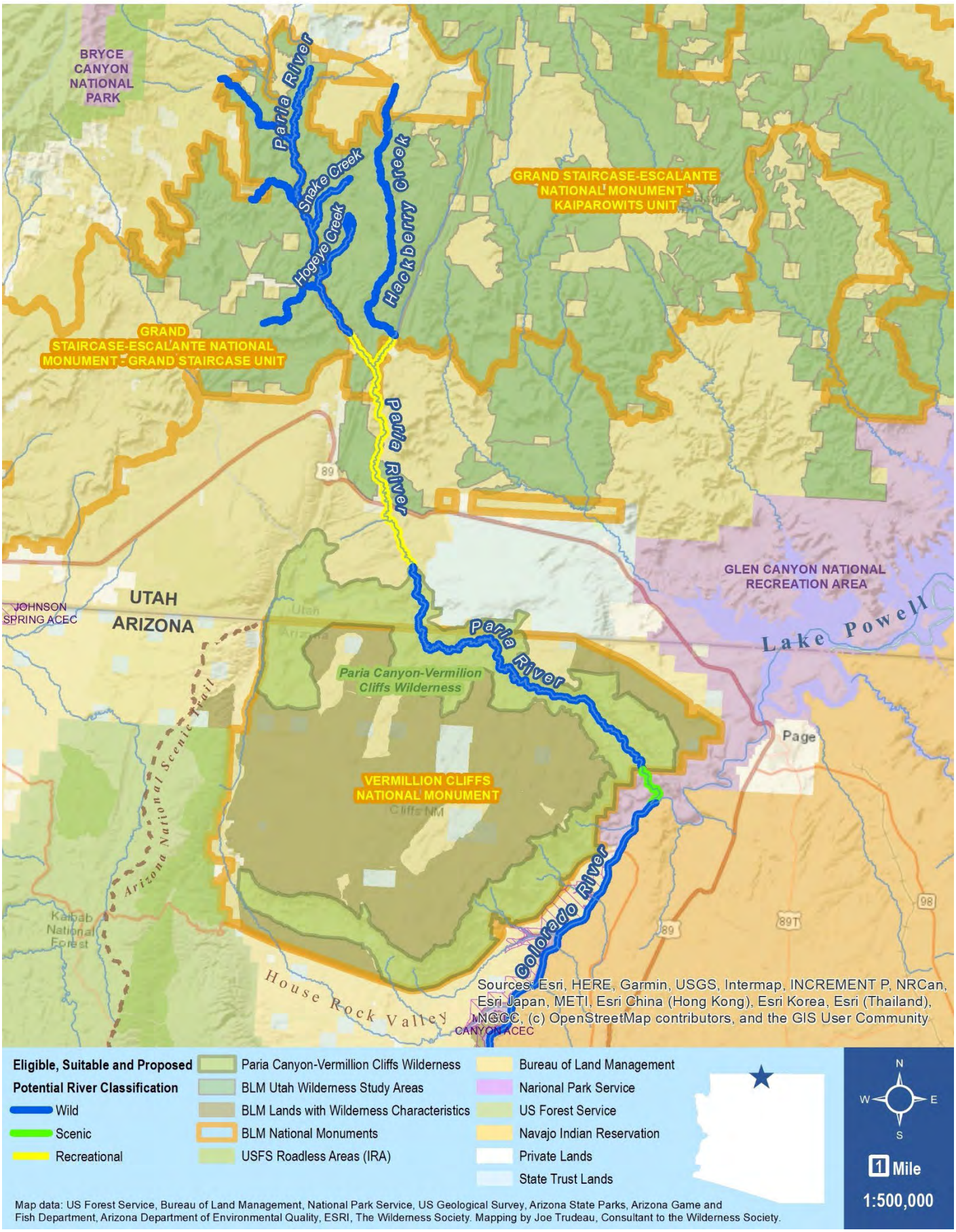
Kanab Creek



Top left: Light, water, and rock meet in colorful displays, deep in Kanab Creek. Photo by Jonathan Buford.
Top right: Stunning blue water flows over a slab in Grand Canyon National Park. Photo by Pete Hathaway.
Bottom: A backpacker peers into Kanab Creek from the Kaibab National Forest. Photo by Meredith Meeks.

Potential Wild and Scenic River Segments at Kanab Creek

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Paria River Watershed



Paria River

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Coconino
Watershed: Paria River
Region: Grand Canyon Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	26.6	3.3	0	29.9
Non-federal land:	none			

The Paria River, emerging on the northeastern slopes of Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, makes a 96-mile journey through some of America's most stunning redrock desert country on its way to meet the Colorado River at the beginning of the Grand Canyon. In Arizona, the river has carved the spectacular Paria Canyon, creating a unique riparian corridor through an otherwise extremely arid and harsh wilderness region. The canyon is noted for its dramatic terrain, featuring a 2,500-foot-deep gorge with a variety of spectacular geological features, such as massive sandstone walls decorated with huge streaks of multi-colored desert varnish. The corridor is an important water source for a variety of wildlife such as deer, bobcat and desert bighorn sheep. As a prized backpacking destination, it offers some of the most scenic hiking in Arizona. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed the Paria River as a Wild river in 1991, and the Bureau of Land Management found the Arizona segment of the river Suitable for designation in its 1997 statewide study. Here, we describe the Arizona segments, but future efforts to protect this river must consider the 100 miles of Eligible segments in Utah too.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Grand Canyon eligibility report (Barnes, 2005) listed these ORVs plus Cultural, Historic, Palaeontologic, Aquatic, and Hydrologic.

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The river's incision through an area of significant geologic uplift and associated faulting exposes numerous layers of the earth's crust, providing dramatic scenery. There are riparian plants that make up delicate hanging gardens and vegetated wall springs that add to the wonder. Other plant life includes the Roaring Springs poppy and striped flower milk vetch, both threatened species. Entering these canyons is like walking into a magical, unique world.

Geology (ARC, BLM): Paria Canyon's remarkable geologic features, like massive amphitheaters, twisting slot canyons, incredible sandstone arches, and sheer cliff faces, have been documented in countless magazines and other media.

Recreation (ARC, BLM): Outstanding backpacking, day hiking, and horseback riding are available along the Paria River. The river corridor is intensively managed to maintain values of solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

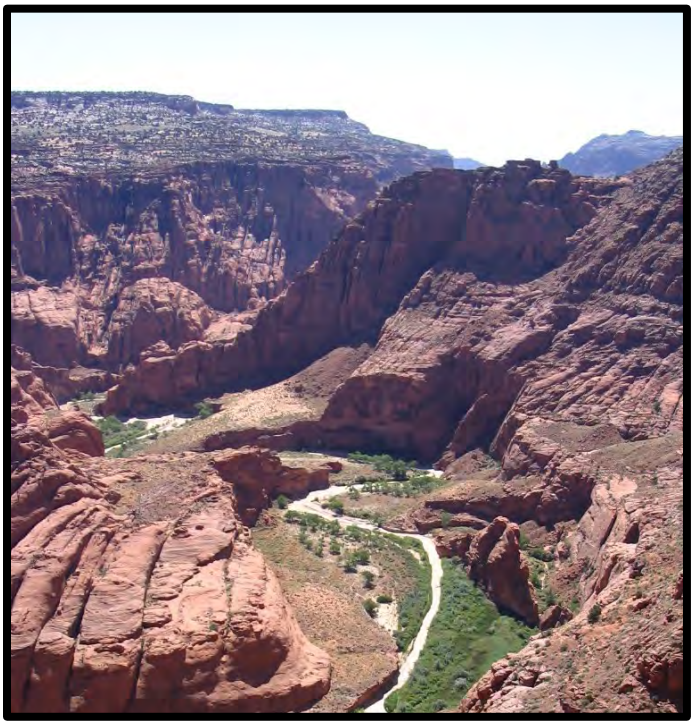
Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): Protected species such as humpback chub, razorback sucker, and southwestern willow flycatcher, as well as bald eagles, peregrine falcons, bighorn sheep, and several other native fish, reside in Paria Canyon. Beaver occasionally reside near the mouth of the canyon.

Cultural (ARC, BLM): The area is rich in remnants of both Native and Euro-American use. Remnants of habitation have been located and documented. Anasazi dwellings and petroglyphs, along with pump sites from early ranches, are still evident.

Riparian Vegetation (BLM): Deciduous trees such as willow, box elder, and cottonwood, grow along sandy terraces. These stand in stark contrast to the soaring walls and arid upland Colorado Plateau desert habitats.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ 35 miles of the Paria from White House Trailhead in Utah to the Colorado River, as well as Buckskin Gulch in Utah from Wire Pass to the confluence with the Paria River, were proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal. Buckskin Gulch is not covered in detail in this report as it is in Utah.
- ✓ The entire river, from the headwaters in Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, to the confluence with the Colorado River, was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The Arizona portion was found Suitable for Wild and Scenic River protection in the Bureau of Land Management's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The BLM found that nearly 100 miles of the Paria River and its tributaries in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah are Eligible and Suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation. These segments are largely encompassed by The Cockscomb and Paria-Hackberry Wilderness Study Areas.
- ✓ 31.5 miles of the Paria River flows through the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area in Utah and Arizona.
- ✓ The 26.6-mile Wild-classified Arizona portion is entirely within the Vermillion Cliffs National Monument.
- ✓ The lower 3.3-mile Scenic-classified segment is within the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.
- ✓ Lee's Ferry at the confluence of the Paria and Colorado Rivers, is designated as an Arizona Heritage Water.



Top: Paria Canyon is one of the most scenic and coveted backpacking trips in the southwest. Photo by Jim Dublinski.
Bottom left: A backpacker stands out among light and shadows along the Paria River in 1984. Photo by Sheila Kollasch.
Bottom right: Looking into the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness from the Paria Plateau. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Virgin River

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Mohave
Watershed: Virgin River
Region: Grand Canyon Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable Study River			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles of BLM Suitable:	2.9	6.7	18.5	28.2
Non-federal land:	6.8 miles of private land between BLM			

The Virgin River flows for 145 miles through three states. It originates east of Zion National Park in the high plateaus of southern Utah, has carved deep red rock canyons in the western Colorado Plateau, and then meanders through the eastern Mojave Desert before emptying into Lake Mead in Nevada. In Arizona, the river cuts through an area of extreme faulting and folding, exposing numerous layers of bedrock and providing spectacular scenery, particularly in the Virgin River Gorge. This is one of the few remaining wild tributaries of the Colorado River, though intense development pressure in growing communities and agricultural areas threaten the river's future flows. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed to designate Wild, Scenic, and Recreational segments along the full 35 miles through Arizona in 1991. In 1994 the Bureau of Land Management found 28.2 miles in public land segments Suitable for designation, excluding 6.8 miles of private land from their study. Upstream in the watershed, 165 miles of stream have been designated as National Wild and Scenic Rivers in and around Zion National Park. Throughout the watershed, numerous conservation organizations from large to small work to protect private lands along the river for many conservation values and public benefits.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The river runs through a rugged canyon with walls from 300 to 500 feet high. This is a uniquely beautiful river where one can see Joshua trees from the banks. On the northern section, access is possible only by foot, horseback, or floating the river down from Utah.

Geology (ARC, BLM): The Virgin River flows through a portion of the Hurricane Cliffs, which form the western edge of the Colorado Plateau. The relatively flat plateau lies to the east, while the Basin and Range Province with its fault-block mountains and alluvium-filled valleys is to the west. The river cuts a scenic gorge several hundred feet deep along the faulted and uplifted Virgin Mountains. Rocks in the canyon walls include the Pennsylvanian Callville Limestone and the Cambrian Tonto Group. The river is actively eroding its bed in this unstable, earthquake-prone environment.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): The Virgin River supports 40 state-sensitive species and 12 federally-listed species, including 6 native fish. The Suitable segment is designated critical habitat for endangered fish (Virgin River chub and woundfin) and birds (southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo). The river also provides habitat for peregrine falcon, California leaf-nosed bat, spotted bat and common black-hawk. The Virgin provides a unique riparian corridor through an otherwise arid region and is an important water source for a variety of wildlife, including the desert bighorn sheep and desert tortoise.

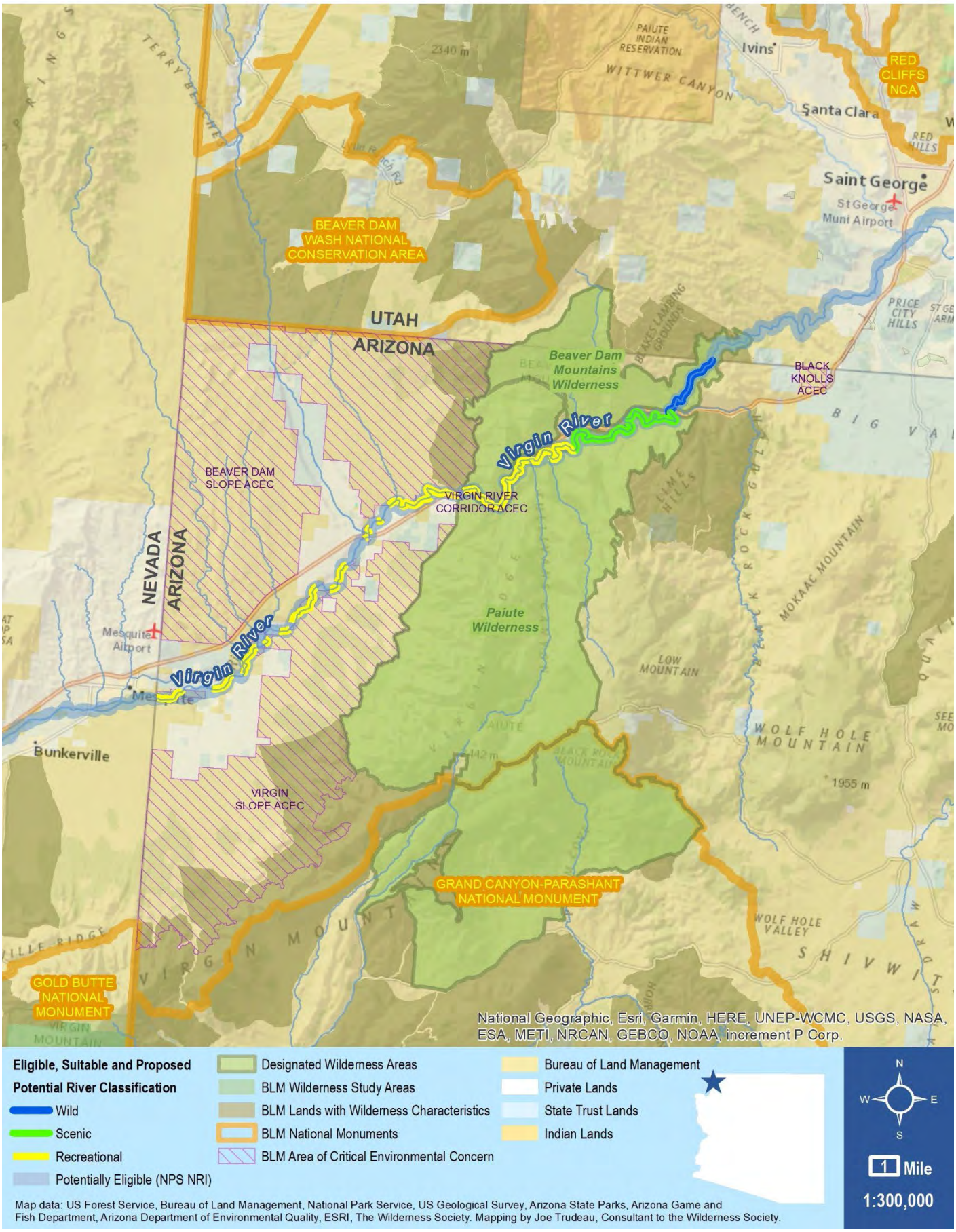
Ecology (ARC)/Aquatic and Riparian (BLM): The Virgin River ecosystem is highly diverse and beautiful. Riparian forests and woodlands mingle with agricultural land and pristine desert. High sediment loads and large floods contribute to a dynamic channel morphology and rich riverine environment.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The entire 35 miles of the Virgin River in Arizona across all land ownerships, from the Utah state line to the Nevada state line, were proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ 126 miles of the Virgin River, from Zion National Park to Lake Mead, were listed in 1982 as potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Portions of the river on public lands in Arizona were found Suitable for Wild and Scenic River protection in the Bureau of Land Management's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The 2008 Arizona Strip Field Office Resource Management Plan directs the agency to manage the full 28.2 Suitable miles so as not to damage the river's existing Wild and Scenic River eligibility, classification, or suitability.
- ✓ 2.8 miles of the Virgin River flows through the Beaver Dam Mountains Wilderness area, and 5.4 miles flows through the Paiute Wilderness. Both areas are managed by the Bureau of Land Management and were established in 1984.
- ✓ The entire length of the Virgin River on public land in Arizona is within the Virgin River Corridor Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, established in the 2008 Resource Management Plan for the Arizona Strip Field Office.
- ✓ 18.4 miles of the Virgin River, as well as 147 miles of tributaries, primarily within Zion National Park in Utah, are designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, established in the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009.

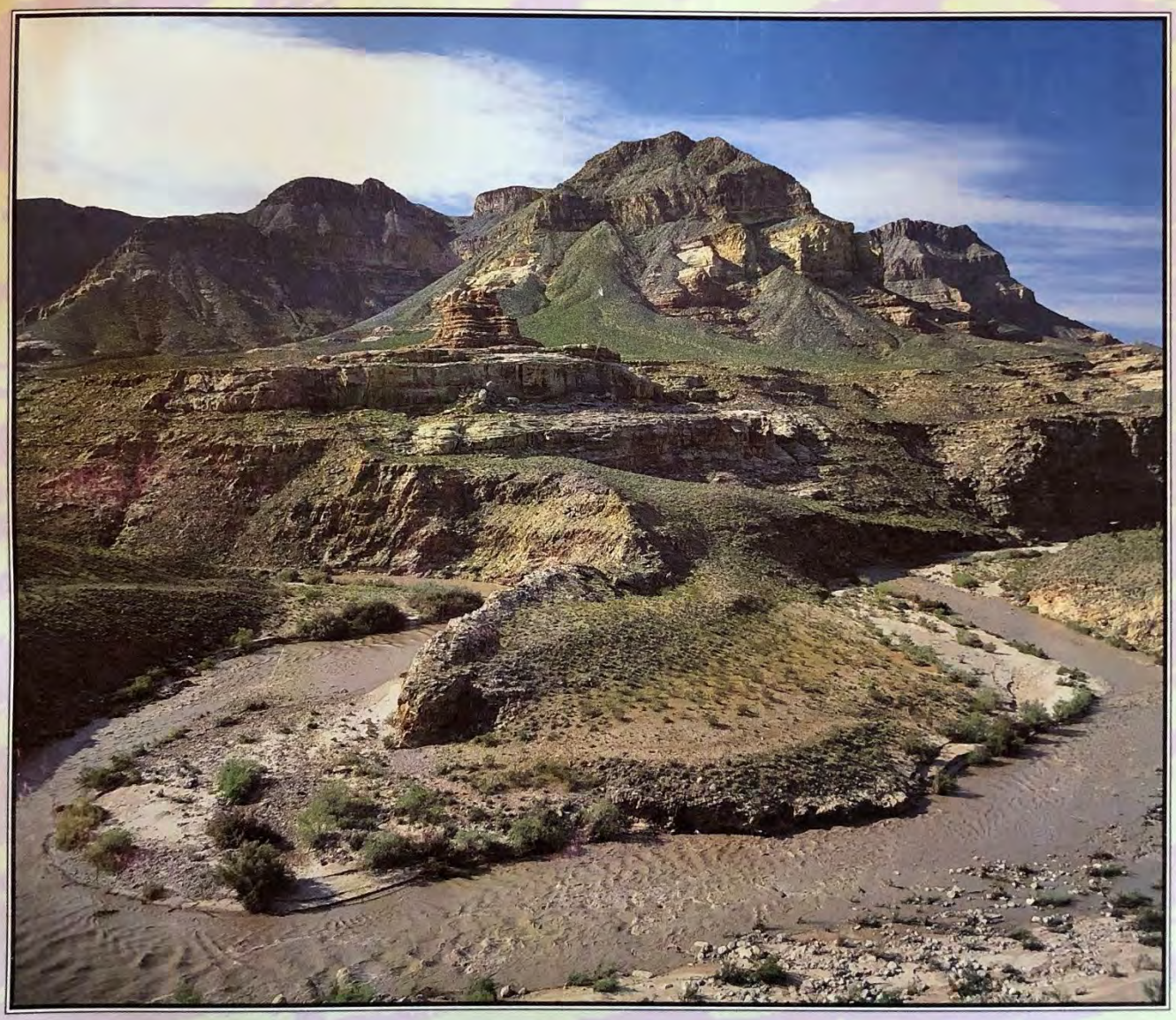
The Virgin River in the Bureau of Land Management's Beaver Dam Wilderness area. Photos by Jonathan Buford.

Potential Wild and Scenic River Segments on the Virgin River



Arizona is laced with ribbons of life-giving streams and rivers which provide the moisture and habitat for wildlife and recreation in otherwise forbidding country. I would like to sound a call-to-action to all of us who care about preserving Arizona's natural heritage to move vigorously ahead with WILD AND SCENIC RIVER *legislation right now. Protecting our natural flowing streams makes good economic sense ...and is simply the right thing to do.*

— **BRUCE BABBITT**, *March 11, 1991*



THE VIRGIN RIVER

The Virgin River is the last river to flow from a subalpine to desert ecosystem without a major dam—yet. Designating the Virgin as a *WILD AND SCENIC RIVER* is needed to protect this fascinating and fragile ecosystem.

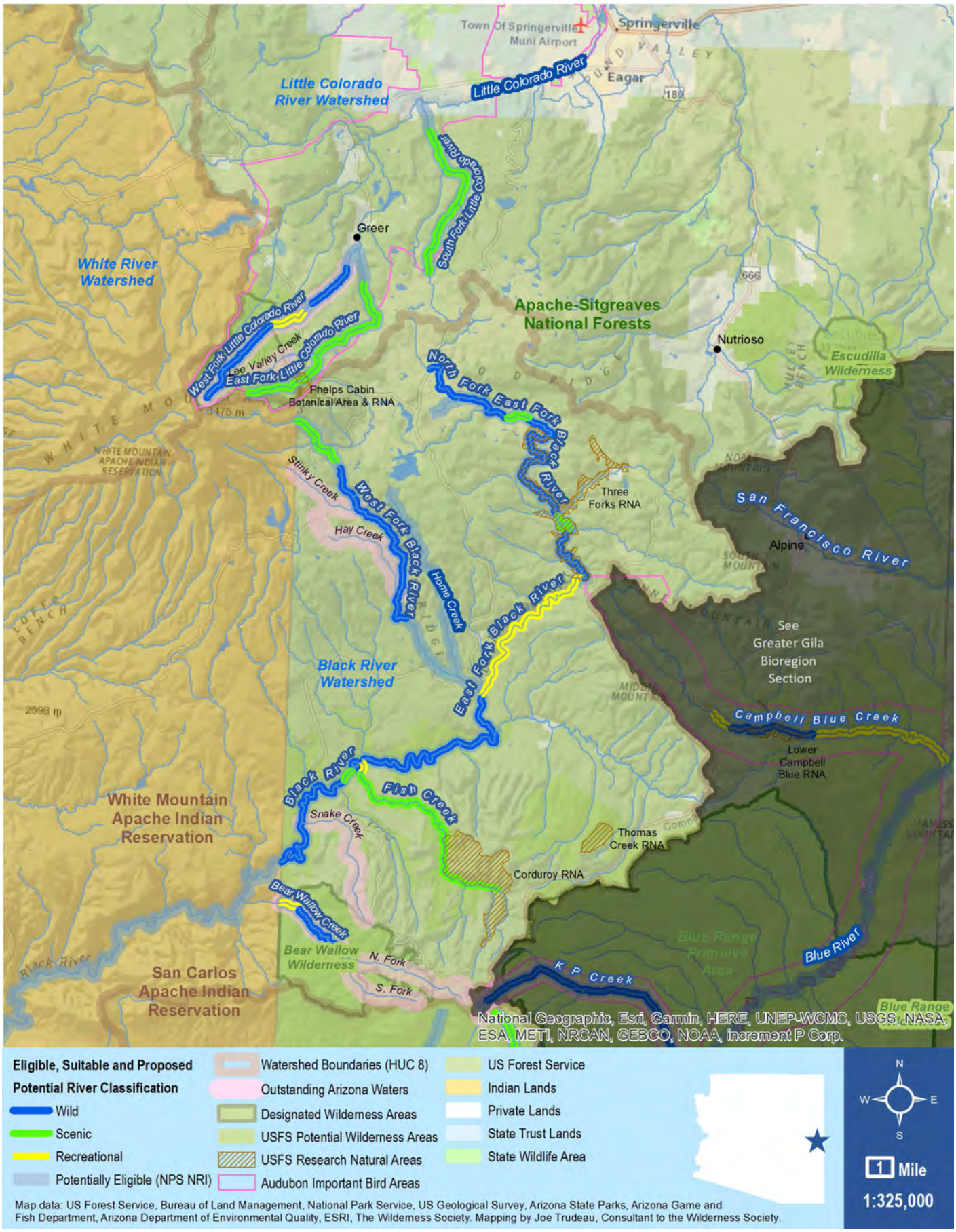
The back cover of the 1993 *Lifeblood of the Desert* revised proposal, featuring a quote from former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt.

The White Mountains Bioregion

Eastern Arizona's White Mountains are an expanse of rolling meadows, rounded peaks, lush canyons, and diverse forests. This is Arizona's most extensive high country, where wolves roam and native trout dart through dark, shadowy waters. Several of Arizona's most spectacular rivers are born here. The Little Colorado River emerges in canyons on the eastern slopes of Mount Baldy, the state's second highest peak at 11,409 feet. The forks of the Black River begin in a mosaic of conifer forests and grasslands to the east of Baldy, and eventually merge with the White River to form the Salt River. And the Blue River, covered in the Gila Bioregion section of this book, begins in pine forests and quickly drops into the rugged mountains of America's last remaining Primitive Area as it descends towards the Gila River in the Sonoran Desert below.

Patches of Spruce-Fir-Aspen Forest Meet Vibrant Meadows and Cool Waters
East Fork of the Black River, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
Photo by Joel Hazelton

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the White Mountains Bioregion



West Fork of the Little Colorado River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Apache
Watershed: Little Colorado River Headwaters
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	6.4	0	1.7	8.1
Non-federal land:	none			

The headwaters of the Little Colorado River are in eastern Arizona's White Mountains, in the Mount Baldy Wilderness, one of the smallest but most pristine wilderness areas in Arizona. From its headwaters at over 11,000 feet elevation, this creek flows through forests of Colorado blue spruce, white fir, corkbark fir, ponderosa pine, white pine, and quaking aspen, cutting through hundreds of feet of volcanic rock. Near Sheep Crossing, the creek leaves the wilderness area and flows through lush meadows seasonally laced with wildflowers. The West Fork of the Little Colorado River provides a high quality semi-primitive, water-based, recreation area adjacent to the popular resort community of Greer. The headwaters of the longest river beginning and ending in Arizona deserve special protection for the unique qualities found in this part of the state. The stream is already classified by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality as an Outstanding Arizona Water.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): This delightful creek is one of the most scenic in Arizona as it flows through some of the state's highest elevations. These cool and clear waters are the ecological focal point of the unique nature of the White Mountains. Wet meadows, Arizona willow stands, willow-dogwood associations and forested slopes above the stream channel are all part of a complex functioning ecosystem. This stream is an example of the vast – and beautiful – diversity that Arizona has to offer.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): The area is popular for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, picnicking, sightseeing, nature study, and photography. Primitive recreation is available in the Mount Baldy Wilderness, and accessible recreation is available on State Highway 273. Many come from afar to fish for Apache Trout, or photograph the diverse array of wildlife and seasonal colors.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The fragile riparian and aquatic habitats associated with the river support several special status species of plants and animals. Among the stream-side vegetation are several species of plants endemic to the White Mountains, including Arizona willow, White Mountain paintbrush and Goodding's onion. The stream is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for Apache trout, and secondarily for bluehead sucker and speckled dace. The lower Wild segment is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the Recreational and lower Wild segments are critical habitat for the critically-endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. The West Fork is within the Audubon Society's Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area, which contains high-elevation habitat that supports a diversity of breeding species that rely on the highest elevations in Arizona.

Geology (ARC): Mount Baldy is an extinct volcano, a remnant of a broad Tertiary lava cone between 10 and 8.6 million years old. Most of this ancient dome has eroded away by both water and by glaciers. The area has many lovely meadows typical of glaciated areas. The forks of the upper Little Colorado River are the only Eligible rivers in Arizona with this geologic history.

Cultural (ARC): Prehistoric sites, such as hunting camps and rock art from the Mogollon culture, are believed to occur along canyon walls along the river. This area has not yet been thoroughly surveyed, and efforts to do so are needed.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Entire reach from the headwaters to the confluence with the East Fork on private lands in the town of Greer was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory, though two fish barriers have shortened the Eligible segment.
- ✓ From the headwaters to the two Greer fish barriers is an Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ The upper 4.25 miles flows through the Mount Baldy Wilderness, established in 1970.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ Included in the Audubon Society's Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area.

Lush meadows, cool streams, and dark forests characterize Arizona's White Mountains. Photo by Nick Burruel.

East Fork of the Little Colorado River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Apache
Watershed: Little Colorado River Headwaters
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	9.3	0	9.3
Non-federal land:	none			

The East Fork of the Little Colorado River starts in the Mount Baldy Wilderness and flows northeast through the Phelps Cabin Research Natural Area (RNA) and Phelps Botanical Area and north to the small town of Greer. This area is known for its scenery and clean water, with cool, dark forests, lush meadows, and abundant precipitation combining to form a truly unique environment in Arizona. The Eligible segment begins at the river's headwaters and ends at a fish barrier above Greer. The U.S. Forest Service classified the entire stream as one 9.3-mile Scenic segment. However, the upper 2.6 miles of the segment is within a Wilderness area as well as contiguous lands identified by the Forest Service as Potential Wilderness. Therefore, future efforts to designate this stream as a Wild and Scenic River should consider reclassifying that upper section to Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery, Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation as ORVs in the 2015 Forest Plan.

Scenery: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "The East Fork Little Colorado River is one of the most scenic rivers in Arizona." The high forest, rolling meadows, lush riparian vegetation, and montane geology combine to provide outstanding scenery. The canyon is as much as 600 feet deep, with water rushing over boulders between mossy cliffs.

Recreation: The area is popular for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, picnicking, sightseeing, nature study, and photography. Primitive recreation is available in the Mount Baldy Wilderness, and accessible recreation is available on State Highway 273. Many come from afar to fish for Apache Trout, or photograph the diverse array of wildlife and seasonal colors.

Fish and Wildlife: The stream, as well as its tributary Lee Valley Creek, is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for Apache trout, and secondarily for bluehead sucker and speckled dace. The lower 1.5 miles is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The lower 7 miles, as well as Lee Valley Creek, are designated critical habitat for the critically-endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. The East Fork is within the Audubon Society's Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area, which contains high-elevation habitat that supports a diversity of breeding species that rely on the highest elevations in Arizona. Sensitive wildlife species include northern goshawk, Arizona montane vole, water shrew, and Mexican gray wolf.

Vegetation: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Vegetation is an ORV because the river corridor and surrounding riparian areas support a large diversity of flora associated with the unique forests of eastern Arizona. Sensitive plant species include Goodding's onion, White Mountains paintbrush, Bebb's willow, and Arizona willow. The stream flows through a variety of plant communities including sub-alpine meadows, mixed conifer, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and pine-bunch grass. The year-round stream is important to the riparian areas and wildlife. The importance of the riparian communities is demonstrated by the establishment of the Phelps Cabin RNA and the Phelps Botanical Area."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Entire reach from the headwaters to the confluence with the West Fork on private lands in the town of Greer was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ This river starts in the Mount Baldy Wilderness and flows northeast through the Phelps Cabin Research Natural Area (RNA) and Phelps Botanical Area before flowing through the small town of Greer.
- ✓ Lee Valley Creek (tributary) is a designated Outstanding Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ Included in the Audubon Society's Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area.

Top: The Little Colorado's upper reaches are the highest elevation riparian meadows in Arizona. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: Spruce, fir, and other conifers keep these waters cool for native trout. Photo by Adrienne McLeod.

South Fork of the Little Colorado River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Apache
Watershed: Little Colorado River Headwaters
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	7.3	0	7.3
Non-federal land:	none			

The South Fork of the Little Colorado River begins at the grassland-forest ecotone at the crossing of Forest Road 409, and ends at the mainstem of the Little Colorado River northeast of the town of Greer. Two Eligible segments are described here, separated by a fish barrier, and the lower segment ending at a fish barrier. Riparian vegetation, including montane willow riparian forest, occurs adjacent to the river, which flows though ponderosa and mixed conifer forest in an impressive canyon. Almost the entire river corridor burned in the 2011 Wallow Fire, but in a 2012 Addendum to the Eligibility Report, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests stated: "It is expected that aspen regeneration will be very high along the entire Eligible river, with the extent of fall colors greater than in the past. Increased landscape diversity is expected because of the greater variety of landscapes (more rock features visible, greater presence of aspen, different tree sizes and species as regrowth occurs, and more open forests where small trees were killed)." The U.S. Forest Service classified the two segments as Scenic; however, most of the upper segment is not accessed by roads, so any future efforts to designate this stream as a Wild and Scenic River should evaluate reclassifying that segment to Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery as an ORV in the 2015 Forest Plan. A prehistoric ORV was removed from the findings of the agency's 1993 Resource Information Report because the sites are on state and private land to the north. The Fish and Wildlife ORV has been added because of fisheries value, threatened and endangered species habitat, and recognition as an Important Bird Area.

Scenery: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Scenery is an ORV because the diversity of textures, colors, and forms represented in the canyons' trees, shrubs, streamside vegetation, and animals create a unique area for hiking and fishing. Elevations range from 7,400 to 9,000, with landscapes varying from forests to canyons. North of Forest Road 409 the South Fork Little Colorado River rushes down a fairly steep, thickly-forested canyon with lush riparian vegetation. The rock canyon walls are covered with moss and lichen. The river flows through boulders of various sizes and glides through quiet pools. The lower 3 miles open into a wider canyon with more riparian vegetation. Streamside vegetation includes willows and alders."

Fish and Wildlife: The stream is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for Apache trout, and secondarily for bluehead sucker, Little Colorado sucker, and speckled dace. The South Fork is within the Audubon Society's Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area, which contains high-elevation habitat that supports a diversity of breeding species that rely on the highest elevations in Arizona. Most of the South Fork is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Entire reach from Forest Road 409 to the confluence with the main stem of the Little Colorado River on private lands downstream of the South Fork Campground was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ From Forest Road 409 to a fish barrier upstream of the South Fork Campground is an Eligible Wild and Scenic River per the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Audubon Society's Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area.

Large wildfires have significantly changed the Little Colorado River landscape in recent decades. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Black River and Fish Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee/Apache
Watershed: Black River
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Black River Miles:	18.3	0.5	0	18.8
Fish Creek Miles:	0	9.9	0.6	10.5

The Black River begins at the confluence of the East and West Forks and flows for 115 miles to its confluence with the White River, there forming the Salt River. The Eligible segments described here are entirely on National Forest land, beginning at the confluence of the forks, and ending at the border of the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation after 18.8 miles. This description also includes an additional 10.5 miles of Fish Creek, a major tributary. The Black River was included in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, which concludes that "the Black River is considered one of the wildest rivers in Arizona." It listed scenic and recreation values as "best in the state." In 1991, the Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed the entire Black River on National Forest lands, along with the full length of the East and West Forks, as Wild and Scenic Rivers. The U.S. Forest Service classified Fish Creek above a small fish barrier as Scenic; however, the entire segment is within an Inventoried Roadless Area and an even larger Potential Wilderness Area, per the 2015 Forest Plan, so future efforts to designate Fish Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should consider reclassifying that segment to Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate findings of the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "The Black River is a large, perennial river confined between lava ridges. The canyon's size provides a great diversity of views from open ponderosa pine stands on south-facing slopes to dense forests on north-facing ones. There are brushy slopes and lichen-covered scree slopes as well. The river alternates between quiet, smooth pools and tumbling, boulder-strewn sections."

Recreation (ARC, USFS): The Black River represents one of the most popular destinations for developed and dispersed recreation in the White Mountains. Trails along Fish Creek and mainstem Black River provide backcountry access for hikers, campers and fishermen. Typical spring run-off provides an outstanding and challenging boating opportunity for low-draft watercraft. This is also a popular area for hunting elk, deer, bear, and turkey.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The Black River is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for desert sucker, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, and speckled dace, and secondarily as a Blue-Ribbon coldwater brown trout fishery. Fish Creek, as well as many other tributaries, are managed primarily for Apache trout, and secondarily for other native fish. The entire Black River, as well as the lower third of Fish Creek, is designated critical habitat for the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. Nearly all of the upper Black River watershed is within critical habitat for the threatened Mexican spotted owl. Tributaries to the Black River and Fish Creek are designated critical habitat for the critically-endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse.

Geology (ARC): The river flows through a series of winding gorges cut into Tertiary basalt that is 15-38 million years old. There are terraces and benches hundreds of feet above river level that mark previous locations of the river. Most of the gorges are up to 800 feet deep with dark basalt walls. Located in the geologic transition zone between the Colorado Plateau to the north and the Basin and Range Province to the south, the river provides a sampling of both physiographic provinces.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The entire 115-mile length of the Black River, beginning at the confluence of the East and West Forks, through the San Carlos and White Mountain Apache Indian Reservations, to the confluence with the Salt River, was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate Wild and Scenic River in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ 18.7 miles of the Scenic and Wild-classified segments of the Black River, and the entire 10.5 miles of Fish Creek are within the Black River Canyon Roadless Area and the Black River Canyon Potential Wilderness.
- ✓ Fish Creek is encompassed by the Corduroy Recommended Research Natural Area, a 3,350-acre area established in the 2015 Forest Plan that provides a representation of high elevation vegetation types including aspen.
- ✓ Snake Creek, a tributary to the Black River downstream of Fish Creek, is a designated Outstanding Arizona Water.

Top: The Black River has carved a sinuous canyon through basalt mesas. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: Old growth ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests lines the Black River's banks. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

West Fork of the Black River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Apache
Watershed: Black River
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Potentially Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	8.6	3	0	11.6
Non-federal land:	none			

The West Fork of the Black River begins on the southeastern slopes of Baldy Peak on the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation, and flows 20 miles to join the East Fork. The river has carved a canyon into basalt mesas and plateaus cloaked with ponderosa pine forest. The Eligible segments described here begin where the river enters National Forest land from the Indian Reservation, and ends at the confluence with the East Fork. The upper Scenic segment is separated from the longer Wild segment by two small rock gabion fish barriers. The entire segment was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, and was also identified as potentially Eligible in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. However, two additional fish barriers were later constructed lower on the river that contributed to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests concluding that the lower 5.5 miles, including two miles flowing through Arizona Game and Fish Department deeded lands, as ineligible for Wild and Scenic River designation. Any future efforts to protect this river should evaluate whether the fish barriers truly disqualify the river, and consider designation of the full length.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate findings of the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Landscapes vary from forests to meadows. A panoramic view of the Mount Baldy and Baldy Peak can be seen from the upper river. The mix of conifer and deciduous tree species results in an outstanding display of fall colors."

Recreation (ARC, USFS): The few road crossings provide opportunities for easy access for fishing, picnicking, or day hikes. The long Wild segment is an unroaded canyon, providing outstanding backpacking and backcountry hunting/fishing opportunities. The Thompson Trail provides access into this canyon. This is a popular area for big game hunting.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The West Fork is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily as an Apache Trout recovery stream. Secondary priority is to re-establish populations of loach minnow, speckled dace, desert sucker, Sonora sucker, and roundtail chub. Almost the entire Wild segment of the West Fork is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl as well as for the critically-endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. It is potential habitat for narrow-headed garter snake, northern leopard frog, Chiricahua leopard frog, and Arizona toad.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The entire length of the West Fork was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ Two tributaries of the Wild segment of the West Fork, Stinky Creek and Hay Creek, are classified as Outstanding Arizona Waters by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ To the east of the West Fork is Home Creek, which was found potentially Eligible in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. However, the 2009 Eligibility Report concluded that: "Home Creek is no longer Eligible because it is not free-flowing. Two dirt, gabion, and concrete fish barriers were constructed across it. It is no longer flowing in a natural condition and the structures have modified the waterway. Other river-related values are neither unique nor outstanding."

Top: Summer storm clouds over the West Fork of the Black River along the Thompson Trail. Photo by Lisa Hankinson.
Bottom: Autumn hues grace the West Fork of the Black River along the Thompson Trail. Photo by Lisa Hankinson.

East Fork of the Black River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Apache
Watershed: Black River
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	3.3	1.2	8.2	12.7
Non-federal land:	none			

The East Fork of the Black River begins at a point called Three Forks, where Boneyard Creek, the North Fork of the East Fork, and an unnamed drainage converge. Three segments are described in this reach: first, a 1.2-mile Scenic segment from Three Forks to Coyote Creek. Then a 3.3-mile Wild segment where the river flows through a deep canyon; and finally, an 8.2-mile Recreational segment from ¼ mile above Diamond Rock Campground to the confluence with the West Fork. This segment is perhaps the most well-known of any in the Black River system, as it is paralleled by Forest Road 276 for its entire length. Numerous campgrounds, picnic areas, and river access points are maintained in this segment. The area is closed to livestock grazing, except for a small portion at the southern extent of the Recreational segment, which protects the sensitive riparian area and reduces conflicts with wildlife and recreationists.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate findings of the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The East Fork is a profoundly scenic place, which is made evident in the number of photographs of it that have been published in magazines and other media. Dramatic panoramic views are found on the canyon rims, and stunning old growth forest cloaks the canyon walls. Numerous pools, rifles, cobblebars, beaches, and grassy vales provide a diverse range of scenic qualities along the river.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Due to the access afforded by Forest Road 276, the East Fork is the most heavily visited of the segments on the Black River, especially with seven developed campgrounds available for overnight visitors. Licensed and permitted outfitters and guides conduct hunting and fishing trips in the river canyon. The river is very popular for swimming, fishing, sightseeing, and wildlife observation – with one prized sighting being the elusive Mexican gray wolf.

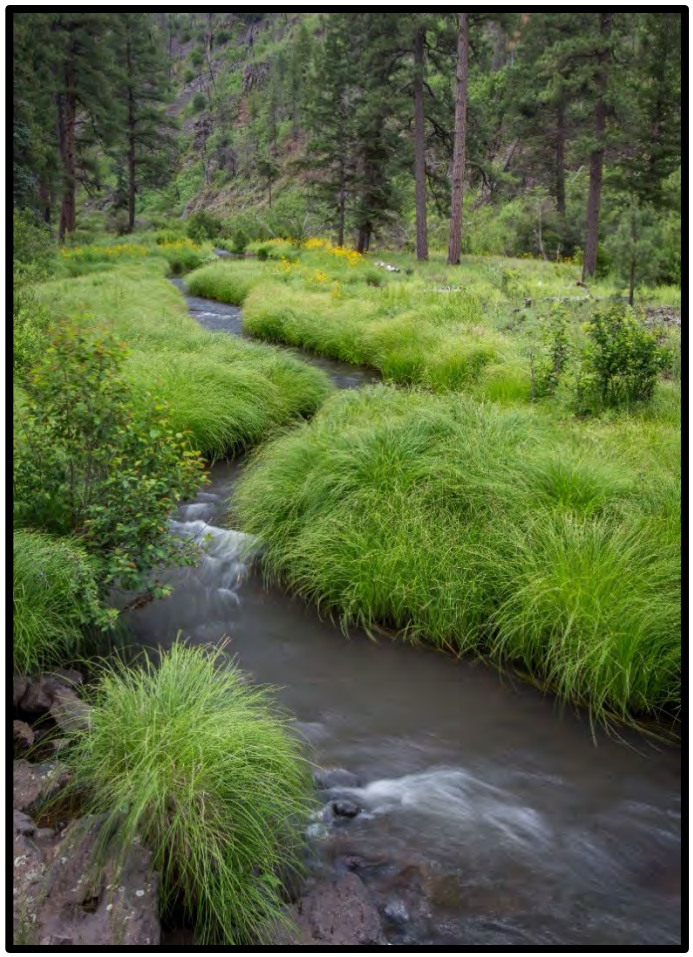
Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The East Fork is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for loach minnow, roundtail chub, desert sucker, Sonora sucker, and speckled dace, and secondarily as a coldwater trout fishery with a priority on stocking Apache trout. From its confluence with the West Fork up to Three Forks is designated as critical habitat for the federally endangered loach minnow, as are the tributaries of Boneyard and Coyote Creeks. The entire East Fork is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl as well as for the critically-endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. The uppermost extent of the river, plus Boneyard Creek, is critical habitat for the endangered Three Forks springsnail. The Three Forks Recommended Research Natural Area provides habitat for rare species like the California floater, Three Forks springsnail, loach minnow, and Chiricahua leopard frog.

Historic (USFS): Several significant historic sites are found here, including two 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps camps at Three Forks, a large, diamond-shaped rock that was used by early settlers and rangers as a landmark, historic features built by the CCC, including three "Adirondack style" shelters at Diamond Rock Campground, and the remains of a popular 1920s lodge near Diamond Rock.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The East Fork from Boneyard Creek to Diamond Rock Campground was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Three Forks Recommended Research Natural Area, a 2,903-acre area established in the 2015 Forest Plan to provide research opportunities in a montane willow riparian forested habitat, fens, and wetlands unique to the Apache Sitgreaves National Forests. The area also provides habitat for several rare aquatic species: California floater, Three Forks springsnail, loach minnow, and Chiricahua leopard frog.
- ✓ The Open Draw Wildlife Quiet Area, established in the 2015 Land Management Plan to provide refuge for wildlife in an area of high recreational use, borders the western side of the Wild-classified segment.

East Fork of the Black River



Top left: The East Fork of the Black River flows through stunning old growth ponderosa pine forests. Photo by Paul Gill.
Top right: Protected from livestock grazing, the East Fork supports lush riparian vegetation. Photo by Paul Gill.
Bottom: Wildfires have opened up the landscape, and established vast young aspen forests. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

North Fork of the East Fork of the Black River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Apache
Watershed: Black River
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	12.7	1	0	13.7
Non-federal land:	¼ mile just upstream of Crosby Crossing			

The North Fork of the East Fork of the Black River begins at Merlyn Reservoir, a few miles north of Big Lake. The Eligible segments described here begin at Highway 261, and end at Three Forks, where this fork meets Boneyard Creek and becomes the East Fork. The river is almost all Wild-classified, except for a 40-acre parcel of private land and Forest Road 285 at Crosby Crossing, about one-third of the way down the river, which is classified as Scenic. Other than this short Scenic segment, the river is entirely wild and unroaded as it flows through sprawling grasslands and high-country meadows. Very few recreationists visit these segments, although they are stunningly beautiful and unique for Arizona – and occupied by an impressive diversity of wildlife.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Scenery is an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV) because the scenery and visual attractions are diverse over the river segments. The North Fork East Fork Black River is a unique river in that it flows through high-elevation grasslands. The White Mountains are the only location in Arizona with high-elevation grasslands." Below the grasslands, the river flows through a deep, narrow canyon through boulders and serene pools.

Fish and Wildlife: The Eligibility Report further stated: "Wildlife habitat is an ORV because of its quantity, quality, and diversity." The North Fork of the East Fork is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for loach minnow, roundtail chub, desert sucker, Sonora sucker, and speckled dace, and secondarily as a coldwater trout fishery with a priority on brown and rainbow trout. The North Fork of the East Fork, as well as tributaries Boneyard Creek and Coyote Creek, are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered loach minnow. The lower third is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the lowermost mile is designated critical habitat for the critically-endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. Rare and ESA-listed species such as southwestern willow flycatcher, Chiricahua leopard frog, California floater, narrow-headed garter snake, Arizona montane vole, water shrew, northern goshawk, and Mexican gray wolf all reside here.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The North Fork of the East Fork from its source to Boneyard Creek and onward down the East Fork is listed as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Three Forks Recommended Research Natural Area, a 2,903-acre area established in the 2015 Forest Plan to provide research opportunities in a montane willow riparian forested habitat, fens, and wetlands unique to the Apache Sitgreaves National Forests. The area also provides habitat for several rare aquatic species: California floater, Three Forks springsnail, loach minnow, and Chiricahua leopard frog.

The uppermost reaches of the Black River flow through open, tree-speckled grasslands. Photos by Joel Hazelton.

Bear Wallow Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: Black River
Region: White Mountains Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	3.7	0	1	4.7
Non-federal land:	none			

Bear Wallow Creek is a tributary to the Black River. It is one of the southernmost streams to emerge before the landscape shifts from conifer forest to the lower, shrubbier mountains of the transition zone between the southern White Mountains and Greater Gila Bioregion. This is truly wild and seldom-visited country, as the Segment described here is wholly encompassed by the Bear Wallow Wilderness Area. The headwaters forks of the creek are both designated Outstanding Arizona Waters, as is the main stem to the forest boundary. The lowest 1.75 miles of the stream are within the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation. The Wild segment runs from the convergence of the North and South Forks down to a fish barrier, and below that it is classified as Recreational down to the forest boundary. A new concrete fish barrier was constructed in 2019 within the Recreational segment, which was constructed in a manner that preserved free-flowing conditions.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery, Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation as ORVs in the 2015 Forest Plan.

Scenery: Bear Wallow Canyon is exceptionally scenic. Perched at the southern edge of the White Mountains portion of the Mogollon Rim, it is at the boundary of the Colorado Plateau and the Mogollon Highlands Ecoregions. The canyon is deep, steep, and rugged. Vegetation is explosively colorful, with a wide range of trees and shrubs that have vibrantly glowing foliage in the autumn. Ancient, old growth forest that has never been logged is stunningly beautiful and inspiring. The impacts of the Wallow Fire – which started in the Bear Wallow Wilderness – have only enhanced the scenic qualities.

Recreation: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Recreation is an ORV because the opportunities are popular enough to attract visitors from throughout and beyond the area of comparison. Three trails access the main trail along Bear Wallow Creek, providing a variety of loops for day hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding. Hunting and fishing are also popular activities."

Fish Habitat: Bear Wallow Creek is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for Apache trout, secondarily for loach minnow, desert sucker, and speckled dace.

Wildlife Habitat: The entire creek is within designated critical forested habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl and narrow-headed garter snake. The endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and Mexican gray wolf use Bear Wallow Creek, as do Sensitive wildlife species like the water shrew, spotted bat, lowland leopard frog, northern goshawk, narrow-headed garter snake, Ferris' copper and four-spotted skipperling butterflies, and possibly the northern leopard frog.

Vegetation: Bear Wallow Creek is an outstanding example of high elevation vegetation unusual in Arizona. The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Vegetation is an ORV because of the quality and extent of the riparian vegetation. Sensitive plant species along the river include Goodding's onion and Blumer's dock. Besides the large aspen stands that grew after wildfires, old-growth Douglas-fir, white fir, and spruce are found in the river corridor with large, old-growth ponderosa pine on the adjacent south-facing slopes. Rocky Mountain maple, alder, elderberry, and three species of willows are found along the river. Unique high elevation herbaceous riparian plants are baneberry, sweet cicely, cow parsnip, twinberry, false-hellebore, and monkshood." The 2011 Wallow Fire impacted the vegetation, but in a manner that created even more diversity and heterogeneity.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the confluence of the North and South Forks to National Forest boundary was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ The entire Eligible length of Bear Wallow Creek is within the Bear Wallow Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ The entire 4.2-mile length of Bear Wallow Creek, as well as the 3.8-mile South Fork and the 5.4-mile North Fork, are classified as Outstanding Arizona Waters by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

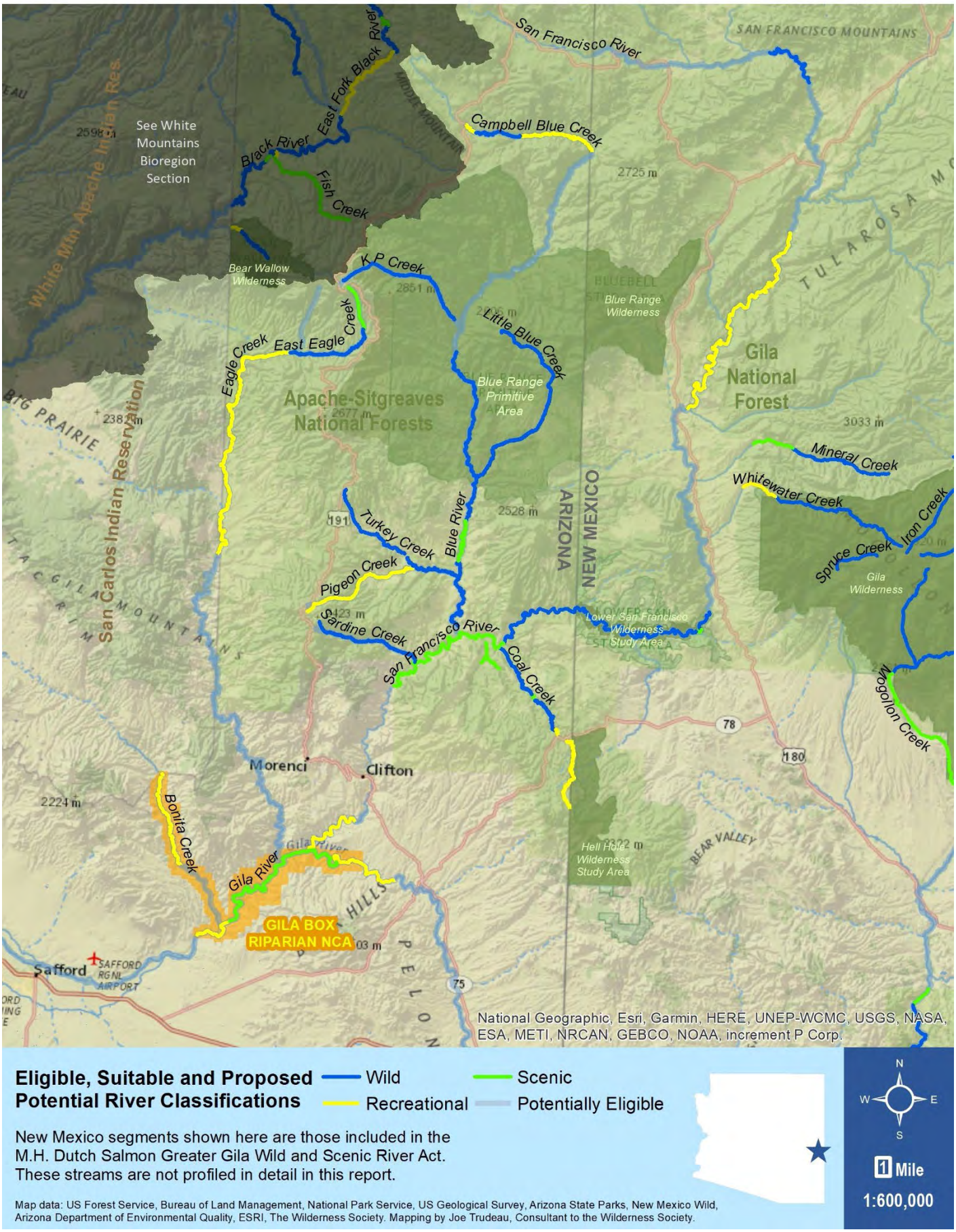
Top: A backpacker hikes through old growth conifer forest in Bear Wallow Canyon. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom: Summer blooms along Bear Wallow Creek in the Wallow Fire burn scar. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

THE GREATER GILA BIOREGION

The Greater Gila Bioregion is a dramatic, transitional landscape, bridging the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts with the Colorado Plateau and Arizona's White Mountains. Beginning in the Mogollon Mountains of New Mexico's Gila National Forest, the Gila River makes a 650-mile journey to the Colorado River. Sadly, the lower half of the Gila River is overused and mostly dried up. But the upper half still retains incredibly wild segments through public lands, as well as fertile agricultural valleys and a long segment through the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation. The wild waters of the Blue River meet the San Francisco River in remote canyons just east of the New Mexico state line, and together they join the Gila in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. Often called the Yellowstone of the Southwest, this is big, open and rugged country.

A RIBBON OF LIFE FLOWS THROUGH PARCHED DESERT MOUNTAINS AND CANYONS
GILA RIVER, GILA BOX RIPARIAN NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
PHOTO COURTESY OF WILD ARIZONA

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Greater Gila Bioregion



Eligible, Suitable and Proposed Potential River Classifications

- Wild
- Recreational
- Scenic
- Potentially Eligible

New Mexico segments shown here are those included in the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act. These streams are not profiled in detail in this report.

Map data: US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, US Geological Survey, Arizona State Parks, New Mexico Wild, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, ESRI, The Wilderness Society. Mapping by Joe Trudeau, Consultant to the Wilderness Society.

N W E S

1 Mile

1:600,000

Blue River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	23.3	4.2	0	27.5
Non-federal land:	none (7 miles in formerly Eligible segment)			

The Blue River is the heart of a wildlands complex in eastern Arizona that is unrivaled in its beauty, ruggedness, and remoteness. The Blue begins in the high plateaus and rolling mountains of the southeastern White Mountains Bioregion, where Campbell Blue Creek and Dry Blue Creek meet on the western slope of the San Francisco Mountains. From this confluence, the Blue flows for 53.4 miles through some of the most isolated and pristine wilderness in Arizona, including the Blue Range Primitive Area – the last remaining designated Primitive Area in the nation. This is a transitional landscape – pines and firs in the high country, and high desert grasslands, chaparral, and woodlands at lower elevations. Five tributaries join the Blue that are themselves Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, making this one of the highest concentrations of such streams in the state. The entire Blue River was proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, and the U.S. Forest Service found the entire river Eligible in 2009. In 2010, though, the Forest Service completed a Suitability Study that eliminated the upper 25.1 miles from consideration for designation, and also carved out the bottom three-quarters of a mile of the river to allow construction of a fish barrier that has since been built. The description here follows the final determinations of the 2010 Suitability Study. However, any future efforts to protect this river should consider the possibility of designating the upper 25.1 miles as a Recreational segment, consistent with the 2009 Eligibility Report and the Nationwide Rivers Inventory finding of potential eligibility.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The Blue is a highly scenic and diverse river corridor. Steep mountainsides, box canyons and colorful cliffs are scenic geologic features. Vegetation ranges from dense stands of mixed conifer to a rugged desert chaparral. This constant variety of ecological communities, interspersed by colorful and dominating landforms, provides diverse scenery.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The Blue River is crucial to the survival of native fish in the southwest, including desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, and spikedace, as well as Chiricahua leopard frogs, lowland leopard frogs, and other native amphibians. The entire river, as well as Campbell Blue Creek and the lower portion of Little Blue Creek, are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. The Blue River from HU Bar Cabin down to Pigeon Creek is critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The river is the core of the Audubon Society's Blue River Complex Important Bird Area.

Historic and Prehistoric/Cultural (ARC, USFS): The Blue River holds significance in the establishment of the U.S. Forest Service in the southwest, including beautiful sites built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Ranching heritage lives on with the descendants of early settlers. The river corridor contains extensive evidence of occupation by the Mogollon culture, including pithouse villages, multiple room blocks, masonry pueblos, ceremonial caves, cliff dwellings, and multi-storied masonry pueblos with kivas. Estimates suggest there may be over 400 separate prehistoric sites along the Blue River.

Recreation (USFS): Hiking, backpacking, camping, horse packing, whitewater boating, and hunting opportunities abound in this remote, vast, and undeveloped primitive area, providing a recreation experience unlike elsewhere in the state.

Vegetation (USFS): A great diversity of vegetation, including a range of tree species, occurs in the river corridor.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The entire length of the Blue River was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The entire river (53.4 miles) was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report.
- ✓ 27.5 miles of the Blue River were found Suitable for designation in the 2010 Blue River and KP Creek Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study. The upper 25.1-mile Recreational segment and the bottom 0.75 mile were released.
- ✓ About 12.5 miles of the Eligible portion of the Blue River is within the Blue Range Primitive Area.
- ✓ 14.5 miles of the Blue River are within or bordering the Pipestem and Lower San Francisco Roadless Areas.

Top: The Blue River has carved a broad canyon through a mix of colorful volcanic rocks. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: Spring foliage adds a soft green hue to the Blue River's riparian area. Photo from Alltrails.com.

KP Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	11.3	0	0	11.3
Non-federal land:	none			

KP Creek originates along Highway 191 in eastern Arizona, six miles south of the guest lodge at Hannagan Meadow. The high point of its origin along the Mogollon Rim also gives rise to East Eagle Creek, which flows south to the Gila River, as well as the North Fork of Bear Wallow Creek, which flows west to the Black River. This point is literally the edge of the Colorado Plateau, a dramatic transitional zone between the plateau country to the north and the rugged desert mountains to the south. The segment described here starts at KP Cienega Campground and ends at a parcel of private land just above the Blue River. The segment is wholly wild, as it is almost entirely within the Blue Range Primitive Area. The U.S. Forest Service found the creek Eligible in 2009, and in 2010 the Forest Service completed a Suitability Study that concurred with the 2009 report.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery, Recreation, Fish, and Wildlife as ORVs in the 2015 Land Management Plan.

Scenery: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "The scenery is widely diverse. Upper KP Creek rushes down a steep, thickly-forested canyon with lush riparian vegetation. Two small waterfalls can be seen from KP Trail, which follows the creek downstream. Additional waterfalls are found about 7 miles downstream, but these are located off the trail. Grassy flats contrast with large, old-growth ponderosa pines and provide views into deep pools and across to canyon walls."

Recreation: The Eligibility Report further stated: "Recreation is an ORV because the recreation opportunities attract visitors from throughout the area of comparison and have the potential to attract visitors from beyond the area of comparison. KP Creek provides opportunities for hiking, fishing, backpacking, and horseback riding. A popular day-hike destination is two small waterfalls about 3 miles downstream from KP Cienega. KP Creek also provides access to the Blue Range Primitive Area."

Fish: The creek provides high quality fish habitat and is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for desert sucker, Gila trout, loach minnow, longfin dace, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, and spikedace. Apache trout, which are Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed, were transplanted into KP Creek in 1969, though they are potentially not native to this stream.

Wildlife: The upper two-thirds of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and four known owl territories occur along the Eligible segment. Mexican gray wolf, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, fox, long-tailed weasel, black bear, and large game reside here. Sensitive wildlife species include bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, narrow-headed garter snake, Ferris' copper and four-spotted skipperling butterflies, and possibly northern leopard frog. KP Creek is within the Audubon Society's Blue and San Francisco Rivers Complex Important Bird Area.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The entire length of the creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report.
- ✓ Found Suitable for designation in the 2010 Blue River and KP Creek Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study.
- ✓ All but the upper 0.8 miles of KP Creek is within the Blue Range Primitive Area.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

KP Creek flows through montane forests into the wild depths of the Blue Range Primitive Area. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Campbell Blue Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	4.1	0	8	12.1
Non-federal land:	1.2 miles of private land			

Campbell Blue Creek arises southwest of the small town of Alpine, Arizona. From its source, it flows generally southeast for approximately 17 miles to the confluence with Dry Blue Creek just over the state line into New Mexico. The segments described here begin at Highway 191, 10 miles south of Alpine, and ends at the stream's confluence with Dry Blue. Together, these streams form the Blue River. This is one of the most ecologically diverse streams in Arizona, with a tremendously rich mix of vegetation, wildlife, and landforms. Because of this, the stream is designated critical habitat for numerous species and is within the Lower Campbell Blue Research Natural Area. Livestock grazing is not permitted in the majority of the creek. Campbell Blue Creek was proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, and was determined Eligible for designation in the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "A diversity of vegetation and landform textures, colors, and forms can be found along Campbell Blue Creek. The south-facing slopes are hot and dry with widely-spaced large ponderosa pines, Gambel oak, grasses, bare or dry lichen-dappled rocks, and scattered cacti, while the north-facing slopes are cooler and moister with dense mixed conifers and mossy or forb-covered rocks."

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): Most of Campbell Blue Creek is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and just over 3 miles of lower Coleman Creek tributary and Campbell Blue are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered Chiricahua leopard frog. The entire lower Recreational segment is designated as critical habitat for the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and about 3.5 miles of the creek below Luce Ranch is designated critical habitat for the critically-endangered New Mexico mead jumping mouse. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily for desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, spikedace, Chiricahua leopard frog, and narrow-headed garter snake, and secondarily for Gila trout. The creek is in the Audubon Society's Blue and San Francisco Rivers Complex Important Bird Area.

Recreation (USFS): Recreation opportunities include horseback riding, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, photography, wildlife viewing, swimming, water play, mild canyoneering, and sightseeing.

Vegetation (USFS): The creek is so diverse that the delineation of distinct vegetation types is difficult. Sensitive plant species including Blumer's dock, White Mountains clover, yellow lady's-slipper, and possibly Arizona alum root.

Cultural and Historic (ARC): Numerous Mogollon Culture prehistoric sites associated with the greater Blue River complex are found along the lower reaches of Campbell Blue Creek.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Highway 191 to the Blue River is listed as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ The Wild segment of Campbell Blue Creek borders the Campbell Blue Roadless Area, and is entirely within the Campbell Blue Potential Wilderness area, identified by the U.S. Forest Service during Forest Plan revision.
- ✓ The Recreational segment runs between the Campbell Blue Roadless Area and the Centerfire Roadless Area, and other than two parcels of private land, is entirely within the Centerfire Potential Wilderness.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Lower Campbell Blue Recommended Research Natural Area, a 580-acre area established in the 2015 Forest Plan for its prime example of high-quality riparian vegetation and old growth forests. It provides habitat for Chiricahua leopard frog, loach minnow, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, and Mexican spotted owl.

Little Blue Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	18.4	0	0	18.4
Non-federal land:	none			

Little Blue Creek originates in a canyon on the southern face of Bear Mountain, deep in the heart of the Blue Range Primitive Area, and ends at the Blue River 5.5 miles upstream of the Blue River Trailhead. Its entire 18.4 miles is within the Primitive Area, and for that reason it is classified as entirely Wild. The upper third of the creek flows through forested woodlands between mountains, and the lower section opens up significantly as the creek carves through volcanic ash layers in an area called the White Rocks, west of Alma Mesa. The creek was determined to be Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the U.S. Forest Service during the revision of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan, the first time the creek had been evaluated.

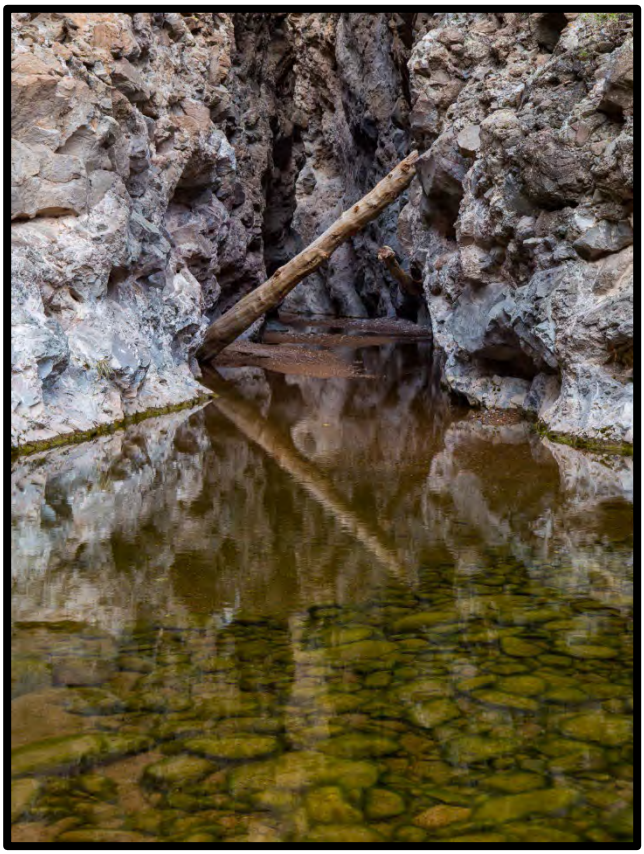
Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery and Recreation as ORVs in the 2015 Land Management Plan. Additional Fish and Wildlife Habitat ORV has been added due to the presence of threatened and endangered species and their designated critical habitat.

Scenery: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Scenery is a value because of the diversity of landscapes along the creek. Landscapes range from high mountain meadows to an incised narrow canyon to a semi-slot canyon."

Recreation: The Eligibility Report further stated: "Recreation is a value because the recreation and solitude opportunities attract visitors from beyond the area of comparison. There is a diversity of recreation opportunities in a remote and primitive setting." The Little Blue Box is a popular site to hike to for adventurous backcountry travelers and photographers.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat: The lower 3.2 miles of Little Blue Creek are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow. The upper two-thirds of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the bottom mile of Little Blue Creek is critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. As a tributary of the Blue River, Little Blue Creek is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, specifically for a subset of the following species depending on availability and suitability of habitat: desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, roundtail chub, spikedace, Chiricahua leopard frogs, lowland leopard frogs, and other native amphibians.



Little Blue Creek's "box." Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire length of Little Blue Creek is within the Blue Range Primitive Area.

Turkey Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	8.2	0	0	8.2
Non-federal land:	none within Eligible mileage			

Turkey Creek originates on the northeastern slopes of Four Bar Mesa, along Highway 191, 33 miles north of the mining town of Morenci, Arizona, and ends at its confluence with Pigeon Creek in the Mitchell Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Other than a short segment on private land where Forest Road 475 crosses, its entire 8.2 miles is within Roadless Areas, and for that reason it is classified as entirely Wild. The creek was determined to be Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the U.S. Forest Service during the revision of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan, the first time the creek had been evaluated.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Recreation, Wildlife, and Prehistoric as ORVs in the 2015 Land Management Plan.

Recreation: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Recreation is a value because Segment 2 provides a unique recreation opportunity that has the potential to attract visitors from throughout and beyond the area of comparison. This segment contains several falls and drop-offs that make the canyon unhikable, but would allow for a high quality canyoneering opportunity for experienced enthusiasts."

Wildlife: The 2009 Eligibility Report states that Wildlife is an ORV because the creek supports populations of lowland leopard frog, a Forest Service Sensitive species. In addition, Turkey Creek is included within Arizona Game and Fish Department's Lower Blue River Conservation Opportunity Area, which means that it will be managed for a subset of the following species depending on availability and suitability of habitat: desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, roundtail chub, spikedace, Chiricahua leopard frogs, lowland leopard frogs, and other native amphibians.

Prehistoric: The 2009 Eligibility Report states that prehistoric resources are known to exist along the upper segment, and that there is a high potential for additional sites to exist.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ All of Turkey Creek above Alamosa Ranch (T Links Ranch) private inholding are within the Pipestem Roadless Area, and the portion of Turkey Creek below the ranch is within the Mitchell Peak Roadless Area.
- ✓ The entire length of the creek, other than the portion at Alamosa Ranch (T Links Ranch), is within the West Blue/San Francisco Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision.

Pigeon Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	4.8	0	10.3	15.1
Non-federal land:	0.64 miles of private land			

Pigeon Creek originates on the northeastern slopes of Grey Peak and Mitchell Peak, along Highway 191, 23 miles north of the mining town of Morenci, Arizona. The stream ends at its confluence with the Blue River in the Mitchell Peak Inventoried Roadless Area, south of the Blue Range Primitive Area, and 6.6 miles upstream of the Blue's confluence with the San Francisco River. The segments described here begin at the stream's origin, which is accessible from the U.S. Forest Service's Pigeon Trailhead on Highway 191, just north of the HL Saddle Picnic Area. The creek was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1993, and was determined to be Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the U.S. Forest Service during the revision of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan. Within the upper 10.3-mile Recreational segment, a 0.64 mile reach crosses an unoccupied parcel of private land owned by the Alamosa (T Links) Ranch. Above this inholding, the creek is entirely within the Mitchell Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Additionally, the entire creek (except for crossings of Forest Road 475D and 475E immediately below the inholding) is within the West Blue-San Francisco Potential Wilderness unit. For these reasons, any future efforts to designate Pigeon Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should consider reclassifying Pigeon Creek above the inholding to Wild, and below the inholding to Scenic.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Cultural and Historic (ARC, USFS): The 2009 Eligibility Report states that prehistoric resources are an ORV "because the river corridor contains important evidence of human occupation and use. Several prehistoric sites associated with the Mogollon culture have been recorded in this area and include artifact scatters, single room structures, room blocks, and rock art sites. Much of segment 1 has not been inventoried. Segment 2 has not been inventoried, but there is a high potential for cultural resources."

Fish and Wildlife (ARC): The bottom mile of Pigeon Creek is critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo, and is within the Audubon Society's Blue and San Francisco Rivers Complex Important Bird Area. The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Sensitive wildlife species along Pigeon Creek include Arizona toad, spotted bat, common black-hawk, and Arizona Bell's vireo. Pigeon Creek is also potential habitat for the sensitive lowland leopard frog." Native fish species include longfin dace, Sonora sucker, desert sucker, and speckled dace. As part of Arizona Game and Fish Department's Lower Blue River Conservation Opportunity Area, Pigeon Creek is managed for a subset of the following species depending on availability and suitability of habitat: desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, roundtail chub, spikedace, Chiricahua leopard frogs, lowland leopard frogs, and other native amphibians.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1993 Second Printing of the "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The entire creek from its headwaters to the Blue River was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ 4.4 miles of the Wild segment and 8 miles of the Recreational segment of Pigeon Creek are within the Mitchell Peak Roadless Area, while the entire length of the creek is within the West Blue/San Francisco Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision.

Upper San Francisco River

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	9	15	0	24
Non-federal land:	0.36 miles through Martinez Ranch			

The San Francisco River originates near Alpine, Arizona, and flows east into New Mexico. It then flows south through sections of wild public lands interspersed with heavily grazed private ranchland. Then, the river turns west and enters Arizona through its most spectacular gorge, called the Lower San Francisco River Canyon. The New Mexico portion is a Wilderness Study Area and is included in the M.H. Dutch Salmon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Arizona portion, described here, leaves the Lower Canyon and passes through developed areas near the towns of Clifton and Morenci, and finally meets the Gila River in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protection for this river in 1991, and the U.S. Forest Service determined it to be Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation during the revision of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan. The Forest Service classified the upper 9 miles (above Martinez Ranch) as Wild, as it flows through the Lower San Francisco Inventoried Roadless Area, but classified the lower 15 miles as Recreational because at that time Forest Road 212 travelled the length of the canyon from Martinez Ranch to the forest boundary. However, since that time, the road has been closed, and the Forest's Travel Management Plan commits to keeping the road closed. Because of this, we have upgraded the classification to Scenic. Any future efforts to designate this river should evaluate conditions and consider a Wild classification.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "The San Francisco River has a variety of landscapes providing a diversity of textures, colors, and forms created by the river's streamside vegetation and geological formations. The rugged canyon walls, combined with pools, riffles, and riparian vegetation, are distinctive."

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Backpacking, hiking, fishing, photography, swimming, and hunting are popular activities. Rafting, kayaking, and canoeing are possible with suitable water flows. This use will increase as inflatable kayaks become more popular for low-water use. The river corridor is also suitable to horse-pack trips.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The entire river in Arizona is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow. The entire segment described here is critical habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher. Most of the Wild segment is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl and is Chiricahua leopard frog recovery habitat. The river from Martinez Ranch to Sardine Creek is critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The river is in the Audubon Society's Blue and San Francisco Rivers Complex Important Bird Area.

Cultural (ARC): Prehistoric remains of the Mogollon culture are evident in canyon walls, cliffs, and caves. Rock art, rock shelters, lithic scatters, pithouse villages, and small to large pueblos have been documented. Agricultural use is probable.

Vegetation (USFS): The 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Vegetation is an ORV because of the diversity of vegetation communities associated with a semi-desert river system. The vegetation communities consist of mixed broadleaf riparian woodland, semi-desert grassland, and, Madrean pine-oak woodland. Where deeper soils exist, the canyon floor is occupied by mesquite, woody shrubs, and herbs with widely scattered tree species such as cottonwood, Goodding's willow, Arizona sycamore, hackberry, alder, and seepwillow. Along the channel edges, riparian vegetation consists of boxelder, seepwillow, alder, Arizona sycamore, hackberry, cottonwood, willow, grasses, forbs, and shrubs."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire Wild-classified segment of the San Francisco is within the Lower San Francisco Roadless Area, and the entire Recreational segment is within or adjacent to the Lower San Francisco and Sunset Roadless Areas.
- ✓ The entire length of the river is within the West Blue/San Francisco Potential Wilderness and the Sunset Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision.

Top: A backpacker hikes the San Francisco below its confluence with the Blue River. Photo by Amber Fields.
Bottom: The San Francisco River flows through rolling mountains on its way towards the Gila River. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Coal Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	9.6	0.6	7.7	18
Non-federal land:	none			

Coal Creek begins in the Big Lue Mountains on the Arizona-New Mexico state line, and flows north to the San Francisco River, joining the river just upstream of Martinez Ranch. Just under 18 miles of Coal Creek was determined to be Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the U.S. Forest Service during the revision of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan, the first time the creek had been evaluated. The Forest Service delineated 5 segments, as follows:

- *Segment 1: Headwaters north to ¼ mile south of Highway 78, 6.9 miles, Recreational*
- *Segment 2: ¼ mile north of Highway 78 to 1 mile north of Highway 78, 0.8 miles, Recreational*
- *Segment 3: 1 mile north of Highway 78 to ¼ mile south of the power lines, 4.2 miles, Wild*
- *Segment 4 ¼ mile south of the power lines to ¼ mile north of the power lines, 0.6 miles, Scenic*
- *Segment 5: ¼ mile north of the power lines to the San Francisco River, 5.4 miles, Wild*

The Forest Service excluded the stream between segments 1 and 2 because in this section the Highway 78 road crossings feature culverts in the streambed and rip-rap along the banks, therefore the section is not free-flowing. The Coal Creek campground is also within this exclusion area. Other than this exclusion and a powerline crossing in segment 4, the entire creek is within Inventoried Roadless Areas or, for the section of segment 1 in New Mexico, within the Hells Hole Wilderness Study Area. Despite these protected areas, Forest Road 8345 penetrates several miles up into the Roadless Area and the Wilderness Study Area. For this reason, the classification is Recreational. Any future efforts to designate this creek as a Wild and Scenic River should evaluate Forest Road 8345 for its compatibility with the Roadless Area and Wilderness Study Area.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, and Historic resources as ORVs in the 2015 Land Management Plan.

Recreation: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report determined that Recreation was an ORV because "Coal Creek presents a unique opportunity for horseback riders to traverse an entire river corridor. This opportunity has the potential to attract visitors from throughout and beyond the area of comparison."

Fish: The 2009 Eligibility Report claimed that segments 2 through 5 are likely habitat for the endangered Gila chub. Now that the fish has been reclassified as roundtail chub, this ORV may not still be applicable.

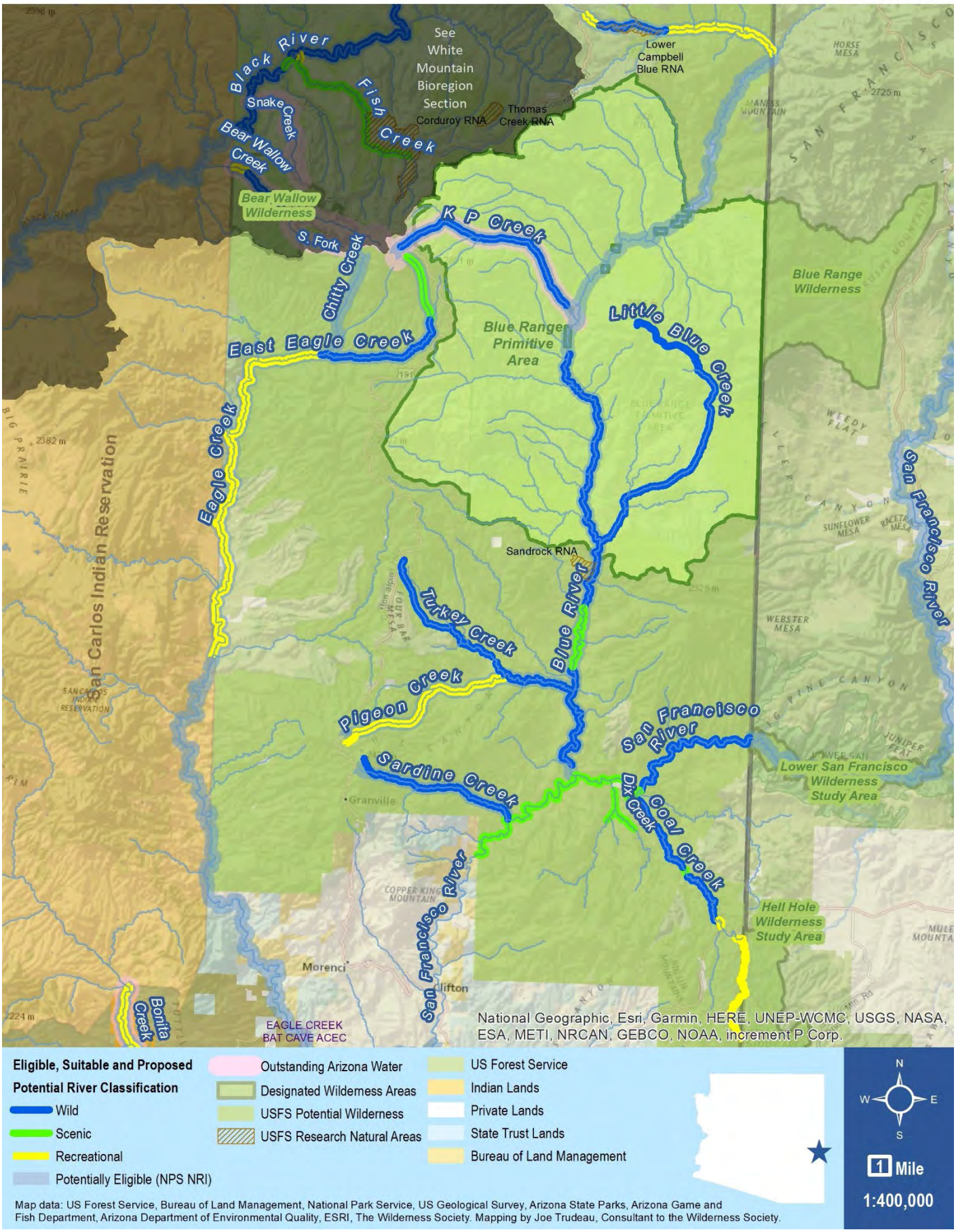
Wildlife: A portion of Coal Creek downstream of the campground is critical habitat for the federally endangered Chiricahua leopard frog, and the creek supports one of the three known populations of this species in the Clifton Ranger District.

Historic: The 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Segment 1 includes pits that were used to make charcoal for smelting operations at the nearby copper mine."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire 6.9-mile Recreational segment of Coal Creek is within the Hell Hole Roadless Area, and the lowermost 3 miles of the creek are within the Lower San Francisco Roadless Area. The portions of the creek that cross into New Mexico are within the Hell Hole Wilderness Study Area, which one of the three remaining U.S. Forest Service Wilderness Study Areas in New Mexico.
- ✓ Except for a powerline and a road, the entirety of Coal Creek is in the West Blue/San Francisco, Coal Creek, and Hells Hole Potential Wilderness units, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Forest Plan revision.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Blue Range and San Francisco Canyons



Dix Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	3.3	0	3.3
Non-federal land:	none, segment ends at Martinez Ranch			

Dix Creek – both the Left and Right Prongs – are short but important tributaries to the San Francisco River. They flow north to the river from the rolling Big Lue Mountains at the southern edge of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The lower reaches are perennial, and the segments described here include those reaches to the point they cross on to the private land at Martinez Ranch. The creek's dense riparian forest stands in contrast to the San Francisco River which is much more open due to scouring flood flows. The creek was determined to be Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the U.S. Forest Service during the revision of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan, the first time the creek had been evaluated.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery, Recreation, Fish, and Wildlife resources as ORVs in the 2015 Land Management Plan.

Scenery: Dix Creek flows through a scenic – and unique – steep-walled canyon.

Recreation: The steep-walled canyon requires hikers to swim through pools to pass through the gorge.

Fish and Wildlife: Dix Creek and its tributaries are designated critical habitat for the endangered Gila chub, though the fish has been reclassified as roundtail chub. Sensitive fish species in Dix Creek include longfin dace, Sonora sucker, and desert sucker. The common native fish species, speckled dace, is also found in Dix Creek, and no non-native fish are found there. A portion of Dix Creek is critical habitat for the federally endangered Chiricahua leopard frog, and the creek supports one of the three known populations of this species in the Clifton Ranger District. The creek is in the Audubon Society's Blue and San Francisco Rivers Complex Important Bird Area.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ Dix Creek borders the Sunset Roadless Area. Other than a single dirt road, it's within the Sunset and Cold Spring Mountain Potential Wilderness units, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Forest Plan revision.

Sardine Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	8.9	0	0	8.9
Non-federal land:	1 mile of inaccessible private land			

Sardine Creek originates on the south face of Mitchell Peak in the southern Blue Range, and flows for 8.9 miles to its confluence with the San Francisco River, 6.5 miles below the Blue River confluence. The headwaters can be accessed by trail from the Sardine Saddle Picnic Area, 19 miles north of the town of Morenci on Highway 191. Otherwise, the creek is difficult to access as it is entirely within the Mitchell Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 preliminary eligibility study identified the river as Scenic, but the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests changed the classification from Scenic to Wild because "the existence of a few inconspicuous structures, particularly those of historic or cultural value, at the time of study need not bar Wild classification."

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves N.F. identified Scenery as an ORV in the 2015 Land Management Plan.

Scenery: The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated: "Scenery is an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV) because of the contrasts presented by the lush riparian corridor in interior chaparral, Madrean pine-oak woodland, ponderosa pine forest, and semi-desert grassland environments. These differences are enhanced during the fall when the riparian vegetation turns from green to red, orange, and yellow. Sardine Falls is a very dramatic feature of Sardine Canyon. The falls drop a total of 20 feet, with the water cascading down several bedrock layers. The vegetation variety provides contrasts of form, line, texture, and seasonal colors. Although Sardine Creek is a narrow drainage, there are expansive vistas of the canyon walls."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The entire creek from its headwaters to the San Francisco River was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire length of Sardine Creek is in the Mitchell Peak Roadless Area, including the parcel of private land at XA Spring, which is surrounded by the Roadless Area and lacks road access. It is entirely within the West Blue/San Francisco Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision.

Eagle Creek and East Eagle Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Greenlee
Watershed: Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Eagle Creek Miles:	0	0	19.5	19.5
E. Eagle Creek Miles:	11	3.5	0	14.5
Non-federal land:	2.6 miles Tribal, 8.5 miles private			

East Eagle Creek originates high on the southern slopes of the Mogollon Rim, and flows for 72 miles before joining the Gila River in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area as Eagle Creek. The remote upper reaches of East Eagle Creek are primarily accessible by trail, and are characterized by a mixture of ponderosa pine and lower woodland species. Further downstream on Eagle Creek, magnificent cottonwoods and pinyon-juniper woodlands connect the dispersed private lands of the picturesque Upper Eagle Creek community. The segment described here is that on National Forest land, and includes short reaches that cross onto the neighboring San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protecting this river in 1993, and the U.S. Forest Service determined in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan that the creek was Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation down to the confluence with Sheep Wash, where the river decidedly enters the Indian Reservation. However, the Nationwide Rivers Inventory lists the entire river as potentially Eligible, so any future efforts to designate Eagle Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should consider partnering with the San Carlos Apache and other downstream users to protect the entire river.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery (ARC): The entire watershed offers scenic views of outstanding quality including steep, rugged canyons near the headwaters, and spectacular fall colors and riparian vegetation along the broad valley lower on Eagle Creek.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): The Eagle Creek National Recreational Trail follows portions of the East Eagle and Chitty Creek drainages. Numerous other trails access the entire proposed segment. Honeymoon Campground provides a very rural setting for campers and picnickers alike. Numerous swimming holes occur along the perennial stream.

Fish (ARC, USFS): Most of the Recreational segment of Eagle Creek is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the lowermost few miles of that segment are critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo and narrow-headed garter snake. All of Eagle and East Eagle Creeks above the creeks' first crossing on the Apache Reservation are designated critical habitat for the Gila Chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. The upper half of the reach is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, spikedace, Gila topminnow, and Gila trout.

Cultural and Historic (ARC): Evidence of the prehistoric Mogollon culture abounds along the entire corridor, including pithouse villages, small multiple-room blocks, and small masonry pueblos. Historic features include a schoolhouse, remains of the original Honeymoon Ranger Station, and the homes and buildings of the early settlers to the area.

Vegetation (USFS): The U.S. Forest Service's 2009 Eligibility Report stated that on Eagle Creek, "Vegetation is an ORV because of outstanding quality of the riparian vegetation. Sensitive plant species include Blumer's dock and *Wislizeni* gentian. Overstory vegetation along Eagle Creek is primarily narrowleaf cottonwood, Arizona walnut, and boxelder. Shrubs consist primarily of scarlet sumac. Grasslands surround the identified river segment and are characterized by bunchgrasses, chaparral, piñon pine, and alligator juniper."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1993 Second Printing of the "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ The entire length from the headwaters to the Gila River was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The segment described here was found Eligible for protection in the Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s 2009 Eligibility Report and subsequently the 2015 Land Management Plan. Chitty Creek, a tributary to East Eagle Creek, was disqualified from eligibility because the riparian corridor was completely destroyed in post-wildfire flooding.
- ✓ Approximately 7 miles of Eagle and East Eagle Creeks flows between the Salt House and Hot Air Roadless Areas.
- ✓ The entire Wild segment is in the Hot Air - Salt House Potential Wilderness unit identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision. The Scenic segment is also in the unit, with just two dirt road crossings.

Scenes along Eagle Creek during the winter months. Photos by Robin Silver.

Gila River – Gila Box

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Greenlee/Graham
Watershed: Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	15.7	10.5	26.2
Non-federal land:	0.74 miles of private land			

The Nationwide Rivers Inventory lists the entire Gila River from its headwaters in New Mexico to the Arizona mining town of Winkelman as Eligible for further study for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Federal agency studies have found two sections of the Gila River in Arizona to be Eligible for protection as Wild and Scenic Rivers: a section flowing through the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, and another downstream of Coolidge Dam, which is on the San Carlos Indian Reservation. The segment described here is on Bureau of Land Management land in and adjacent to the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, which was created by Title II of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990. Three segments of the river were proposed with Scenic-Wild-Scenic classifications by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. Those recommendations were supported when the BLM found the river Eligible in the 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. However, the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report downgraded classifications to Recreational-Scenic-Recreational "to be consistent with management actions proposed in the GBRNCA Draft Interdisciplinary Plan." This report displays the findings of the BLM's 1997 suitability study as it is the most recent evaluation, and those classifications have been incorporated into the management plan for the area. However, future efforts to protect the river should consider reclassifying to the earlier eligibility findings because the area road system is managed to minimize impacts to the river corridor, and much of the area meets the criteria for BLM Lands with Wilderness Characteristics. As such, classifications of Scenic-Wild-Scenic for the three respective segments is more representative of actual conditions on the ground.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Scenery (ARC, BLM): Stunning scenery is found along the entire reach, especially the prominent Orange Cliffs.

Geology (ARC, BLM): The walls of the river canyon are cut from volcanic and volcaniclastic rocks. Geothermal activity is present at Gillard Hot Springs, the hottest spring in Arizona, which is located within a half mile of the river.

Recreation (ARC, BLM): The natural qualities of the river, its riparian habitat, and its geologic features have made it an area of steadily increasing popularity. The Gila Box is used extensively for rafting and boating, hiking, picnicking, and fishing.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): The Gila River from New Mexico to the eastern Phoenix-metro area is designated critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo, and from New Mexico to Coolidge Dam is critical habitat for the endangered razorback sucker. Other rare species present include Arizona toad, lowland leopard frog, American peregrine falcon, common black hawk, bald eagle, golden eagle, Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, narrow-headed garter snake, and bighorn sheep. Native fish include longfin dace, speckled dace, desert sucker, and Sonora sucker.

Hydrologic (BLM): The river is free-flowing and subject to massive variation in flow in response to upstream conditions.

Cultural and Historic (BLM): The Gila River plays a prominent role in Native American culture and the history of the settlement of the American West. Numerous significant sites are found along the river through the Gila Box.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ The entire 251 miles of the Gila River from the Gila National Forest in New Mexico to the town of Winkelman, Arizona, was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of the Gila River managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and later found Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ These segments flow through the 23,000-acre Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, established in 1990.
- ✓ 20 miles of the Gila River within the Gila Box RNCA are within the Gila Box Lands with Wilderness Characteristics unit, proposed to the BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2018. Another 1.4 miles outside of the RNCA are within the Black Hills North Proposed Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.

The Pinaleño Mountains rise above the Gila River in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. Photo by Paul Gill.

San Francisco River – Gila Box

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Greenlee/Graham
Watershed: San Francisco River
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	6.5	6.5
Non-federal land:	1.38 miles of private land			

The San Francisco River originates near Alpine, Arizona, and flows east into New Mexico. It then flows south through sections of wild public lands interspersed with heavily grazed private ranchland. Then, the river turns west and enters Arizona through its most spectacular gorge, called the Lower San Francisco River Canyon. Below that section, the San Francisco passes through the town of Clifton before entering public lands again, and finally joins the Gila River in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, created by Title II of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990. Two segments of the river in and immediately upstream of the RNCA were proposed with Recreational and Wild classifications by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. The BLM found the river Eligible in the 1993 Resource Management Plan for the Safford Field Office with a classification of Scenic. However, in the agency's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report, its classification was downgraded to Recreational "to be consistent with management actions proposed in the GBRNCA Draft Interdisciplinary Plan." This report displays the findings of the BLM's 1997 suitability study as it is the most recent evaluation, and those classifications have been incorporated into the management plan for the area. However, future efforts to protect the river should consider reclassifying the lower 2.9 miles as Wild as that section flows through an area that meets the criteria for BLM Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The following statements in quotations were taken from the BLM's 1994 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement Rivers Appendix, which described these Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

Scenery: "The Lower San Francisco flows through a striking steep walled canyon composed of conglomerate rock formations."

Geology: Scenic rock formations and layers characterize the San Francisco River.

Recreation: "The river provides outstanding opportunities for hiking, backpacking, seasonal river float trips, seasonal sandrail driving, camping, photography, wildlife viewing, and sightseeing. The natural condition of the area, rugged topography, twisting canyons, and flowing water contribute to the outstandingly remarkable recreation opportunities in the proposed river area."

Fish and Wildlife: "The San Francisco River is important to wildlife as a source of about half the water that flows through the Gila Box, supporting that aquatic and riparian system." The lower 2 miles of the San Francisco are designated critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the river for a range of native fish, including desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, Rio Grande sucker, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, and spikedace, although non-native fish also occur. Lowland leopard frog, bighorn sheep, and many other species reside here.

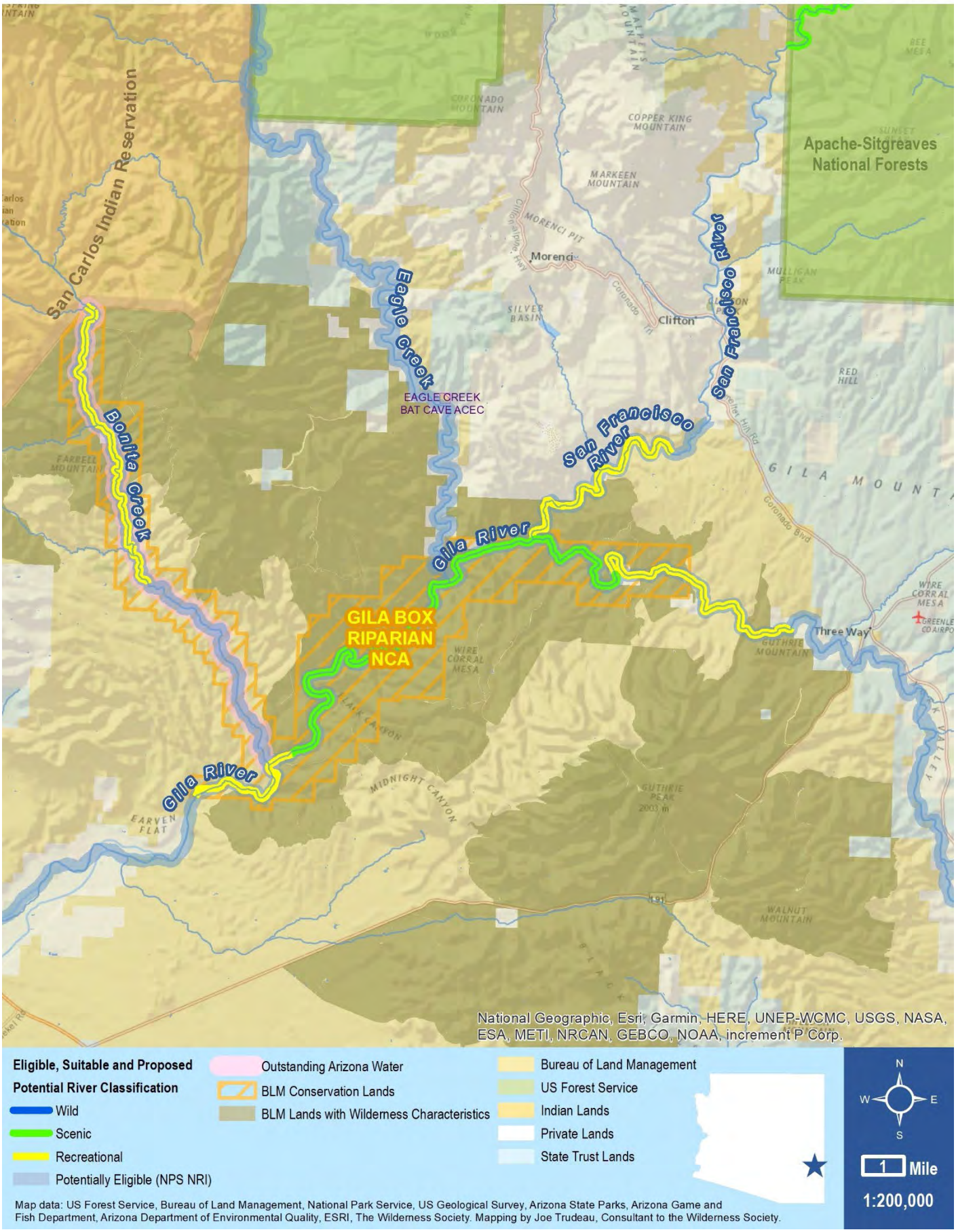
Hydrologic: "The Lower San Francisco is a perennial water. Because year long water is so uncommon in the desert southwest, the hydrologic values are considered outstandingly remarkable. Perennial water is extremely important for vegetation, fish and wildlife, and recreation values."

Cultural: The river corridor features Mogollon and Salado sites, plus numerous more recent Apache and settlement-era sites.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ 8 miles of the San Francisco on BLM lands below the town of Morenci was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of the San Francisco River managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and later found Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The lower quarter-mile is within the 23,000-acre Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, established in 1990.
- ✓ 2.9 miles of the San Francisco River are within the Gila Box Lands with Wilderness Characteristics unit, proposed to the BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2018.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers at Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area



Bonita Creek

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Graham
Watershed: Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir
Region: Greater Gila Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	8.4	8.4
Non-federal land:	0.72 miles of private land			

Bonita Creek originates at Ash Flat on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation, and flows south for 50 miles before joining the Gila River at the western edge of the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, created by Title II of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990. Much of the stream's course is through open, rolling grasslands, but the portion on BLM land runs primarily within a steep walled canyon. The full 15 miles of Bonita Creek within the conservation area were proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. That proposal included the upper 8.4 miles from the Indian reservation to Lee Trail Road as Scenic, and from there 6.6 miles down to the Gila River as Recreational. The BLM's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan found the entire 15-mile segment Eligible for further study, with a preliminary classification of Recreational, owing to the "presence of roads and other developments along its length." The agency's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report concluded that the lower segment was not suitable for designation because of water withdrawals made by the City of Safford, but found the upper segment suitable as a Recreational river, stating that the segment "deserves protection … due to the nationally significant fish and wildlife habitat, and unique cultural sites of national importance." This report displays the findings of the BLM's 1997 suitability study as it is the most recent evaluation, and those classifications have been incorporated into the management plan for the area. However, future efforts to protect Bonita Creek should consider reclassifying most of the upper segments 8.4 miles as Wild as that section flows through an area that meets the criteria for BLM Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and any trace of old roads have been naturalized. The lower segment should receive renewed consideration as a Recreational classification, but only with the endorsement of the City of Safford, which relies on this stream as its sole source of potable water.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The following statements in quotations were taken from the BLM's 1994 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement Rivers Appendix, which described these Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

Water Quality: In 1992, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality designated Bonita Creek as a Unique Water.

Recreation: "Pleasure driving, waterplay, picnicking, camping, birdwatching, archaeological site study, and hiking are popular activities in Bonita Creek. The canyon is a very popular undeveloped recreational area for residents in the Safford area."

Fish and Wildlife: The entire length of Bonita Creek in the Gila Box RNCA is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the lower 2 miles of the creek are critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The creek is populated by longfin dace, speckled dace, Gila topminnow, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, and desert sucker, as well as Chiricahua leopard frog. Other rare wildlife includes bald eagle, peregrine falcon, razorback sucker, southwestern willow flycatcher, bats, a range of other raptors, bighorn sheep, beaver, and breeding and migrating birds.

Riparian: Bonita Creek is a rich riparian habitat, and includes one of Arizona's most extensive beaver created ecosystems.

Cultural: "Cultural resources found in Bonita Creek canyon include numerous historic and prehistoric cultural sites including well-preserved cliff dwellings, an historic cabin, homesteads, scatters of chipped stone and pottery, isolated locations of arrowheads and other artifacts, rock art, the National Historic Safford-Morenci Trail, and a variety of other types of sites."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Segments of Bonita Creek managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and later found Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The entire length of Bonita Creek on BLM land was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The entire 14.7-mile length of Bonita Creek below the San Carlos Indian Reservation is within the 23,000-acre Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, established in 1990.
- ✓ 15 miles of Bonita Creek is a classified Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ The upper 5.7 miles of Bonita Creek are within the Turtle Mountain Lands with Wilderness Characteristics unit, proposed to the BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2016.

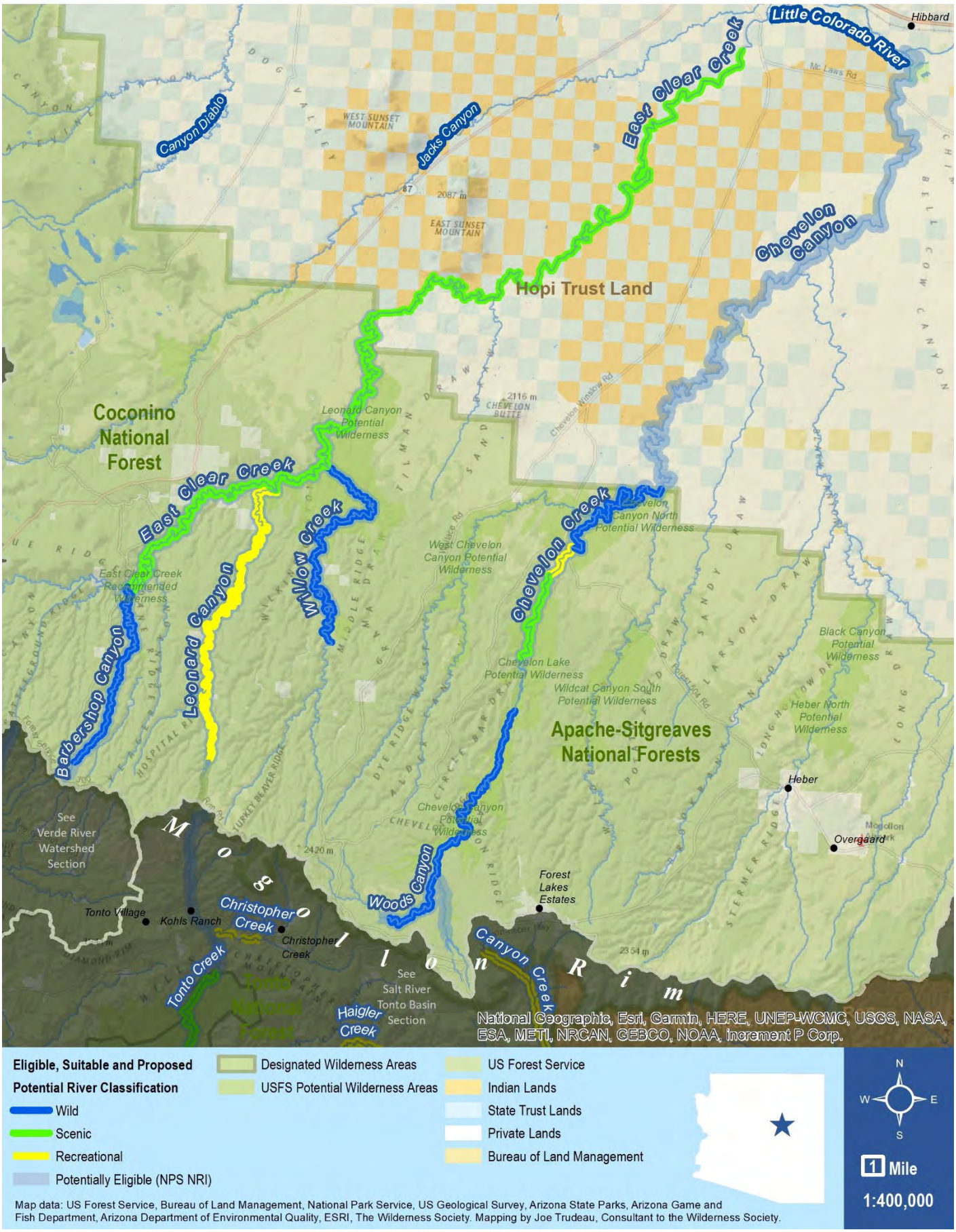
Top: Autumn Colors along Bonita Creek in the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. Photo by Paul Gill.
Bottom: Bonita Creek and Turtle Mountain seen from the Safford-Morenci Trail in the Gila Box RNCA. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

THE MOGOLLON PLATEAU

Northern Arizona's Mogollon Plateau is a relatively flat, forested landscape, bisected by a handful of long, deep, and sinuous canyons. The Plateau is defined by the Mogollon Rim on the south – a 200-mile escarpment that drops away into the Salt, Tonto, and Verde basins – and the broad grassland valley of the Little Colorado River to the north. The water here flows northeast to the Little Colorado, primarily through the complex canyon systems of the Chevelon and East Clear Creek watersheds. The upper (southern) halves of these canyon systems are within national forests, while the lower halves flow through checkerboards of state, private, and Tribal lands – though these lands are no less remote or wild. With few exceptions, these canyons are too steep for road-building, so their natural character is well-preserved.

STUDENTS IMMERSED IN OLD GROWTH PINE FOREST AND STREAMSIDE MEADOWS
LEONARD CANYON, COCONINO AND APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FORESTS
PHOTO COURTESY OF PRESCOTT COLLEGE

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Mogollon Plateau



Chevelon and Woods Canyon Creeks

Managing Agency: Coconino and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Coconino
Watershed: Middle Little Colorado River
Region: Mogollon Plateau

Status:	Eligible (USFS) & Potential (private/state)			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	28.4	5.3	2.4	36.1
Non-federal land:	51 mile potentially Eligible segment below the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest			

Chevelon Creek begins as two separate streams, Woods Canyon Creek and Willow Springs Canyon Creek. These two streams are dammed in their upper reaches to form recreational lakes. Downstream of these dams, the streams join to form Chevelon Creek, which flows for 85 miles to the Little Colorado River upstream of Winslow, Arizona. Chevelon is a wild and scenic stream running through a steep, narrow, twisting canyon. The riparian area is virtually undisturbed by human activity. The creek is dammed at one point, forming Chevelon Lake; this section is excluded from eligibility. There is only one road crossing, at Chevelon Crossing several miles below the dam. Other than Chevelon Lake, the entire lengths of Chevelon Creek and Woods Canyon Creek on National Forest land are Eligible for protection. The 51-mile segment flowing through mixed ownership below the National Forest is listed as potentially Eligible in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. Future efforts to protect this river should evaluate eligibility, classifications, and Outstandingly Remarkable Values of this wild and pristine segment.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The creek has carved a deep, narrow, twisting canyon into the landscape. The steep terrain and limited access into the canyon have kept human intrusion to a minimum. The primary scenic features are located in the primitive, steep-walled and twisting canyon, with cliffs rising as much as 300 feet above deep pools in the stream channel.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Primitive recreation such as backpacking, swimming, picnicking and fishing are available to the adventurous in this remote and isolated canyon.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): Five native fish are found in various sites along the creek, and the upper portion is managed as a Blue-Ribbon trophy coldwater fishery. The lower few miles are designated Critical Habitat for the Little Colorado spinedace. All but the lower few miles are designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl.

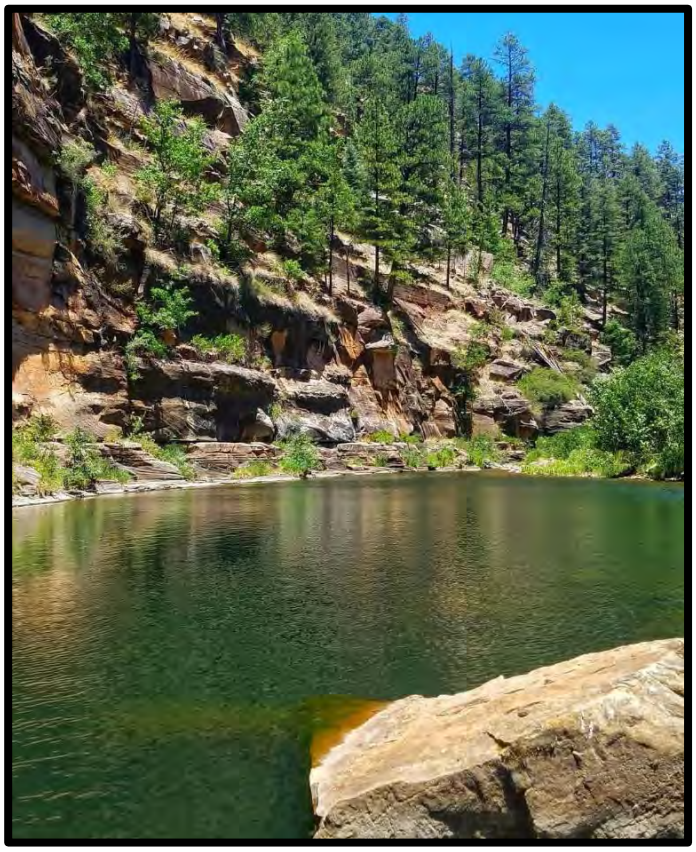
Vegetation/Ecology (ARC, USFS): A highly diverse mosaic of vegetation types and habitats, ranging from mixed conifer forest to pinyon-juniper woodland. Canyon bottom trees include ponderosa pine and narrowleaf cottonwood, alder, willow, oak and boxelder. The riparian zone is in excellent condition as it has not been grazed by livestock since the 1960s. Due to the steepness and depth of the canyon, the canyon bottom and the slopes above the stream have never been logged.

Cultural and Historic (ARC): The area saw fairly continuous occupation from 4000 years ago up to 800 years ago. The Eastern Sinagua people inhabited the canyon as long as 2000 years ago. Corn and other crops were grown in the canyon. Evidence of these people remains in the canyon in the form of rock art and rock shelters. A 140-foot-long rabbit net, woven out of human hair, was found in the canyon. A Civilian Conservation Corps camp is located near Chevelon Crossing.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 “Lifeblood of the Desert” proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Entire length of Chevelon Creek from Chevelon Dam to the confluence of the Little Colorado River was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service’s Nationwide Rivers Inventory. Woods Canyon was listed in 1993.
- ✓ The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests found Woods Canyon and Chevelon Creek (excluding Chevelon Lake) Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection in their 2009 Eligibility Report and 2015 Land Management Plan.
- ✓ 16 miles of Woods Canyon and Chevelon Creek (above Chevelon Lake) flow through the Chevelon Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area and the Chevelon Canyon Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision. Below the lake, the entire Wild segment is in the Chevelon Canyon North Potential Wilderness unit, and 4 miles of the Scenic segment is in the Chevelon Lake Potential Wilderness.
- ✓ Willow Springs Creek was identified in the 1993 Resource Information Report and the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, but the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests determined the creek did not possess any Outstandingly Remarkable Values in the 2015 Forest Plan. Future efforts to protect this river should re-evaluate the segment at that time.

Chevelon and Woods Canyon Creeks



Top left: Old-growth ponderosa pine forests cloak the steep walls of upper Chevelon Creek. Photo by Dennis Roshay.
Top right: Placid waters at a large pool in upper Chevelon Creek. Photo by Nick Burruel.
Bottom: The wide, slow-moving waters of middle Chevelon Creek. Photo by Johnida Dockens.

East Clear Creek

Managing Agency: Coconino and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Coconino
Watershed: Middle Little Colorado River
Region: Mogollon Plateau

Status:	Eligible (USFS), Proposed (private/state)			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	81.9	0	81.9
Non-federal land:	3.8 miles private land, 23.9 miles State Trust Land, 15.2 miles Hopi Trust Land			

East Clear Creek flows north from the Mogollon Rim to the Little Colorado River near Winslow, Arizona. It is a wild, deep canyon with incredible rocky cliffs towering over a free-flowing stream. Riparian vegetation thrives alongside the stream which is confined in a narrow canyon bottom. Beginning in the high elevations of the Mogollon Plateau the creek is surrounded by pines, firs, oaks, and maples. Deep, clear pools abound as the creek flows through the wide-open spaces of the high Colorado Plateau. The upper segment is Barbershop Creek, a free-flowing, 14-mile southern fork and headwaters of East Clear Creek, meeting the main creek near Forest Road #9. Leonard Canyon and Willow Creek join East Clear within the Leonard Canyon Potential Wilderness area. The lower 43 miles flow through a checkerboard of state, private, and Tribal land, which was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. This review carries forward that recommendation for any future river conservation efforts. The Coconino National Forest classified the 39-mile public land segment as Scenic; however, much of the segment is within Inventoried Roadless Areas or Potential Wilderness. Future efforts to designate this stream as a Wild and Scenic River should consider reclassifying some segments to Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): East Clear Creek is noted for its scenic beauty. It has formed a narrow canyon with rocky cliffs and a variety of colors and textures due to the vegetative species variation and geologic formations.

Fish Habitat (ARC, USFS): East Clear Creek supports populations of Little Colorado Spinedace, and portions of the creek has been designated as Critical Habitat for this fish. Yaeger Canyon, a tributary, is used as a donor stream for many of the Little Colorado spinedace supplemental stockings in the Clear Creek Drainage. Other native fish include Little Colorado sucker, roundtail chub, bluehead sucker, and speckled dace. It is managed as a sport fishery for wild rainbow trout.

Wildlife (ARC): The area is home to many forest species, including black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, elk, turkey, and mule deer. The entire upper third of the creek is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl.

Recreation (ARC): Recreational activities include hiking, backpacking, fishing, trail riding, and nature study. Because of the remote and inaccessible nature of the area, recreational opportunities are mostly primitive, backcountry experiences.

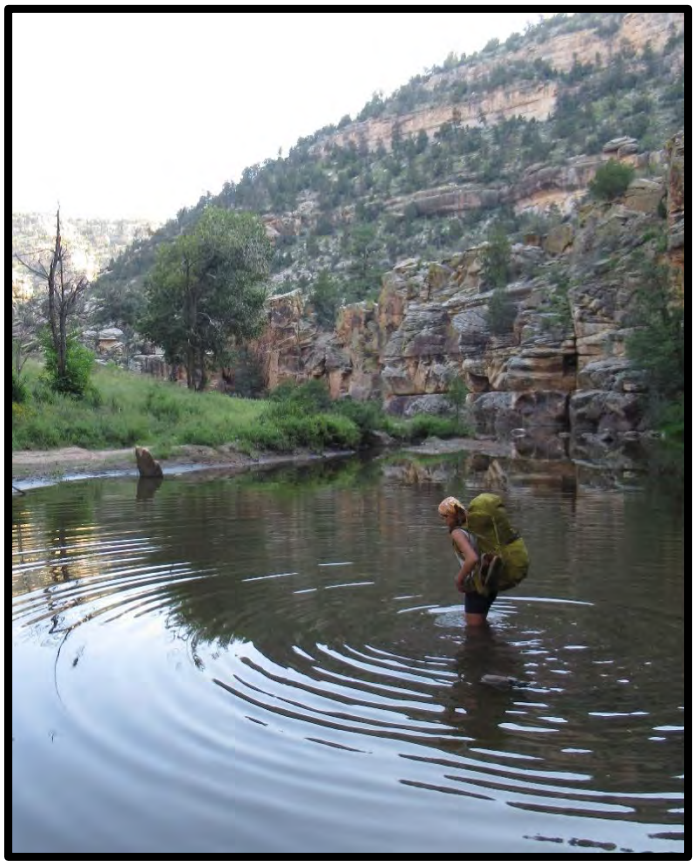
Geology (ARC): The creek flows northeast off the edge of the Mogollon Rim, across the Mogollon Plateau. The stream is representative of plateau streams in the Four Corners area - it has a gorge up to 800 feet deep that reveals in cross section typical plateau rocks. The Kaibab Limestone forms sharp angles and cliffs, while the Coconino Sandstone forms cliffs with well-defined crossbedding derived from sand dunes which were active before they were cemented into rock.

Ecological (ARC): The narrow, steep canyons that flow north from the Mogollon Rim are important ecological systems to the wildlife that inhabit the region. The riparian zone of East Clear Creek provides excellent habitat. Dominant overstory vegetation includes New Mexico locust, bigtooth maple, willows and walnuts. This rugged, steep canyon has not been heavily logged or grazed due to its severe topography. This has left the riparian corridor in pristine condition.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 “Lifeblood of the Desert” proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the confluence of Barbershop Creek to the National Forest boundary was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service’s Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The segment from Forest Road 96 to the Forest boundary is an Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Coconino National Forest.
- ✓ 9.5 miles of East Clear are in the East Clear Creek Roadless Area and 17.5 miles in the Leonard Canyon Area.
- ✓ 20 miles of East Clear Creek are within the East Clear Creek Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during Forest Plan revision.

East Clear Creek



Top left: Cross-bedded Coconino sandstone and placid waters along East Clear Creek. Photo by Nick Burruel.
Top right: A student crosses East Clear Creek during an autumn orientation course. Photo courtesy Prescott College.
Bottom: The confluence of East Clear Creek and Leonard Canyon, as seen from a large cave. Photo by James Holderer.

Barbershop Canyon

Managing Agency: Coconino National Forest
County: Coconino
Watershed: Middle Little Colorado River
Region: Mogollon Plateau

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	13.5	0	0	13.5
Non-federal land:	none			

Barbershop Canyon starts near the Mogollon Rim and runs 13.5 miles to its confluence with East Clear Creek. The stream flows through moist, mixed-conifer forest and patches of dry ponderosa pine forest on south-facing slopes. The canyon bottom riparian vegetation consists of alder, willow, box-elder, narrowleaf cottonwood, New Mexico locust, and Arizona walnut. This is a wild and entirely undeveloped stream, though forest roads are located on the ridges above the stream. The Arizona Rivers Coalition included Barbershop Canyon in the description of East Clear Creek, and attributed the same Outstandingly Remarkable Values to it. Here, we describe the values assigned by the Forest Service, as well as an added value of Wildlife Habitat, due to the area's importance to birds, including its recognition as an Audubon Society Important Bird Area and final designation of Mexican spotted owl critical habitat in 2004.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The 2009 Coconino National Forest Eligibility Report stated: "Barbershop Canyon like East Clear Creek into which it flows is noted for its scenic beauty. It has formed in an extremely narrow canyon with rocky cliffs and a variety of colors and textures due to the variety of vegetative species and geologic formations."

Fish Habitat (ARC, USFS): The creek, as well as its tributary Dane Creek, is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Both creeks support native fish such as speckled dace, Little Colorado sucker, and bluehead sucker. Barbershop is inhabited by rainbow trout as well. The 2009 Coconino National Forest Eligibility Report stated: "Barbershop Canyon at one time contained populations of Little Colorado spinedace. This segment contains perennial pools that can provide habitat for this species which has been designated threatened under both state and federal species classification." Thanks to the work of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Little Colorado spinedace was re-introduced to Barbershop and Dane Creeks in 2018, translocated from nearby Yaeger Canyon, which flows into East Clear Creek just below Barbershop Canyon's confluence.

Wildlife (ARC): The upper two-thirds of Barbershop Canyon are within the Audubon Society's Mogollon Rim Snowmelt Draws Important Bird Area, which is recognized for its importance for numerous woodpecker species, as well as breeding and migrating passerines. All but the upper mile is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the headwaters to the confluence of East Clear Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the Coconino National Forest's 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ 11.3 miles of Barbershop Creek are within the Barbershop Canyon Roadless Area.

Barbershop Canyon meanders through ponderosa pine forest on Arizona's Mogollon Rim. Photo by Nick Burruel.

Leonard Canyon

Managing Agency: Coconino and Apache-Sitgreaves N.F.'s
County: Coconino
Watershed: Middle Little Colorado River
Region: Mogollon Plateau

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	23.6	23.6
Non-federal land:	0.4 miles in two parcels of private land			

Leonard Canyon begins at Knoll Lake Dam near the Mogollon Rim, and runs to the confluence of East Clear Creek. The creek is the boundary between the Coconino and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, and eligibility evaluation was completed by the Coconino in 2009. The Coconino classified the 23.6-mile segment as Recreational. However, the lower 4.5 miles of the segment is within an Inventoried Roadless Areas and Potential Wilderness, so any future efforts to designate this stream as a Wild and Scenic River should consider reclassifying the lower section to Wild and the upper section to Scenic. Here, we describe the Outstandingly Remarkable Value of Fish Habitat assigned by the Forest Service, as well as an added value of Wildlife Habitat, due to the area's importance to birds, including its recognition as an Audubon Society Important Bird Area and final designation of Mexican spotted owl critical habitat in 2004.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coconino National Forest identified Fish Habitat as an ORV in the 2018 Forest Plan. In addition, the additional ORV of Wildlife Habitat is justified by designated critical habitat and recognition as an Important Bird Area.

Fish Habitat: Leonard Canyon is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. It supports native fish such as speckled dace, Little Colorado sucker, and bluehead sucker, and is the original source for all Little Colorado spinedace restocking efforts in the Clear Creek drainage. The 2009 Coconino National Forest Eligibility Report stated that the segment contains populations of the Little Colorado spinedace; a native fish classified as threatened under both state and federal species classification.

Wildlife Habitat: The upper third of Leonard Canyon is within the Audubon Society's Mogollon Rim Snowmelt Draws Important Bird Area, which is recognized for its importance for numerous woodpecker species, as well as breeding and migrating passerines. The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Knoll Lake Dam to the confluence of East Clear Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The bottom 4.5 miles of Leonard Canyon are in the Leonard Canyon Roadless Area and the Leonard Canyon Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Forest Plan revision.

Leonard Canyon

Top left: Clean, cold waters and pristine conditions along lower Leonard Canyon. Photo by Nick Burruel.
Top right: Native American petroglyphs along Leonard Canyon. Photo courtesy Prescott College.
Bottom: The still, green waters of Leonard Canyon – typical for the streams in this area. Photo by Nick Burruel.

Willow Creek

Managing Agency: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
County: Coconino
Watershed: Middle Little Colorado River
Region: Mogollon Plateau

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	18.9	0	0	18.9
Non-federal land:	none			

Willow Creek flows north from the near the Mogollon Rim to its confluence with East Clear Creek at the western edge of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. This is a truly wild stream, and is aptly classified as Wild. The lower portion of Willow Creek is in the Leonard Canyon Roadless Area, and the entire creek is within the Leonard Canyon Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Forest Plan revision. Access is by foot only, so very few people get to see the wild depths of this significant side canyon to East Clear Creek, though some backpackers, anglers, and hunters do venture into it. The 1993 U.S. Forest Service Wild and Scenic River Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona stated: "The remoteness of this segment is very valuable to people looking for a break from the congestion of crowded recreation areas."

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest identified Wildlife and Vegetation as ORVs in the 2015 Forest Plan, and removed Scenery and Geology from the findings of the agency's 1993 Resource Information Report because those values were not outstanding in comparison to surrounding streams.

Wildlife: Willow Creek is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Native fish such as speckled dace, Little Colorado sucker, bluehead sucker, and the threatened Little Colorado spinedace reside here. The sensitive northern leopard frog occurs here, and historically so did the endangered Chiricahua leopard frog. Being densely forested, the entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and it also provides habitat for sensitive wildlife species including bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, common black-hawk, and northern goshawk.

Vegetation: The 2009 Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Eligibility Report stated: "Vegetation is an ORV because of the diversity of species that occur throughout the river corridor. Dominant plant species along this river segment include ponderosa pine and narrowleaf cottonwood with other woody and herbaceous species. The canyon walls are dominated by oneseed juniper and piñon pine. Many other shrubs, forbs, and grasses are common. Mixed conifer stands occur in north-facing, mesic pockets throughout the canyon." The majority of the river corridor is not grazed by cattle.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From one quarter mile north of Wiggins Crossing to Clear Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2009 Eligibility Report and the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.
- ✓ The lower portion of Willow Creek is in the Leonard Canyon Roadless Area, and the entire creek is within the Leonard Canyon Potential Wilderness, identified by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Forest Plan revision.

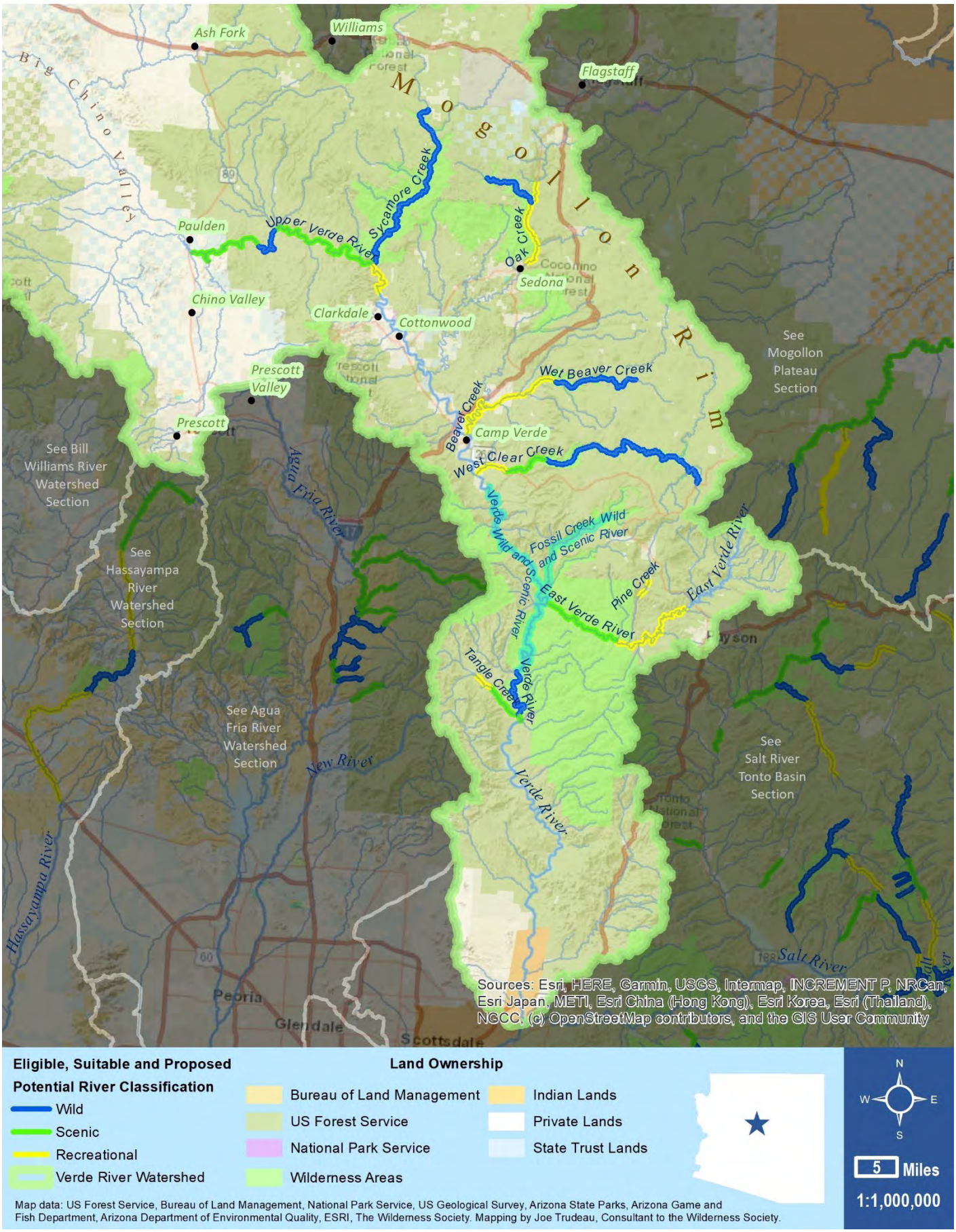
A Google Earth aerial view of the sinuous canyon carved by Willow Creek.

THE VERDE RIVER WATERSHED

The Verde Watershed is a green artery pulsing through the heart of Arizona. Located in the center of the state, the Verde collects water from Arizona's highest peak, deep canyons cutting through the Mogollon Rim, and craggy ranges like the Mazatzal Mountains. Biodiversity along the Verde River is unparalleled, with two dozen species protected by the Endangered Species Act, varied geology and soils, and habitats including desert scrub, grasslands, chaparral, woodlands, forests, springs, and more. Arizona's only designated Wild and Scenic Rivers – the Verde and Fossil Creek – are found here, but many opportunities to protect vulnerable rivers remain. Upstream of the communities of the Verde Valley, Sycamore Creek and the Upper Verde River are ranked as Arizona's top Wild and Scenic River priorities by conservation groups.

ARIZONA'S LONGEST REMAINING PERENNIAL AND FREE FLOWING RIVER
UPPER VERDE RIVER, PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST
PHOTO BY JOE TRUDEAU

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Verde River Watershed



Upper Verde River

Managing Agency: Prescott and Coconino National Forests
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Upper Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible (USFS) & Proposed (non-USFS)			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
USFS Eligible miles (Verde River):	5.7	24.5	6.2	45.5
Private land miles (Verde River):	0	1.83	0	
TNC land miles (Verde River):	0	0.13	0	
State Trust Land miles (Verde River):	0	1.62	0	
State Wildlife Area miles (Verde River):	0	3.77	0	
State Wildlife Area miles (Granite Creek):	0	1.5	0	
State Trust Land miles (Granite Creek):	0	0.2	0	

The Upper Verde River drains a massive watershed in central and northern Arizona, including portions of the Coconino, Kaibab, and Prescott National Forests, as well as a vast expanse of state and private lands in the Big Chino Valley and the Prescott basin by way of Granite Creek and its tributaries. In 2011, the Sierra Club proposed protecting the entire river from its origin at Sullivan Dam to the end of the U.S. Forest Service ownership near the town of Clarkdale, including the USFS-Eligible segments plus important sections upstream such as the Upper Verde State Wildlife Area and a preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy. The segments described here are an update to the 2011 proposal, depicting the classifications established by the Prescott National Forest with the additional upstream portions classified as Scenic.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Prescott National Forest identified Archaeological, Scenic, Fishery, Wildlife, Recreational, and Botanical as ORVs in the 2015 Forest Plan. In their 2018 Forest Plan, the Coconino National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Heritage, Wildlife, Fish Habitat, and Botany as ORVs for the lower 6.7 miles of the river bordering the Prescott National Forest. Parentheses indicate findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The Upper Verde, Granite Creek, and Sycamore Creek possess stunning scenery, contrasting a vibrant green riparian forest with diverse geology and landforms stitched together by a sinuous green waterway.

Geology (ARC, USFS): The Upper Verde and tributaries slice through striking geology at the transition between the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range, exposing rocks found in the Grand Canyon.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Recreational opportunities along the Upper Verde River include kayaking, canoeing, hiking, backpacking, horse riding, photography, wildlife viewing, swimming, camping, fishing, hunting, a scenic train ride, and interpretation or observation of geological, cultural, and ecological features.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The riparian forest, contrasted with a variety of landforms, creates unmatched wildlife habitat. The entire Upper Verde is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, as well as the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The river from Perkinsville down is designated critical habitat for the razorback sucker, from Rio Verde Ranch to Sycamore Canyon is critical habitat for the threatened narrow-headed garter snake, and the lowermost mile for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Numerous other species of native fish reside here.

Botanical (USFS): The entire Upper Verde, as well as Granite Creek and much of Sycamore Canyon, feature a continuous ribbon of cottonwood-willow and mixed deciduous forest – two of the rarest habitats in the southwest – as well as cattail marshes, wet meadows, and cold, clear freshwater springs.

Archaeology/Heritage/Cultural (ARC, USFS): The canyons, bluffs, and floodplains of the Upper Verde contain at least 54 known historical and pre-historic cultural sites, including cliff dwellings, hilltop ruins, cave shelters, ceramic and lithic artifacts, rock art, cowboy camps, stone cabins, and many other sites of national significance.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Entire length from the boundary of state lands down to the town of Clarkdale was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The segments as described here were proposed for designation by the Sierra Club in 2011.
- ✓ Found to be an Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the 2015 Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the Prescott National Forest.
- ✓ One mile of the upper Scenic segment on the Upper Verde flows through the Muldoon Roadless Area, and another mile flows along the boundary. 9.7 miles of the Upper Verde flow through the Muldoon Potential Wilderness, a 20,427-acre area identified by the Prescott National Forest during Forest Plan revision, and an additional 8.6 miles flow along the edge of the 5,314-acre Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Contiguous Recommended Wilderness.

Top: Limestone cliffs and deep pools characterize the Upper Verde River at the State Wildlife Area. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom: The lush Upper Verde River just below its confluence with Sycamore Creek. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Sycamore Creek

Managing Agency: Coconino and Prescott National Forests
County: Coconino/Yavapai
Watershed: Upper Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Eligible miles:	4.1	0	0	30.5
Proposed miles	26.4	0	0	
Non-federal land:	none			

Sycamore Creek emerges on the Mogollon Rim southwest of Flagstaff, and flows for 30 miles to join the Verde River upstream of the town of Clarkdale. Often referred to as "The Little Grand Canyon" for its geological similarity to the Grand Canyon, Sycamore Creek is the wild sister to Oak Creek Canyon, which has a road running up its length. Nearly the entire segment described here is within the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, one of northern Arizona's premier multi-day backpacking destinations. Proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, the U.S. Forest Service found a 4.1-mile-long segment that starts at Parson Springs and runs to the confluence of the Verde River as Eligible for Wild and Scenic designation. Our proposal expands on this by 26.4 miles to include the entire creek within the wilderness area, a stream very worthy of the additional protection afforded by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coconino National Forest identified Recreation, Fish Habitat, and Riparian as ORVs in the 2018 Forest Plan. Parentheses indicate findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): Sycamore Creek's terrain is highly varied and distinctive, ranging from intimate canyons where the river spans from vertical wall to wall, to open areas affording vistas of the Mogollon Rim escarpment. Distinctive sections of Grand Canyon-type geology provide great contrasts in color and texture. Red and white limestone walls reach as high as 700 feet right from the river corridor. Numerous deep pools, grottoes, caves, seeps, and springs further provide great scenic and ecological value. The vegetation is also highly varied and distinctive with much contrast between the riparian species along the river corridor to desert grassland species within sight up along the cliffs and slopes away from the river.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): The Sycamore Canyon Wilderness offers an unroaded recreation setting that is fairly accessible to nearby communities. It is popular with day hiking, swimming, backpacking, horsepacking, and fishing.

Fish Habitat (ARC, USFS): Sycamore Creek has been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as having the possibility to provide habitat for the endangered spikedace. Desert sucker and Sonora sucker occupy the stream. Other native fish that occupy the Verde River (loach minnow and roundtail chub) can also use Sycamore Creek's habitat.

Riparian: The 2008 Eligibility report stated: "The broad belt of riparian which borders Sycamore Creek is remarkable in terms of quantity, quality, and diversity." The upper half or so of Sycamore Canyon is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the lower 1.75 miles are critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo.

Geologic (ARC): Sycamore Creek offers exciting geological variety as it drops through the Mogollon Rim, showcasing many of the same layers found in the Grand Canyon.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Lower 4.1 miles proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Lower 4.1 miles found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Lower 4.1 miles, from Parsons Spring to the confluence with the Verde River, was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Lower 4.1 miles is an Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Nearly the entire length of Sycamore Creek is within the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, established in 1972.

Top: Sycamore Creek wraps around an immense oxbow deep in the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom: Sycamore Creek viewed from the Parsons Trailhead near the confluence with the Verde River. Photo by Paul Gill.

West Fork of Oak Creek

Managing Agency: Coconino National Forest
County: Coconino
Watershed: Upper Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	11.1	0	0	11.1
Non-federal land:	none			

The West Fork of Oak Creek is a stunning gorge carved into sandstones and limestones, beginning on the Mogollon Rim south of Flagstaff and flowing east to join Oak Creek at the Call of the Canyon Day-Use Area on the Coconino National Forest. It is a very popular hike as it provides an accessible yet world-class mellow canyoneering experience. The upper extents require technical abilities and equipment. The segment described here starts at the headwaters of the creek and runs to the confluence with Oak Creek. Proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, it was found Eligible by the Coconino National Forest in 1993. It is almost entirely within the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness and is classified as Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coconino National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Geology, Heritage, Riparian, and Ecology as ORVs in the 2018 Forest Plan. Parentheses indicate findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The following statements in quotations are taken from the Coconino National Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study:

Scenery (ARC, USFS): "The dramatic geologic formations with their red, tan and grey color tones, and the diverse vegetation all combine to make the West Fork of Oak Creek nationally recognized for its spectacular scenery."

Recreation (ARC, USFS): "The majority of the West Fork is within the Red Rock Secret Mountain Wilderness and it provides a remarkable recreational opportunity which is being utilized by large numbers of forest visitors."

Geology (ARC, USFS): "The West Fork of Oak Creek has incised the Mogollon Rim and exposed a great deal of the geologic history of Arizona. The geologic features created by the process of erosion are spectacular and varied. The sheer cliffs, spires and buttes all are dramatic evidence of the geological process."

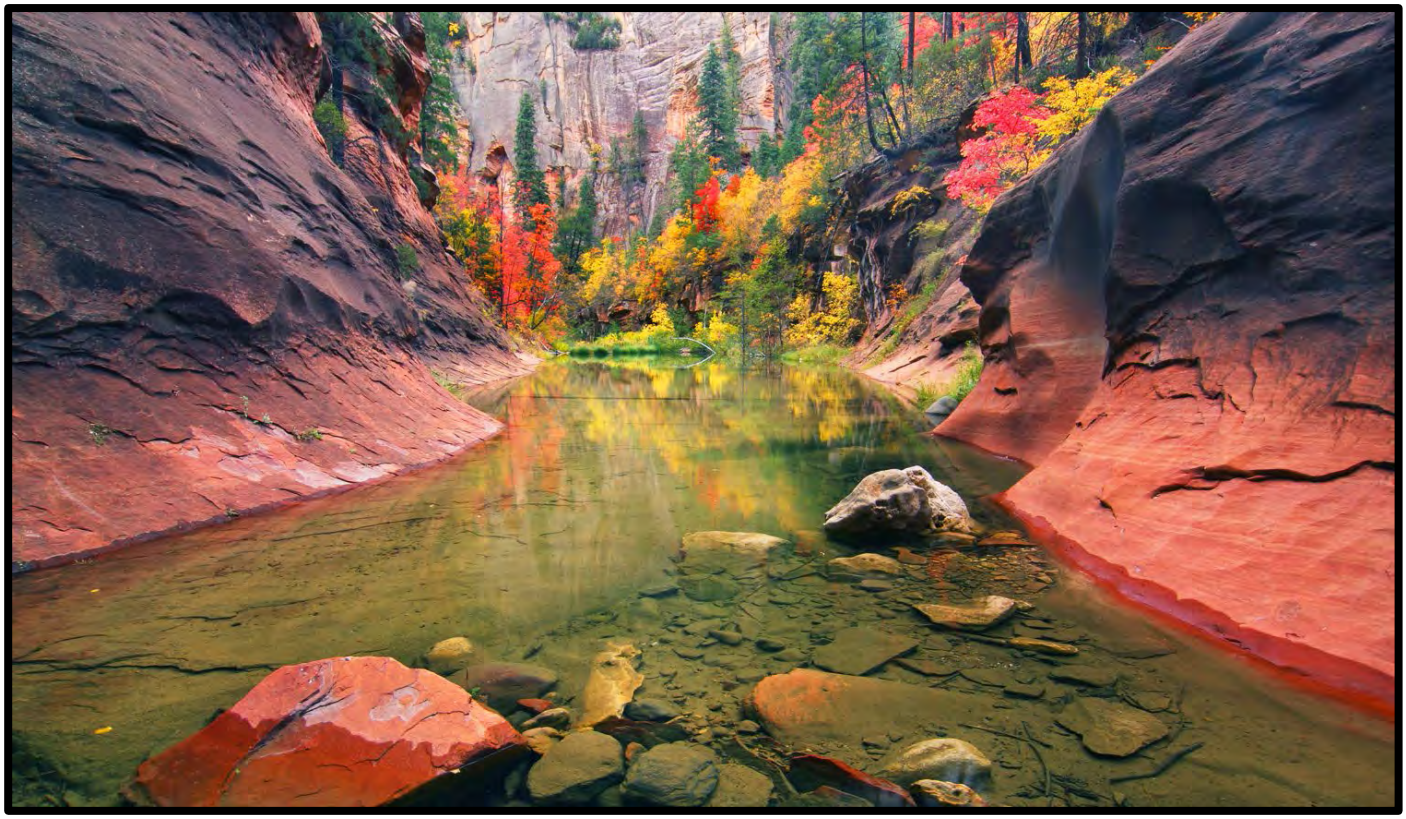
Heritage/Cultural (ARC, USFS): "The mouth of West Fork was the location of the Call of the Canyon Lodge where Zane Grey wrote the novel by the same name, using West Fork as a setting."

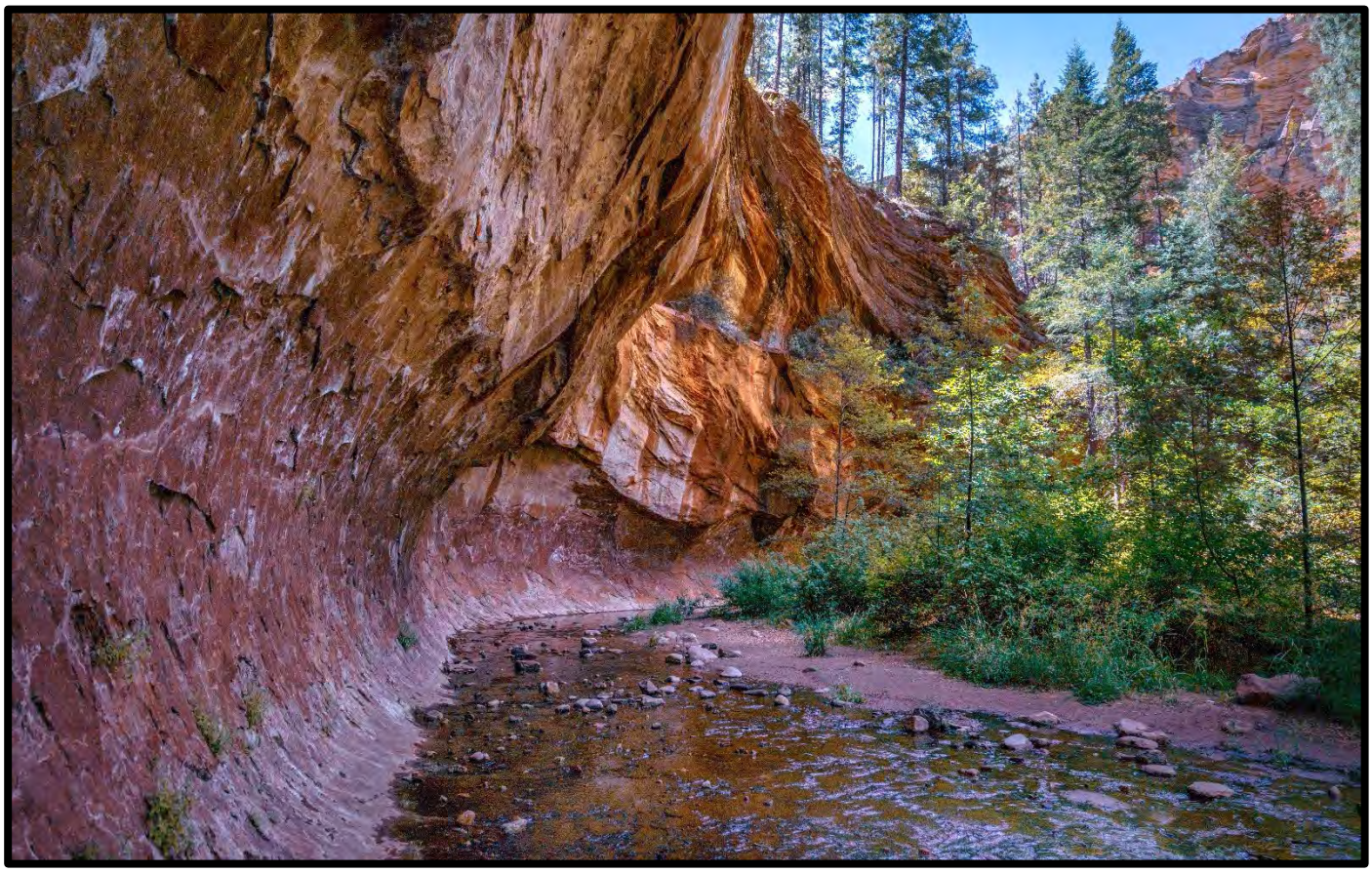
Fish Habitat (ARC, USFS): "West Fork of Oak Creek is a valuable cold water fishery. It is one of the few perennial streams on the COF capable of providing year-round fisheries habitat." The West Fork is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, primarily for desert sucker, Gila trout, and speckled dace, as well as for narrow-headed garter snake.

Riparian/Ecology (ARC, USFS): "The quantity, quality and diversity of this resource make this resource value remarkable. This stream passes through the 1,717-acre Research Natural Area designated in 1931. The Research Natural Area recognized the ecological importance of this willow/box elder community in terms of providing unusual ecological niches." Along the upper reach of the West Fork there is one of only a few occurrences in the state of blue spruce vegetation community. This stand of blue spruce is at an elevation range lower than expected due to the shade provided on the steep north-facing canyon wall. The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the lower half is critical habitat for the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. Arizona bugbane, a special status plant species which occurs in scattered localities in both Oak Creek and West Fork, requires a particular habitat with moist soils in deep-shaded canyons.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Entire length from the headwaters to the confluence with Oak Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Almost the entire length of the West Fork is within the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ The West Fork flows through the Oak Creek Research Natural Area, created in 1931. It is an example of a biologically diverse Creekside, and is a paleobotanical area containing plant species surviving from the last ice age.





Top: Stunning fall colors in the West Fork's deep sandstone canyon. Photo by Paul Gill.
Bottom: The power of water to carve solid rock is evident along the West Fork of Oak Creek. Photo by Adrienne McLeod.

Oak Creek

Managing Agency: Coconino National Forest
County: Coconino
Watershed: Upper Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
USFS miles:	0	0	10.71	13.33
State Park miles:	0	0	0.37	
Private miles:	0	0	2.25	

Oak Creek is one of the most beloved streams in Arizona. Beginning on the Mogollon Rim south of Flagstaff, it has carved a gorgeous canyon known to many as Highway 89A runs through it from the town of Sedona. The segment described here starts at the Sterling Springs Fish Hatchery and runs until the segment reaches private land north of Sedona. It was proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, and found Eligible by the Coconino National Forest in 1993. It is also a designated Outstanding Arizona Water. Slide Rock State Park is a popular swimming and hiking location, and numerous campgrounds and picnic areas are located along the segment. Truly one of Arizona's most well-known and photographed canyons, Oak Creek can sometimes receive excessive amounts of recreation. Wild and Scenic River designation would provide another tool for managers to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for the stewardship and restoration of this remarkable and iconic waterway.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coconino National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Geology, Fish Habitat, Riparian, and Ecology as ORVs in the 2018 Forest Plan. Parentheses indicate findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): Oak Creek Canyon is internationally renowned for its striking scenery, geology, and vegetation. The watershed comprises a transition of great diversity from ponderosa pine and fir forest to live oak-pinyon-juniper and Arizona cypress woodlands, to deciduous sycamore-alder-cottonwoods and ending in desert scrub and grasslands.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Year-round fishing exists in Oak Creek for stocked trout. Hiking may be done over a myriad of trails throughout the canyon. Abundant opportunities for sightseeing, bird watching, camping and picnicking at established sites exists. Swimming is popular at the many pools along the creek or at the chute at Slide Rock State Park.

Geology (ARC, USFS): Oak Creek flows through some of the most spectacular landforms and geologic settings in Arizona. As the stream flows off the Mogollon Rim, it has carved through several Grand Canyon rock layers, creating waterfalls, pools, slabs, spires, towering cliffs, and other features. The canyon is also unique as it is formed along a prominent local fault.

Fish Habitat (ARC, USFS): Oak Creek is important as a year-round cold water sport fishery, stocked with rainbow and Gila trout. The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages it as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for desert sucker, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, Gila trout, and rainbow trout.

Riparian/Ecology (ARC, USFS): Clear, clean spring water and diverse and lush riparian vegetation provides habitat, cover, food, and drink for wildlife. Most of Oak Creek Canyon is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the entire creek is critical habitat for the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. Arizona bugbane, a special status plant species which occurs in scattered localities in both Oak Creek and West Fork, requires a particular habitat with moist soils in deep-shaded canyons.

Cultural (ARC): In Oak Creek the upper canyon contains hunting camps and rock shelters from an early occupational period. From Steamboat Mountain downstream there are more than 50 known Indian sites. The agricultural southern Sinaguas were established from about 600 A.D. to 1400 A.D. Evidence also points to Apache and Pai groups in the area about 100 years before the Spanish arrived. Zane Grey had a cabin near the confluence of West Fork and Oak Creek and wrote a book titled "Call of the Canyon" about the area.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Pumphouse Wash to private land at the boundary of the city of Sedona was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality in 1985.

Top: Oak Creek is a quintessential forested Mogollon Rim stream. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: Diverse riparian forest makes Oak Creek a popular destination in all seasons. Photo by Paul Gill.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Upper Verde River Watershed

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Middle Verde River Watershed

Wet Beaver Creek

Status:	Eligible and Potential			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Eligible USFS miles:	13.7	0	4.6	35.6
Eligible Private miles:	0	0	0.5	
Potential USFS miles:	0	0	4.3	
Potential NPS miles:	0	0	3.6	
Potential YAN miles:	0	0	0.6	
Potential Private miles:	0	0	8.3	

Managing Agency: Coconino National Forest
County: Coconino/Yavapai
Watershed: Upper Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Wet Beaver Creek originates along the western Mogollon Rim, northeast of the Town of Camp Verde. It joins Dry Beaver Creek just north of Montezuma Castle National Monument, and together the two forks flow to the Verde River as Beaver Creek. The upper 13.7 miles flows through the Wet Beaver Wilderness, a popular destination for hiking, swimming, and canyoneering. This segment, plus the next 4.6 miles outside of the wilderness area, were found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the Coconino National Forest. Below these segments, the creek flows for another 16.8 miles through a patchwork of lands, including two National Monuments, another 4.3 miles of the Coconino National Forest, a portion of the Yavapai-Apache Nation, and private lands. The upper Eligible segments are an obvious addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System, but future efforts to protect this stream should consider the potential segments, as their contribution to the conservation of riparian habitats, agriculture, culturally significant sites, and recreational areas in the Verde Valley would be significant.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coconino National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Geology, Heritage, Fish Habitat, Riparian, and Ecology as ORVs in the 2018 Forest Plan. Parentheses indicate findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The upper segment has eroded deeply into the Mogollon Rim and is characterized by steep topography, lush riparian growth, and numerous pools which reflect the colorful red rock sandstone walls of the canyon. The lower potential segment features beautiful and diverse riparian habitat and impressive archaeological sites.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): The upper segment's wilderness designation gives testimony to its striking beauty, which also explains the area's popularity for picnicking, swimming, and both day and overnight hiking. The lower reaches are more easily accessed by automobile and receive extensive recreational use in the form of sightseeing, especially at the two National Monuments. The segment below Montezuma Castle can be used for boating during the spring runoff season.

Geology (ARC, USFS): Beaver Creek has eroded its upper canyon through the volcanic basalt which forms the top of the Mogollon Rim. As the creek progresses southwesterly, it goes through many of the same sedimentary layers which characterize the Grand Canyon: Kaibab, Toroweap, Cooonino, Supai, and Hermit formations. The lower segment features a chalk-like limestone called the Verde formation which is interlayered with pink silt and sand deposited by ancient streams.

Cultural/Heritage (ARC, USFS): The creek has many archeological sites, including two designated as National Monuments, as well as historical sites like the Beaver Creek Ranger Station, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Fish Habitat (USFS) & Fish and Wildlife (ARC): Nearly the entire Recreational segment is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and that whole segment plus two tributaries (Walker Creek and Red Tank Draw), are designated critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. Those tributaries are also critical habitat for Gila (roundtail) chub. Uncommon bird species include the osprey, common black hawk, and Bell's vireo. The creek's dependable supply of water lures other game and non-game wildlife to the area such as quail, dove, mule and white-tailed deer, javelina, elk, and bobcat. Beavers, from which the creek obtains its name, also inhabit its waters.

Riparian & Ecology (USFS): The amount, diversity, and quality of riparian vegetation create highly diverse ecological niches.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 “Lifeblood of the Desert” proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the headwaters on Hutch Mountain to private lands just east of Montezuma Well National Monument was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service’s Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire 13.7-mile Wild segment of Wet Beaver Creek is within the Wet Beaver Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ Designated as an Arizona Heritage Water for its importance to Arizona history and ecology.
- ✓ The creek flows through Montezuma Castle (2.8 miles) and Montezuma Well (0.8 miles) National Monuments.

Wet Beaver Creek

Top left: Black lava rocks form a small dam in a redrock sandstone pool. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Top right: Mogollon Rim canyons like Wet Beaver display striking contrasts of rock, water, and light. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: Students swim down Wet Beaver Creek on a backpacking orientation course. Photo courtesy Prescott College.

West Clear Creek

Status:	Eligible and Potential			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Eligible USFS miles:	32.7	6.9	0	
Potential USFS miles:	0	0	1.1	
Potential Private miles:	0	0	1.5	44
Potential TNC miles:	0	0	0.5	
Potential Camp Verde miles:	0	0	1.3	

Managing Agency: Coconino National Forest
County: Coconino/Yavapai
Watershed: Lower Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

West Clear Creek originates on the Mogollon Rim near the small town of Clint's Well, and flows for 44 miles to join the Verde River southeast of the town of Camp Verde as it slashes one of Arizona's most prominent extended box canyons. The upper 32.7 miles flows through the West Clear Creek Wilderness, a popular destination for backpacking, swimming, and canyoneering. This segment, plus the next 6.9 miles outside of the wilderness area, were found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation by the Coconino National Forest. Below these segments, another 4.4 miles flows through national forest, private land, land owned by the Town of Camp Verde, and a preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy at the confluence with the Verde River. The upper Eligible segments are an obvious addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System, but future efforts to protect West Clear Creek should also consider the lower potential segments, as their contribution to the conservation of riparian habitats, agriculture, and recreational areas in the Verde Valley would be significant. The entire creek was proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in their 1991 proposal.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coconino National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Geology, Heritage, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Riparian, and Ecology as ORVs in the 2018 Forest Plan. Parentheses indicate findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): West Clear Creek Canyon is remarkable for its deep narrow passageways cut through sandstones of the Supai and Coconino formations. Bright beams of sunlight illuminate the canyon walls while a green filtered glow characterizes the canyon floor hidden beneath a canopy of riparian vegetation. In the fall, maples, poison ivy, willows, and alders offer red and yellow contrasts to the canyon's lush greenery.

Geology (ARC, USFS): This is a representative rim country stream carving a narrow canyon with walls plunging from 5,900 feet in elevation to 4,000 feet in the area near Black Mountain. The upper canyon walls are formed by Tertiary basalt, while the erosion by the creek has revealed Kaibab Limestone, Coconino Sandstone and sandstones of the Supai Formation.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Superior opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist as this stream is exceedingly remote for most of its length. For years, trout fishing has been a primary reason for descending the rugged slopes to access West Clear Creek. Trails leading into the canyon from the rim are popular with hikers and backpackers seeking good fishing and secluded swimming holes. Trails that lead up from the canyon mouth get substantial use by hikers, anglers, backpackers, and car campers who use the primitive Forest Service campground near Bull Pen Ranch.

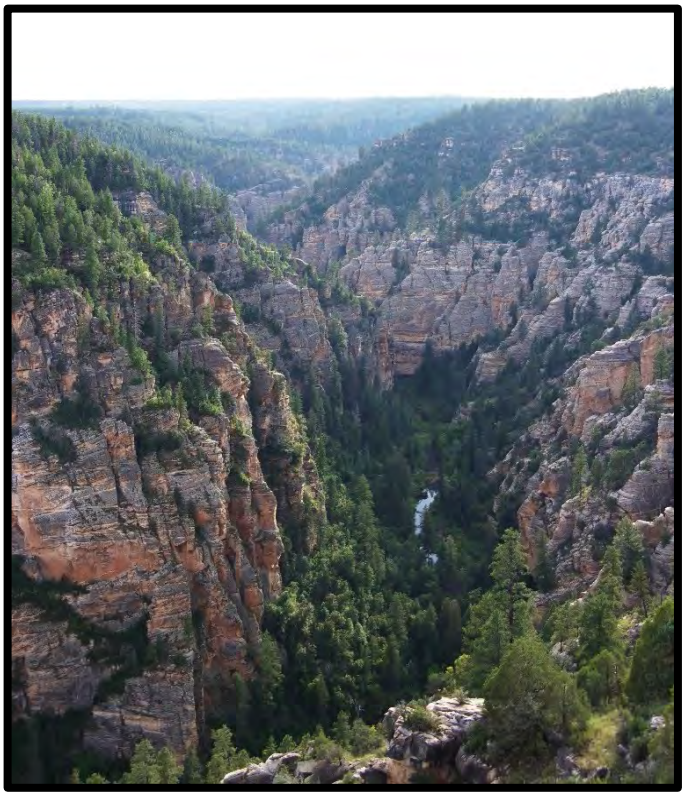
Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): The bottom 7 miles of West Clear Creek is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace, and the bottom 5 miles is critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The eastern half of West Clear Creek canyon is within designated critical habitat for the threatened Mexican spotted owl. It is a highly valuable cold water sport fishery with rainbow and brown trout. Native fish include desert sucker, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, and speckled dace. The stream once harbored native Gila trout, but restoration efforts would not be feasible.

Riparian/Ecology (ARC, USFS): The amount, diversity, and quality of riparian vegetation create diverse ecological niches.

Cultural/Heritage (ARC, USFS): Prehistoric cliff dwellings, petroglyphs, and artifacts are found throughout, as well as the Clear Creek Ruins (National Register listed), Calkin Ranch and Verde Ball Court sites (National Register Eligible), a portion of the General Crook Military Road, the 1930s era Clear Creek Ranger Station, and a Civilian Conservation Corps work camp.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ From the headwaters to the West Fork Campground was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ An Eligible Wild and Scenic River in the 2018 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire 32.7-mile Wild segment of West Clear Creek is within the West Clear Creek Wilderness, established in 1984. An additional 2 miles of the Scenic segment borders the Wilderness Area around Bull Pen.



Top: Students backpack down West Clear Creek on a late summer orientation course. Photo courtesy Prescott College.
Bottom Left: Looking from a rim overlook down into West Clear Creek. Photo courtesy Prescott College.
Bottom Right: Lower West Clear Creek, near the Forest Service campground. Photo by Paul Gill.

Lower Verde River

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Yavapai/Gila
Watershed: Lower Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	9.2	0.8	0	10
Non-federal land:	none			

The Lower Verde River is the segment of the Verde River immediately below the currently designated Wild and Scenic River. The segment runs for 10 miles, from Red Creek to Sheep's Bridge. The entire river was listed in 1982 as potentially Eligible in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory, but this segment was left out of the 1984 designation legislation because at that time there was interest in construction of a new flood control project which would have inundated this segment. The segment was proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, then found Eligible by the U.S. Forest Service in 1993 with a Wild classification. The Tonto National Forest's 2020 eligibility report carried forward the finding, but downgraded the lower 0.8-mile segment to Scenic because it is accessible by road.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Tonto National Forest's 2020 eligibility report listed Fisheries, Wildlife, Historical, and Recreation as ORVs. The following descriptions are taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study:

Recreation: "Recreation values have also been identified as outstandingly remarkable for this segment of the Verde River. The majority of the river area is in the Mazatzal Wilderness area and provides opportunities to engage, year-round, in dispersed recreation activities including hiking, backpacking, camping, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and river running. These opportunities are abundant and high quality, occur in a rugged and remote setting, provide a high level of challenge and risk, and are considered unique and exemplary when compared to similar resources in the State of Arizona."

Fish and Wildlife: "The riparian community and the river itself provide high quality, contiguous habitat for a large and diverse suite of fish and wildlife species including important sensitive species like bald eagles, Northern-Mexican garter snake and southwestern willow-flycatcher. The area provides valuable winter habitat for migratory waterfowl and birds, including important foraging habitat for bald eagles and critical habitat for the Southwestern willow-flycatcher. The Verde River is one of the primary breeding areas for bald eagles in the State of Arizona. This segment of the Verde River supports a high diversity and concentration of State and Federally listed fish species including razorback sucker, spikedace, roundtail chub, Loach minnow, and Colorado pikeminnow. The river provides uniquely diverse and high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to Arizona, including the only critical habitat for razorback sucker."

Cultural and Historic: "There are many known sites within the potential river area and available data suggests an extensive prehistoric occupation by the Hohokam people: evidence ranges from sherd and lithic scatters to large villages with pithouses and pueblo architecture that dates from approximately AD 800 to 1400. Spaniards first touched the Verde River in 1583 looking for gold. The area was used by the Yavapai Indians beginning around AD 1700 until the establishment of reservations. In the late 1820s, Anglo fur trappers explored the Verde from its confluence with the Salt River upstream to the headwaters in chino Valley. Cattle and sheep grazing occurred beginning around 1900 leading to the need for a safe livestock crossing over the Verde River. Sheep's Bridge was originally constructed for flocks of sheep to cross the river, and was used for this purposed from 1943 until 1979. Sheep's Bridge is now on the National Register of Historic Places and represents a unique feature that is not found anywhere else in the state. The area is one of the few intact locations where there is an interaction of prehistoric transportation and resource procurement."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ From the end of the currently designated Wild River segment at the mouth of Red Creek down to the upper limit of Horseshoe reservoir was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ Almost the entire 9.2 miles of the Wild-classified Lower Verde is in the Mazatzal Wilderness, established in 1964.

Top: A canoe trip beached at Red Creek, the start of the Lower Verde segment. Photo courtesy American Whitewater.
Bottom: Members of the Arizona Rivers Coalition and Congressman Morris Udall float the Verde in 1986. Photo by Tim Flood.

East Verde River

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Lower Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	12.9	20.3	33.2
Non-federal land:	none			

The East Verde River originates on the Mogollon Rim north of Payson, and flows for 53 miles to join the Verde Wild and Scenic River in the Mazatzal Wilderness. The stream begins its journey in ponderosa pine forest, and ends among saguaro cacti in the Sonoran Desert. The entire river was listed in 1982 as potentially Eligible in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protecting the entire river as a Wild and Scenic River in 1991. Then, in 1993 the U.S. Forest Service found the middle 20.3 miles potentially Eligible as a Recreational river, and the lower 12.9 miles potentially Eligible as a Scenic river. The Tonto National Forest carried forward the eligibility findings in their 2020 eligibility report. The upper 19.8 miles were found non-Eligible due to the amount of private land. The segments described here are downstream of State Highway 260.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

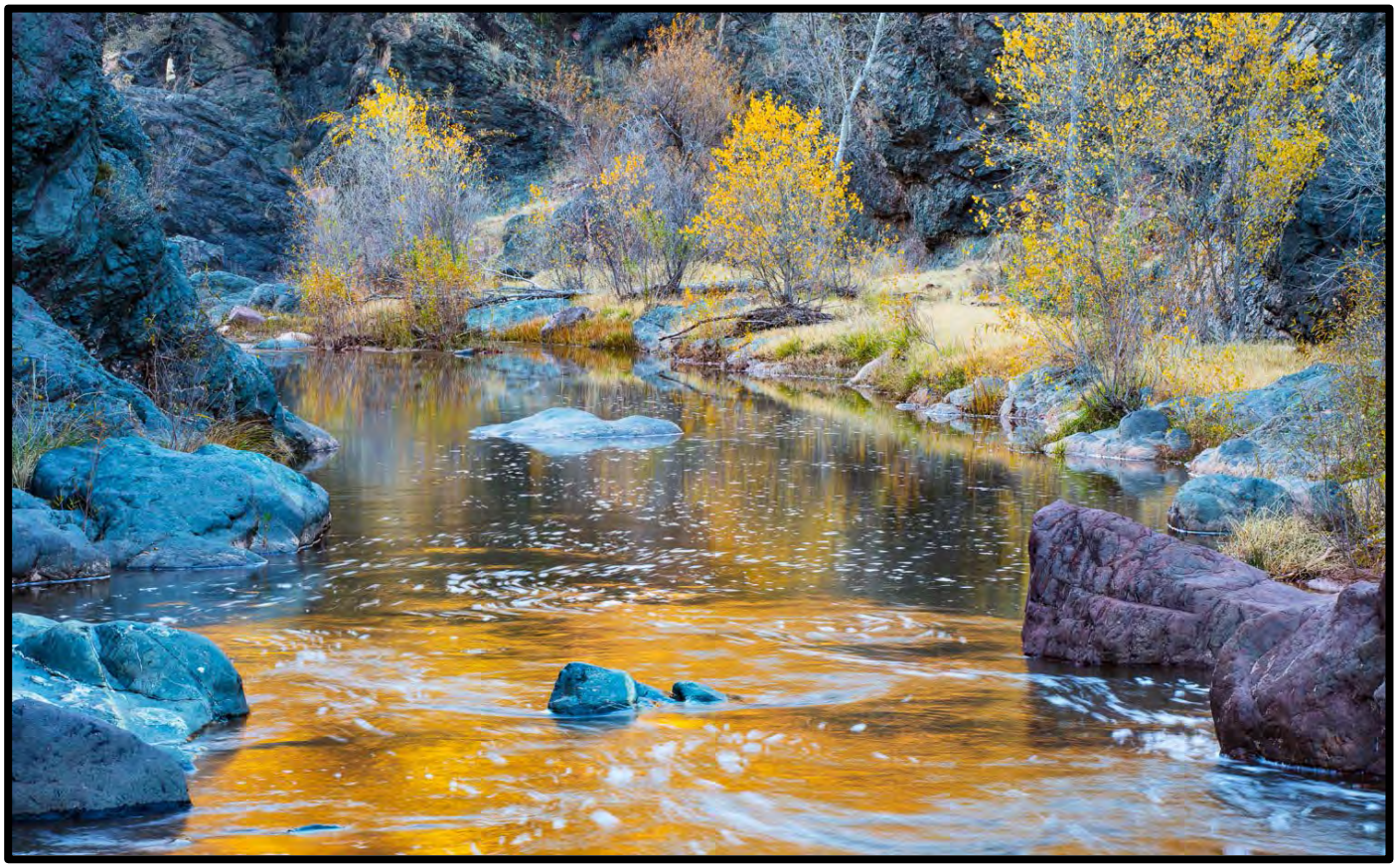
The USFS 1993 Resource Inventory Report found that the East Verde had Wildlife and Riparian ORVs. However, the 2020 Tonto National Forest Eligibility Study found that the river only had a Scenery ORV. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposal listed Scenery, Recreation, Fish and Wildlife, and Cultural ORVs. This updated description includes the following ORVs.

Scenery: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "In the East Verde River's 34-mile descent to its confluence with the Verde River, it travels past and through a myriad of geologic layers and life zones giving it a wide variety of truly beautiful scenery rarely found elsewhere in the area of comparison, Arizona. Starting in the ponderosa pine forest of the Payson area, the river proceeds through deep canyons that are composed of the same Paleozoic layers that make the Grand Canyon famous but also intruded by more recent volcanic events. The scenically renowned Bright Angel Shale and Tapeats Sandstone eventually give way to a stunning canyon of bright pink Payson Granite unique to the East Verde River which forms a series of waterfalls that land in beautiful, peaceful pools. The scenery is enhanced by riparian vegetation including big shady cottonwoods and an unusual amount of Arizona cypress. Later, as it winds down to the Sonoran Desert it drops into multiple black gorges of Precambrian rock which further contribute to the beauty of the surrounding desert."

Recreation: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, though the agency did not list Recreation as a value: "Many old and large cottonwood trees combine with the riparian vegetation to give welcome shade to the sometimes-broad stream bank. Recreational users derive social benefits from the opportunities for solitude, relaxation, viewing of scenery, and wildlife in an area with preserved unique and natural condition. Recreational activities include hiking and backpacking, car-camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing, hunting, and off-highway driving." In addition, the Arizona National Scenic Trail crosses the East Verde River, and is an important point for hikers on the trail.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Entire river from the headwaters to its confluence with the Verde River was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ The entire 12.9-mile Scenic segment of the East Verde River is within the Mazatzal Wilderness, established in 1964. The lowermost 2.6 miles of the Recreational segment is within the Wilderness area as well.



Top: The East Verde River tumbles off the Mogollon Rim and into polished granite bedrock. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: The East Verde swirls around ancient rocks as it flows through the Mazatzal Wilderness. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Lower Verde River Watershed

Tangle Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Lower Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	7	2.6	9.6
Non-federal land:	none			

Tangle Creek originates on the Verde Rim, just east of the Agua Fria National Monument, and flows southeasterly through Bloody Basin to join the Verde River just upstream of Sheep's Bridge. The Tonto National Forest identified two Eligible segments: a Recreational segment that runs from the confluence of Round Tree Canyon to the crossing of Forest Road 269, and a Scenic segment that runs from there down to the Verde River.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Scenic resource values were also identified as meeting the criteria for outstandingly remarkable in Tangle Creek and are directly related to the unique riparian habitat found there. Tangle Creek's unique assemblage of desert vegetation and trees that produce spectacular fall colors provides visitors to the river corridor with scenery that is spectacular and not common to other rivers in the State. This desert vegetation assembled with fall color producing trees comprises less than 1 percent of the Arizona landscape."

Natural/Riparian: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Tangle Creek was identified has having outstandingly remarkable natural (riparian) and scenic resource values when compared to similar resources across the State of Arizona. Tangle Creek is one of the best examples of a Sonoran Desert riparian area in the State of Arizona. The good quality, mixed broad-leaf community has a fairly extensive reach and is home to a variety of grasses, sedges, and other hydric plants. The unique desert riparian area also provides habitat for a wide variety of migratory birds and other wildlife." Longfin dace and desert sucker habitat is found in Tangle Creek.

Pine Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Lower Verde River
Region: Verde River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	2.6	2.6
Non-federal land:	none			

Pine Creek originates on the Mogollon Rim above the towns of Pine and Strawberry, and flows for 20 miles before joining the East Verde River in the Mazatzal Wilderness. The segment described here is a 2-mile reach that encompasses Tonto Natural Bridge State Park. Future efforts to protect Pine Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should consider evaluating the section of the stream below the Eligible segment as it is entirely undeveloped and has been identified by Arizona Game and Fish Department as a potential reintroduction site for longfin dace and lowland leopard frog. The lower segment is a potential Wild-classified segment.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Geology: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Pine Creek was identified as having outstandingly remarkable geologic resource values when compared to other similar resources across the nation. The area within the river corridor contains the largest known travertine natural bridge in the world, measuring 180 feet high, 400 feet long and approximately 100 feet thick on top. The bridge was formed by a small stream flowing through a shady canyon in the wooded foothills of the Mogollon Rim. The area surrounding the bridge was made into a state park, Tonto Natural Bridge State Park (June 29, 1991), and draws visitors from across the state and country. The Tonto Natural Bridge, and Pine Creek with its perennial waters attract visitors accessing recreational opportunities in the area, such as hiking. The area is also known for its nesting pair of American peregrine falcons."

THE SALT RIVER-TONTO BASIN REGION

The Salt River and Tonto Creek Basins are quintessential Arizona. This is classic desert country, with broad valleys broken by soaring mountain ranges – and almost entirely within the Tonto National Forest. The roaring Salt River drains the White Mountains and the Apache Indian lands to the east, and Tonto Creek collects water from the Mogollon Rim and Mogollon Highland mountain ranges. These two rivers meet at Roosevelt Lake, constructed a century ago to store water for agriculture and development in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Today, more than a dozen streams above the lake are Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection. The Sierra Ancha is an important range here, giving rise to most of the Eligible creeks in this bioregion, many of which are characterized by striking waterfalls and dazzling pools of crystal-clear water.

A WILD DESERT RIVER MARKED BY TREACHEROUS RAPIDS AND REMOTE CANYONS
SALT RIVER, TONTO NATIONAL FOREST AND APACHE INDIAN RESERVATIONS
PHOTO BY TIM FLOOD

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Upper Salt River

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	39.1	20.3	0	59.4
Non-federal land:	0.4 miles through one small private parcel is excluded from eligibility			

The Salt River is one of Arizona's great rivers, beginning at the junction of the White and Black Rivers and joining the Gila River in Phoenix, though the river's natural hydrology in its lower sections has been destroyed by dams and diversions. Between the junction of the White and Black Rivers and Roosevelt Lake, however, the Salt is as wild and free as a river can be. The Upper Salt River is a 59.4-mile reach that runs from the boundary of the San Carlos Indian Reservation to the Highway 288 bridge upstream of Roosevelt Lake. This section was proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition and found Eligible by the Tonto National Forest with a Scenic segment upstream of the Salt River Canyon Wilderness, and a Wild segment within the wilderness area. The upper Scenic segment and the upper 9.5 miles of the Wild segment borders the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): Scenic features include 2,000 foot deep, multi-colored, steep-walled canyons; exceptional riparian habitat dominated by cottonwood, sycamore, and mesquite trees; saguaro cactus and bald eagle soaring overhead. The river leaves Salt River Canyon and flows through desert terrain before entering Jump-off Canyon with dramatic towering walls and Quartzite Falls. There is little sign of human intrusion to detract from the beauty of the river.

Geology (ARC, USFS): A great variety of geologic formations are exposed along the Upper Salt River. Layers of limestone, diabase, basalt, granite, and sandstone are easily observed. There are also examples of faulting and folding which are very unique, such as a formation called the Devil's Postpile. The marvelous Salt Banks, formed by evaporation of some of the salt-water springs that give the river its name, are about seven miles below the Highway 60 bridge.

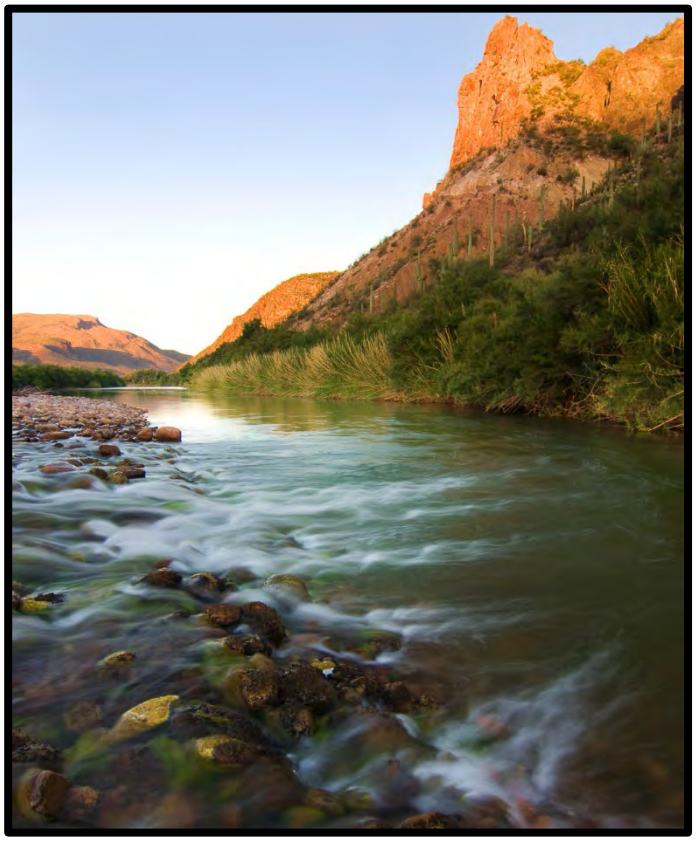
Recreation (ARC, USFS): The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "The Upper Salt River also provides recreation opportunities that draw people from across the state and region. River related opportunities include white water river running, fishing, long distance hiking and backpacking. River running is so popular a lottery is used to allocate a limited number of permits. Running the Upper Salt River is comparable to running the Grand Canyon and it is one of only a very few comparable opportunities in the state and country."

Cultural (ARC, USFS): The Salt River was important for both pre-historic and historic people. The Salado culture occupied the canyon from AD 1150-1400. Cultural sites include small masonry rooms to large multiroom pueblos. Historic use is mainly associated with ranching during the late 19th century to the present. The site of one of the last battles of the Apache war and many hilltop defensive sites are known to be in the area. Two excellent cliff dwellings are located near the river and are regularly visited by raft trips.

Fish and Wildlife/Riparian (ARC): This free-flowing river is also of utmost importance in maintaining an example of Arizona's native big-river fish community. The entire river segment is designated critical habitat for the razorback sucker, and is critical habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher from Cherry Creek and down. Species known to occur here include yellow-billed cuckoo, roundtail chub, narrow-headed garter snake, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and many other riparian species. The riparian values of desert rivers have been well documented in numerous studies. The Salt River and its adjacent uplands are vegetated by both extremely rare and common plant communities. More important is the juxtaposition and intimate associations between the desert and riparian communities.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The entire 62 miles of the Salt River from the confluence of the White and Black Rivers to the western boundary of the White Mountain Apache Reservation was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ The 39.1-mile Wild segment of the Upper Salt flows through the Salt River Canyon Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ The upper 18.3 miles of the upper Scenic segment of the Upper Salt River flows borders the Picacho Roadless Area.



Top: An early autumn scene on the Salt River. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom Left: Boaters drop into rapids in the Salt River Wilderness. Photo by Steph Hovater.
Bottom Right: Cobbles at low water on the Salt River. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Canyon Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	7.2	7.2
Non-federal land:	OW ranch is within the corridor but the creek does not pass through it.			

Canyon Creek originates on the Mogollon Rim in the northeastern corner of the Tonto National Forest, and flows for more than fifty miles before joining the Salt River just upstream of the Salt River Canyon Wilderness. All but the upper 7.2 miles on the Tonto National Forest are within the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation. Canyon Creek is unique as a Mogollon Rim stream as it is relatively low gradient and flows through broad, open meadows, rather than steep, cascading canyons like most other Rim Country streams. It is a popular fishing stream, and visitors can choose from 4 nearby U.S. Forest Service campgrounds. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages a fish hatchery that breeds Gila trout, rainbow trout, and arctic grayling. Conservation groups and land management agencies have worked collaboratively on successful habitat restoration projects.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Wildlife: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Canyon Creek was identified as having outstandingly remarkable wildlife values. Several species of conservation concern including the American dipper, olive-sided flycatcher, red-faced warbler, MacGillivray's warbler, and Pacific wren utilize Canyon Creek and the surrounding river corridor habitat. The Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas documents only 4 detections of breeding Pacific wrens and one of those detections came from Canyon Creek, making it remarkable for the state as one of the few breeding areas for this species. Additionally, Canyon Creek has … the highest known density of narrow-headed garter snakes on the Tonto and possibly one of the largest wild populations within the State of Arizona. … Canyon Creek is managed as a "blue ribbon" fishery and is a very popular recreation area during the cool summer months. This segment is different than most of the other streams coming off the Mogollon Rim, with a wide valley bottom and prairie in the middle. There are dispersed camping areas in close proximity to this segment and exclosures help to keep elk and cows away from the stream." The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The lower 5 miles is designated as critical habitat for the narrow-headed garter snake.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Canyon Creek Spring to the National Forest Boundary was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.

Canyon Creek's wide, open meadows are highly unique among Mogollon Rim streams. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Cherry Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Potentially Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	16.4	6.2	10.2	32.8
Non-federal land:	Less than ¼ mile			

Cherry Creek originates along the Mogollon Rim where the Sierra Ancha range juts to the south. Along its 61-mile journey to join the Salt River, it passes through the small town of Young, as well as dropping through a spectacular, wild canyon, including a long stretch through the Cherry Creek Roadless Area on the Tonto National Forest. In 1991, the Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed almost 33 miles of Cherry Creek, from Cherry Creek Springs to the Salt River, for Wild and Scenic Protection. The U.S. Forest Service determined that 25 miles of the creek downstream of Young was potentially Eligible for designation in its 1993 eligibility report, excluding everything below Ellison Ranch. However, the Tonto National Forest concluded in 2022 that Cherry Creek no longer possessed any Outstandingly Remarkable Values, and as such the agency found the stream non-Eligible. Conservation groups argued to the Forest Service that Cherry Creek does in fact possess ORVs, but the agency did not waver in their decision. The segments described here reflect an updating of the earlier proposed segments, and include information substantiating the presence of ORVs. The segments are as follows:

Segment 1: 15.3 miles from Cherry Creek Springs down to Horse Camp Creek (Wild)
Segment 2: 6.2 miles from Horse Camp Creek to the Ellison Ranch (Scenic)
Segment 3: 10.2 miles from Ellison Ranch to Wilderness boundary (Recreational)
Segment 4: 1.1 miles from Salt River Wilderness boundary to Salt River (Wild)

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The scenery in the mid-section of the watershed is spectacular with towering cliffs from the Sierra Ancha Wilderness dominating the view. At creek level, bluffs and rock outcroppings occur at almost every bend in the river. This section of the creek is completely undeveloped, providing superior visual quality with no human intrusions.

Recreation: Due to the rugged terrain and dirt road access, the Cherry Creek watershed remains largely undeveloped and is excellent for dispersed recreation. Users swim, hike, hunt, fish, and birdwatch in this remote setting. Hunters find deer, quail, and javelina. Exceptional hiking is found along the creek or canyon slopes to ancient Indian ruins.

Fish and Wildlife: About 10 miles of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the lower 5 miles is designated critical habitat for the razorback sucker. Cherry Creek currently supports self-sustaining populations of roundtail chub, desert sucker, Sonora sucker, longfin dace and speckled dace. Chiricahua leopard, lowland leopard frogs and narrow-headed garter snake have been found along Cherry Creek. The common blackhawk, peregrine falcon, Mexican spotted owl, California leaf-nosed bat, red bat, and the occult bat all have special species status and are known to live in the Cherry Creek area. The southwestern river otter was historically present. The entire length of the creek supports a rich riparian habitat and is an important wildlife migration corridor.

Ecology: The closed canopy mixed broad-leaf deciduous riparian forest associated with portions of Cherry Creek provide nesting habitat for numerous pairs of common blackhawks. These riparian woodlands provide migration corridors for many species of neotropical migrants as well as nesting habitat for many species of obligate riparian nesting birds.

Cultural and Historic: Many well preserved archaeological sites have been found throughout the length of the creek. The middle portion was first studied in 1934, while the upper and lower reaches were studied in the 1970s. Many cliff dwellings have been found made of masonry construction up to 20 rooms in size. Most ruins are 600-800 years old and are classified as Salado ruins.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 “Lifeblood of the Desert” proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Forest Rod 329 to Ellison Ranch was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service’s Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ 12.2 miles of the Wild-classified segment of Cherry creek are within the Cherry Creek Roadless Area, and the lower 1.1-mile Wild segment is within the Salt River Canyon Wilderness, established in 1984.

Cherry Creek

Top Left: Cherry Creek drains the Mogollon Rim and the eastern slopes of the Sierra Ancha. Photo by Jonathan Buford.
Top Right: An image of Cherry Creek captured for the original "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal. Photo by Bill Gobus.
Bottom: Lower Cherry Creek near the confluence with the Salt River. Photo by Jonathan Buford.

Pueblo Canyon/Cold Spring Canyon/Devil's Chasm

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Pueblo Canyon Miles:	1.7	0	0	1.7
Cold Spring Canyon Miles:	1.7	0	0	1.7
Devils Chasm Miles:	2.5	0	0	2.5
Non-federal land:	none			

Pueblo Canyon, Cold Spring Canyon, and Devil's Chasm are three steep and beautiful creeks cascading off the eastern face of the Sierra Ancha mountain range in the Sierra Ancha Wilderness. They flow into Cherry Creek, but the Eligible segments are all upstream of the Cherry Creek Road. These streams are scenic wonders with high cultural significance, featuring a number of cliff dwellings and other archaeological sites. They also host unique ecological and botanical features, such as the endemic Arizona bugbane and Sierra Ancha fleabane, and the rare California redbud. As relatively unknown creeks, these provide fantastic opportunities to find solitude while exploring geological, botanical, and cultural sites of supreme significance.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Pueblo Canyon

Scenery: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Scenic values in Pueblo Canyon were identified as being outstandingly remarkable. The unique display of hanging gardens, colorful geologic formations, huge monolith granite walls, waterfalls and cultural resources (i.e., cliff dwellings and cliff drawings) provide river users with scenery that is spectacular and unique in Arizona. While the area is secluded, owing to a high degree of preservation in the area, people travel from all over the world to see this area."

Historic: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Pueblo Canyon is named after the large, fairly intact pueblo located in the river corridor. This feature is one of only two examples in the state that are as intact as this one and provides a high quality example of what these structures looked like prior to European settlement."

Cold Spring Canyon

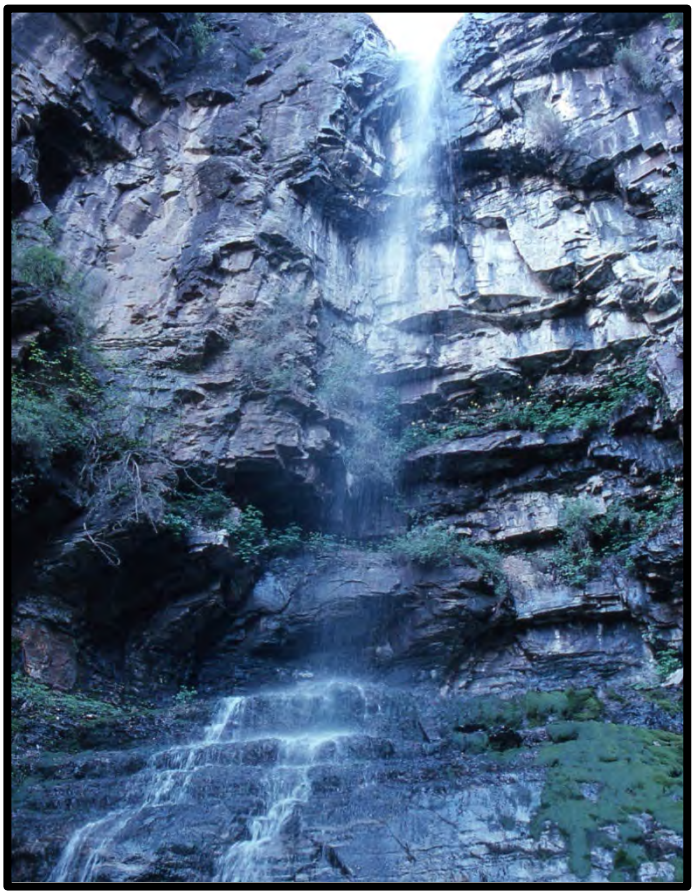
Natural/Botanical: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Cold Spring Canyon was identified as having outstandingly remarkable natural (botanical) values when compared with similar resources in the State of Arizona. Cold Spring Canyon's unusual geologic formations, vegetation and topography in the canyon setting result in unique habitat conditions, including low light and dripping cliffs, for a high number of endemic, rare and sensitive plant species. The Sierra Ancha fleabane (Erigeron anchana) and the Arizona bugbane (Cimicifugia arizonica) are two examples. The population of Arizona bugbane is possibly the largest in the Sierra Ancha Mountains."

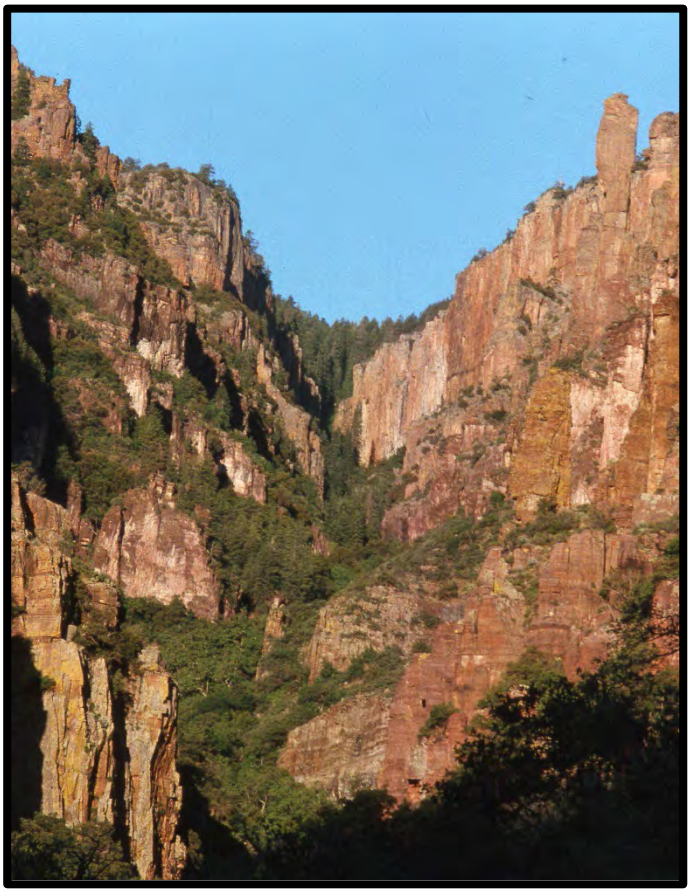
Devil's Chasm

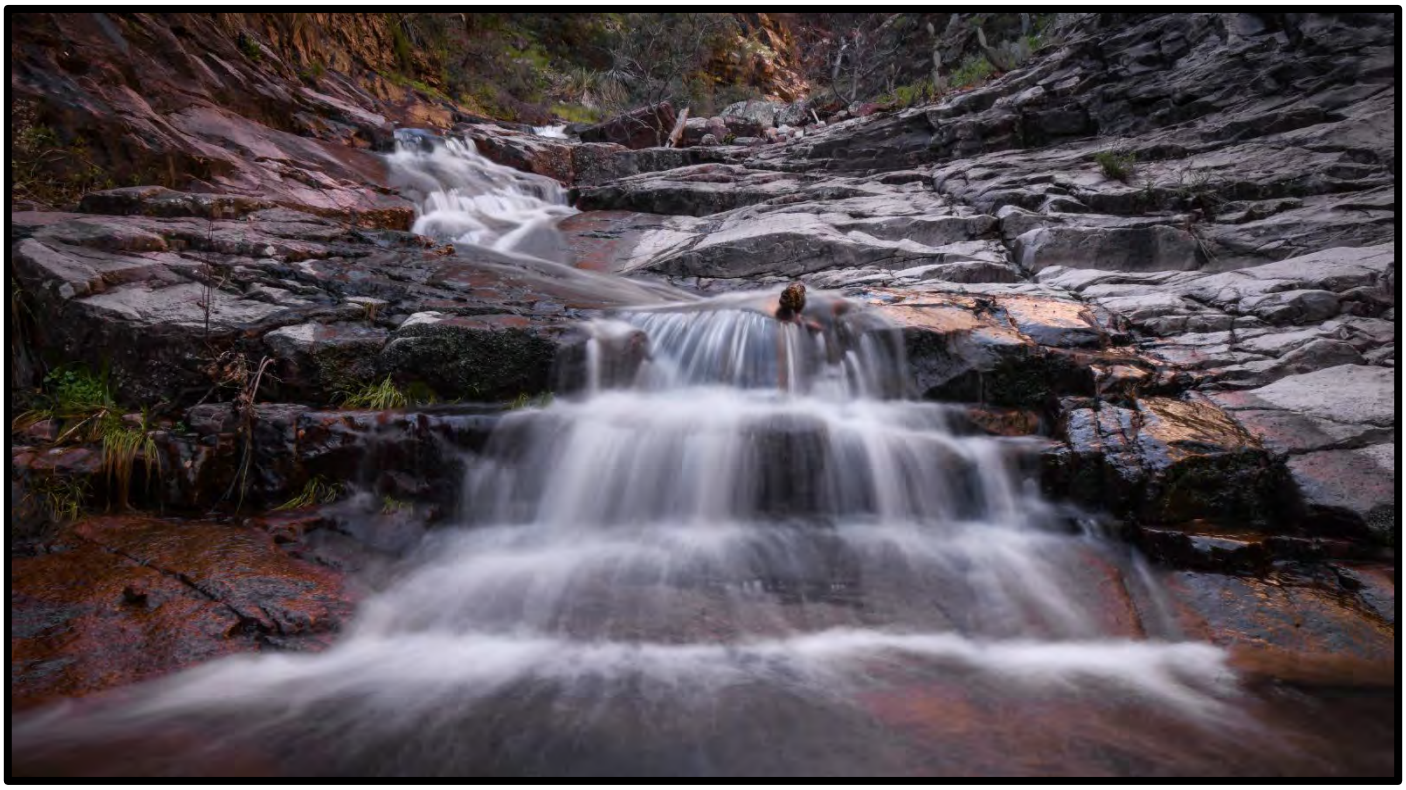
Historic: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Devil's Chasm was identified as having outstandingly remarkable cultural resource values when compared to similar resources across the nation. Devil's Chasm contains a unique, relatively intact, high country pueblo and represents the northern extent of the Hohokam pueblo features. The area includes a rare rounded building that is unique within the nation. The cliff dwellings are considered world class and unique due to their uncommon melding and blending of different cultural types representing use of the area by multiple cultures/tribes."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ All three of these Eligible segments are within the Sierra Ancha Wilderness, established in 1964.







Top Left: A waterfall in Pueblo Canyon drains the forests high in the Sierra Ancha. Photo by Tim Flood.
Top Right: Cold Spring Canyon carves a steep gorge on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Ancha. Photo by Tim Flood.
Bottom: Polished cascades in Devil's Chasm. Photo by Robert Indrisie.

Coon Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	10.9	0	1.7	12.6
Non-federal land:	1 mile through Coon Creek Ranch			

Coon Creek originates at the southern tip of the Sierra Ancha on the southwestern slopes of Aztec Peak and flows through the Sierra Ancha Wilderness to join the Salt River in the Salt River Canyon Wilderness. Six streams profiled in this compilation emerge from this single mountain, including Coon, Parker, Workman, Pueblo, Cold Spring, and Devil's Chasm. In 1991, the Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protecting 9.5 miles of Coon Creek, but the U.S. Forest Service has never completed a thorough eligibility study. The segments described below reflect an updating of the earlier proposal. The creek's 3,700-foot drop over a short distance has created a boxed-in canyon along the upper two-thirds, while the lower third is surrounded by desert foothills. The creek begins in a coniferous forest and winds its way through communities of deciduous woodlands, pinyon-juniper, chaparral, and eventually ending in upland Sonoran Desert scrub-cacti vegetation.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: Combining the many life zones along the creek with the fact that this area has not yet been severely impacted by human activity creates a pleasant visual experience. The steep canyon provides breathtaking views and the mature stands of cottonwood, sycamore, ash, willow, and walnut trees are a joy to see in arid country.

Fish and Wildlife: The upper half of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. Coon Creek is managed for self-sustaining native aquatic species with a focus on longfin dace and desert sucker. The Arizona Game and Fish Department plans to evaluate the creek for future roundtail chub introductions as well as suitability for narrow-headed garter snake and other native aquatic species.

Cultural and Historic: There are fourteen recorded human-occupied sites along the creek, ranging in size from one to sixty-five rooms, including a Salado cliff dwelling built between A.D. 1280 and 1350. Armer Ranch has buildings old enough that they may be considered historically significant, including a waterwheel and housing that was used to provide hydro-electric power to the ranch.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ The uppermost 0.5 miles of Coon Creek are within the Sierra Ancha Wilderness Contiguous Roadless Area, and the next 3.5 miles are within the designated Sierra Ancha Wilderness, established in 1964. The lower 1.1-mile Wild segment is within the Salt River Canyon Wilderness, established in 1984.

Top: Coon Creek flows from the Sierra Ancha Wilderness down to the Salt River Canyon Wilderness. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Bottom: Lower Coon Creek flows through the cactus covered foothills of the Sierra Ancha Mountains. Photo by Tim Flood.

Salome Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible and Potentially Eligible/Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	20	0	0	20
Non-federal land:	none			

Salome Creek originates on Pine Mountain in the central Sierra Ancha, and has carved a massive canyon cutting into the southwestern face of that range. Most of the creek flows through the Salome Wilderness, which is one of Arizona's top canyoneering destinations. Workman Creek, another stream profiled in this report, joins Salome Creek in Hells Hole, deep in the wilderness area. In 1991, the Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protecting 20 miles of Salome Creek, from the Turkey Creek confluence down to Forest Road 60. The same 20-mile segment was found potentially Eligible in the U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report eligibility study. However, the Tonto National Forest recently made an arbitrary eligibility determination, finding only 8.5 miles Eligible. The Tonto National Forest's 2020 eligibility report makes the following arbitrary changes: (1) excludes the creek within the Armer Mountain and Buzzard Roost grazing allotments, (2) excludes the segment below the wilderness boundary, even though no changes in the free-flowing status have been documented, and (3) eliminated Fish and Wildlife and Cultural Outstandingly Remarkable Values. The segments described here update the 1993 proposal and include the agency's 1993 ORV findings and the entire 20 miles from Turkey Creek to Forest Road 60.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): A magnificent, deep, wild canyon is cut by the creek as it tumbles from its origin at 7,000 feet to the desert floor at 2,500 feet. The upper portion of the proposed segment consists of ponderosa pine, scrub oak, pinyon, and juniper forests. As it exits the wilderness area the creek has carved an outstanding mile-long granite gorge. Other notable scenery includes a canyon named The Jug, colorful Dutchwoman Butte, and the marvelous contrast of a cottonwood riparian zone immediately flanked by saguaro cacti.

Recreation (ARC, USFS): Opportunities include canyoneering, hiking, backpacking, birding, nature watching, fishing, and hunting. The creek is not navigable, but there are numerous pools that draw many enthusiasts for a refreshing swim. Only three trails cross the stream; these are above the wilderness boundary in the upper segment. The creek corridor is remote and offers excellent opportunities for solitude and quiet.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS 1993): The upper half of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. Dependable water on Salome Creek provides one of the most important ecological corridors for wildlife in the Tonto/Salt River basin, including deer, bear, javelina, mountain lion, great blue heron, hawks, the state-protected Gila monster, fish, and amphibians. The 1993 Resource Information Report listed roundtail chub, peregrine falcon, southwestern willow flycatcher, Swainson's hawk, loggerhead shrike, Mexican garter snake, Arizona toad, yellow-billed cuckoo, lowland leopard frog, common black hawk, western red bat, little brown bat, and southwestern cave myotis as species which likely use the aquatic and riparian habitat.

Geologic (ARC): Eons of flash floods have carved and polished a one-mile long, 200-foot deep, narrow gorge of pink granite at the segment exiting the wilderness area. This labyrinthine channel with its clear pools is a popular destination for an increasing number of visitors.

Cultural (USFS 1993): At least 12 known Salado sites occur in Salome Creek, including Tuzigoot-on-Salome, a 150+ room masonry pueblo occupied from about 1250 to 1400 AD.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the confluence of Salome and Turkey Creek to Forest Road 60 was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ 8.5 miles of Salome Creek were found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ 13.1 miles of Salome Creek are within the Salome Wilderness, established in 1984.

Canyoneers descend Salome Creek, a popular – and challenging – technical canyon route. Photo by Robert Indrisie.

Workman Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible and Formerly Eligible/Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	2.8	0	6.2	9
Non-federal land:	1.4 miles of private land in segment 2			

Workman Creek originates on the northwestern slopes of Aztec Peak in the southern Sierra Ancha, and flows for 10 miles to join Salome Creek in Hells Hole, deep in the Salome Wilderness. The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report found 9 miles of Workman Creek, from Workman Falls to Salome Creek, potentially Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection with a preliminary classification of Recreational. However, the Tonto National Forest significantly reduced the Eligible segment in its 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report, eliminating the bottom two segments of the creek, which are below Forest Road 3221. Interestingly, the segments eliminated from eligibility happen to align with grazing allotment boundaries, and not with any values of the creek. The 2.3-mile upper segment remaining Eligible is within an area excluded from cattle grazing, while the middle 3.8-mile segment and lower 2.8-mile segment are in the A-Cross, Armer Mountain, and Buzzard Roost allotments. In this compilation, we describe the full length of Workman Creek, consistent with the agency's 1993 findings, because the decision by the Tonto National Forest was an arbitrary choice based on factors unrelated to eligibility and more appropriately made in a suitability study. In addition, we upgrade classification for the bottom 2.8 miles to Wild because that segment is in the Salome Wilderness. Future efforts to protect Workman Creek should consider the values of the entire stream.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report found that the upper 6 miles of Workman Creek had Scenic, Wildlife, Ecological, and Riparian ORVs, and the lower 2.8 miles in the Salome Wilderness had Wildlife, Ecological, and Riparian ORVs. The Tonto National Forest's 2020 eligibility study found Scenic and Natural/Botanical ORVs.

Scenic: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Workman Creek Falls (the tallest known falls on the Tonto National Forest and one of the tallest perennial waterfalls in the state) is a central feature on the eastern end of the canyon. This stream, on its way to the Salome Wilderness, drops into stunning solid rock pools. Workman Creek is an ecotone (transition area between two biomes), resulting in diverse vegetation with a mixture of pine and fir created by the microclimate of the narrow canyon. The combination of the unique plant and animal species, in conjunction with its high scenic quality, create a unique stream environment."

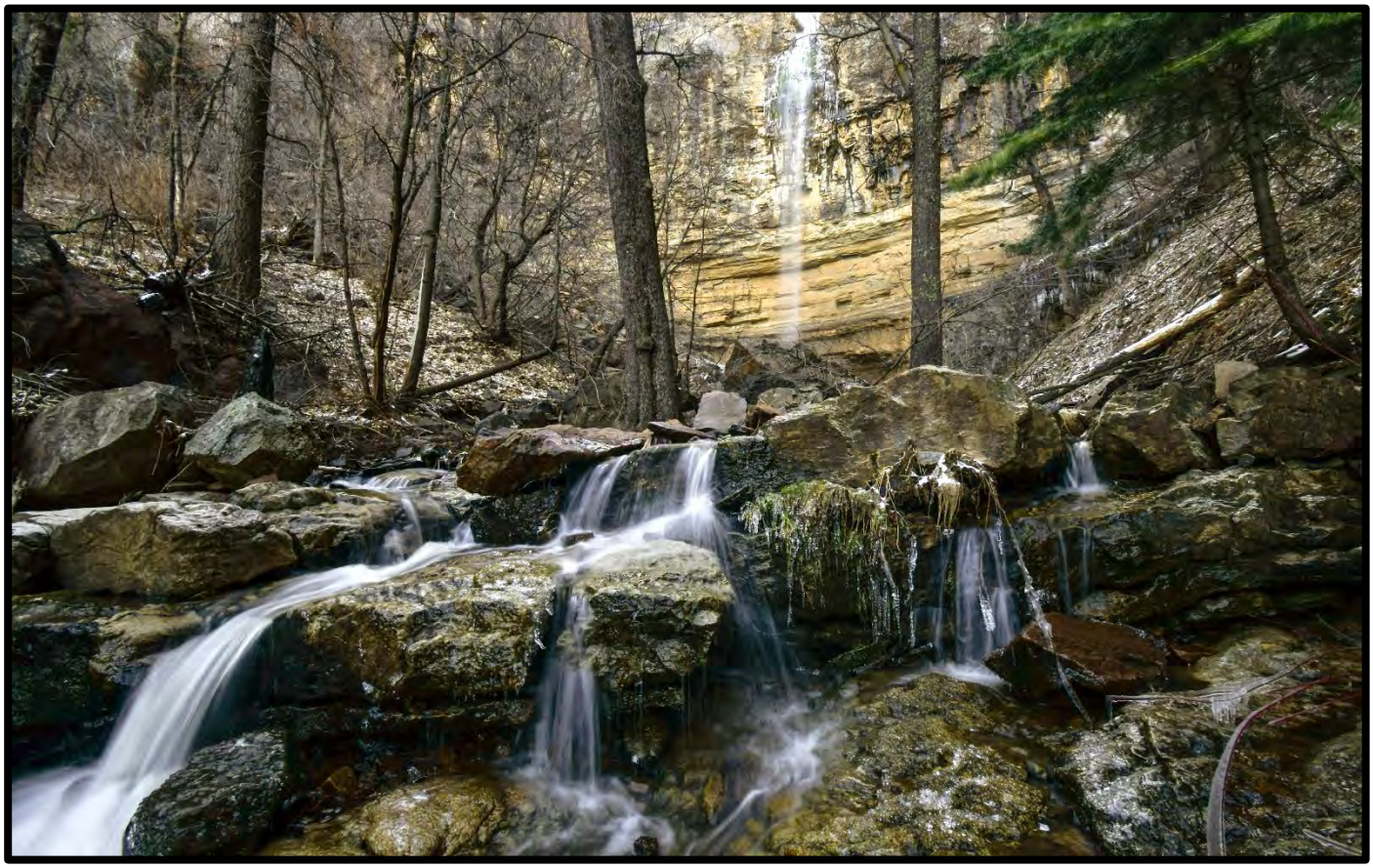
Natural/Botanical: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Workman Creek has also been identified as having outstandingly remarkable natural (botanical) resource values when compared with other similar resources and areas within the state. As mentioned above, the creek falls sharply as it descends, and moves through many transitional areas, different slope aspects and elevation bands creating unique habitats that harbor a diverse suite of plants and unique plant groupings. The creek has two riparian dependent Forest Service sensitive species: Chiricahua/Blumer's dock (*Rumex orthoneurus*), one of the few known natural populations, and Arizona bugbane (*Cimicifuga arizonica*). Additionally, there is a high number of endemic plant species and the habitat has the potential to harbor more rare and narrowly distributed plant species due to its unique environment."

Ecological/Riparian: The 1993 Resource Information Report stated that Workman Creek had good condition and advanced riparian vegetation because the stream corridor was not grazed, despite being in active grazing allotments. Future efforts to protect this stream should evaluate whether the Tonto National Forest has maintained good riparian vegetative condition.

Wildlife: The 1993 Resource Information Report stated that Mexican spotted owl, northern goshawk, western red bat, greater western mastiff bat, occult little brown bat, southwestern cave myotis, northern Mexican garter snake, and lowland leopard frog may occupy the stream.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Workman Falls to Salome Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The upper 2.3-mile segment was found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ 2.8 miles of Workman Creek are within the Salome Wilderness, established in 1984.



Top: Workman Falls is one of the highest waterfalls in Arizona. Photo by Robert Indrisie.
Bottom: Maple leaves glow against the backdrop of black alder bark and Workman Creek's dark water. Photo by Paul Gill.

Parker Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Upper Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Potentially Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	8.9	0	8.9
Non-federal land:	none			

Parker Creek originates on the western slopes of Carr Peak and Aztec Peak in the southern Sierra Ancha, and flows southwest towards Lake Roosevelt. The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report found 8.2 miles of Parker Creek, from Rock Spring to Cottonwood Wash, potentially Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection with a preliminary classification of Scenic. However, the Tonto National Forest eliminated the Eligible stream in its 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report, claiming that Outstandingly Remarkable Values were not present. Conservation groups argued that the 1993 findings should stand, but the Tonto National Forest ultimately eliminated the creek's eligibility. The findings of the 1993 report are presented here for reference in any future efforts to protect Parker Creek as a Wild and Scenic River.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report found that 8.2 miles of Parker Creek had Scenic, Wildlife, Ecological, and Riparian ORVs. More accurate mapping has corrected that to the 8.9 miles reported here.

Scenery: The entire canyon has scenic values, but Parker Canyon Falls is truly spectacular. Numerous dispersed camping sites are located on top of the 1,000-foot-tall cliffs to the southwest of the creek. Incredible views of the canyon and its stunning igneous and sedimentary rocks, as well as the Tonto Basin beyond, are found there.

Wildlife: The upper two-thirds of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The 1993 Resource Information Report describes "excellent habitat for resident and migratory birds" and lists southwestern willow flycatcher, peregrine falcon, occult little brown bat, southwestern cave myotis, western red bat, and black hawk as species that likely reside at Parker Creek.

Riparian: The upper canyon features a healthy and diverse mixed evergreen and deciduous riparian plant community, dominated by alder but also featuring white oak, walnut, sycamore, Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, Gambel oak, box elder, coffeeberry, chokecherry, and many more species. The creek ends in a palo verde-saguaro plant community.

Ecological: The upper half of the creek is within the Sierra Ancha Experimental Forest, and is currently ungrazed by livestock. The Experimental Forest was established to study the effects of grazed and ungrazed pastures on water yield and to study water cycle relationships in the Salt River Watershed. In addition, the upper 2.5 miles of the creek are within a recommended Research Natural Area, proposed by the U.S. Forest Service. A 2009 floristic survey published in the Journal of the Arizona-Nevada Academy of Science[1] reported the presence of 625 species, representing 335 genera and 94 families of vascular plants, in Parker Creek Canyon. The study concluded that Parker Creek was significantly different floristically than the surrounding mountains, and had a stunning richness of fern and fern-like species present, totaling 32 species, including 12 species unique to the Parker Creek watershed.

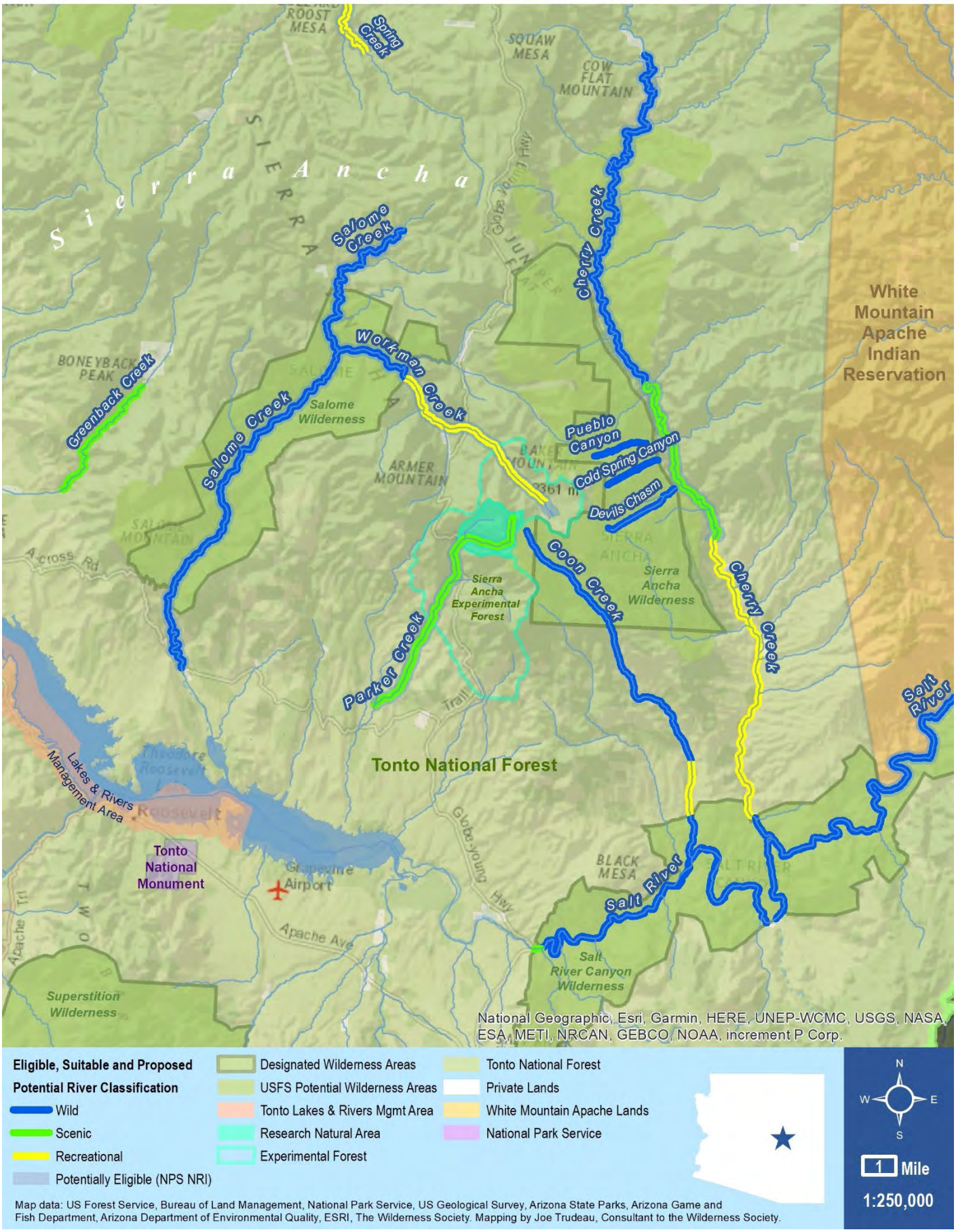
Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Rock Spring to confluence with Cottonwood Wash was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The upper half of Parker Creek, as well as the upper segment of Workman Creek, is within the 13,500-acre Sierra Ancha Experimental Forest, established in 1932 as the Parker Creek Experimental Forest, and expanded and renamed in 1938. It is one of 80 experimental forests and ranges administered by the Forest Service and dedicated to the study of environmental changes in natural and managed forest and rangeland ecosystems.
- ✓ The upper 2.5 miles of Parker Creek is within the 1,441-acre Upper Forks Parker Creek Recommended Research Natural Area, proposed in the Tonto National Forest's 2022 Final Land Management Plan. The area is proposed for additional protection due to its unique and exemplary canyon bottom mixed broadleaf riparian forests.

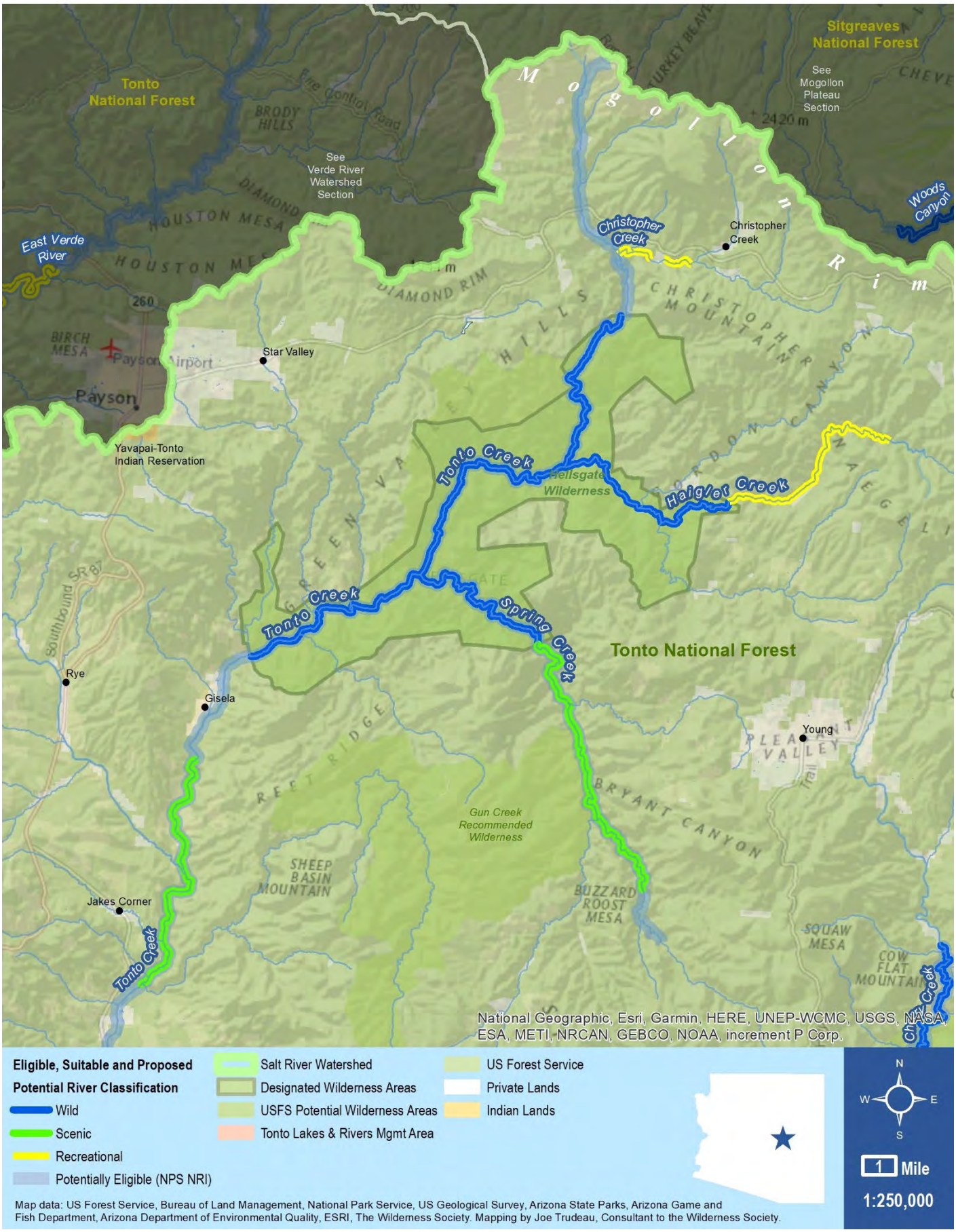
[1] Farruggia, F. T., N. Luke, and N. Hertzfeld. 2009. Preliminary Botanical Explorations of The Parker Creek Canyon, Sierra Ancha Mountains, Gila County, Arizona. Journal of the Arizona-Nevada Academy Of Science 41(2):59-74.

Parker Canyon Falls is among the most spectacular in Arizona. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Sierra Ancha



Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Upper Tonto Basin



Tonto Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Tonto Creek
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible with other potentially Eligible segments			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	21.7	9.1	0	30.8
Non-federal land:	none in Eligible segments			

Tonto Creek originates on the Mogollon Rim east of Payson, and flows for 75 miles to join the Salt River. It collects water from the Sierra Ancha on the east and the Mazatzal Mountains on the west, forming one of Arizona's most significant intermontane basins, Tonto Basin. The final 10 miles are submersed below Roosevelt Lake, created by the Roosevelt Dam which was built between 1905 and 1911, and later expanded between 1989 and 1996. The entire 65 miles of free-flowing creek above the reservoir was listed in 1982 as potentially Eligible in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protecting about 55 miles of Tonto Creek, from the state fish hatchery to Gun Creek, as a Wild and Scenic River in 1991. Then, in 1993 the U.S. Forest Service found the 21.7 miles through the Hellsgate Wilderness and the 9.1 miles from Cocomunga Creek to Gun Creek as potentially Eligible, excluding the settlement of Gisela from eligibility. The Tonto National Forest carried forward the eligibility findings for the upper segment in their 2020 eligibility report, but slashed the lower segment down to just 3.2 miles. Also, the forest downgraded classification of the upper Wilderness segment from Wild to Scenic, claiming that "limited amounts of grazing in the river corridor" and limited water quality justified the downgrade. The segments as described here mirror the 1993 findings, since the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not grant the agency the authority to downgrade classification based on limited grazing and transient water quality impairments. Future efforts to designate Tonto Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should evaluate the entire stream for protection, and adopt the 1993 findings as a starting point.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The USFS 1993 Resource Information Report listed Scenery, Geology, Fish and Wildlife, and Riparian as ORVs. The USFS 2020 Eligibility Report listed Recreation, Scenery, Wildlife, and Historic as ORVs. The 1991 Arizona Rivers Coalition proposal listed Scenery, recreation, Geology, Fish and Wildlife, and Ecological as ORVs.

Scenery: Hellsgate Wilderness and the distinctive canyon of Tonto Creek are stunning backcountry areas with profoundly beautiful scenery, mixing dramatic terrain, complex geology, and a range of vegetation into colorful and dynamic vistas.

Geology: In its one-mile vertical fall, the creek passes through several canyons with stepped cliffs rising several hundred feet to a basalt cap. The creek passes several huge rock falls and landslides, exposes several spectacular faults, and crosses the boundary between the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range Province.

Recreation: Tonto Creek is popular for kayaking, backpacking, canyoneering, hunting, fishing, photography, and day hikes.

Fish and Wildlife: The entire segment up to Haigler Creek is designated as critical habitat for the narrow-headed garter snake. Tonto Creek below Gisela is designated critical habitat for the northern Mexican garter snake and southwestern willow flycatcher. From Houston Creek down is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace. Lower Tonto Creek has one of the highest density breeding populations of threatened yellow-billed cuckoo and endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Other important species include desert tortoise, lowland leopard frog, roundtail chub, Mexican spotted owl, Sonora sucker, Gila topminnow, desert sucker, black hawk, bald eagle, and Sonoran Desert toad.

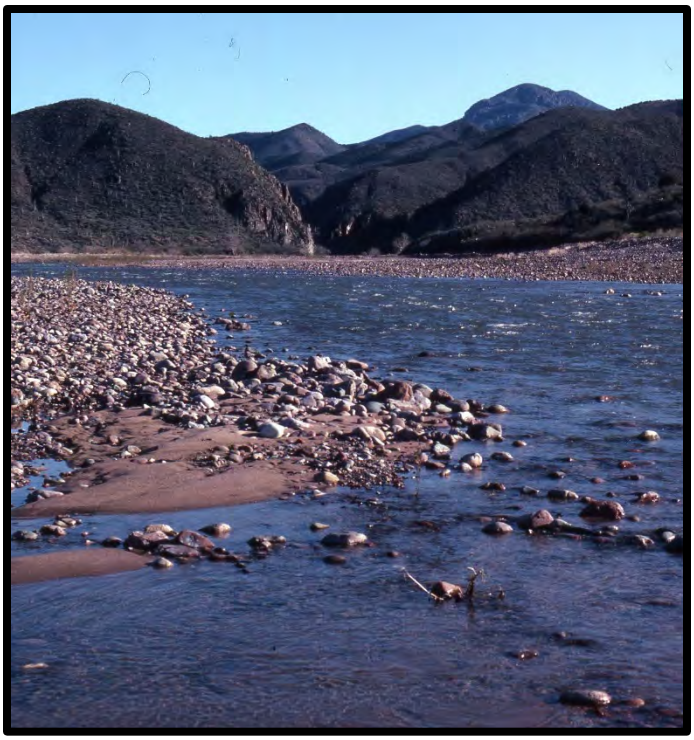
Ecological/Riparian: Tonto Creek is a significant habitat corridor connecting the Sonoran Desert to the Colorado Plateau.

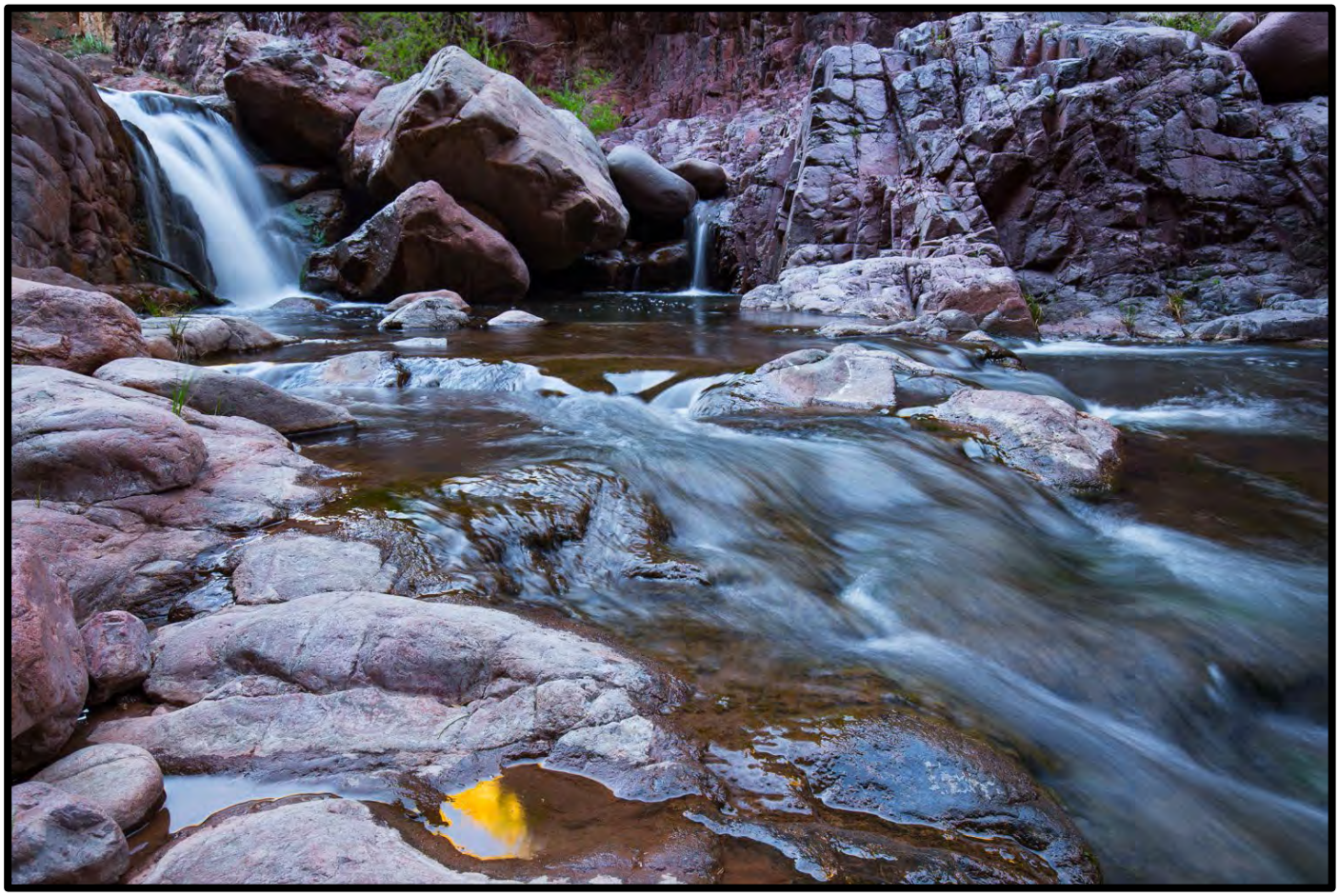
Historic: For centuries Tonto Creek below Gisela was a major route and habitation area for Hohokam and Salado cultures. Numerous sites are scattered all along this stretch, scarcely surveyed by archaeologists.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The entire creek, from its headwaters to Roosevelt Lake, was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Two segments were found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ 21.6 miles of Tonto Creek are within the Hellsgate Wilderness, established in 1984.

Tonto Creek





Top Left: Tonto Creek is one of Arizona's most coveted whitewater kayak runs. Photo courtesy American Whitewater.
Top Right: Tonto Creek below where it emerges from the Hellsgate Wilderness. Photo by Tim Flood.
Bottom: The upper reaches of Tonto Creek features dozens of waterfalls and cascades. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Haigler Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Tonto Creek
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	7.5	0	7.4	14.9
Non-federal land:	1.7 miles private land in Recreational segment			

Haigler Creek originates in the northern portion of the Sierra Ancha where the range blends with the Mogollon Rim. It flows west for 23 miles and joins Tonto Creek deep within the Hellsgate Wilderness. The creek was proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by conservation groups during the revision of the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan in 2017, with the proposed Outstandingly Remarkable Values of scenery, recreation, geology, riparian, and fish and wildlife. In a very cursory review, the Tonto National Forest concluded that ORVs did not exist in Haigler Creek. The segments depicted here are a modification of the 2017 citizens proposal. Future efforts to designate Haigler Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should carefully evaluate the full length of the creek and consider an even more comprehensive level of protection.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: Haigler Creek begins in lovely ponderosa pine forest with a lush riparian ecosystem. Its lower segment drops into deep, tumultuous, and scenic canyon as it descends towards Tonto Creek. Waterfalls, pools, cascades, and cool, shady forest cover combine to create a very scenic stream corridor.

Geology: A gas seep occurs in Haigler Creek which is worthy of more detailed geologic investigation.

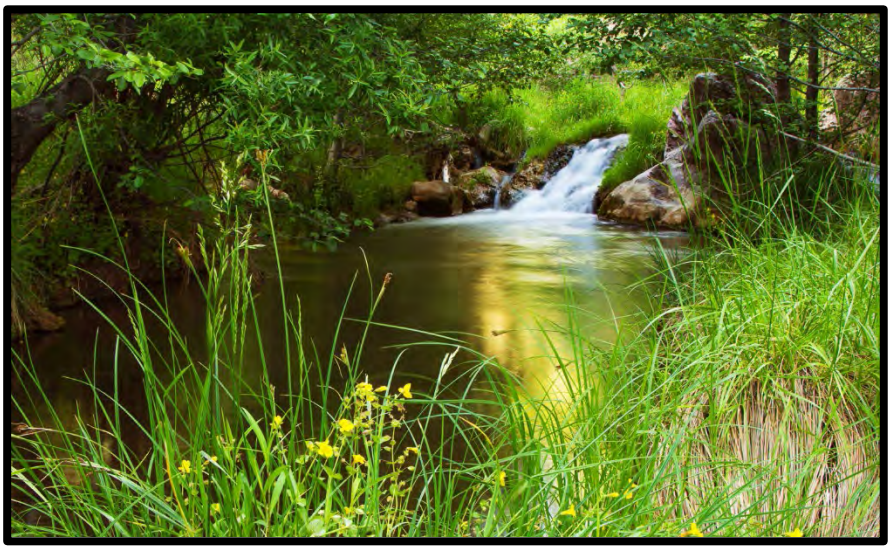
Recreation: Haigler Creek is very popular for fishing, swimming, picnicking, camping, and backpacking. Two National Forest campgrounds sit on the banks of Haigler Creek within the Recreational segment. The lower Wild segment is used by Prescott College for annual new student backpacking courses.

Fish and Wildlife: The upper few miles of the creek is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the stream up to a private inholding is designated as critical habitat for the threatened narrow-headed garter snake. Native fish include longfin dace, desert sucker, and speckled dace, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department manages Haigler Creek as a high priority recovery stream for Gila trout.

Riparian: Haigler Creek features a diverse riparian area with cottonwoods, alders, sycamore, ash, walnuts, box elder, and more riparian species.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed for Wild and Scenic River eligibility by conservation groups in 2017.
- ✓ The 7.5-mile proposed Wild segment of Haigler Creek is within the Hellsgate Wilderness, established in 1984.



Left: Students at Prescott College explore the rocks and waters of Haigler Creek. Photo courtesy Prescott College.
Right: Lush riparian vegetation and blooming monkeyflower along Haigler Creek. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Spring Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Tonto Creek
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Potentially Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	6.4	13	0	19.4
Non-federal land:	Creek borders 0.4 miles of private land			

Spring Creek originates in the central Sierra Ancha and flows north for 20 miles, joining Tonto Creek deep in the Hellsgate Wilderness. The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report found most of Spring Creek, from Forest Road 486 to Tonto Creek, potentially Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection with preliminary classifications of Recreational (upper segment) and Wild (lower segment). However, the Tonto National Forest eliminated the Eligible stream in its 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report, claiming that the abundance of non-native fish made the creek's values less outstandingly remarkable than others in the state. Conservation groups argued that the 1993 findings should stand, but the Tonto National Forest ultimately eliminated the creek's eligibility. The findings of the 1993 report are presented here in a modified form. The 1993 eligibility study included a portion of Dinner Creek, as well as private lands at Spring Creek Ranch. The segments presented here exclude the upper reach in Dinner Creek, and begins the segment at the bottom of Spring Creek Ranch. In addition, the upper segment has been reclassified to Scenic as it is only accessed in two points by dirt roads (Forest Road 484 that leads to old mine prospects, and County Road 134 that leads to the Flying W Ranch headquarters) and is otherwise completely natural. Future efforts to designate Spring Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should adopt these changes.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

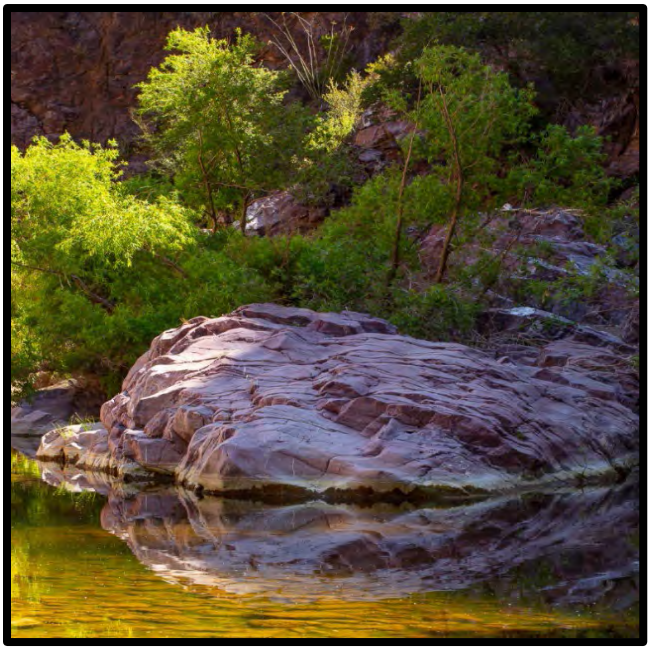
The USFS 1993 Resource Information Report listed Fisheries, Riparian, and Ecological as ORVs for Spring Creek.

Fisheries: Nearly the entire length of Spring Creek, as well as the Rock Creek tributary, are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace. The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily for desert sucker, roundtail chub, and speckled dace. The Department states that "Spring Creek and the associated tributaries of Rock, Buzzard Roost, and Turkey Creek contain the highest density population of roundtail chub in the Salt River watershed" which contradicts the determination made by the Tonto National Forest in 2022 that Spring Creek did not have outstandingly remarkable fisheries values.

Riparian/Ecological: The 1993 Resource Information Report describes Spring Creek as having unique and important alder and sycamore-willow-alder plant communities. Habitat is described as excellent, with stable undercut banks, excellent riparian vegetation, and excellent instream cover.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Forest Road 416 to its confluence with Tonto Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The 6.4-mile proposed Wild segment of Spring Creek is within the Hellsgate Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ 3.5 miles of the upper Scenic segment flows through the edge of the Gun Creek Recommended Wilderness Area, identified by the Tonto National Forest in the 2022 Final Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.



Spring Creek drains the northern Sierra Ancha into the dramatic Hellsgate Wilderness. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Christopher Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Tonto Creek
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	2.3	2.3
Non-federal land:	none			

Christopher Creek originates on the Mogollon Rim east of Payson. The upper segment of the creek flows through See Canyon on the eastern face of Promontory Butte. Once it crosses under Highway 260, the creek increases in base flow and drops through a scenic canyon before joining Tonto Creek upstream of the Hellsgate Wilderness. It is this segment, between the Christopher Creek Campground and Tonto Creek, that was found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreation: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "This segment of Christopher Creek, above the confluence with Upper Tonto Creek, is home to several recreational activities including fishing, canyoneering, and climbing. It is also revered by the elite steep creek kayaking community as one of, if not the best, relatively rare steep class V+ creek segments in Arizona. The creek quickly drops into a prolonged slot canyon composed of a series of very difficult and dangerous waterfalls that are runnable only by elite kayakers looking for a challenge. This Outstanding Remarkable Value for recreation is enhanced by its relatively short length and its accessibility by road, making it possible to run twice in one day.... This segment is popular among those seeking refuge from the heat during the summer months in Arizona. Each spring, Christopher Creek is stocked with rainbow trout, allowing anglers the opportunity to cast their hearts out for rainbows as well as brook and brown trout. Other recreational opportunities in the area include biking, bird watching, hiking, horseback riding, and swimming."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.

Christopher Creek is known as the best extreme class V steep creek kayaking in Arizona. Photo by Chris Baer.

Reno Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Tonto Creek
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	3.6	0	3.6
Non-federal land:	none			

Reno Creek originates on the southeastern slopes of Mount Ord in the Mazatzal Mountains and flows east for 8.1 miles to join Tonto Creek near Punkin Center. The Eligible segment described here is the lower two-thirds of the reach above Highway 188, ending at private land. The segment surrounds Old Fort Reno, which was located along Reno Creek as it was a good source of water for the military as it battled Native Americans in the 1860s.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Historic: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Reno Creek was identified as having outstandingly remarkable cultural and historic resource values when compared to similar resources across the state and country. Reno Creek, and the area within its river corridor, contain important evidence of occupation and use by humans including one of the earliest military camps established for use during the Apache wars. The military camp was built as a result of Reno Road … that facilitated movement from Phoenix to Tonto Basin/Payson and ultimately provided passage for the first pioneers to the area and opened up the northern part of Arizona for settlement. The road functioned until the early 20th century. High quality examples of pre-historic ranching and mining sites and features are also found in the area."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.

Greenback Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Gila
Watershed: Tonto Creek
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	5.1	0	5.1
Non-federal land:	none			

Greenback Creek originates in the Sierra Ancha mountains and flows west to join Tonto Creek. A 5.1-mile segment beginning at private land and flowing through between desert peaks was found to be Eligible as a Scenic-classified river by the Tonto National Forest. The stream features one native fish, the longfin dace.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Historic: Greenback Creek features a high density of pre-historic Apache sites, including a rare, large, multi-room pueblo, unique within the State of Arizona, as well as being the site of one of the earliest settlement-era cavalry fights on the Tonto National Forest. The area was also important in the history of the Arizona Volunteers, a team of mercenaries hired by the army to fight the Apaches.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.

Fish Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Maricopa
Watershed: Lower Salt River
Region: Salt River-Tonto Basin Region

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	3	2.7	0	5.7
Non-federal land:	none			

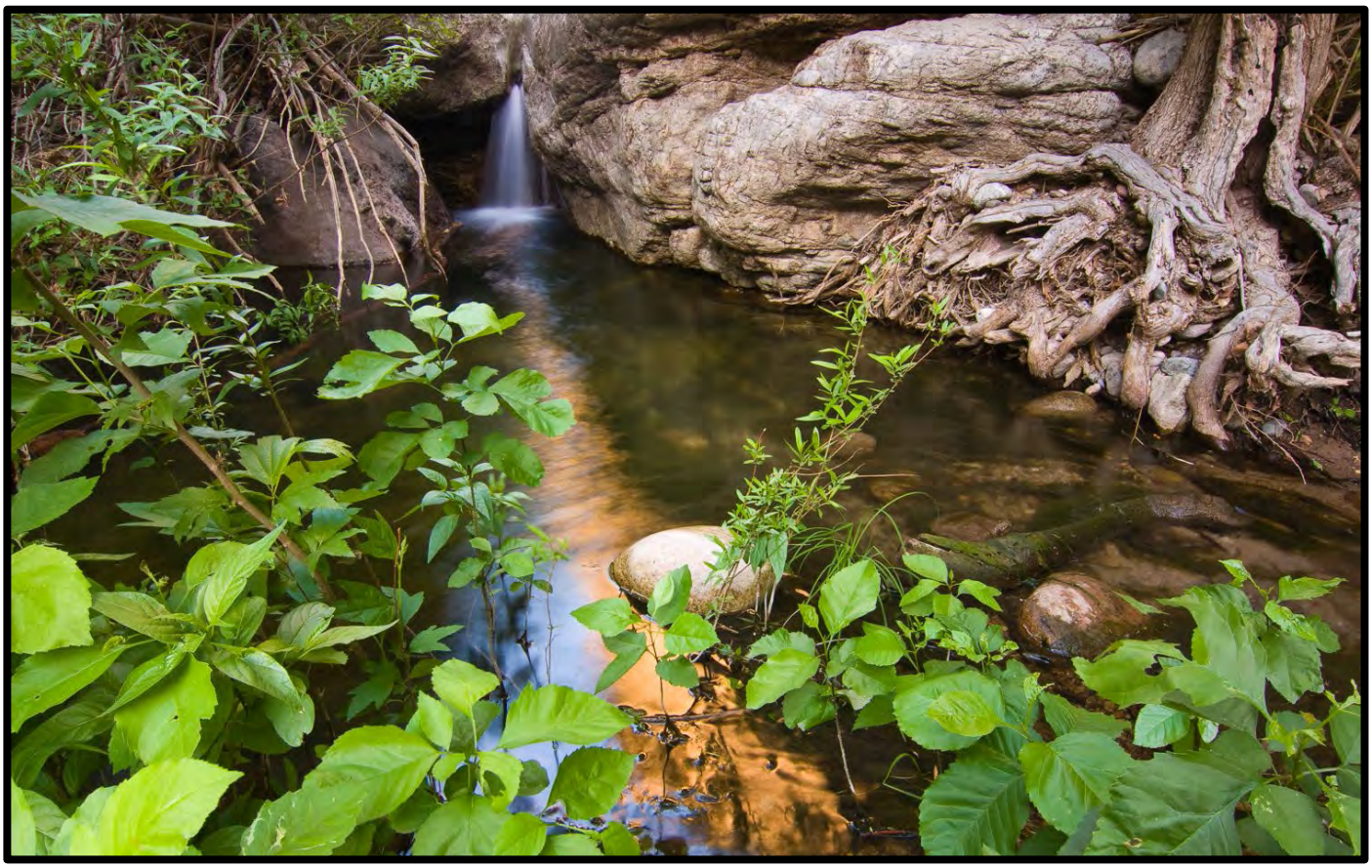
Fish Creek originates in the Superstition Wilderness on the Tonto National Forest, and flows for about 16 miles before joining the Salt River in upper Canyon Lake, just below the Horse Mesa Dam. The Eligible segments include a 3-mile Wild-classified segment within the wilderness area, and then below State Route 88 (Apache Trail) is a 2.7-mile Scenic-classified segment that ends abruptly at a tributary in the SENE section 4, T. 2 N., R. 10 E. The segments described here mirror the eligibility finding of the Tonto National Forest. However, future efforts to protect Fish Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should consider extending the lower section down to the Lakes and Rivers Management Area boundary, and raising the classification to Wild as it flows through the Coronado Mesa Recommended Wilderness Area, established in the 2023 Forest Plan. In addition, a Fish and Wildlife ORV should be considered, as the creek is managed by Arizona Game and Fish Department as high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for self-sustaining populations of Gila topminnow (endangered), longfin dace, and roundtail chub.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Natural/Botanical: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Fish Creek was identified as having outstandingly remarkable natural (botanical) values when compared with similar resources within the State of Arizona. The rare annual plant, Fish Creek fleabane (*Erigeron piscaticus*), endemic to Arizona, has only three known locations in the state, one of which is on Fish Creek. Pima Indian mallow (*Abutilon parishii Wats*), a sensitive species, is also present in the area and represents the northernmost distribution of the species. Additional endemic species include Mapleleaf false snapdragon (*Mabrya acerifolia*) and the Gila rock daisy (*Perityle gilensis*)."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

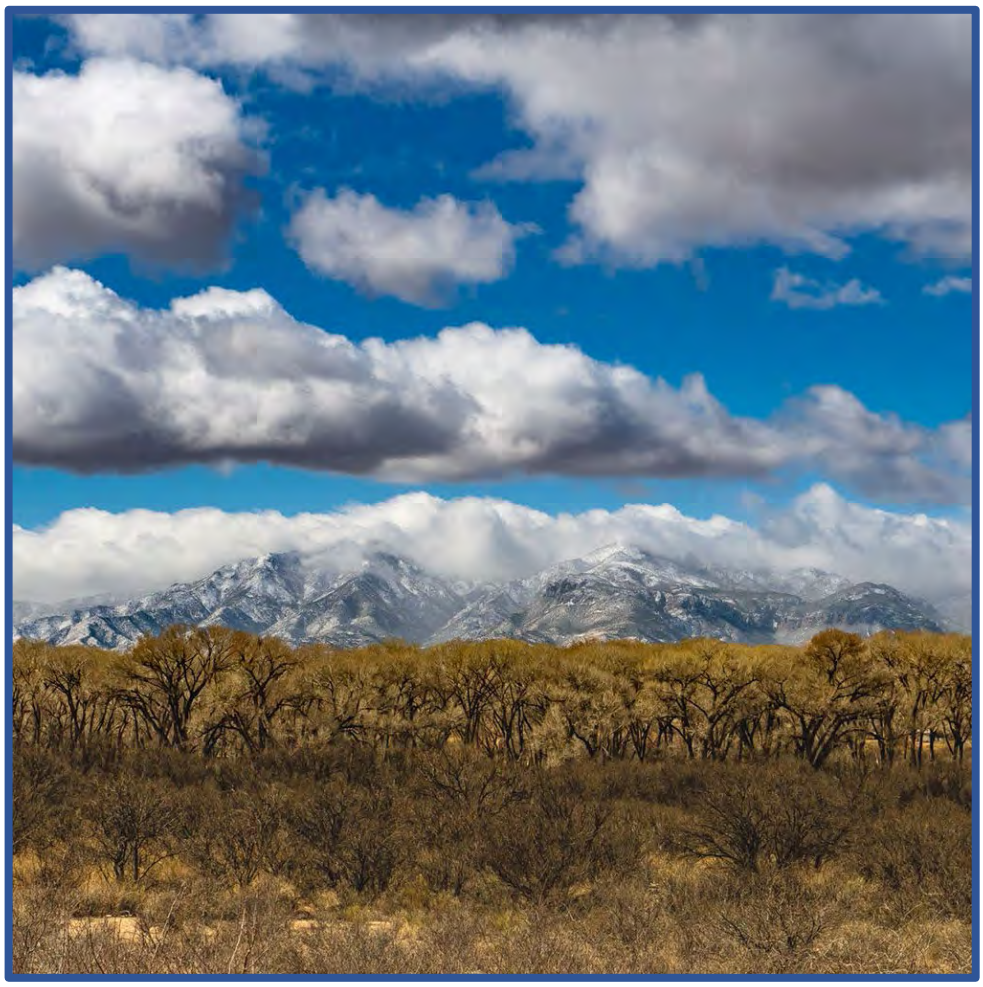
- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ The 3-mile Eligible-Wild segment of Fish Creek is within the Superstition Wilderness, established in 1964.
- ✓ The lower segment flows through the Coronado Mesa Recommended Wilderness Area.



Top: Fish Creek emerges from the Superstition Mountains as it descends to the Salt River. Photo by Adrienne McLeod.
Bottom: A serene pool in the depths of Fish Creek Canyon in the Superstition Wilderness. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

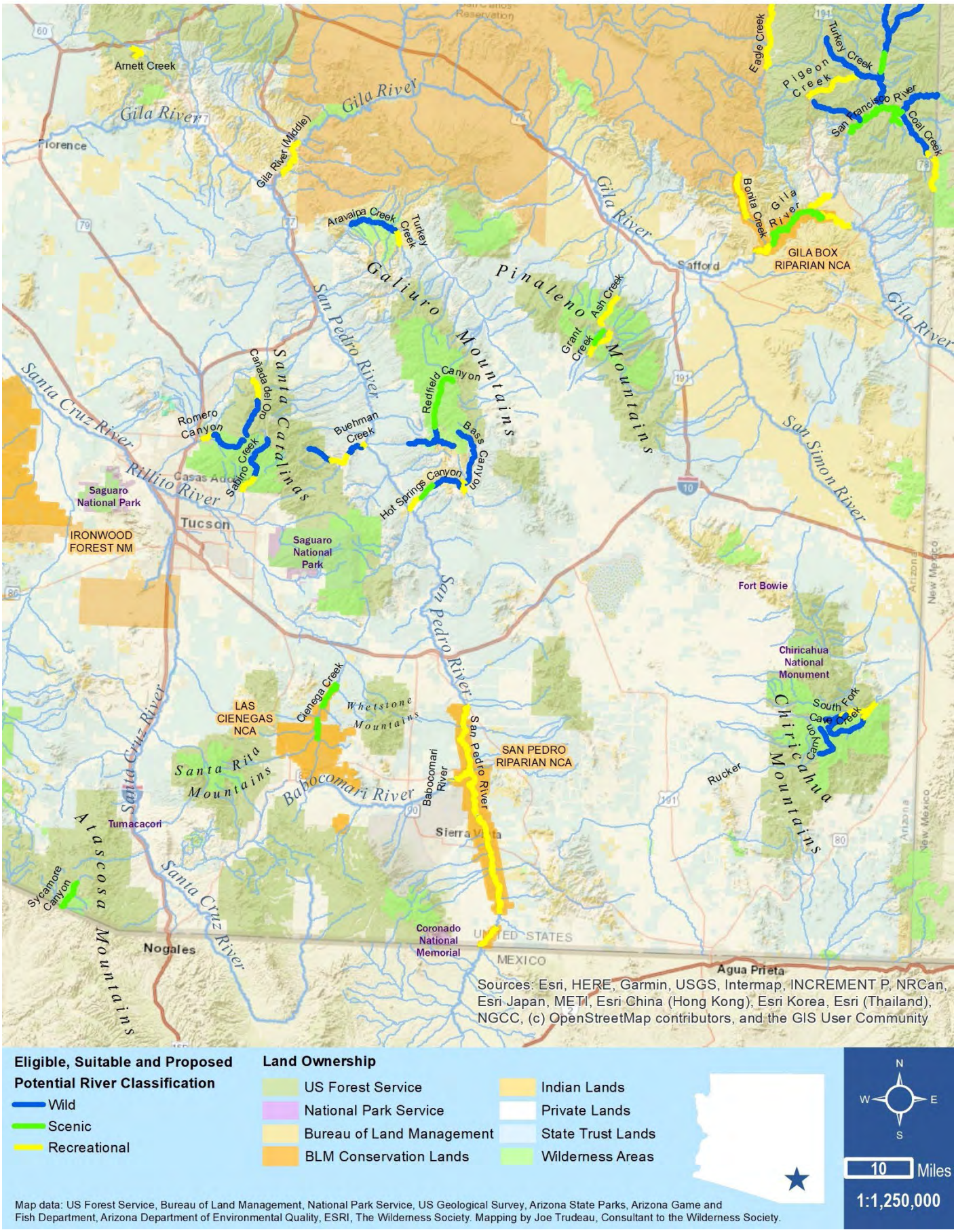
THE SKY ISLANDS BIOREGION

Southeastern Arizona's Sky Islands is a place like none other, containing the San Pedro, Santa Cruz, San Simon, and several other watersheds. Considered a global biodiversity hotspot, this is a region of forested mountains divided by a sea of Chihuahuan Desert grassland and Sonoran Desert cactus scrub. Steep-gradient, high-mountain creeks – like Cave Creek in the Chiricahua Mountains or Ash Creek in the Pinaleños – cascade down imposing mountain faces and sink into deep valley-bottom alluvial deposits. Then, water emerges again as lazy waterways – like the San Pedro River and Cienega Creek – in the broad valley bottoms. Some, like Aravaipa Creek, pass through remarkable canyons. Each mountain range and valley is unique – and each faces its own threats. This is the most populated bioregion covered in this book, and while some creeks are well protected, other face imminent risk of overuse and exploitation.



A LEAFLESS COTTONWOOD GALLERY FOREST MEETS SNOWY SKY ISLAND RANGES
SAN PEDRO RIVER, SAN PEDRO RIPARIAN NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
PHOTO BY RON STEWART, FRIENDS OF THE SAN PEDRO RIVER

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Sky Islands Bioregion



Arnett Creek/Telegraph Canyon

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Pinal
Watershed: Middle Gila River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	3.5	3.5
Non-federal land:	none			

Arnett Creek and its tributary Telegraph Canyon originate in the Picketpost Mountain area of the Superstition Complex, a series of craggy volcanic mountain ranges stretching from the Gila River to the Salt River, east and southeast of Phoenix. The U.S. Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report found the creeks potentially Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection with a preliminary classification of Scenic. The Tonto National Forest carried forward the Eligible segments in its 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report but downgraded the classification to Recreational due to the amount of recreational use, proximity to roads and development, and streamside developments and modifications.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Arnett Creek and Telegraph Canyon were identified as having outstandingly remarkable scenic and fisheries resource values when compared to similar resources across the State of Arizona. Scenic values of Arnett Creek and Telegraph Creek are remarkable due to the very complicated geology and vegetation in the area. The distinctive gorges and broad canyons with solid rock vertical walls provide many novel rock forms. Bare soil, desert pavement, barren rock textures with unique stringers of riparian deciduous trees along the creeks and nearby botanical gardens creates a unique area juxtaposed with the vast surrounding undistinguished desert."

Riparian/Ecological: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Arnett Creek and Telegraph Canyon were identified as having outstandingly remarkable riparian resources for their well-developed tree, shrub, and herbaceous components, which contribute to excellent diversity in both species and vegetative structure. The perennial desert ecosystems present in Arnett Creek are rare in the State of Arizona and on the Tonto. While there are similar Sonoran Desert riparian areas within the state (notably further south), Arnett Creek is different than those areas in that it is positioned within the upland division of the Sonoran Desert, which is the northern most extent of the Sonoran Desert. The densely forested riparian areas on these streams are in stark contrast to the paloverde mixed cacti series on the adjoining uplands, which is dominated by saguaro, cholla cacti, and catclaw. The two tree-sized willow species dominate the overstory, with lesser amounts of sycamore, Fremont cottonwood, and ash. There are few riparian areas in the state that have such complex geology and paloverde mixed-cacti plant communities within the riparian zone." The river is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, with a focus on longfin dace and the federally endangered Gila topminnow.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Portions of Arnett Creek and Telegraph Canyon were listed in 1993 as potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2020 Final Land Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Eligibility Report.
- ✓ Arnett Creek and Telegraph Canyon are within the Audubon Society's Boyce Thompson Arboretum and Arnett-Queen Creeks Important Bird Area, recognized for its exceptional diversity of birds and rare habitat.

Arnett Creek/Telegraph Canyon

Arnett Creek flows through the Sonoran Desert on the north side of Picketpost Mountain. Photos by Lisa Hankinson.

Middle Gila River

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Gila/Pinal
Watershed: Middle Gila River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	7.4	7.4
Non-federal land:	1 mile State Trust and 1 mile private			

The Nationwide Rivers Inventory lists the entire Gila River from its headwaters in New Mexico to the Arizona mining town of Winkelman as potentially Eligible for further study for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Federal agency studies have found two sections of the Gila River in Arizona to be Eligible for protection as Wild and Scenic Rivers: a section flowing through the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, and another downstream of Coolidge Dam, which is on the San Carlos Indian Reservation. The Gila River below Coolidge Dam flows through a mix of ownerships, including Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, State Trust, private, and a 19.1-mile segment that is the border between BLM land and the San Carlos Indian Reservation. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed these entire 32 miles from Coolidge Dam to Winkelman as Recreational and Wild segments in 1991, and that entire reach was found Eligible for further study in the 1992 Safford District Resource Management Plan. That plan described 3 segments: a 5.5-mile Recreational upper segment; a 12.5-mile Wild middle segment that borders the Needles Eye Wilderness; and a 14-mile Recreational lower segment, much of which is paralleled by State Highway 77. The BLM's 1997 decision on Wild and Scenic Suitability ultimately only forwarded a recommendation for the lower 7.4 miles of the river. The agency's 1994 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement stated that "the San Carlos Apache Tribe which owns 19.1 miles of shoreline out of the 32 miles of river segment has strongly opposed adding the Middle Gila to the National Wild and Scenic River System." For that reason, this report only describes the suitability findings for the lower 7.4-mile Recreational segment. However, any future efforts to protect the Middle Gila as a Wild and Scenic River should consider working with the San Carlos Apache and exploring opportunities for designation of the full 32 miles below Coolidge Dam.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM):

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The Middle Gila River canyon is highly scenic as it cuts through the colorful Dripping Springs Mountains.

Geology (ARC, BLM): The Middle Gila is representative of large desert rivers that once were much more common in the Southwest. In the lower gorge, the river cuts through the Dripping Spring Mountains, exposing Mississippian limestones and Proterozoic granites that are more than a billion years old.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): The entire Suitable segment is designated critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The river's riparian habitat hosts numerous uncommon and federally listed species such as the bald eagle, southwestern willow flycatcher, peregrine falcon, snowy egret, black-crowned night heron, osprey, common black hawk, zone-tailed hawk, northern beardless tyrannulet, and the Mississippi kite. In addition, the Gila monster and the desert tortoise may be found here.

Recreation (ARC): The Suitable river segment is paralleled by Arizona Highway 77 and is easily accessed by automobile. It receives extensive recreational use in the form of fishing, picnicking, tubing, canoeing, and rafting.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ A 32-mile segment beginning at Coolidge Dam and ending near the town of Winkelman was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ The entire 251 miles of the Gila River from the Gila National Forest in New Mexico to the town of Winkelman, Arizona, ending with this segment, was listed in 1982 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ A 32-mile segment of the Middle Gila River managed by the Bureau of Land Management was found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1992 Safford District Resource Management Plan. After evaluation, the bottom 7.4 miles was found Suitable for designation in the 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report, and the upper portion was released due to opposition from the San Carlos Apache Tribe.
- ✓ 12.3 miles of the formerly Eligible Middle Gila above the Suitable segment borders the Needles Eye Wilderness.

Two views of the Gila River just upstream of the towns of Hayden and Winkelman. Photos by Mitch Tobin/waterdesk.org.

Aravaipa Creek and Turkey Creek

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Graham/Pinal
Watershed: Lower San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable, and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Aravaipa Creek Miles:	9.5	0	0	12.2
Turkey Creek Miles	0	0	2.7	
Non-federal land:	none			

Aravaipa Creek originates in the northern half of the Sulphur Springs Valley between the Galiuro Mountains on the south and the Santa Teresa and Pinaleño Mountains on the north. Most of the creek is privately owned and surrounded by State Trust lands. However, a significant portion of the lower half of the creek flows through Aravaipa Canyon, owned by the Bureau of Land Management and The Nature Conservancy. Aravaipa is regarded as one of Arizona's most pristine and remarkable riparian canyons, and attracts backpackers from around the world who wish to explore the scenic beauty as the creek passes through the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. Turkey Creek is a tributary to Aravaipa, forming a portion of the western wilderness boundary, and is known for its rich biodiversity. Both streams were proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1993, with Aravaipa as a Wild-classified stream and Turkey with a Recreational classification because of a two-track road running down the canyon. Both streams were found Eligible by the BLM, and the agency later concluded that Aravaipa was suitable for designation as a Wild river. Turkey Creek, however, was found non-suitable, and in the BLM's 1994 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement the agency claimed that the stream was not nationally significant, there were no known threats to the free-flowing values or outstandingly remarkable values, and designation would not offer any additional protective management because it was already within the Turkey Creek Riparian Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Based on those factors, the BLM concluded that "if designated, there would be little, if any change from current management." In spite of BLM's determination, and because ACEC designations are not permanent forms of protection, Turkey Creek still deserves consideration for Wild and Scenic protection.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM):

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The BLM described Aravaipa Canyon as "one of Arizona's scenic jewels of world renown. The creek flows through a narrow and colorful 1,000-foot-deep canyon lined with a mature riparian forest. The combination of water, topography, and vegetation provides a variety in the landscape that produces outstanding scenery."

Recreation (ARC, BLM): Aravaipa and Turkey Creeks are popular hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, photography, birdwatching, and sightseeing destinations. A permit system exists to manage use so as not to degrade resource values.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): Aravaipa Creek is among the most important native fish streams in Arizona, as it is one of the only locations in the state that still supports a full complement of native fish. It is managed for self-sustaining populations of desert sucker, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, and spikedace. The entire length of Aravaipa Creek from Stowe Gulch to the San Pedro River, as well as Turkey Creek, is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo.

Cultural (BLM): Turkey Creek features human occupation sites dating 10,000 years old, as well as other more recent sites.

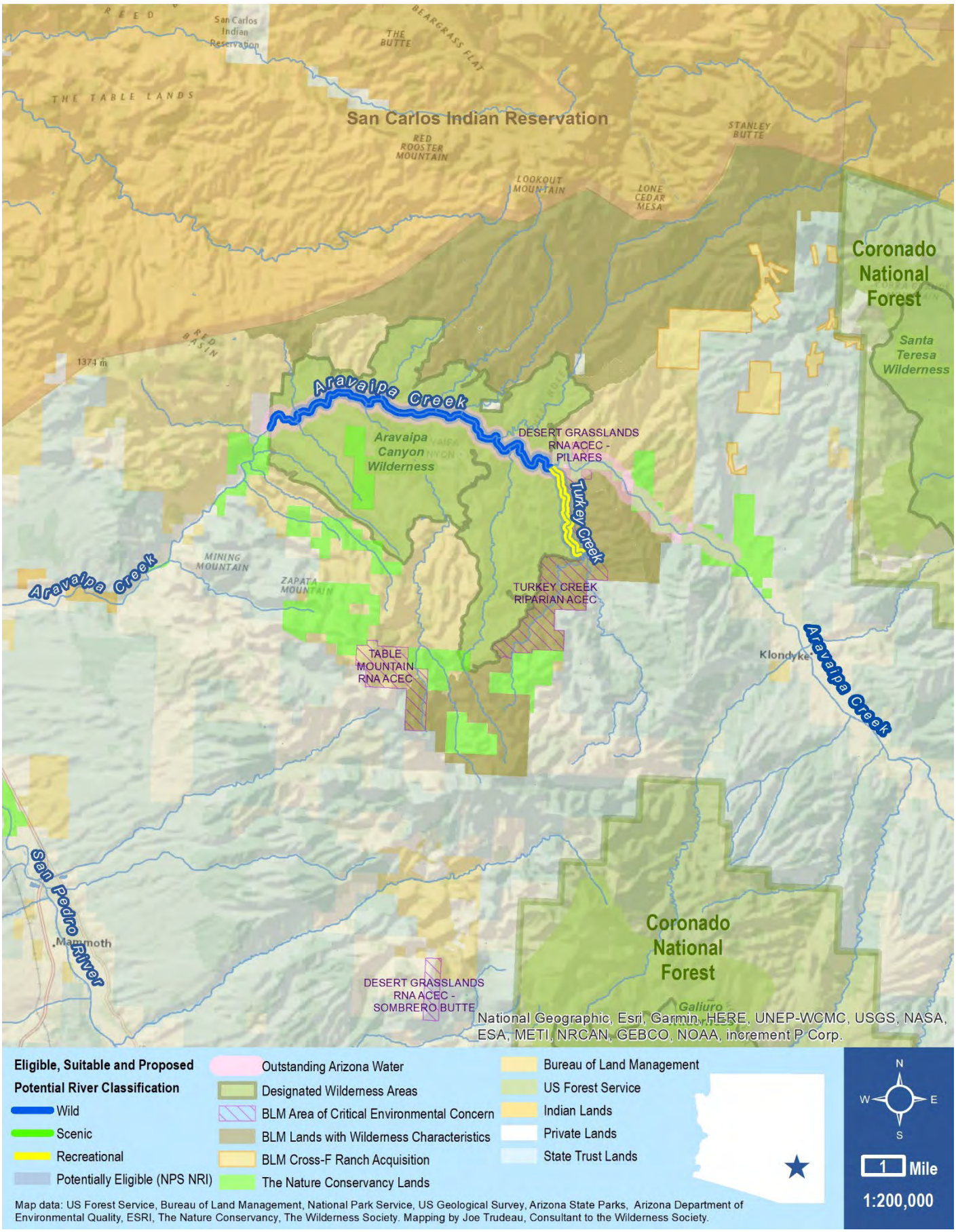
Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1993 Second Printing of the "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Both streams were listed in 1993 as potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of Aravaipa Creek and Turkey Creek managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1992 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and Aravaipa Creek was found Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Study Report.
- ✓ The entire 9.5-mile Wild segment is within the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ Turkey Creek is within the Aravaipa Southeast Proposed Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, proposed to the BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2018, and the Turkey Creek Riparian Area of Critical Environmental Concern, established in the 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ 15.5 miles of Aravaipa Creek, including the entire Aravaipa Wilderness as well as upstream Nature Conservancy lands, are classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ Aravaipa Creek is designated as an Arizona Heritage Water due to its ecological importance and human history.

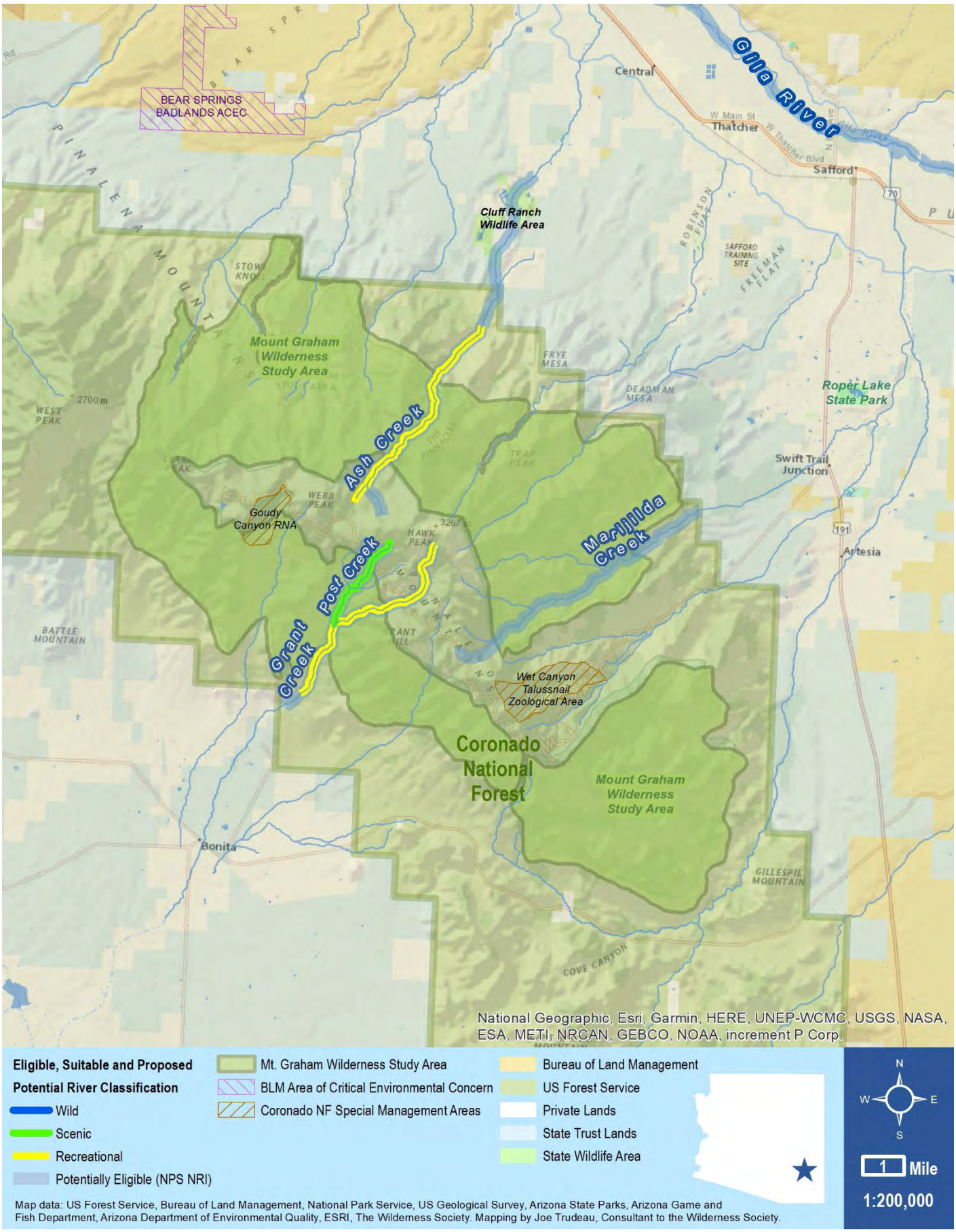
Aravaipa Creek and Turkey Creek

Top left: Autumn colors at sunset light up Aravaipa Creek. Photo by Joel Hazelton.
Top right: Spring leaves burst out in soft hues over Aravaipa Creek. Photo by James Holderer.
Bottom: Aravaipa Canyon is one of Arizona's most outstanding backpacking experiences. Photo by Adrienne McLeod.

Potential Wild and Scenic River Segments at Aravaipa Canyon



Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Pinaleño Mountains



Ash Creek

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Graham
Watershed: Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	0	6.2	6.2
Non-federal land:	none			

Ash Creek is a steep and wild stream that drops more than a mile of vertical relief on the eastern face of the Pinaleño Mountains as it descends to the Gila River. The segment described here – previously proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition – runs from the headwaters on the north face of Mount Graham down to the diversion for Arizona Game and Fish Department's Cluff Ranch Wildlife Area. Along its course, Ash Creek passes through a tremendously diverse range of ecosystems and vegetative communities. The Forest Service classified the whole segment as Recreational because the entire segment is paralleled by a trail. However, the trail is non-motorized and receives primarily foot traffic. Furthermore, the middle 2.8 miles are within the Mount Graham Wilderness Study Area, and the entire segment is virtually wilderness down to the Ash Creek Trailhead. Therefore, we recommend that any future efforts to protect Ash Creek as a Wild and Scenic River consider classifying the majority of the stream as Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Fish, Historic, Cultural, and Ecological as ORVs. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study. Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): "Steep slopes, year-round water, deep canyons and waterfalls provide outstanding scenic qualities. Panoramic views of the Gila Valley may be seen from the mid to high elevations of the creek."

Recreation (ARC, USFS): "The Ash Creek trail #307 parallels the stream most of its length and this is one of the few locations in the region to fish for native trout."

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): Ash Creek, as well as Frye Creek, Deadman Creek, and Marijilda Creek, are within Arizona Game and Fish Department's Pinaleño Mountain Streams Conservation Opportunity Area. The streams are high priorities for native aquatic species management, primarily Gila trout, and secondarily for desert sucker, longfin dace, roundtail (Gila) chub, and speckled dace. The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The creek originates in high-elevation forested critical habitat for the critically-endangered Mount Graham red squirrel. The Pinaleño Mountains support endemic land snails (Pinaleño talussnail, mimic talussnail, Wet Canyon talussnail, Clark Peak talussnail, and Pinaleño mountainsnail) that are managed and monitored under the Pinaleño Land Snail Conservation Agreement between the Coronado National Forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Arizona Game and Fish Department. Several endemic Forest Service Sensitive species, such as the White-bellied Long-tailed Vole, Pinaleño monkey grasshopper, and heliograph fleabane all occur in this vicinity.

Cultural and Historic (ARC, USFS): "Ash Creek is within the Western Apaches' traditional cultural property, determined Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and the streams of Dzil Nchaa Si An's are particularly sacred. Historic features such as remnants of an old sawmill operations and flume provide artifactual evidence of early Euro-American occupancy."

Ecological (USFS): "The mixed broadleaf area of Ash Creek is diverse in vegetation, dropping in elevation from Spruce-fir type to desert shrub type. The creek runs through small mountain meadows, forests of Engelmann Spruce and Douglas-fir, box elder and Arizona Walnut."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the headwaters to the diversion to Cluff Ranch was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ 2.8 miles of the Recreational-classified segment of Ash Creek are within the Pinaleño Roadless Area/Mount Graham Wilderness Study Area, which one of the three remaining U.S. Forest Service Wilderness Study Areas in Arizona.

Ash Creek Falls tumbles down the eastern face of Mount Graham in the Pinaleño Mountains. Photo by Robert Indrisie.

Grant Creek and Post Creek

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Graham
Watershed: Willcox Playa
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	2.7	5.9	8.6
Non-federal land:	none			

Grant and Post Creeks descends more than a mile of vertical relief on the western face of the Pinaleño Mountains as they drop into the vast and arid Sulphur Springs Valley – which gives rise to Aravaipa Creek. The 5.9-mile segment of Grant Creek described here runs from its headwaters on the west face of Mount Graham down to a diversion approximately three quarters of a mile from the forest boundary, near the Fort Grant State Prison. The 2.7-mile segment of Post Creek begins at Hawk Peak Spring and meets Grant Creek just over one half of its way down the mountain. The Forest Service classified the entirety of Grant Creek as Recreational because it is paralleled by a trail. However, the trail is non-motorized and receives infrequent traffic. Furthermore, the middle 2.9 miles are within the Mount Graham Wilderness Study Area, as are 2 miles of Post Creek. Therefore, we recommend that any future efforts to protect Grant and Post Creeks as Wild and Scenic Rivers consider classifying the majority of the streams below the Swift Trail Road as Wild.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Wildlife, Fish, Historic, Cultural, and Ecological as ORVs for Grant Creek. They identified Scenery, Recreation, Wildlife, Fish, and Cultural as ORVs for Post Creek. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: "Spectacular views of waterfalls and the steep rock faces on the side slopes of the Pinaleño Mountains may be seen as well as panoramic views of the Sulphur Springs Valley below and the Galiuro Mountains across the valley. The rugged steep canyons, year-round water, and waterfalls provide outstanding scenic qualities."

Recreation: "The Grant Creek trail #305 parallels the creek for much of its length and this is one of the few locations in the region to fish for native trout."

Fish and Wildlife: The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The creek originates in high-elevation forested critical habitat for the critically-endangered Mount Graham red squirrel. The Pinaleño Mountains support endemic land snails (Pinaleño talussnail, mimic talussnail, Wet Canyon talussnail, Clark Peak talussnail, and Pinaleño mountainsnail) that are managed and monitored under the Pinaleño Land Snail Conservation Agreement between the Coronado National Forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Arizona Game and Fish Department. Several endemic Forest Service Sensitive species, such as the White-bellied Long-tailed Vole, Pinaleño monkey grasshopper, and heliograph fleabane all occur in this vicinity. Gila and Apache trout have occurred in these creeks.

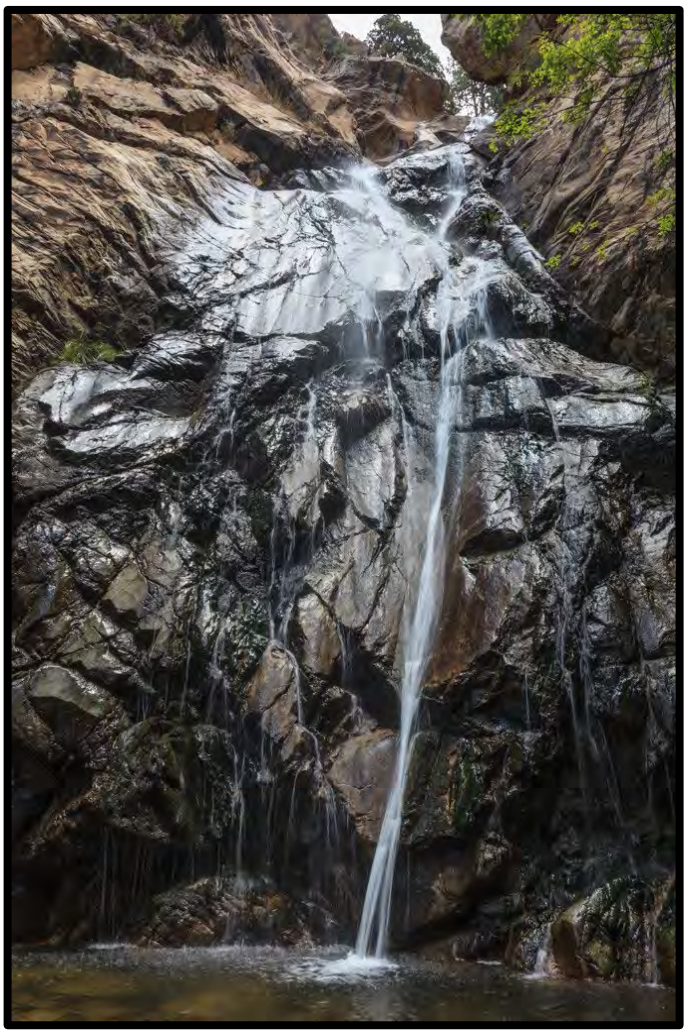
Cultural and Historic: "Grant and Post Creeks are within the Western Apaches' Mount Graham/Dzil Nchaa Si An traditional cultural property, determined Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and the streams of the mountain are particularly sacred. Further, Grant Creek was the site of a skirmish between Apaches and the military in the 1860s, in which at least two young Apache girls survived the attack by hiding in a pool of water, and covering themselves with brush. As one of the most important streams on the west side of the mountains, Grant Creek supplied water to Camp Grant (name changed to Fort Grant in 1879) and remnants of a pipeline constructed in the late nineteenth century are still present."

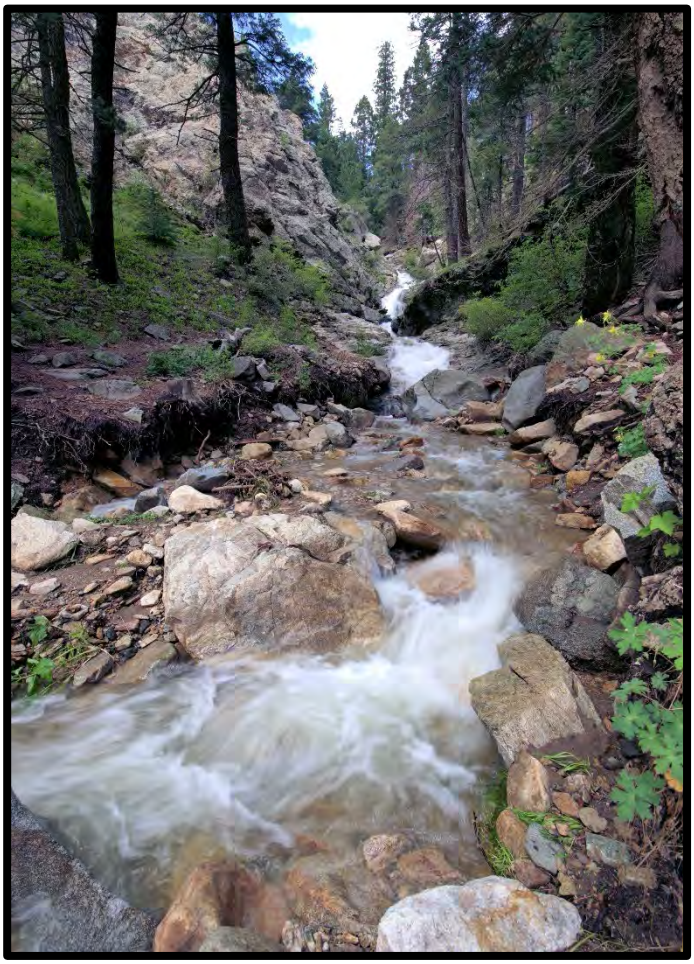
Ecology: "The mixed broadleaf riparian area below is diverse. The creek drops from the mixed conifer zone (dominant species include Engelmann spruce, Douglas-fir, and the thinleaf alder with less present box elder and Rocky Mountain Maple) to high desert shrub in the lower reaches (oaks, alder, sycamore, and juniper)."

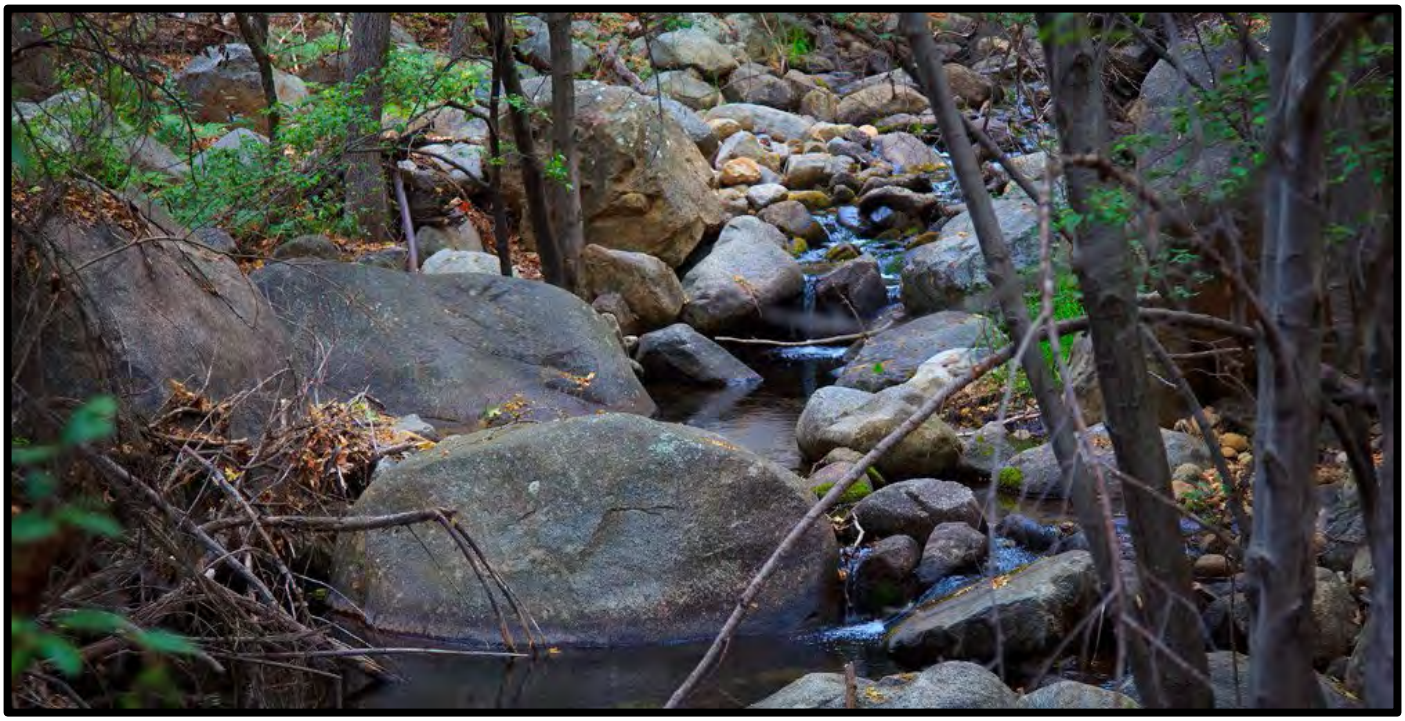
Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Both streams were listed in 1993 as potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ 2.9 miles of Grant Creek and 2 miles of Post Creek are within the Pinaleño Roadless Area/Mount Graham Wilderness Study Area, which one of the three remaining U.S. Forest Service Wilderness Study Areas in Arizona.

Grant Creek and Post Creek







Top left: A waterfall on upper Grant Creek. Photo by Jonathan Patt.
Top right: Post Creek joins Grant Creek in the Mount Graham Wilderness Study Area. Photo by Jim Rorabaugh.
Bottom: Grant Creek is an important stream for native trout. Photo by Jonathan Patt.

Sabino Canyon

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Pima
Watershed: Rillito River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	8.9	0	3.6	12.5
Non-federal land:	none			

Sabino Canyon is one of the most beloved creeks in Arizona, known to Tucson residents as a stunning hike into the Santa Catalina Mountains, with spectacular scenery and renowned swimming holes such as along the popular Seven Falls hike. The creek begins in the mountain village of Summerhaven, and drops more than 6,000 vertical feet over the course of its 17-mile journey to meet Tanque Verde Wash and the Rillito River in urban Tucson. The segments described here begin at the Marshall Gulch Recreation Area, high in the mountains, and end at the Coronado National Forest Boundary, literally on the edge of Tucson's sprawling foothills communities. The lower Recreational segment is encompassed by the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, while the upper segment is almost entirely within the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. Several additional miles above the upper segment are potentially Eligible, but were excluded from U.S. Forest Service study due to an abundance of private land.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Historic, and ORVs for the upper Wild-classified segment; and those plus Fish for the lower Recreational-classified segment. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: "The beauty of the river canyon has an international reputation and is one of the most visited in the state. This river has pools that provide almost year-round water-based recreation."

Recreation: "The river, the riparian area, and the prehistoric and historic heritage are the focus of several environmental education programs which are attended by about 15,000 people each year. A paved road runs parallel to the Canyon for approximately 4 miles. This road is used to transport visitors in shuttle buses, by bicyclists, and as a pedestrian trail (hiking/walking). Trails access this portion of the Pusch Ridge Wilderness and provide the most popular summer hiking opportunities in the Santa Catalina Mountains." The Arizona Trail crosses Sabino Creek within the Pusch Ridge Wilderness.

Fish: The lower half of Sabino Canyon is designated critical habitat for the Gila chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. It is also a reintroduction site for the endangered Gila topminnow, which was released there in 2017.

Wildlife: All but the lowest portion of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The lower four miles of Sabino Canyon are within the Audubon Society's Tanque Verde Wash/Sabino Canyon Important Bird Area, which is recognized for providing habitat to a variety of birds of conservation concern, such as Bell's vireo, Abert's towhee, and rufous-winged sparrow.

Cultural and Historic: The lower segment within the recreation area is "rich in cultural resources, with rock art, food-processing areas, rock shelters, a cache of pottery vessels, and other features reflecting use from centuries of O'odham and Hohokam use and Anglo short- and long-term visits in the early 20th century. Depression-era road and recreation facilities along this segment of Sabino Creek have been determined Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places." The upper Wild segment features "traces of human occupation, including prehistoric rock shelters and food-processing camps and an early 20th century ranger station."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Marshall Gulch recreation site to Sabino Canyon Recreation Area listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ 8.6 miles of Sabino Canyon is within the Pusch Ridge Wilderness, established in 1978.
- ✓ The lower four miles of Sabino Canyon are within the Audubon Society's Tanque Verde Wash/Sabino Canyon Important Bird Area, and the entire creek is within the Tucson Sky Islands Important Bird Area.

Sabino Canyon

Top Left: Seven Falls is a series of spectacular waterfalls in Sabino Canyon. Photo by Maya Horner.
Top Right: Sabino Canyon descends thousands of feet off of Mount Lemmon. Photo by Nick Burruel.
Bottom: Sabino Canyon is a popular recreation destination for residents of the City of Tucson. Photo by Maya Horner.

Romero Canyon

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Pima
Watershed: Upper Santa Cruz River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	7.3	0	2.3	9.6
Non-federal land:	none			

Romero Canyon begins high in the Santa Catalina Mountains and drains the western flanks of the range to the west, joining Canada del Oro in the town of Oro Valley. The upper Wild-classified segment begins at the stream's headwaters in the Santa Catalina Mountains, and ends at the Pusch Ridge Wilderness boundary. The entire upper segment is within the wilderness area, and is also within the Bighorn Sheep Management Area, established in the 1986 Forest Plan. The lower Recreational-classified segment continues from there down to the stream's confluence with Canada del Oro, and is entirely within Catalina State Park which is Forest Service land leased to the State of Arizona. The canyon is a popular destination for hiking, swimming, picnicking, and wildlife observation.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, Cultural, and Historic as ORVs for Romero Canyon. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: Romero Canyon is exceptionally scenic, with soaring mountain walls, cliffs, waterfalls, swimming holes, and diverse vegetation.

Recreation: "Access to this portion of Romero Canyon is through Catalina State Park. A park road, approximately ¼ mile away, provides access to the lower canyon. A trail leading to prehistoric and historic cultural resources provides access to an education-oriented form of recreation. When water is present, the lower six miles are heavily used for water play."

Fish and Wildlife: All but the lowest portion of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. Romero Canyon hosts a translocated population of roundtail (Gila) chub, as well as numerous other sensitive species, including the Lowland Leopard Frog. Bighorn sheep are common in the canyon. Romero Canyon is within the Audubon Society's Tucson Sky Islands Important Bird Area, recognized for a high diversity of habitat types supporting birds such as wild turkey, red-faced warbler, Grace's warbler, olive warbler, buff-breasted flycatcher, elf owl, whiskered screech-owl and Mexican spotted owl.

Cultural and Historic: Lower Romero Canyon is within the Sutherland Wash Archaeological District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district includes a complex of Hohokam archaeological occupation and farming sites dating from ca. 500 to 1350 A.D. There are the remains of other nineteenth-century settlements in the area, as well.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the headwaters to the end of Catalina State Park was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The 7.3-mile Wild segment of Romero Canyon is entirely within the Pusch Ridge Wilderness, established in 1978, and is entirely within the Bighorn Sheep Management Area, designated by the 1986 Forest Plan.
- ✓ The upper 0.5 miles of the Recreational lower segment of Romero Canyon is within the Romero Canyon Wild and Scenic River Roadless Area, which is contiguous and between the Oracle and Catalina State Park Roadless Areas.
- ✓ Romero Canyon is within the Audubon Society's Tucson Sky Islands Important Bird Area.

Top left: Romero Canyon features numerous waterfalls. Photo by Lisa Hankinson.
Top right: Water, polished granite, and riparian vegetation meet in Romero Canyon. Photo by Lisa Hankinson.
Bottom: Romero Canyon's pools as seen from a hiking trail. Photo courtesy of Jim/Flickr Creative Common License.

Canada del Oro

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Pima/Pinal
Watershed: Upper Santa Cruz River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	6.8	0	5	11.8
Non-federal land:	none			

Canada del Oro begins high in the Santa Catalina Mountains on the western flank of Mt. Lemmon, and drains the northern slopes of the range between the massive crests of Oracle Ridge and Samaniego Ridge. The creek flows north while on the Coronado National Forest, but upon leaving the Forest it turns sharply to the west then south as it wraps around the base of the range and descends towards the Santa Cruz River. The upper Wild-classified segment begins at the stream's headwaters in the Santa Catalina Mountains, and ends one quarter mile south of Forest Road 736 (Charouleau Gap Road). Nearly the entire upper segment is within the Oracle Roadless Area. The lower Recreational-classified segment continues from there down to the boundary of private land and the Coronado National Forest, and is accessible from Forest Road 736 which follows it for its length.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenery, Fish, Wildlife, and Historic as ORVs for Canada del Oro. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: The upper segment within the Roadless Area is incredibly scenic, unmarred by roads or human development, and featuring diverse forests with dramatic views of distant ranges and the spires of Pusch Ridge. The lower segment is within open oak woodland and upper Sonoran Desert and is a popular area with off-road drivers. The Canada del Oro Trail is used by mountain bikers.

Fish and Wildlife: All but the lowest portion of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. The entire segment is within the Audubon Society's Tucson Sky Islands Important Bird Area, recognized for a high diversity of habitat types supporting birds such as wild turkey, red-faced warbler, Grace's warbler, olive warbler, buff-breasted flycatcher, elf owl, whiskered screech-owl and Mexican spotted owl.

Historic: Historic sites along the lower segment of the creek are related to early 20th century mining.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The full length on the Coronado National Forest was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ 6.1 miles of the Wild-classified upper segment of Canada del Oro flows through the Oracle Roadless Area and the Canada del Oro Wild and Scenic River Roadless Area.
- ✓ The U.S. Forest Service portion of Canada del Oro is within the Audubon Society's Tanque Verde Wash/Sabino Canyon and Tucson Sky Islands Important Bird Areas.

Top left: Coatimundi are common inhabitants of riparian canyon bottoms in the Sky Islands. Photo by Adrienne McLeod.
Top right: Montane riparian areas are crucial travel corridors for black bears. Photo courtesy Prescott College.
Bottom: Canyon treefrogs are widespread in Arizona, but are still a treat to see and hear. Photo by James Holderer.

Buehman Creek

Managing Agencies: Coronado N.F. and Pima County
County: Pima
Watershed: Lower San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
USFS Miles:	4.5	0	0	13 miles
Pima County Miles:	1.7	0	3.9	
State Trust Land Miles:	2	0	0.4	
Private Land Miles:	0	0	0.5	

Buehman Creek drains the eastern Santa Catalina Mountains and joins the San Pedro River at Reddington. A segment from near Pinto Spring to Forest Road 801 was proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, but was summarily dismissed as not Eligible by the U.S. Forest Service in its 1991 Preliminary Analysis of Eligibility and Classification for Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Designations in National Forests of Arizona. No explanation was provided for that determination. The stream is still worthy of consideration for its contribution to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The segments described here include the 1993 proposal plus additional stream miles below that, since most of the area has been acquired by Pima County for its expanding conservation lands system, including lands purchased by the county, as well as State Trust grazing leases held by the county for conservation purposes. The contributions made by Pima County to protect this special desert river are significant, and designation as a Wild and Scenic River would help provide a unified framework for preserving and restoring the entire length of Buehman Creek across land ownerships.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: Buehman Creek drops steeply off the towering Santa Catalina Mountains, providing stunning scenery. Within a five- or six-mile stretch it moves from a conifer forest into a spectacular stand of saguaro cactus. Due to its inaccessibility, it has wilderness characteristics similar to much more remote areas, while in fact, it is only about 20 miles from Tucson. The steep descent and narrow canyon provide many opportunities for remarkable viewing and photography.

Geology: A noteworthy feature of Buehman Canyon is the limestone formations and caves, rarely found along a Sonoran Desert stream. Limestone typically is found further south and east of the Catalinas. Caves provide essential habitat for bat colonies and it is likely that these caves host maternity colonies of Sanborn's long-nosed bats, a rare species known to be in the area.

Fish and Wildlife: Buehman Creek is the only perennial stream on the eastern side of the Santa Catalinas and, as such, it is a major wildlife migration corridor joining the higher elevations of the mountains with the San Pedro River Valley. Gila topminnow and desert pupfish, both endangered species, have been introduced into the creek over recent years. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily desert sucker, Gila topminnow, longfin dace, and roundtail chub.

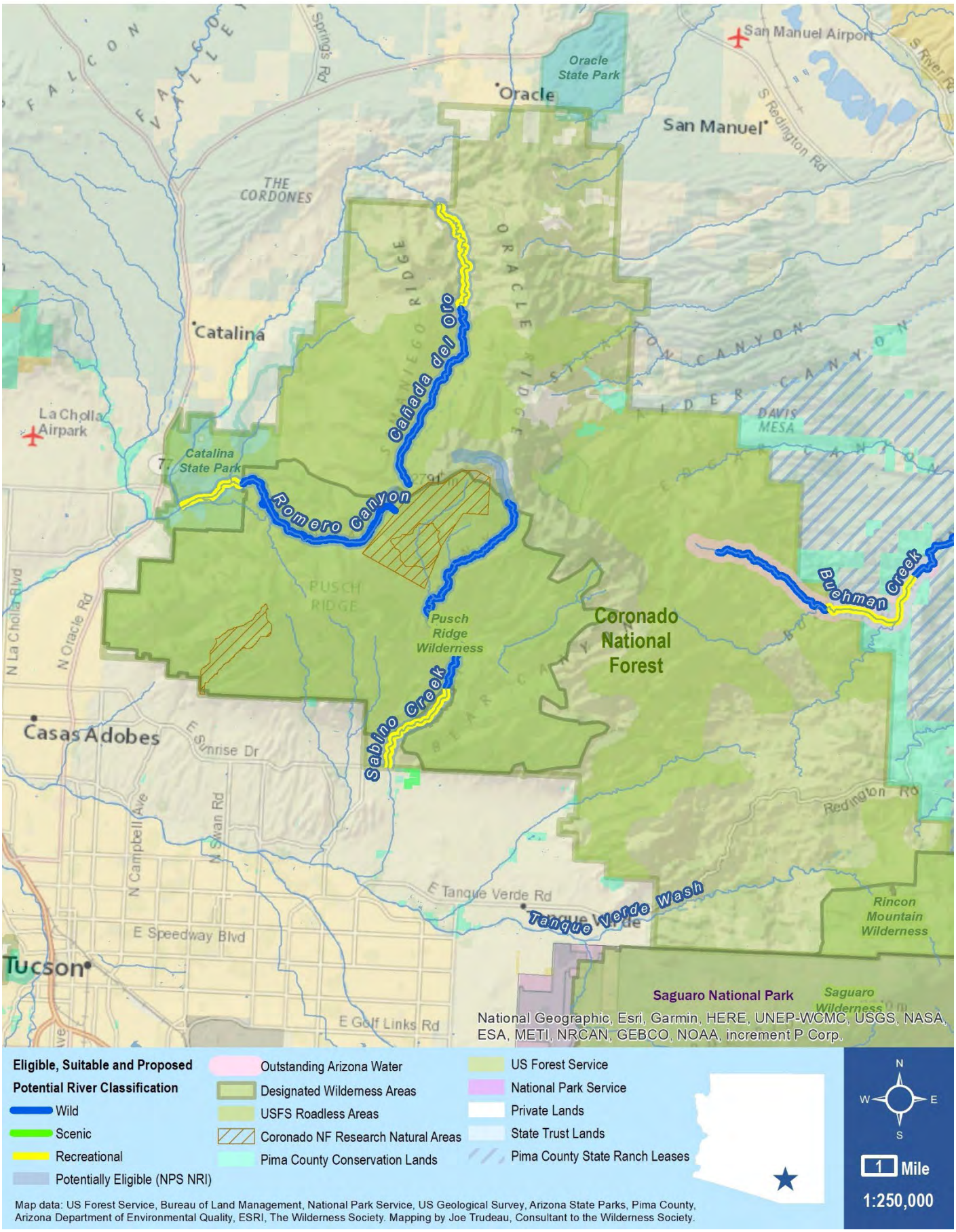
Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Segment down to confluence of Chimney Rock Creek proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ 4.5 miles of Buehman Creek flows through the Butterfly Roadless Area on the Coronado National Forest.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ 2 miles of proposed Wild-classified segment flows through State Trust land protected by Pima County through their acquisition of the state grazing lease.
- ✓ 5.6 miles of Wild and Recreational proposed segments flow through lands owned by Pima County as part of the county conservation lands system.

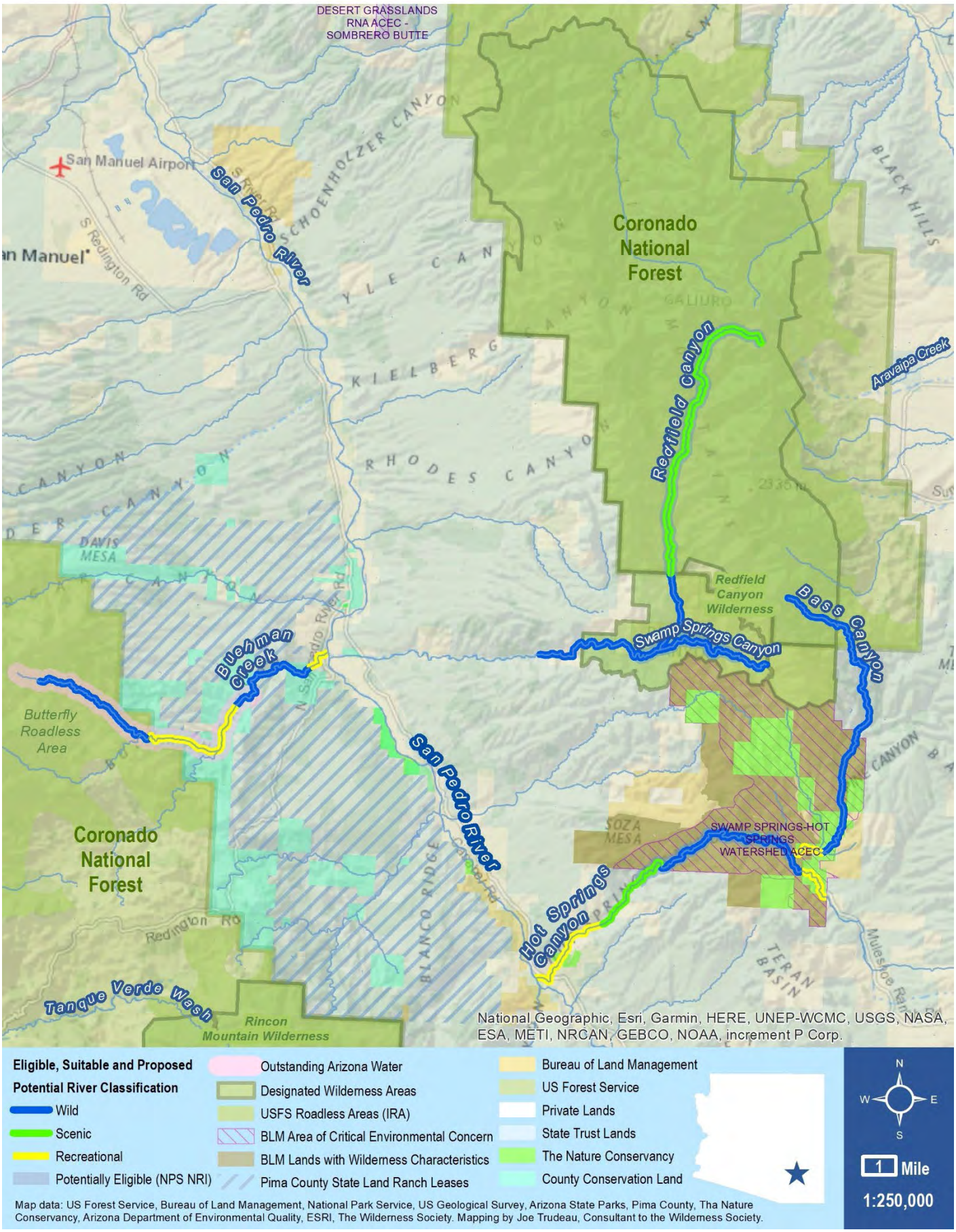
Buehman Creek

Top left and right: Photos of Buehman Canyon taken in the early 1990's during preparation of the original "Lifeblood of the Desert" citizens proposal. Photos by Bill Gobus.
Bottom: Lush riparian forest along Buehman Creek on Pima County conservation lands. Photo courtesy of Pima County.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Santa Catalina Mountains



Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Galiuro and Santa Catalina Mountains



Redfield Canyon

Managing Agencies: Coronado National Forest and Bureau of Land Management
County: Graham
Watershed: Lower San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible (USFS) & Proposed (BLM)			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	7.8	10.2	0	18
Non-federal land:	2 miles private and 3.5 miles State Trust			

Redfield Canyon is the most significant drainage feature of the southern Galiuro Mountains. The creek originates on the northern slopes of Sunset Peak, one of the highest points in the range. From there it flows southward to join Swamp Springs Canyon, then turns abruptly west and descends to the San Pedro River. The segments described here include the entire creek on the Coronado National Forest, which was found Eligible by the U.S. Forest Service with a classification of Scenic. Because the entire segment is within the Galiuro Wilderness, future efforts to protect this stream should consider classifying it as Wild. Also included here is the lower half of Redfield Canyon which is on Bureau of Land Management property (proposed as Wild because it is within the Redfield Canyon Wilderness), as well as a segment on private and State Trust land that is undeveloped and not accessed by any roads. Interestingly, much of these private and State lands are within the designated wilderness area. The segment ends where the stream no longer runs perennially. These segments were proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, but the Bureau of Land Management did not evaluate Redfield Canyon in the agency's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Scenery (ARC, USFS): The area is characterized by a network of canyons with spectacular cliffs and rugged divides. The topography varies from the broad, flat bottomland of lower Redfield Canyon to the deeply incised and powerfully challenging Jackson and Sycamore Canyons. Redfield Canyon is a very steep, deep, narrow canyon with a perennially flowing stream and an extensive riparian forest. It is reputed by some to be more impressive than the well-known Aravaipa Canyon.

Recreation (ARC): Access to this area is difficult and requires a four-wheel drive vehicle. The isolation and ruggedness provide an outstanding wilderness experience for hikers and horseback riders.

Geologic (ARC): The highly eroded canyon walls and bottom consist of rhyolite, basalt and ash flow tuffs in dramatic scenic form. The layered volcanic rocks include white ledge-forming tuffs, fractured andesites, and the high cliff-forming red layers.

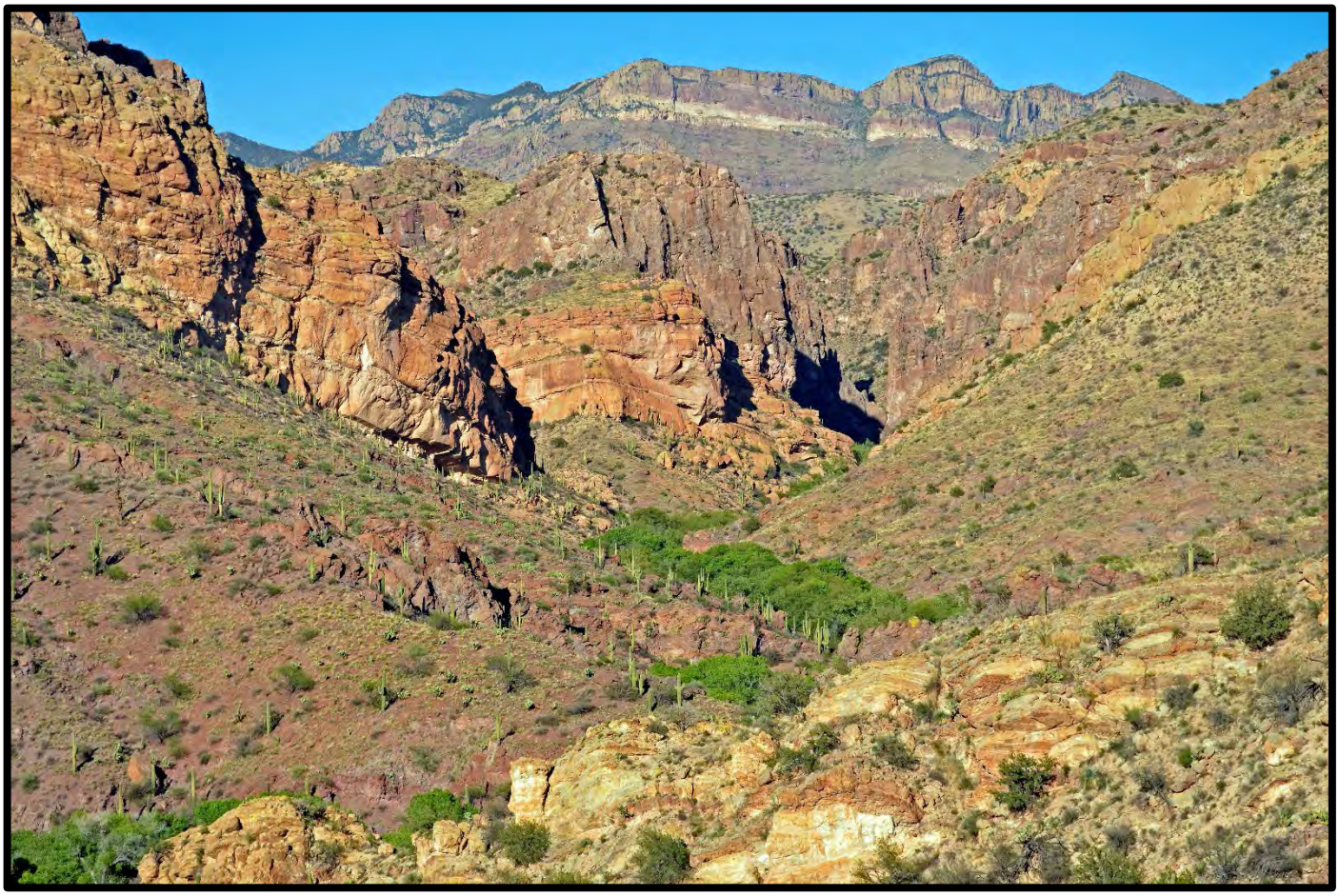
Fish and Wildlife (ARC, USFS): Most of Redfield Canyon is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, and the bottom 1.5 miles is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, as well as the Gila Chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily for Gila topminnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, and Sonora sucker.

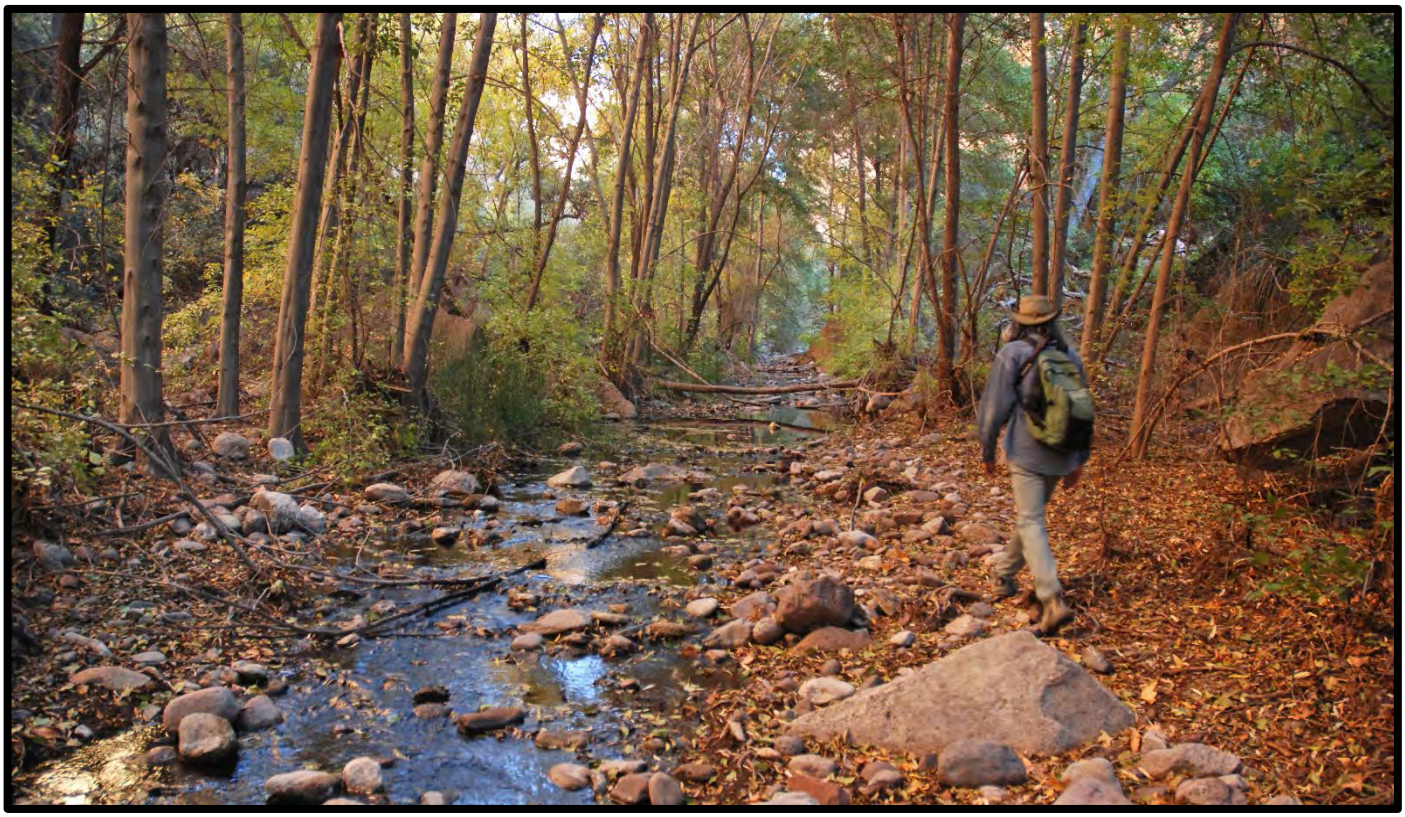
Ecological: Lush riparian forests and a perennial, spring-fed stream contrast with arid shrublands and grasslands, providing abundant and diverse habitat for a wide range of species.

Cultural (ARC): There are a number of homestead cabins and Native American archaeological sites in the area contributing to the historical importance of the canyon.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ The portion on the Coronado National Forest was found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From the headwaters to the National Forest boundary was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The portion on the National Forest was found Eligible for designation in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The uppermost 10.2 miles of Redfield Canyon on the Coronado National Forest are in the Galiuro Wilderness, established in 1964. The next 6.1 miles are in the BLM's Redfield Canyon Wilderness, established in 1990.
- ✓ Redfield Canyon is within the Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area.





Redfield Canyon drains the Galiuro Mountains and passes through two wilderness areas. Photos by Sky Jacobs.

Swamp Springs Canyon

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Graham
Watershed: Lower San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Formerly Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	4.3	0	0	4.3
Non-federal land:	0.4 miles of State Trust land			

Swamp Springs Canyon is a tributary to Redfield Canyon in the southern Galiuro Mountains. The segment described here begins at Jackson Cabin Road and runs to Redfield Canyon. The entire length is within the Redfield Canyon Wilderness, including a short section on State Trust Land, since this wilderness area includes state and private lands. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed protection for Swamp Springs Canyon in its 1991 statewide proposal, and 2.5 miles of the creek was subsequently studied by the Bureau of Land Management for its suitability. However, the agency concluded in the 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report that the stream was not suitable for designation. In the BLM's 1994 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement, the agency claimed that Swamp Springs Canyon was not nationally significant, there were no known threats to the free-flowing values or outstandingly remarkable values, and designation would not offer any additional protective management because it was already within the Swamp Springs-Hot Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Based on those factors, the BLM concluded that "if designated, there would be little, if any change from current management." Importantly, Swamp Springs Canyon is actually not encompassed by the ACEC, so no such protections are afforded. In spite of the BLM's conclusion, Swamp Springs Canyon retains its outstanding values. As such, Swamp Springs Canyon should be considered for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management found Swamp Springs Canyon to possess Fish and Wildlife Habitat ORVs in the 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. The remaining ORVs listen below were proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991.

Scenery: Colorful volcanic rocks, a lush riparian area, and soaring cliffs combine to produce remarkable scenery.

Geology: The highly eroded canyon walls and bottom consist of rhyolite, basalt and ash flow tuffs form dramatic scenery. The layered volcanic rocks include white ledge-forming tuffs, fractured andesites, and the high cliff-forming red layers.

Recreation: Access to this area is challenging and requires a four-wheel drive vehicle. The isolation and ruggedness provide an outstanding wilderness experience for hikers and horseback riders.

Fish and Wildlife: 2.5 miles of Swamp Springs Creek below Redfield Canyon is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the Gila Chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily for Gila topminnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, and Sonora sucker.

Ecological: Lush riparian forests and a perennial, spring-fed stream, contrast with arid shrublands and grasslands, providing abundant and diverse habitat for a wide range of species.

Cultural (ARC): There are a number of homestead cabins and Native American archaeological sites in the area contributing to the historical importance of the canyon.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ From the confluence of unnamed canyons within the Redfield Canyon Wilderness to the confluence with Redfield Canyon was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of Swamp Springs Canyon managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and later found non-Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The entire 4.3 miles of Swamp Springs Canyon are in the BLM's Redfield Canyon Wilderness, established in 1990.
- ✓ Swamp Springs Canyon is within the Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area.

Top: Sycamore leaves fill a pool lined with basaltic rocks in Swamp Springs Canyon. Photo by Jonathan Buford.
Bottom: Layers of eroded volcanic rocks are an outstandingly remarkable geologic value. Flickr Creative Commons license.

Bass Canyon

Managing Agencies: Coronado National Forest and Bureau of Land Management
County: Graham/Cochise
Watershed: Lower San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	10.6	0	1.2	11.8
Non-federal land:	3.3 miles State Trust and 2.4 miles TNC land			

Bass Canyon drains the southwestern slopes of the Galiuro Mountains, beginning within the U.S. Forest Service's Galiuro Wilderness and terminating at Hot Springs Creek in the Bureau of Land Management's Swamp Springs-Hot Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The segments described here include 2.9 miles in the Coronado National Forest, 3.3 miles on State Trust land, 2.7 miles through wilderness-quality BLM land, 2.4 miles through The Nature Conservancy's Muleshoe Preserve, and finally 0.4 miles in wilderness-quality BLM land in the Hot Springs Proposed LWC. The stream was first proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, but has never been agency-evaluated for its inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In this report, Bass Canyon is classified as Wild for its entire length down to a road crossing near the Preserve headquarters, and then classified as Recreational from the road to its confluence with Hot Springs Creek.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The view from The Nature Conservancy's Muleshoe Ranch Preserve is magnificent with pink and beige eroded hillsides contrasting with the lush green riparian vegetation of Bass Canyon and adjacent streams.

Recreation: The entire area is very isolated and receives little visitation. Most roads require high clearance vehicles to negotiate. Because of the highly scenic geologic formations, the rare assemblage of fish and diverse wildlife species present, and the pristine location, Bass and Hot Springs Canyons offer a fascinating hiking opportunity.

Fish and Wildlife: The upper extent of Bass Canyon is designated critical habitat for Mexican spotted owl, and the lower 3.5 miles are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the Gila Chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily desert sucker, Gila topminnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, and speckled dace.

Ecology: Bass Canyon and Hot Spring Canyon provide perennially flowing water along their entire lengths and support lush riparian forests in an arid environment, enabling wildlife to thrive. This undisturbed, remote natural area provides crucial habitat for the region's typical wildlife as well as for many rare and sensitive species. These canyons contribute to the flows in the San Pedro River helping to support downstream riparian communities such as the extensive mesquite bosques in the lower San Pedro watershed. The unusual assemblage of five native fish species is an important part of the Muleshoe's preservation plans. There are no introduced fish species present, making these streams an extraordinary key resource in the preservation of the state's native fishery, but invasion of exotic fish species is always a constant threat.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Flows through Swamp Springs-Hot Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
- ✓ The uppermost 1.9 miles of Bass Canyon on the Coronado National Forest are within the Galiuro Wilderness, established in 1964, then the next 1.1 miles of the are within the Galiuro Roadless Area.
- ✓ 2.7 miles of Bass Canyon, downstream of the Coronado National Forest and the segment on State Trust land, are within the Bass Canyon Proposed Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, proposed to the Bureau of Land Management by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2016.
- ✓ The lowermost 0.4 miles of Bass Canyon are within the Cherry Spring Canyon and the Hot Spring Canyon Proposed Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, also proposed to the BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2016.
- ✓ Bass Canyon is within the Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area.

Top: An autumn sunset casts pastel hues over the southern Galiuro Mountains at the Muleshoe Preserve. Photo by Paul Gill.
Bottom: Spring brings vibrant green foliage to the riparian forests on lower Bass Canyon. Photo by Sky Jacobs.

Hot Springs Canyon

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Cochise
Watershed: Lower San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Formerly Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	6.5	2.9	4.5	14
Non-federal land:	2.3 miles State Trust, 5.2 miles private /TNC			

Hot Springs Canyon is the southernmost stream in the Galiuro Mountains, draining the Muleshoe Ranch Preserve and Bureau of Land Management's Swamp Springs-Hot Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern west into the San Pedro River at Cascabel. The stream was first proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, and 6 miles of it were found Eligible for protection and then studied for suitability by the BLM. However, the agency concluded in the 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report that the stream was not suitable for designation. In the BLM's 1994 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement, the agency claimed that Hot Springs Canyon was not nationally significant, there were no known threats to the free-flowing values or outstandingly remarkable values, and designation would not offer any additional protective management because it was already within the Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Based on those factors, the BLM concluded that "if designated, there would be little, if any change from current management." In spite of the BLM's conclusion, Hot Springs Canyon retains its outstanding values and is in fact threatened, as any administrative protection, such as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, is an impermanent level of protection. In this report, we propose the full 14 miles of the stream for Wild and Scenic River protection, from its origin on BLM land to its confluence with the San Pedro River. After a short stretch on BLM land, the stream flows through 1.1 miles of land owned by The Nature Conservancy, proposed for Recreational classification. Then, the next 6.6 miles are within wilderness-quality BLM lands, including a 0.6-mile inholding owned by The Nature Conservancy, which is proposed for Wild classification. The downstream end of the Wild-classified segment is a fish barrier constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 2010 as a requirement of the 2008 Central Arizona Project biological opinion. Below the fish barrier, the segments through State Trust land, private land, and lands owned by The Nature Conservancy and the Cascabel Conservation Association are proposed for Scenic and Recreational classification, depending on ownership and road access.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The view from The Nature Conservancy's Muleshoe Ranch Preserve is magnificent with pink and beige eroded hillsides contrasting with the lush green riparian vegetation of Hot Springs Canyon and adjacent streams.

Recreation: The entire area is very isolated and receives little visitation. Most roads require high clearance vehicles to negotiate. Because of the highly scenic geologic formations, the rare assemblage of fish and diverse wildlife species present, and the pristine location, Bass and Hot Springs Canyons offer a fascinating hiking opportunity.

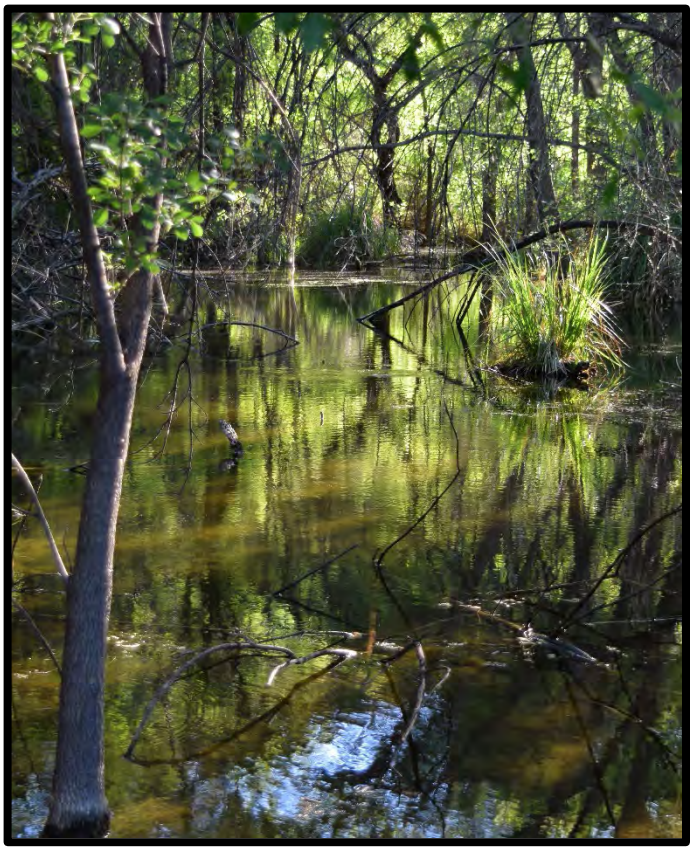
Fish and Wildlife: The Wild segment of Hot Springs Canyon is designated critical habitat for Mexican spotted owl, and the lower 3.5 miles are designated critical habitat for the federally endangered spikedace and loach minnow, and the Gila Chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily desert sucker, Gila topminnow, loach minnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, speckled dace, and spikedace.

Ecology: Bass Canyon and Hot Spring Canyon provide perennially flowing water along their entire lengths and support lush riparian forests in an arid environment, enabling wildlife to thrive. This undisturbed, remote natural area provides crucial habitat for the region's typical wildlife as well as for many rare and sensitive species. These canyons contribute to the flows in the San Pedro River helping to support downstream riparian communities such as the extensive mesquite bosques in the lower San Pedro watershed.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Segment down to the first private parcel was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in their 1991 proposal.
- ✓ From the confluence with Bass Canyon through the BLM portion was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of Hot Springs Canyon managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and later found non-Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The entire portion of Hot Springs Creek on BLM lands, totaling 6.5 miles, is within the Hot Springs Canyon Proposed Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, proposed to the BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2016.
- ✓ Flows through Swamp Springs-Hot Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
- ✓ Hot Springs Canyon is within the Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area.

Hot Springs Canyon



Top Left: Portions of Hot Springs Canyon are reminiscent of eastern hardwood swamps. Photo by Dale Turner.
Top Right: Hot Springs Canyon descends from the Muleshoe Ranch to the San Pedro River. Photo by Dale Turner.
Bottom: Hot Springs Canyon seen near The Nature Conservancy's Muleshoe Ranch. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Cienega Creek and Tributaries

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Pima
Watershed: Rillito River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	9.1	0	11.1
Non-federal land:	none			

Cienega Creek is a perennial stream starting just north of the town of Sonoita and running northward between the Whetstone and Santa Rita mountain ranges through the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and ultimately to join the Rillito River in Tucson by way of Pantano Wash. Local citizen outcry in response to a massive residential development proposal led to BLM acquiring 35,000 acres in the area through a land exchange in 1988, laying the foundation for the future conservation area, as well as the 142,800-acre Sonoita Valley Acquisition Area, which is the area that BLM is authorized to acquire land for conservation purposes. The full 18.5-mile length of the creek through the BLM's then-Empire/Cienega Resource Conservation Area was proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. However, the 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan found just two portions of Cienega Creek Eligible for further study: a 3.5-mile segment and a 5.5-mile segment – both of which were demarcated arbitrarily at section line boundaries. Those Eligible segments, plus the lowermost one-mile segments of both Empire Gulch and Mattie Gulch, eventually were found suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Study Report. Cienega Creek is an outstanding opportunity for expanded biodiversity and open space conservation. Pima County has been actively acquiring conservation lands lower in the watershed, and Cienega Creek is a recognized Outstanding Arizona Water. Future efforts to protect Cienega Creek as a Wild and Scenic River should look beyond the segments found suitable by the BLM, which were arbitrarily defined at section lines. The 2.5-mile section between these segments should be considered for protection as it is perennial and designated critical habitat for four threatened or endangered species. The sections upstream and downstream should also be evaluated. In addition, the Arizona Land and Water Trust holds a large conservation easement on the Babocomari Ranch, just south of the conservation area. Together, a multi-stakeholder, multi-agency approach to river protection would be in line with the legacy of cross boundary work that has thus far been successful in piecing together a large expanse of valuable conservation land.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

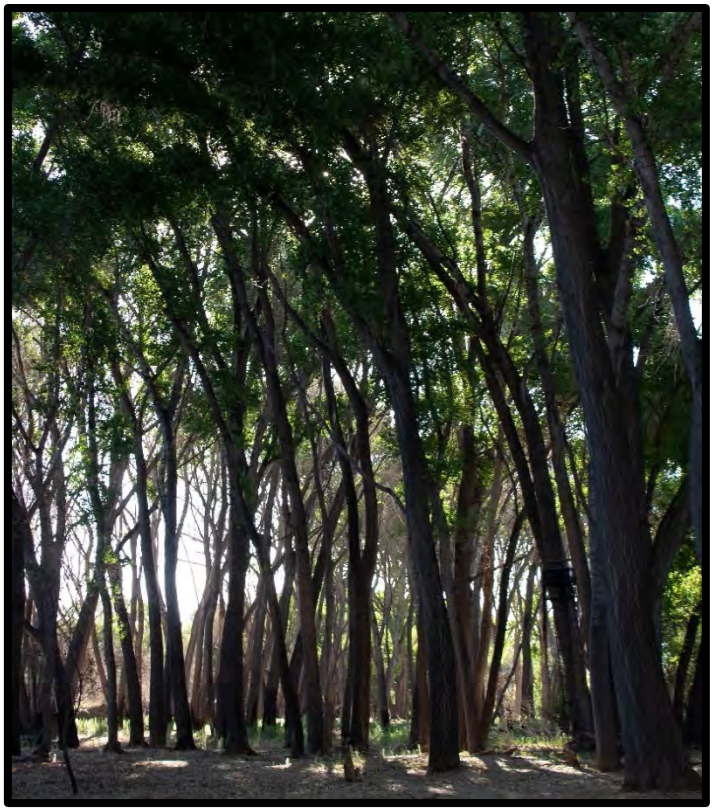
Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM):

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): The entire 30-mile length of Cienega Creek is designated critical habitat for the federally threatened northern Mexican garter snake. The entire segment discussed here is critical habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. A 2.5-mile segment, plus 5.5 miles in Empire Gulch, is critical habitat for the endangered Chiricahua leopard frog. Cienega Creek above The Narrows, plus several miles of Empire Gulch, are designated critical habitat for the Gila chub, which has been reclassified to the roundtail chub. The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily for Gila topminnow, longfin dace, and roundtail chub. According to the Department, Cienega Creek is the largest stream that still supports a relict population of Gila topminnow and roundtail chub, and the entire watershed is free of non-native fishes. Jaguar critical habitat crosses the northern half of Las Cienegas RNCA, a testament to the connectivity value between the Whetstone and Santa Rita Mountains.

Ecology (ARC) & Riparian Vegetation (BLM): As its name implies, Cienega Creek is marshy, with cattails and tall grasses rising six feet high. Until the late 1800s, cienega marsh communities were relatively common in southwestern riparian systems; today, most have disappeared. Cienega Creek's wetland community is one of the last and best examples of a relatively intact cienega, and provides habitat for endangered plants like the Huachuca water umbel and the Canelo Hills ladies'-tresses.

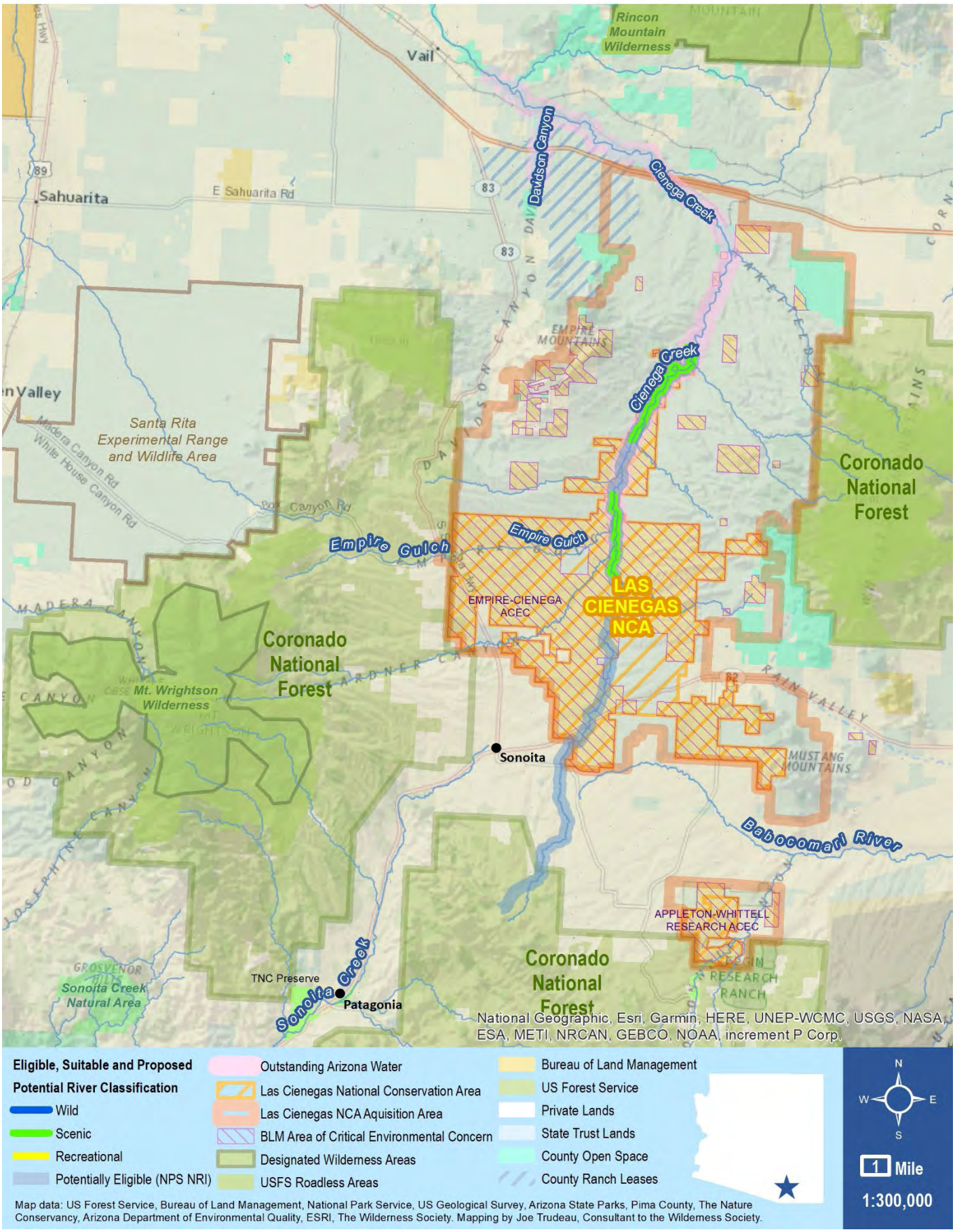
Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ From its headwaters on the Coronado National Forest to "the Narrows" was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of Cienega Creek managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan Amendment. They were further evaluated, and later found Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ The entire Suitable segment is within the 45,000-acre Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, established on December 6, 2000 when Congress passed Public Law 106-538.
- ✓ Over 28 miles of Cienega Creek, from springs in the Conservation Area to Pantano Wash, as well as 2.9 miles of Davidson Canyon, are classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality.
- ✓ Cienega Creek is designated as an Arizona Heritage Water due to its ecological importance and human history.

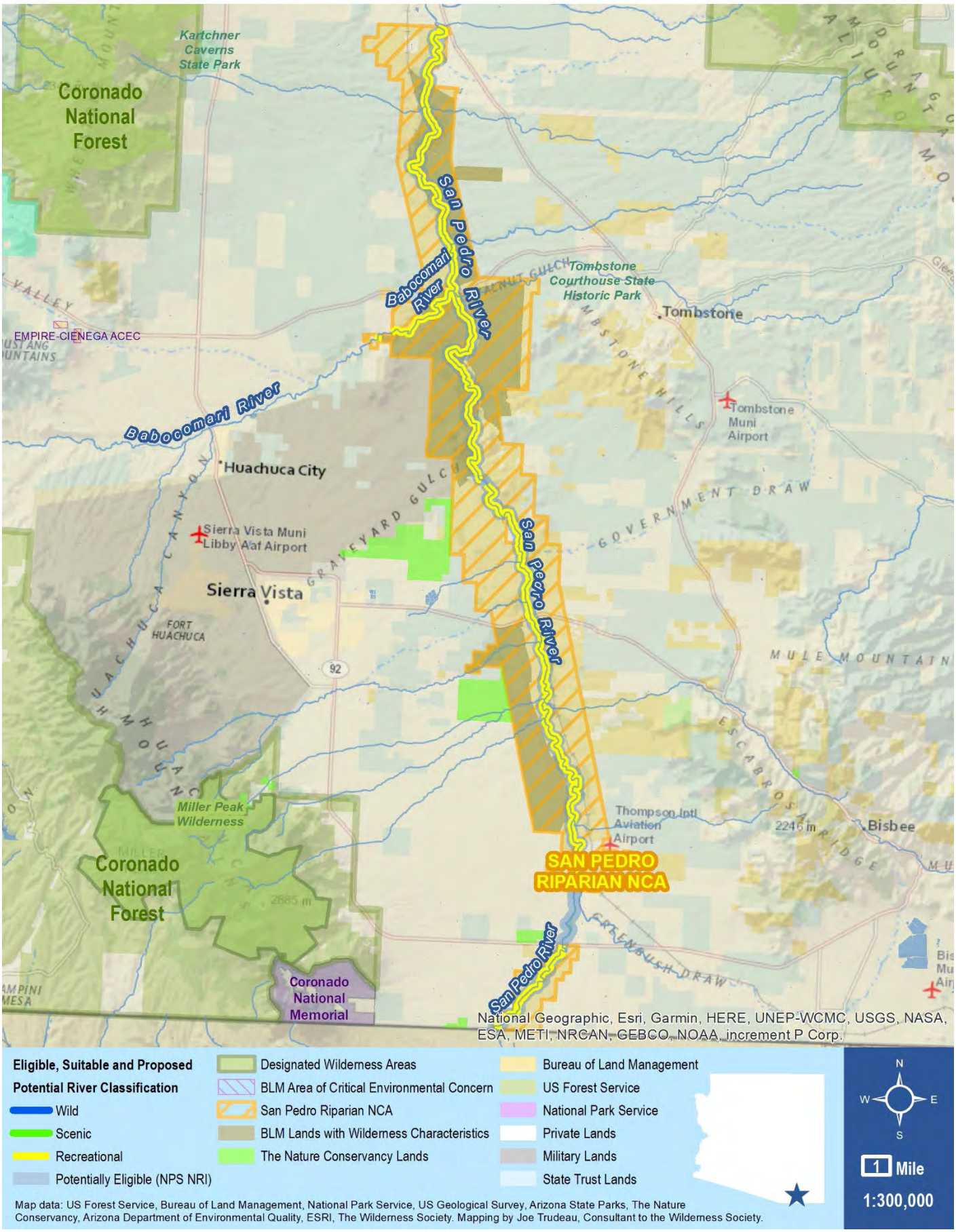


Top: Summer brings vast sunflower blooms to Cienega Creek. Photo by Richard Webster.
Bottom Left: Cienega Creek near North Canyon in the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Photo by Richard Webster.
Bottom Right: Shaded cottonwood groves dominate the riparian systems of Las Cienegas NCA. Photo by Richard Webster.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers at Las Cienegas National Conservation Area



Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers at the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area



San Pedro and Babocomari Rivers

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Cochise
Watershed: Upper San Pedro River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
San Pedro miles:	0	0	45.8	45.8
Babocomari miles:	0	0	4	4
Non-federal land:	none			

The San Pedro River is one of the most beloved desert rivers in America. It has long been a priority for conservationists, as it is one of the longest intact cottonwood-willow riparian galleries in existence. It hosts 84 mammal species, 14 species of fish, 41 reptile and amphibian species, 100 species of breeding birds, and habitat for 250 species of migrant and wintering birds. The Babocomari is one of the San Pedro's most significant perennial tributaries. The Bureau of Land Management's 2016 Eligibility Report proposed Wild, Scenic, and Recreational classifications for the San Pedro, and Scenic for the Babocomari. However, the agency's final Resource Management Plan downgraded the classifications to Recreational. Future efforts to protect these rivers should consider using the classifications proposed in the Eligibility Report.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

ORVs identified in the eligibility and suitability report for the San Pedro River corridor are Scenery, Recreation, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Cultural, Historic, Botanic, and Paleontological. The Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed the same, minus Botanical. The BLM found that the Babocomari River's ORVs are Scenery, Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, and Cultural. Sections in quotations are taken from the 2016 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: The San Pedro River is scenic, with a largely natural appearance and many outstanding landform, vegetation and water features. The Babocomari River forms a steep sided canyon with a narrow canyon bottom and perennial flows.

Recreation: The river corridor provides opportunities for outdoor recreation in riparian and upland settings, in a largely natural environment, with easily accessible areas near highway crossings as well as more remote backcountry areas.

Fish and Wildlife: The San Pedro is a crucial north-south migratory pathway for hundreds of bird species. The central portion of the San Pedro River, as well as the Babocomari River, is designated critical habitat for the northern Mexican garter snake. The entire Suitable segment is designated critical habitat for the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The rivers provide aquatic habitat for Endangered desert pupfish and Gila topminnow. The river corridor habitat is recognized as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area Important Bird Area by the Arizona Audubon Society.

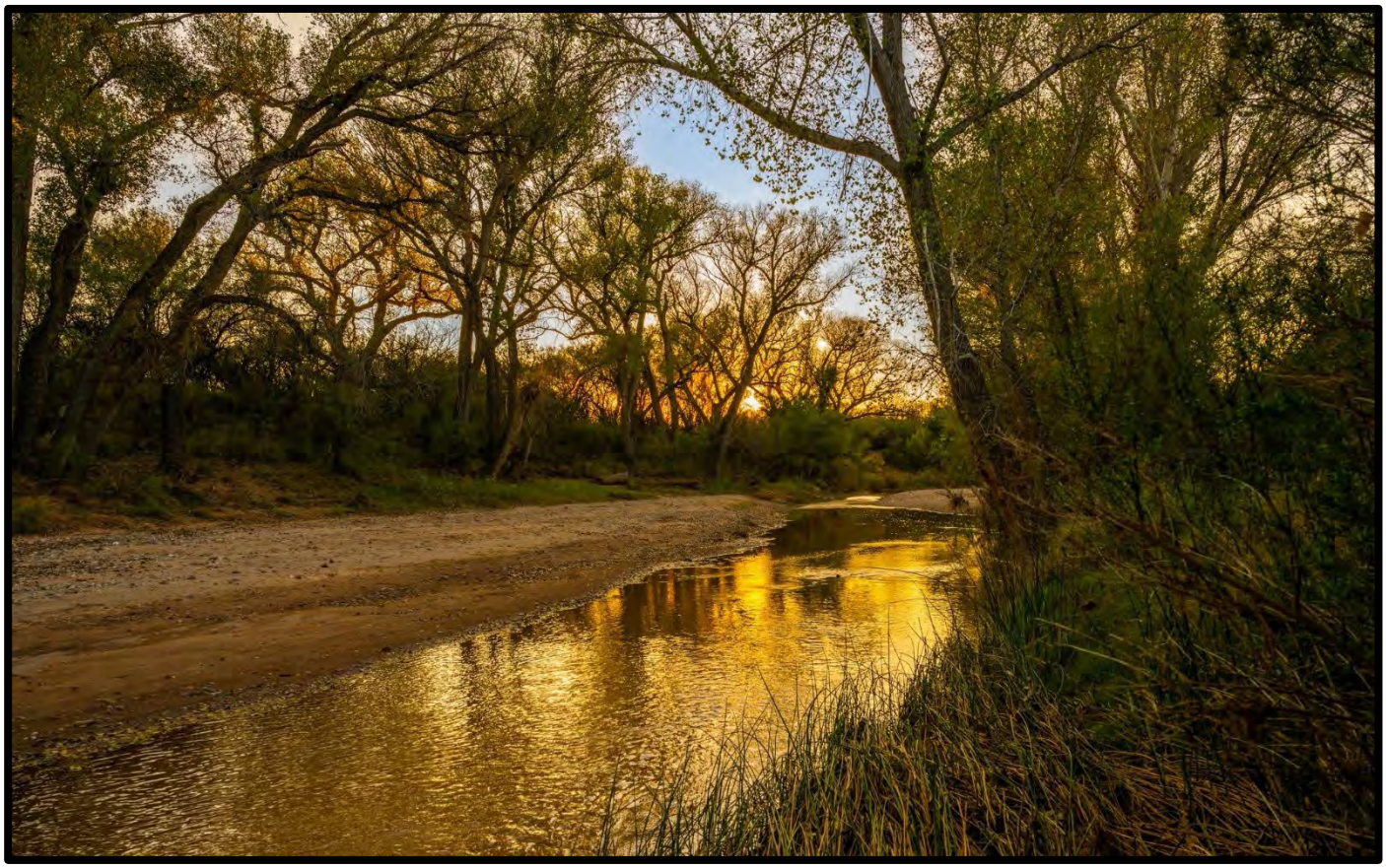
Botanical: "The river study area supports a high variety of riparian and upland vegetation which attracts research and educational activities. The study area includes outstanding cottonwood/willow gallery tree woodland, mesquite bosque, sacaton grassland, mixed desert shrubs and other vegetation communities." Nearly the entire length is designated critical habitat for the Huachuca water umbel. A small cienega is designated critical habitat for the Arizona eryngo.

Cultural and Historic: The river corridor includes remnants of the Presidio de Terrenate, a Spanish adobe dating to the late 1700's, as well as pre-historic sites, including at least one petroglyph site. Historic sites include abandoned townsites, remnants of mining and ore processing, as well as historic railroad grades, roads and trails, and ranching artifacts.

Paleontological: "Geologic formations in the study area include alluvial deposits dating to the last glacial age, approximately 11,000-13,000 years ago, which contain world renowned paleontological resources. The Lehner and Murray Springs Sites, both National Historic Landmarks, are found along the edge of the river corridor. Both sites have contributed information which helped date and understand the Clovis culture in North America during the last ice age."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The San Pedro River was proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ The San Pedro River from the Mexico border to Escalante Wash was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments of the San Pedro River managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for further study in the agency's 1993 Safford District Resource Management Plan. They were further evaluated, and later found Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ Both the San Pedro River and the Babocomari Rivers were found Suitable in the 2016 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report and 2019 Resource Management Plan for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.
- ✓ The San Pedro River flows through the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, established in 1988 in the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act, Public Law 100-696.



The San Pedro River is the centerpiece of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. Photos by Ron Stewart.

Rucker Creek

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Cochise
Watershed: Whitewater Draw
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	6.3	0	0	6.3
Non-federal land:	none			

Rucker Creek flows off the western face of the highest peaks in the Chiricahua Mountains, deep within the Chiricahua Wilderness, and descends to Whitewater Draw in the Sonora River basin. The U.S. Forest Service evaluated 14 miles of Rucker Creek for eligibility, and determined that the upper segment from its headwaters to the Chiricahua Wilderness boundary is Eligible. The 1993 eligibility study stated that Rucker Creek's "wide canyon setting offers expansive views of surrounding canyon walls and rock outcrops, diverse hillsides and canyon bottom vegetation and mountain peaks within the wilderness above." The canyon offers an outstanding example of a dynamic, wild ecosystem, impacted by a mosaic of wildfires, erosion, and other biogeographic factors, resulting in a stunning display of diverse ecological attributes.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenic, Recreational, Wildlife, Fish, and Geologic as ORVs for Rucker Creek. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: "This segment is in wilderness. There is an easily reached (and frequently used) trail which follows the creek for about three miles before it heads up a deep and rugged canyon known for its scenic beauty and geology."

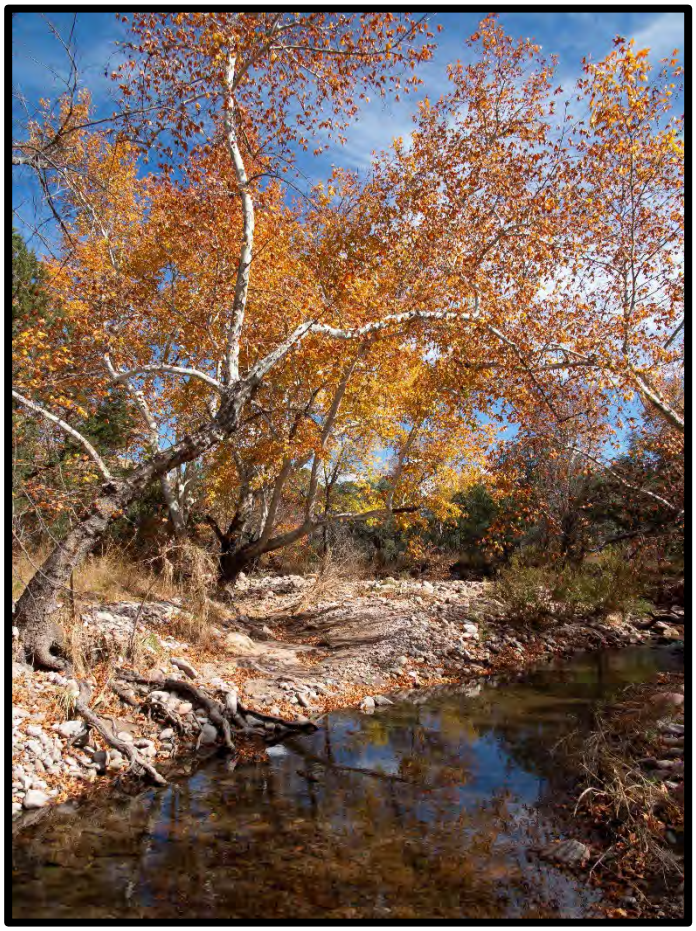
Geology: Rucker Creek flows through the Turkey Creek Caldera, which is a volcanic feature comprised of intrusive and extrusive Tertiary rocks, including a monzonite porphyry, Rhyolite Canyon welded tuff, and rhyolitic lavas, known for unusual erosional patterns.

Recreation: "This is a popular hiking area due to its easy accessibility and spectacular scenery along the creek and canyon."

Fish and Wildlife: The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. "This is the only locality of the Mexican Stoneroller (a listed fish) on the Coronado NF, and one of the few remaining populations in existence. Rucker Creek was the last known locality for the Chiricahua Leopard Frog in the Chiricahuas (type locality). Biological diversity, which includes threatened, endangered, and sensitive species is extremely high in this drainage."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Rucker Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire Wild segment of the Rucker Creek is within the Chiricahua Wilderness, established in 1964.



Top left: Rucker Creek, high in the Chiricahua Mountains. Photo by Jonathan Patt.
Top right: Autumn sycamores glow along Rucker Creek. Photo by Richard Webster.
Bottom: Looking down Rucker Canyon from high in the Chiricahua Wilderness Area. Photo by Richard Webster.

Cave Creek

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Cochise
Watershed: San Simon River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible (lower reach) & Proposed (upper reach)			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	3.6	0	5.7	9.3
Non-federal land:	none			

Cave Creek is the primary drainage on the eastern side of the Chiricahua Mountains in extreme southeastern Arizona. It consists of several forks which converge and flow through the small town of Portal. The segment described here includes the upper reach of Cave Creek, above the confluence with Cima Creek, as well as the lower reach which gathers flow from Cima Creek and the South Fork of Cave Creek. The entire stream was proposed for protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. The stream was only partially evaluated by the U.S. Forest Service in its 2008 study, however, because the Coronado National Forest only considered streams that had been evaluated in the earlier region-wide evaluation conducted by the agency in 1993. The agency study covered the reach below the confluence with Cima Creek (which they called Lower Cave Creek), but not above that point. Here, we include the Recreational-classified Eligible segment, plus a proposal for the upper reach of the stream, with a proposed Wild classification as it is almost entirely in the Chiricahua Wilderness.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish, Wildlife, Historical, Cultural, Ecological, and Riparian as ORVs for Lower Cave Creek. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study. Upper Cave Creek shares many of these values.

Scenery: Dramatic topographic relief, steep mountain walls, and diverse vegetation combine to create stunning scenery.

Geologic: "Geologic features include caves, arches, cliffs, and windows of volcanic and sedimentary rock."

Recreational: "Recreational uses include bird and wildlife watching, natural history research, caving (Crystal Cave), camping, and hiking. Lower Cave Creek is known nationally and internationally for its wildlife viewing (particularly birdwatching)."

Fish and Wildlife: Most of the creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. From the confluence of Cima Creek down to Portal, it is designated critical habitat for the federally endangered Chiricahua leopard frog. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily desert sucker, speckled dace, roundtail chub, and loach minnow, and secondarily for Gila trout. Cave Creek is an internationally recognized birding hot spot, and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service as a special management area.

Cultural and Historic: "Rock art, roasting pits, pithouse villages, and other sites attest to the human presence in the canyon dating back centuries. The Chiricahua Apache attach considerable historical significance to the area, and the Cave Creek Visitor Information Station (originally the Portal Ranger Station) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The research potential of the archaeological sites, the contemporary significance of the area to the Chiricahua Apache, and the historical associations of the Forest Service and CCC sites constitute an outstandingly remarkable historic value."

Ecology: Diverse vegetation, abundant relief, and a range of habitats combine to create a unique ecological mosaic.

Riparian: "This is one of the longest flowing stretches of water in southeastern Arizona. The channel supports a large diversity of flora and fauna. This association of plants and animals is unique to forests of southeastern Arizona."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ From the headwaters to the town of Portal is listed as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Almost the entire Wild segment of the Cave Creek is within the Chiricahua Wilderness, established in 1964.
- ✓ Cave Creek is entirely within the Cave Creek Canyon Birds of Prey Zoological-Botanical Area, proposed by the Coronado National Forest in the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan. The area harbors the densest known population of breeding raptors in the U.S., rare riparian habitat, and diverse migratory and year-round wildlife.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

Fresh snow on the lower Recreational segment of Cave Creek, below Sunny Flat. Photo by Richard Webster.

Cima Creek

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Cochise
Watershed: San Simon River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	2.7	0	0.8	3.5
Non-federal land:	none			

Cima Creek, also known as Winn Falls Creek, is a tributary to Cave Creek. It was proposed with a Wild classification by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991, and called the North Fork of Cave Creek in that proposal. The stream was evaluated by the Coronado National Forest in 2008, and the agency found that the segment from its headwaters to the Chiricahua Wilderness boundary was Eligible as a Wild-classified river. However, they did not make a determination for the segment outside of the wilderness. The segments as described here include the Wild upper reach in the wilderness, as well as the 0.8 miles outside of the wilderness, which is classified as Recreational because of road access.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenery, Recreation, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural, and Riparian as ORVs for Cima Creek. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study. The agency's findings reflect the proposal made by the Arizona Rivers Coalition.

Scenery: Winn Falls, at over 400 feet drop, is one of the most dramatic waterfalls in Arizona.

Recreation: All forks of Cave Creek offer a variety of recreational activities from bird watching to hiking and camping. The area is renowned for its huge variety of bird life.

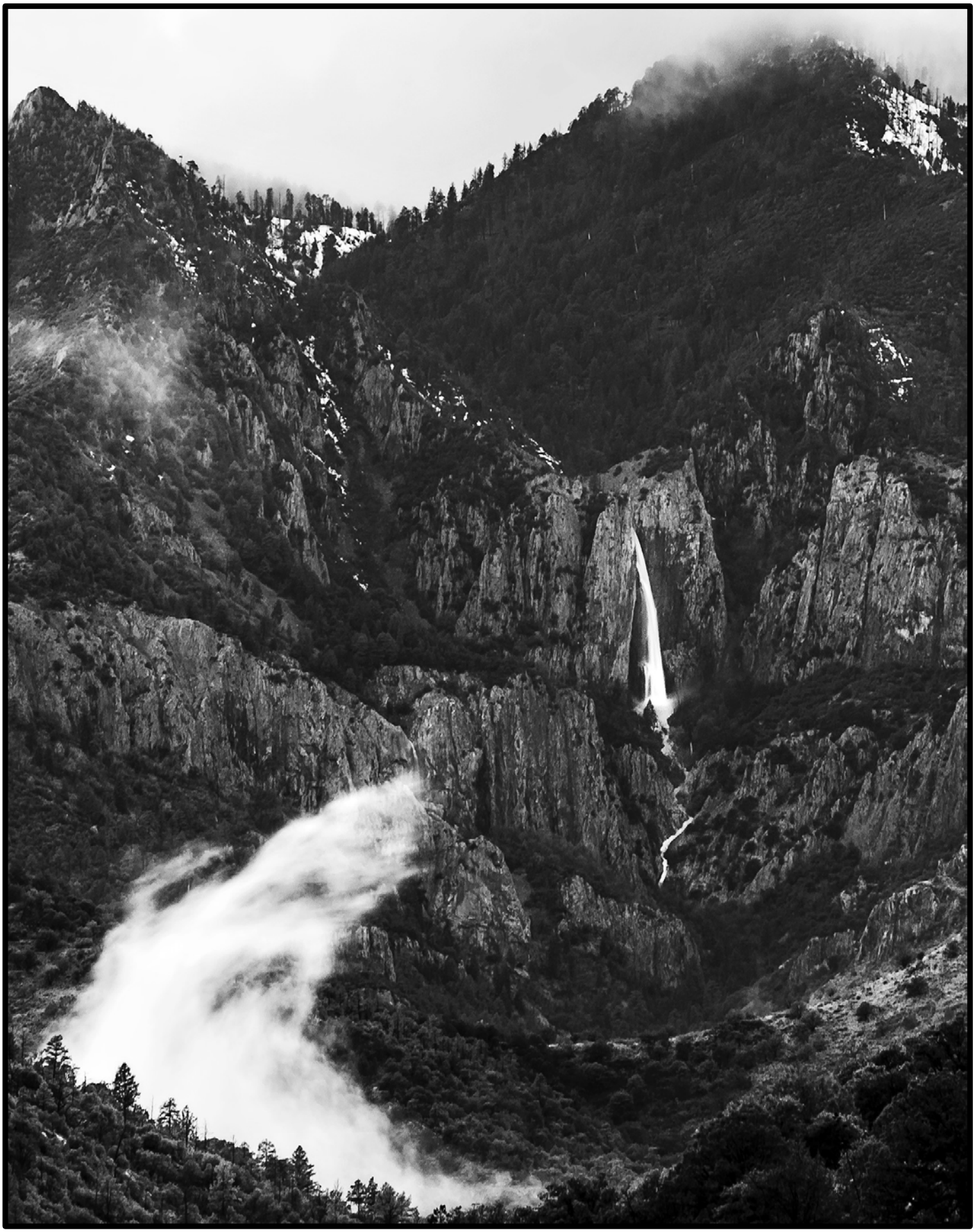
Wildlife: The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl and is a globally significant bird diversity hot spot.

Cultural and Historic: Cima Creek originates high in the Chiricahua Mountains next to a log cabin built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The cabin and its outbuildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Riparian: "The nearby year-round water is important to the riparian area and to wildlife. Along with the other segment (Lower Cave Creek) this is one of the largest perennial streams in southern Arizona."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The creek from its headwaters to its confluence of Cave Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The entire Wild segment of Cima Creek is within the Chiricahua Wilderness, established in 1964, and the Recreational segment is partially within the Chiricahua Roadless Area.
- ✓ Cima Creek is entirely within the Cave Creek Canyon Birds of Prey Zoological-Botanical Area, proposed by the Coronado National Forest in the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan. The area harbors the densest known population of breeding raptors in the U.S., rare riparian habitat, and diverse migratory and year-round wildlife.



Winn Falls tumbles hundreds of feet down Cima Creek in the Chiricahua Wilderness. Photo by Jonathan Buford.

South Fork of Cave Creek

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Cochise
Watershed: San Simon River
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	7.2	1.6	0	8.8
Non-federal land:	none			

The South Fork of Cave Creek is a tributary to Cave Creek, joining the mainstem just under two miles upstream of the town of Portal. It was proposed with a Wild classification by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. The stream was evaluated by the Coronado National Forest in 2008, and the agency found that the segment from its headwaters to the Chiricahua Wilderness boundary is Eligible as a Wild-classified river, and the segment from there down to its confluence with Cave Creek is Eligible as a Recreational-classified river as it is paralleled by Forest Road 622. The segments described here follow the findings of the U.S. Forest Service.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish, Wildlife, Historical, Cultural, Ecological, and Riparian as ORVs for the lower Recreational segment of the South Fork of Cave Creek, and Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Historic and Riparian for the Wild upper segment. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: This creek is known for its diverse flora and fauna. It is popular with birdwatchers, hikers, and backpackers. Dramatic topographic relief, steep mountain walls, and diverse vegetation combine to create stunning scenery.

Geology: "Geologic features include caves, arches, cliffs, and windows of volcanic and sedimentary rock."

Recreation: "Recreational uses include bird and wildlife watching, natural history research, caving (Crystal Cave), camping, and hiking. Lower Cave Creek is known nationally and internationally for its wildlife viewing (particularly birdwatching)."

Fish and Wildlife: The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the creek as a Conservation Opportunity Area for aquatic species, primarily desert sucker, speckled dace, roundtail chub, and loach minnow, and secondarily for Gila trout. Cave Creek is an internationally recognized birding hot spot, and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service as a special management area.

Cultural and Historic: "Rock art, roasting pits, pithouse villages, and other sites attest to the human presence in the canyon dating back centuries. The Chiricahua Apache attach considerable historical significance to the area, and the Cave Creek Visitor Information Station (originally the Portal Ranger Station) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The research potential of the archaeological sites, the contemporary significance of the area to the Chiricahua Apache, and the historical associations of the Forest Service and CCC sites constitute an outstandingly remarkable historic value."

Riparian: "This is one of the longest flowing stretches of water in southeastern Arizona. The channel supports a large diversity of flora and fauna. This association of plants and animals is unique to forests of southeastern Arizona."

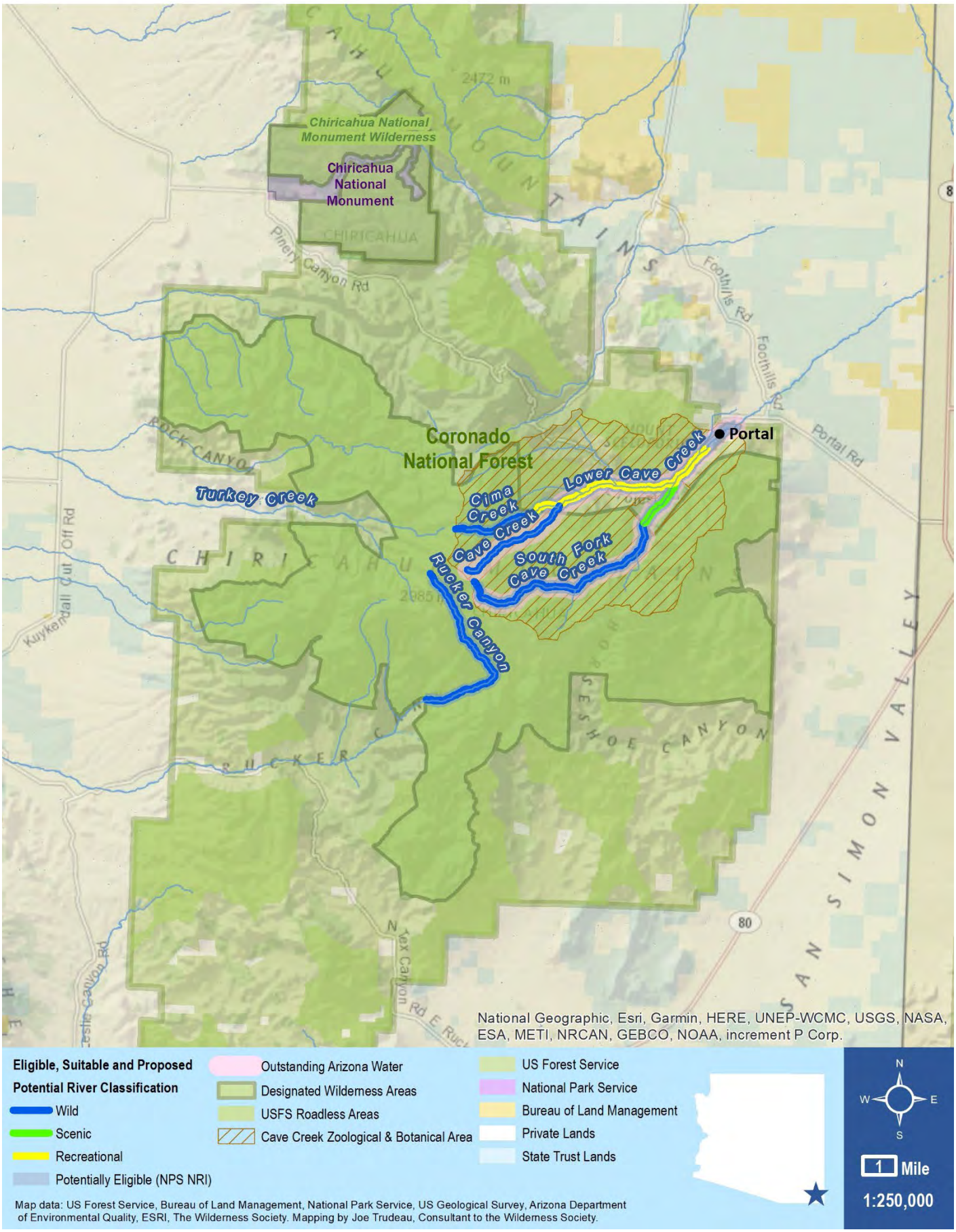
Ecology: Diverse vegetation, abundant relief, and a range of habitats combine to create a unique ecological mosaic.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

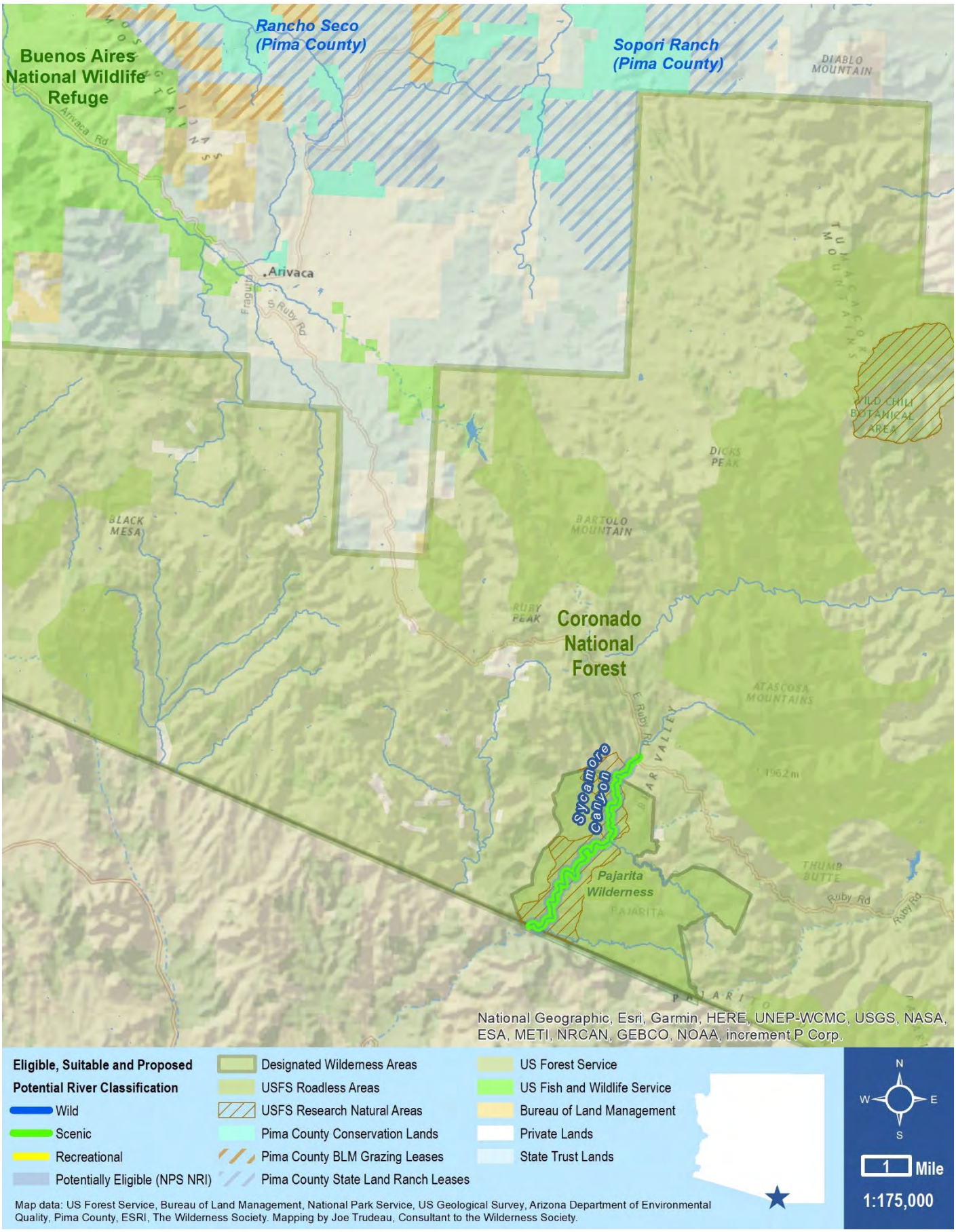
- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ The entire creek from its headwaters to its confluence with Cave Creek was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The entire Wild segment of the South Fork of Cave Creek is within the Chiricahua Wilderness, established in 1964.
- ✓ The South Fork of Cave Creek is entirely within the Cave Creek Canyon Birds of Prey Zoological-Botanical Area, proposed by the Coronado National Forest in the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan. The area harbors the densest known population of breeding raptors in the U.S., rare riparian habitat, and diverse migratory and year-round wildlife. A smaller, designated Research Natural Area surrounds a short portion of the South Fork.
- ✓ Classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

The South Fork of Cave Creek drains forests in the Chiricahua Wilderness. Photos by Richard Webster.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Chiricahua Mountains



Sycamore Canyon: a Potential Wild and Scenic River in the Atascosa Mountains



Sycamore Canyon

Managing Agency: Coronado National Forest
County: Santa Cruz
Watershed: Rio de la Concepcion
Region: Sky Islands Bioregion

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	6.3	0	6.3
Non-federal land:	none			

Sycamore Canyon is unique in many ways, one being that it flows south into Mexico. It is a major drainage in the Atascosa Mountains, a part of the broader Tumacacori Highlands region. The stream was evaluated by the Coronado National Forest in 2008, and the agency found that the segment from Ruby Road (Forest Road 39) to the US/Mexico border is Eligible with a classification of Scenic. Considering that the entire segment is within the Pajarita Wilderness, any future efforts to protect Sycamore Canyon as a Wild and Scenic River should consider a Wild classification.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Coronado National Forest identified Scenic, Recreational, Fish, Wildlife, Historic, Cultural, and Ecological as ORVs for Sycamore Creek. Text in quotations below were taken from the Forest's 2008 Eligibility Study.

Scenery: "The topography is extremely rough, for the most part consisting of the stream bottom with steep slopes and vertical cliffs. The vegetation is live oak savanna with a narrow, riparian hardwood type along the stream. The stream vegetation is characterized by Sycamore, Ash, Alder, Cottonwood, Willow, and Desert Willow. The canyon supports a diverse plant and animal community."

Recreation: Sycamore Canyon is a popular borderlands hike and very popular with bird watchers.

Fish and Wildlife: Sycamore Canyon, as well as Yanks, Atascosa, and Peñasco Canyon tributaries, is critical habitat for the federally endangered Chiricahua leopard frog. The main creek and a portion of Peñasco Canyon are critical habitat for the threatened Sonora chub – this is the only place where this fish occurs in the United States. The entire creek is within designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl, yellow-billed cuckoo, and jaguar. Other rare species include Mexican long-tongued bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, American peregrine falcon, lowland leopard frog, and giant spotted whiptail. "Over 130 species of birds have been identified as frequent visitors to the canyon. Among those are the colorful Vermillion Flycatcher and various warblers, Coppery Tailed Trogon, Rose Throated Becard and others."

Cultural and Historic: "A number of pools, in the inner reaches of the canyon, usually hold water year-round. The importance of this water source to early inhabitants is indicated by numerous rock shelters, some with pictographs, in the canyon walls. Hikers generally start at Hank and Yank Ruins, a historic site which figured in the battles between Apaches and Euro-American immigrants in the late nineteenth century."

Ecology: The Goodding Research Natural Area and proposed Goodding Research Natural Area extension, which encompasses most of this segment, is likely to harbor populations of rare plants such as Parish's abutilon, Cochise sedge, soft Mexican-orange, recurved corycactus, arid throne fleabane, whisk fern, *Mannia californica*, *Plagiochasma wrightii*, and Cochise woodsia. Over 625 species of plants have been identified here, many of which are rare.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found potentially Eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system by the Southwestern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1993 Resource Information Report for National Forests of Arizona.
- ✓ From Ruby Road to the Mexico border was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for designation by the Coronado National Forest in the 2008 Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study, which was incorporated into the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ 5.6 miles of Sycamore Canyon is within the Pajarita Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ Most of Sycamore Canyon is encompassed by the Goodding Research Natural Area, established in 1986, within natural area expansions proposed by the U.S. Forest Service in the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan. The area preserves and conserves an extremely diverse and interesting example of Madrean pine-oak woodland with associated aquatic features for research and education.

Sycamore Canyon

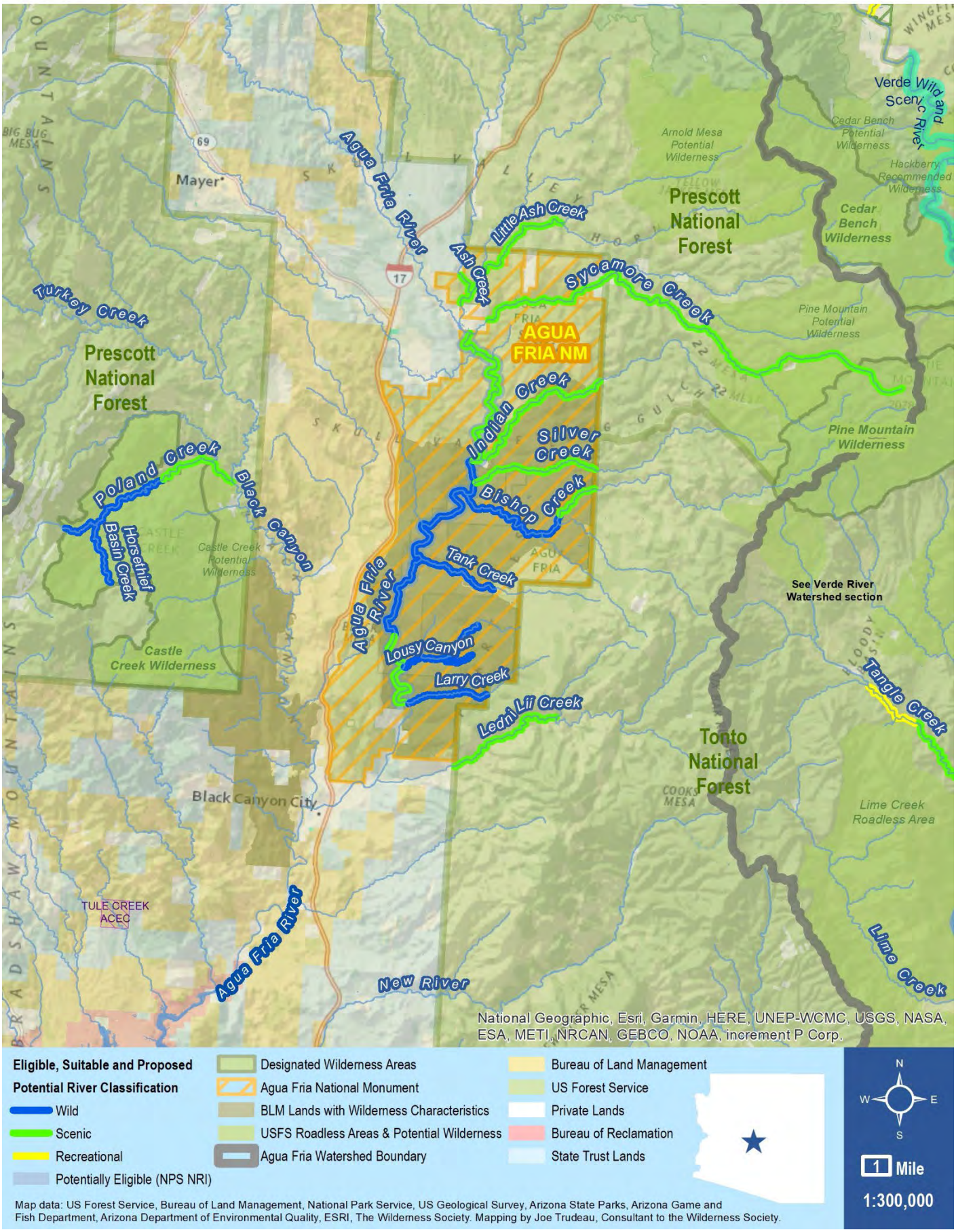
Sycamore Canyon is unique for many reasons, one being that it flows south into Mexico. Photos by Lisa Hankinson.

THE AGUA FRIA RIVER WATERSHED

The Agua Fria River begins in grasslands north of Prescott, and makes a 120-mile arc east, then south, towards the Gila River. The bottom third of the river is now dammed and diverted, but the central portion features extensive ecologically intact public lands. Within that central section, the Agua Fria has carved a deep canyon through Perry Mesa – a volcanic plateau that was once one of the most densely populated Native American village complexes in the southwest. Here, ten side canyons draining mountains and mesas on the Prescott and Tonto National Forests to the east join the Agua Fria, nine of which flow through the Agua Fria National Monument. These canyons provide crucial habitat for rare birds, amphibians, snakes, and other wildlife. To the west, the hulking Bradshaw Mountains give rise to numerous cascading creeks; one profiled here is Poland Creek and its tributary, Horsethief Basin Creek.

MINUTES FROM ARIZONA'S LARGEST CITY IS ONE OF THE STATE'S MOST SPECIAL RIVERS
AGUA FRIA RIVER, AGUA FRIA NATIONAL MONUMENT
PHOTO BY JOEL HAZELTON

Potential Wild and Scenic River Segments in the Agua Fria River Watershed



Agua Fria River

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Suitable			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	10.4	11.4	0	21.8
Non-federal land:	1.5 miles of private land			

The Agua Fria (Spanish for "chilly water") is a major tributary of the middle Gila River. Originating in grasslands northeast of Prescott, the Agua Fria flows generally south toward Phoenix, a total distance of approximately 100 miles. The section discussed here is entirely within Agua Fria National Monument, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This segment of the river has carved a deep canyon through granite bedrock overlaid by basaltic lava flows. The Monument was established to protect outstanding riparian areas and numerous pre-historic cultural sites. Downstream of the Monument, the river passes through the town of Black Canyon City, and is then impounded to form Lake Pleasant. Below the dam all of the water from the Agua Fria is diverted into canals. Finally, the de-watered riverbed below the dam winds through west Phoenix and joins the Gila River just downstream of the Salt-Gila confluence.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The BLM's 1994 Suitability evaluation described the Agua Frias scenic values as such: "The outstandingly remarkable scenic values reflect the areas' topographic diversity and its history of volcanic activity. An extinct volcano known as Joe's Hill is the dominant feature on the mesa tops, covered by basalt from ancient lava flows. The mesas offer a spectacular vista of grasslands and canyons, views of pronghorn herds and other wildlife, and echoes of water flowing in the river and its tributary creeks. In the upper segment of the Agua Fria River study area, rolling hills and sheer cliffs of the mesa edges border a lush riparian valley. In the lower segment, the dramatic Agua Fria River Canyon, filled with boulders that capture pools and produce waterfalls during high flows, is joined by many deeply incised tributary canyons."

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Bureau of Land Management considered the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area as justification for the Fish and Wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Agua Fria River, stating that "IBAs are sites that provide essential habitat for species of conservation concern, which may include breeding, wintering, or migrating birds." The northern half of the Agua Fria River in the National Monument is designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected yellow-billed cuckoo, and the river provides habitat for northern Mexican garter snake, southwestern willow flycatcher, Gila chub, Gila topminnow, longfin dace, and desert sucker.

Cultural (ARC, BLM): Archaeologically, the Agua Fria is among the most significant rivers in the state. The river was a major north-south corridor for the prehistoric Salado and Hohokam Cultures dating back over 1200 years. A large concentration of petroglyph and ancient ruin sites remain along the river and on the surrounding mesa tops. Perry Mesa and Back Mesa together were one of the largest and most important indigenous complexes of late prehistoric times in central Arizona.

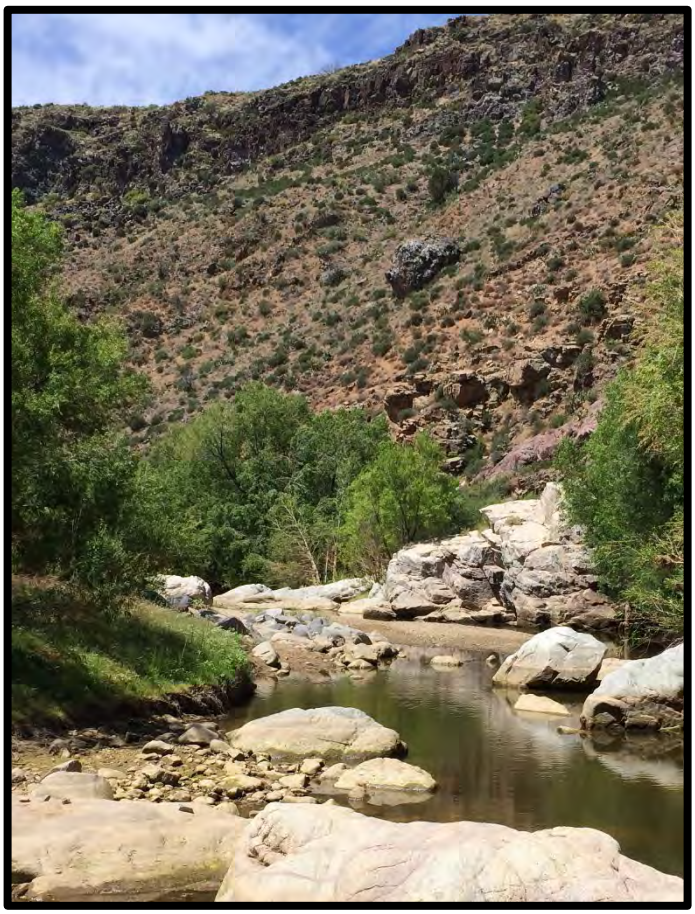
Recreation (ARC): Outstanding hiking, backpacking and exploration abound in the backcountry along the Agua Fria River. Access near Horseshoe Ranch is a popular spot for picnicking, birdwatching, nature study, and cooling off in the water.

Ecological (ARC): The river bottom varies from quicksand to a boulder-strewn streambed, and supports a range of riparian conditions. In places, periodic floods scour the stream bed of vegetation. Where cattle have been excluded from the banks, mature galleries of cottonwood, willow, and sycamore trees grow. Also present are groves of mesquite, cattails, and sedges.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal report.
- ✓ Listed in 1993 as a Wild and Scenic River candidate in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Found Eligible for further study in the BLM's 1994 Phoenix District Resource Management Plan Amendment, and Suitable for designation in the BLM's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report.
- ✓ Flows through Agua Fria National Monument, established by Presidential proclamation on January 11, 2000.
- ✓ Managed to protect free flowing character and outstandingly remarkable Wild and Scenic River values in the BLM's 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Silver Creek, Baby Canyon, and Agua Fria inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.
- ✓ Included within the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area.

Agua Fria River



Top Left: A characteristic scene on the Agua Fria River at the confluence of Badger Springs Wash. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Top Right: Polished blue granite bedrock overtopped by lava flows along the Agua Fria River. Photo by Matt Turner.
Bottom: Desert vegetation meets rushing water and lush riparian forest on the Agua Fria River. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Ash Creek and Little Ash Creek

Managing Agencies: Bureau of Land Management and Prescott National Forest
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	6.7	0	6.7
Non-federal land:	0.7 miles between USFS and BLM land			

Ash and Little Ash Creeks originate on the Verde Rim of the Prescott National Forest, and converge within Agua Fria National Monument, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The 1.5-mile segment of Ash Creek and the 1.8-mile segment of Little Ash Creek on BLM land described here were found Eligible for consideration as potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the BLM for their presence of exceptionally high-quality habitat, especially for native fish, and populations of state sensitive, federally listed, or candidate threatened and endangered species. The remaining portion of Little Ash Creek on the Prescott National Forest and private land is proposed in this report for the first time, based on recent field evaluations. The cool and clear waters of these creeks, and the towering canopy of deciduous forest combine to provide a remarkable riparian oasis in an arid, high-desert setting.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management found Ash and Little Ash Creek to have Wildlife ORVs in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan. The upstream proposed portion of Little Ash Creek on the Prescott National Forest shares those values.

Wildlife: Both Ash and Little Ash Creeks, as well as upstream reaches on private land and the Prescott National Forest, are designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected yellow-billed cuckoo, and maintain populations of native fish (desert sucker, longfin dace, and speckled dace). Extensive mixed-deciduous riparian forest is found along these two creeks, and much of the portion managed by the Prescott National Forest is within well-maintained cattle grazing exclosures. In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Bureau of Land Management considered the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area as justification for the Fish and Wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Value for Ash and Little Ash Creeks, stating that "IBAs are sites that provide essential habitat for species of conservation concern, which may include breeding, wintering, or migrating birds." The BLM added that "Ash Creek is the only perennial stream, even during drought conditions."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River consideration by the Bureau of Land Management in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan and the associated 2007 Final Environmental Impact Statement, and thus managed to protect free-flowing character and Outstandingly Remarkable Values.
- ✓ Flows through Agua Fria National Monument, established by Presidential proclamation on January 11, 2000.
- ✓ Included within the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area.

Ash Creek and Little Ash Creek

Top Left: Towering Fremont cottonwoods along Ash Creek in the Agua Fria National Monument. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Top Right: Deep pools along Little Ash Creek in the Agua Fria National Monument. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom: Early spring growth along Little Ash Creek on the Prescott National Forest. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Sycamore Creek

Managing Agencies: Bureau of Land Management and Prescott National Forest
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	19.8	0	19.8
Non-federal land:	5.2 miles of private land			

Beginning in the Pine Mountain Wilderness on the Prescott National Forest, Sycamore Creek flows westward to its confluence with the Agua Fria River in Agua Fria National Monument. The 3.3-mile portion within the Monument was found Eligible for consideration as a potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the BLM for the presence of exceptionally high-quality habitat, especially for native fish, and populations of rare species. The upper 16.5-mile segment flows across the Prescott National Forest and adjacent private land. This segment is proposed in this report for the first time, based on recent field evaluations which add Scenic, Ecology and Historic outstandingly remarkable values to the Fish and Wildlife values identified by the BLM. Sycamore Creek is a relatively unknown gem, offering rare riparian habitat in the transition zone between the Sonoran Desert and the Colorado Plateau.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management found Sycamore Creek to have Wildlife ORVs in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan. The upstream proposed portion of Sycamore Creek on the Prescott National Forest has Scenery, Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Historic ORVs.

Scenery: Sycamore Creek begins in diverse pine-oak forest on the southwest slopes of Pine Mountain, and flows for almost 21 miles before meeting the Agua Fria River. Much of it is within a deep canyon clad in a range of vegetation types. A series of scenic pools and falls cut through pre-Cambiran granite at a constriction below Double T Ranch.

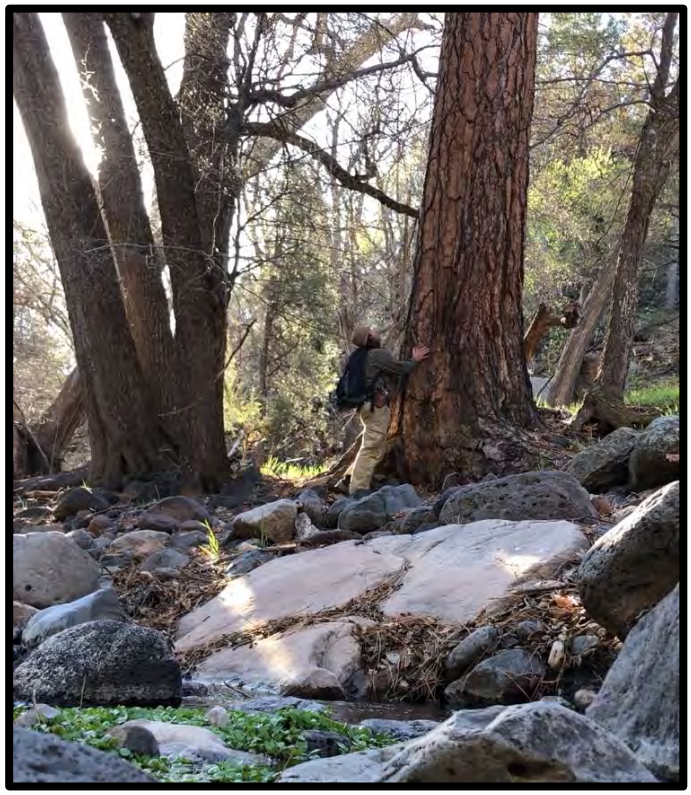
Ecology: Extremely diverse riparian forest makes Sycamore Creek stand out in the region. Trees encountered along the stream include ponderosa pine, Mexican pinyon, Colorado pinyon, alligator juniper, Rocky Mountain juniper, one-seed juniper, Emory oak, Arizona white oak, Gambel oak, Arizona sycamore, velvet ash, Arizona walnut, Fremont cottonwood, Goodding's willow, Arizona alder, Arizona cherry, netleaf hackberry, velvet mesquite, box elder, and Rocky Mountain maple. A range of wildlife use the variety of food sources by these trees. A dense, continuous canopy along many stretches of the creek maintains cold water temperatures needed by aquatic species.

Fish and Wildlife: The portion on the Prescott National Forest is designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected Gila chub, and the portion on BLM land is designated critical habitat for the federally protected yellow-billed cuckoo. The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages Sycamore Creek below Double T Ranch Falls as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for native fish such as the Gila topminnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, and Sonora sucker. In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Bureau of Land Management considered the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area as justification for the Fish and Wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Value for Sycamore Creek, stating that "IBAs are sites that provide essential habitat for species of conservation concern, which may include breeding, wintering, or migrating birds."

Historic: The historic Sycamore Cabin sits on the banks of Sycamore Creek at the lower end of the Prescott National Forest segment. In 1938, the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed the cabin, which served as a residence for the district ranger and later, as housing for fire crews during fire season. The agency now maintains the cabin for recreational rentals.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Segment on BLM land was found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River consideration by the Bureau of Land Management in the 2007 Agua Fria National Monument Final Environmental Impact Statement and the 2010 Approved Resource Management Plan, and thus managed to protect free-flowing character and outstandingly remarkable Wild and Scenic River values.
- ✓ Segment on BLM land flows through Agua Fria National Monument, established by on January 11, 2000.
- ✓ Upper reach on Prescott National Forest is within the Pine Mountain Wilderness, established in 1972.
- ✓ 5.3 miles of Sycamore Creek flows through the Pine Mountain Wilderness-Contiguous Potential Wilderness unit A, a 6,267-acre area identified by the Prescott National Forest during Forest Plan revision.
- ✓ Included within the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area.



Top Left: Polished granite pools and falls along Sycamore Creek in the Prescott National Forest. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Top Right: Old growth pine and alder along Sycamore Creek in the Prescott National Forest. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom: Giant Arizona alder and sandstone ledge at Sycamore Creek in the Prescott National Forest. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Indian Creek and Silver Creek

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Indian Creek miles:	0	6.3	0	6.3
Silver Creek miles:	0	5.1	0	5.1
Non-federal land:	none			

Indian and Silver Creeks originate in the Pine Mountain Wilderness on the Prescott National Forest, and flow westward to their confluences with the Agua Fria River in Agua Fria National Monument. Indian Creek meets the Agua Fria within the Horseshoe Ranch headquarters, which is owned by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, while Silver Creek enters the Agua Fria just below that property. The segments described here are wholly within the Monument, and were found Eligible for consideration as potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These creeks bisect grassland-covered volcanic mesas and in some sections cut into granite bedrock. Open, upper-Sonoran grassland vegetation meets riparian woodlands and forests where diverse wildlife populations thrive.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management found Indian Creek to have Fish and Wildlife ORVs in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan, and the agency found Silver Creek to have Scenic, Fish and Wildlife, and Cultural ORVs.

Scenic: The BLM found Silver Creek's canyon to provide outstanding scenic values.

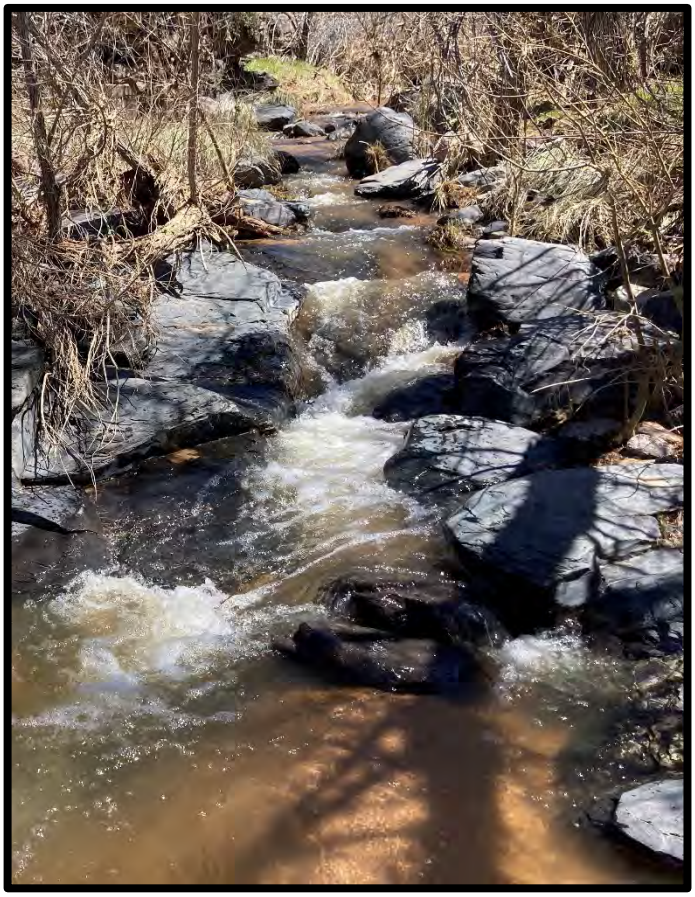
Fish and Wildlife: The upper segments of both Indian and Sycamore Creeks on BLM land, as well as upstream portions on the Prescott National Forest, are designated Critical Habitat for the Gila chub (now reclassified as roundtail chub). The entire length of Indian Creek on BLM land, and the lower half of Silver Creek, are designated critical habitat for the federally protected yellow-billed cuckoo. The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages Silver Creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for native aquatic species such as the Gila topminnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora mud turtle, and lowland leopard frog. The Department manages Indian Creek as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for native aquatic species such as the Gila topminnow, longfin dace, roundtail chub, northern Mexican garter snake, and lowland leopard frog. In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Bureau of Land Management considered the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area as justification for the Fish and Wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Value for Indian and Silver Creeks, stating that "IBAs are sites that provide essential habitat for species of conservation concern, which may include breeding, wintering, or migrating birds." That BLM document also described these creeks as featuring "rare riparian deciduous forest."

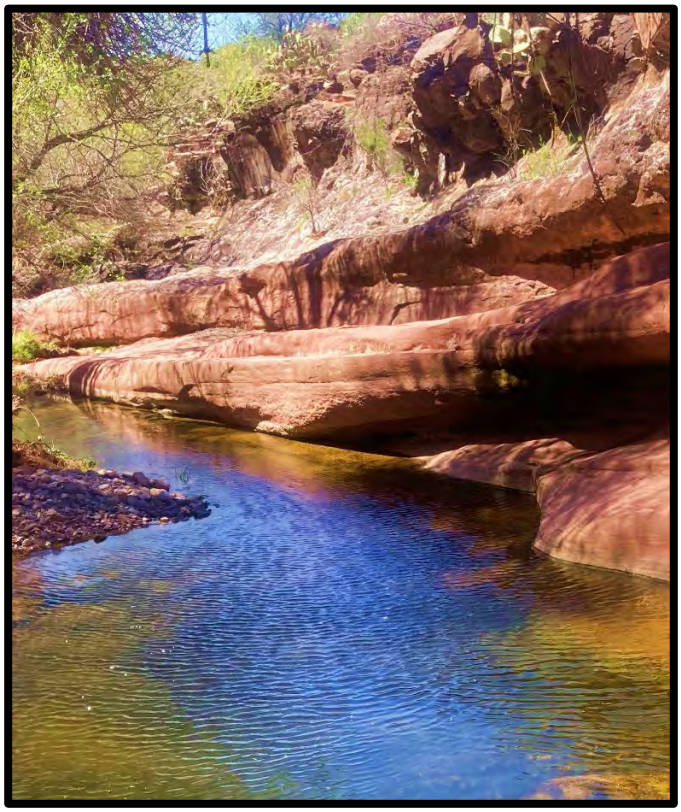
Cultural: The BLM found Silver Creek possesses outstanding cultural values of Pueblo la Plata and associated prehistoric sites within the Perry Mesa National Historic Register District, one of the best-preserved late prehistoric settlement complexes in the Southwest.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River consideration by the Bureau of Land Management in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan and the associated 2007 Final Environmental Impact Statement, and thus managed to protect free-flowing character and Outstandingly Remarkable Values.
- ✓ Flows through Agua Fria National Monument, established by Presidential proclamation on January 11, 2000.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Silver Creek and Baby Canyon inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.
- ✓ Included within the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area.

Indian Creek and Silver Creek





Top Left: Silver Creek flows through the Agua Fria National Monument to join the Agua Fria River. Photo by James Holderer.
Top Right: Indian Creek is critical wildlife habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife. Photo by James Holderer.
Bottom: Silver Creek meanders through basalt-capped Perry Mesa. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Bishop Creek and Tank Creek

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Bishop Creek miles:	5.4	1.8	0	7.2
Tank Creek miles	3.4	0	0	3.4
Non-federal land:	none			

Bishop Creek originates in the Pine Mountain Wilderness on the Prescott National Forest, and flows westward to its confluence with the Agua Fria River in the Agua Fria National Monument. Tank Creek emerges off the northwestern slopes of the New River Mountains, and flows westward to meet the Agua Fria River in the Monument. Both streams as described here are wholly within the Monument, and are classified as Wild, except for the uppermost segment of Bishop Creek, to the north of Bloody Basin Road. Both streams cut through the grassland-covered basalt capstone of Perry Mesa as they descend to the Agua Fria. These canyons are substantially deeper and steeper walled than the Agua Fria tributaries to the north, enhancing their scenic value, and providing much more wild recreational opportunities.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management found Bishop and Tank Creeks to have Scenic, Wildlife, and Cultural ORVs in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan.

Scenery: Bishop Creek has carved Baby Canyon, and Tank Creek has carved Perry Tank Canyon, both of which were named as scenic features by the BLM in the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement. Both creeks descend 800 vertical feet in just a few miles.

Wildlife: In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Bureau of Land Management considered the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area as justification for the Fish and Wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Value for Bishop and Tank Creeks, stating that "IBAs are sites that provide essential habitat for species of conservation concern, which may include breeding, wintering, or migrating birds."

Cultural: Both creeks and their canyon rims feature archaeological sites typical of the Perry Mesa National Historic Register District, one of the best-preserved late prehistoric settlement complexes in the Southwest. Bishop Creek features the Baby Canyon Pueblo, as well as numerous petroglyph sites, and Tank Canyon includes Pueblo Pato, widespread rock art, and other prehistoric sites.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River consideration by the Bureau of Land Management in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan and the associated 2007 Final Environmental Impact Statement, and thus managed to protect free-flowing character and Outstandingly Remarkable Values.
- ✓ Flows through Agua Fria National Monument, established by Presidential proclamation on January 11, 2000.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Perry Mesa and Baby Canyon inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.
- ✓ Included within the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area.

Lousy Canyon and Larry Canyon

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Lousy Canyon miles:	5.3	0	0	5.3
Larry Canyon miles:	3.5	0	0	3.5
Non-federal land:	none			

Lousy and Larry Canyons, and a tributary to Lousy Canyon, emerge on the western slopes of the New River Mountains, and are the southernmost tributaries of the Agua Fria River within the Agua Fria National Monument. These were found Eligible for consideration as potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). They are perhaps the most dramatic of the Agua Fria's side canyons, dropping 1,000 feet through the volcanic capstone of Perry Mesa in just a few miles. These are truly wild and remote canyons, even though they are visible from Interstate 17 in Black Canyon City. Steep and unstable ground makes access difficult, protecting the unique wildlife habitat and cultural sites from the impacts of over-visitation. Both streams are considered crucial refugia for native desert fish.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management found Lousy Creek to have Scenic, Fish and Wildlife, and Cultural ORVs in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan, and found Larry Creek to have Scenic and Wildlife ORVs.

Scenery: In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the BLM found both Larry and Lousy Canyons to have scenic values. These are impressively deep and steep walled canyons, whether viewed from within the canyon or on the rims above.

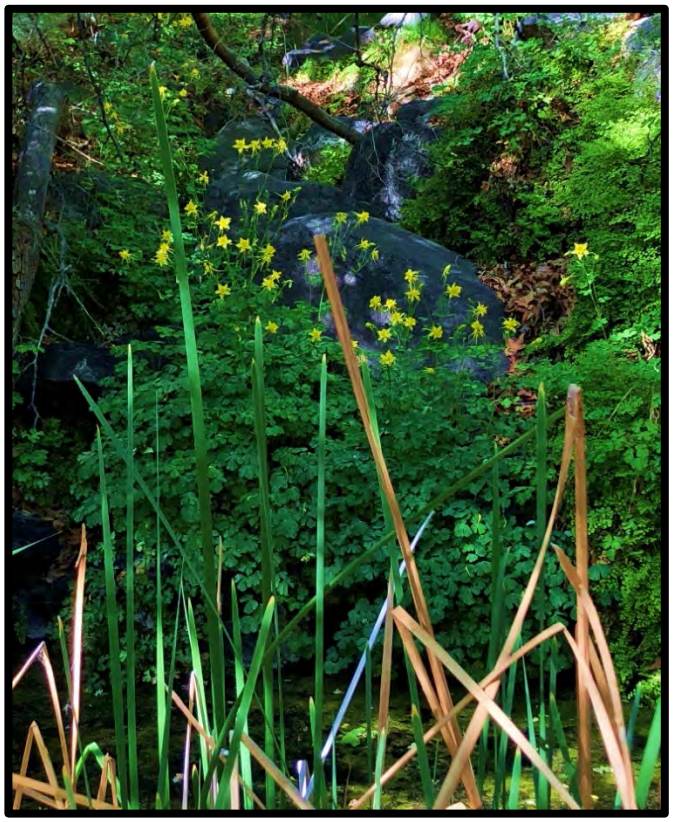
Fish and Wildlife: In the 2007 Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Bureau of Land Management considered the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area as justification for the Fish and Wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Value for Larry and Lousy Canyons, stating that "IBAs are sites that provide essential habitat for species of conservation concern, which may include breeding, wintering, or migrating birds." The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages Larry and Lousy Canyons as high priority Conservation Opportunity Areas for their self-sustaining populations of Gila topminnow, roundtail chub, longfin dace, and lowland leopard frogs. Portions of both Lousy and Larry Canyons are designated Critical Habitat for the Gila chub (reclassified as roundtail chub), and are introduction sites for the federally endangered pupfish.

Cultural: Both creeks and their canyon rims feature archaeological sites typical of the Perry Mesa National Historic Register District, one of the best-preserved late prehistoric settlement complexes in the Southwest.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River consideration by the Bureau of Land Management in the 2010 Agua Fria National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan and the associated 2007 Final Environmental Impact Statement, and thus managed to protect free-flowing character and Outstandingly Remarkable Values.
- ✓ Flows through Agua Fria National Monument, established by Presidential proclamation on January 11, 2000.
- ✓ Encompassed by the Perry Mesa and Baby Canyon inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.
- ✓ Included within the Audubon Society's Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors Important Bird Area.

Bishop and Larry Creeks



Top Left: A lush thicket of cattail, columbine, and maidenhair fern at a pool in Larry Canyon. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Top Right: Bishop Creek Canyon winds below the ruins of a Native American hilltop fort. Photo by Matt Turner.
Bottom: Looking down into Larry Canyon from the divide between it and Lousy Canyon. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

Ledni Líí Creek

Managing Agency: Tonto National Forest
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Eligible			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	0	5.2	0	5.2
Non-federal land:	none			

Ledni Líí Creek arises on the Tonto National Forest on the western face of the New River Mountains, and joins the Agua Fria River in the town of Black Canyon City. The segment described here was identified as Eligible for consideration for protection as a Wild and Scenic River during the revision of the Land Management Plan for the Tonto National Forest. The creek runs along the southern edge of Perry Mesa, just to the southeast of the Agua Fria National Monument. To the north, Perry Mesa rises 1,000 feet, and to the south, the New River Mountains rise nearly 3,500 feet above the creek. The Forest Service classifies this stream as Scenic based on evidence of past human activity and livestock grazing within the river corridor. However, with improved grazing management, this creek would surely meet the requirements of Wild classification. The Creek was renamed from Squaw Creek to Ledni Líí Creek in 2022 in a national effort to rename offensive place names.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Cultural: The following description is taken from the Tonto National Forest's Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study: "Squaw Creek was identified as having outstandingly remarkable cultural and historic resource values when compared with similar resources across the state and country. Due to the remoteness of the location, it is one of the most intact examples of Salado culture (approximately 1150 CE through the 15th century) within the State of Arizona. The area has a high number of high quality rock art sites, major sites next to the creek for water access, field houses, pueblos (including multi-room), and plazas. Over 3,000 sites are suspected to be in the area. Squaw Creek and the surrounding river corridor sites and features are considered an archaeological district due to the area possessing a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of sites, buildings, structures, and objects united historically."

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Tonto National Forest in the 2022 Forest Plan.

Poland Creek

Managing Agency: Prescott National Forest
County: Yavapai
Watershed: Agua Fria River
Region: Agua Fria River Watershed

Status:	Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Poland Creek miles:	5.3	3.5	0	8.8
Horsethief Basin Creek miles:	2.8	0	0	2.8
Non-federal land:	none			

Poland Creek originates in the southern Bradshaw Mountains of central Arizona and flows east to join Turkey Creek where they become Black Canyon Creek, the most significant tributary to the Agua Fria River. Horsethief Basin Creek joins Poland Creek deep in the Castle Creek Wilderness on the Prescott National Forest. The creeks begin in ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest and rapidly drop several thousand feet in elevation through the interior chaparral ecosystem to the Sonoran Desert, carving a deep canyon into Precambrian igneous and metavolcanic rocks – the basement rocks to the state of Arizona. The segments described here have never been proposed or evaluated for Wild and Scenic River protection before. Both streams have proposed Wild-classified segments in the wilderness area, and Poland Creek has a proposed Scenic-classified segment between the wilderness area and its confluence with Turkey Creek. The streams would be valuable additions to the National Wild and Scenic River System for their recreational values as well as the roles they played in Arizona history.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreation: Poland Creek is widely known as an Arizona canyoneering destination, with the book "Canyoneering Arizona" describing a particular spot as "one of the nicest swimming holes anywhere." The creek is a popular hike for people visiting the "ghost town" of Crown King. Two Forest Service campgrounds are located just south of the proposed segments in the Horsethief Basin Recreation Area.

Historic: Both Poland and Horsethief Basin Creeks played important role in Arizona's history. William Bradshaw, a gold prospector from California, arrived in the area in 1863, before the Arizona Territory had been established. He discovered gold in what is now known as Poland Creek on his arrival, which along with other concurrent discoveries played a major role in the establishment of Prescott as the territorial capitol. He went on to establish Bradshaw City, which at its peak had a population of over 5,000 people working various mines and diggings, but today is nothing more than a cemetery and some old stone foundations. The Bradshaw Mountains were later named after William and his brother Isaac; formerly they were called the Silver Mountain Range. Horsethief Basin Creek flows through its namesake basin, where rustlers would corral horses stolen in Mexico, central and southern Arizona. The horses would be driven in herds up to the forested basin to holding corrals where their brands were altered, then they would drive them north to Utah and Colorado where they were sold.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ 8.6 miles of Poland and Horsethief Basin Creeks flows through the Castle Creek Wilderness, established in 1984.
- ✓ 1.2 miles of Poland Creek flows through the Castle Creek Wilderness-Contiguous Recommended Wilderness unit, a 5,545-acre area identified by the Prescott National Forest during Forest Plan revision.

Poland Creek

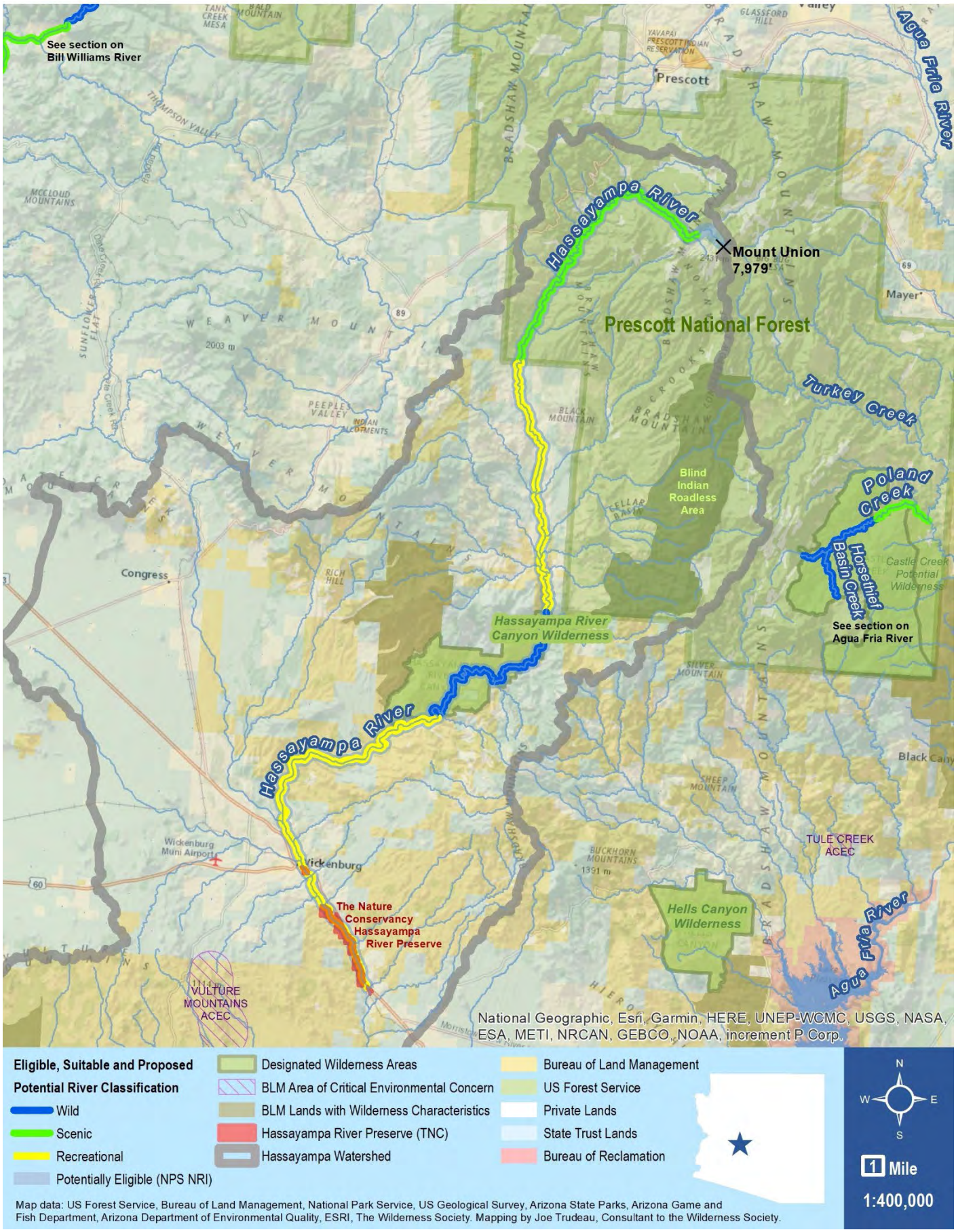
Top Left: Poland Creek near its confluence of Turkey Creek, at the foot of the Bradshaw Mountains. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Top Right: Poland Creek pours out of the east face of the Bradshaw Mountains. Photo by Matt Turner.
Bottom: The “Big Dipper” waterfall on Poland Creek in the Castle Creek Wilderness. Photo by Jonathan Buford.

THE HASSAYAMPA RIVER WATERSHED

The only waterway profiled here is the watershed's namesake – the Hassayampa River. The Hassayampa emerges from springs on the north side of Mount Union, the highest peak in the Bradshaw Mountains. Like the Tonto Basin and the Greater Gila, this is a transitional zone between deserts and forests – and the Hassayampa showcases remarkable ecological transitions. A half dozen feeder streams converge in the forested headwaters in the Prescott Basin before it drops through a series of tortuous canyons, incised into the same era of bedrock as the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and clad in diverse chaparral, woodland, and upland Sonoran habitats. After passing through an imposing box canyon in the Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness, the river valley opens up into the final lush reaches below the town of Wickenburg.

FROM CONIFER FORESTS TO THE ARID DESERT, ONE OF ARIZONA'S LONGEST RIVERS
THE HEADWATERS OF THE HASSAYAMPA RIVER, PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST
AERIAL PHOTO BY JOE TRUDEAU

Potential Wild and Scenic River Segments on the Hassayampa River



Hassayampa River

Managing Agencies: Prescott National Forest and Bureau of Land Management, Hassayampa Field Office
County: Yavapai and Maricopa
Watershed: Hassayampa River
Region: Hassayampa River Watershed

Status:	Formerly Eligible and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	13.6	20	37.7	71.3
Private land:	25.3 miles (not including Nature Conservancy)			
State Land:	3.5 miles			

The proposed Hassayampa Wild and Scenic River begins at the outlet of Hassayampa Lake, high in the Bradshaw Mountains, and ends just south of the city of Wickenburg. The river is a mix of perennial and intermittent reaches, beginning in mixed conifer forest and ending in low Sonoran Desert. This 71-mile stretch of river is varied in vegetation, terrain, and land use, starting as a cold mountain creek in the Prescott National Forest, passing through a broad agricultural valley dotted with farms and ranches, then though the rugged Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness area, and finally ending at a beloved urban park at the Hassayampa River Preserve, managed by Maricopa County. The current proposal is a modification of that which was originally proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in 1991. We are carrying this proposal forward again because we disagree with past ineligibility findings of the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

This proposal updates the 1993 Arizona Rivers Coalition proposal and describes Scenery, Recreation, Fish and Wildlife, and Cultural and Historic ORVs.

Scenery: The length and elevational loss of the Hassayampa River lends itself to stunning scenery. The Hassayampa's canyon is rugged and sinuous, with a myriad of side canyons. The eastern and southern portions pass through a spectacular gorge nearly 1,000 feet deep. Large boulders, short cascades, and beautiful pools of water occur along the canyon bottom, carved into 1.8-billion-year-old igneous and metamorphic rocks. Varied vegetation ranges from Douglas-fir/aspen forest, to ponderosa pine/alder forest, to towering cottonwood galleries winding through parched desert foothills.

Recreation: Recreational opportunities are excellent and include hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, horseback riding, mountain climbing, photography, bird watching, swimming, and exploring the plant, animal and geological features. There are numerous opportunities for solitude and isolation along the proposed segments, as well as points that are easier to access.

Fish and Wildlife: The upper 5.5 miles of the Hassayampa River on the Prescott National Forest is within Mexican spotted owl Critical Habitat, with four known nesting sites within close proximity to the river, and one within the river corridor. The Hassayampa is one of several known strongholds for pure genetic strains of the Arizona toad, a species of concern, as well as featuring native fish such as longfin dace and desert sucker, and the lowland leopard frog. The federally protected yellow-billed cuckoo has critical habitat along the lower seven miles, and has recently been discovered in cottonwood gallery forest along the Hassayampa. The river corridor is one of the few known locations for the secretive Gilbert's skink (*Plestiodon gilberti*). Iconic desert wildlife such as Gila monsters and desert tortoise are commonly observed at lower elevations along the river. The lower 4.6 miles are designated critical habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher.

Cultural and Historic: The globally rare *Agave phillipsiana*, or Grand Canyon Agave, grows along the Hassayampa River on the Prescott National Forest. The plant species developed as a result of indigenous agriculture nearly 1,000 years ago, and this location indicates extensive trading amongst unrelated cultural groups identified as the Patayan, Sinagua, Pre-ancestral Puebloan, and Hohokam cultures.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal report.
- ✓ Listed in 1993 as a potential Wild and Scenic River in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Identified as Eligible in the BLM's 1994 Phoenix District Resource Management Plan Amendment, but found non-Suitable in the 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report, claiming that the segment is "adequately protected in Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness". The U.S. Forest Service determined that the Hassayampa lacked Outstandingly Remarkable Values (1993 Preliminary Analysis of Wild and Scenic River Designation). We are carrying this proposal forward again because we disagree with the agency findings.
- ✓ Flows for 13.6 miles through the BLM Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness, designated in 1990.
- ✓ Flows for 5 miles through the 770-acre Hassayampa River Preserve, owned by The Nature Conservancy and managed by Maricopa County Parks.

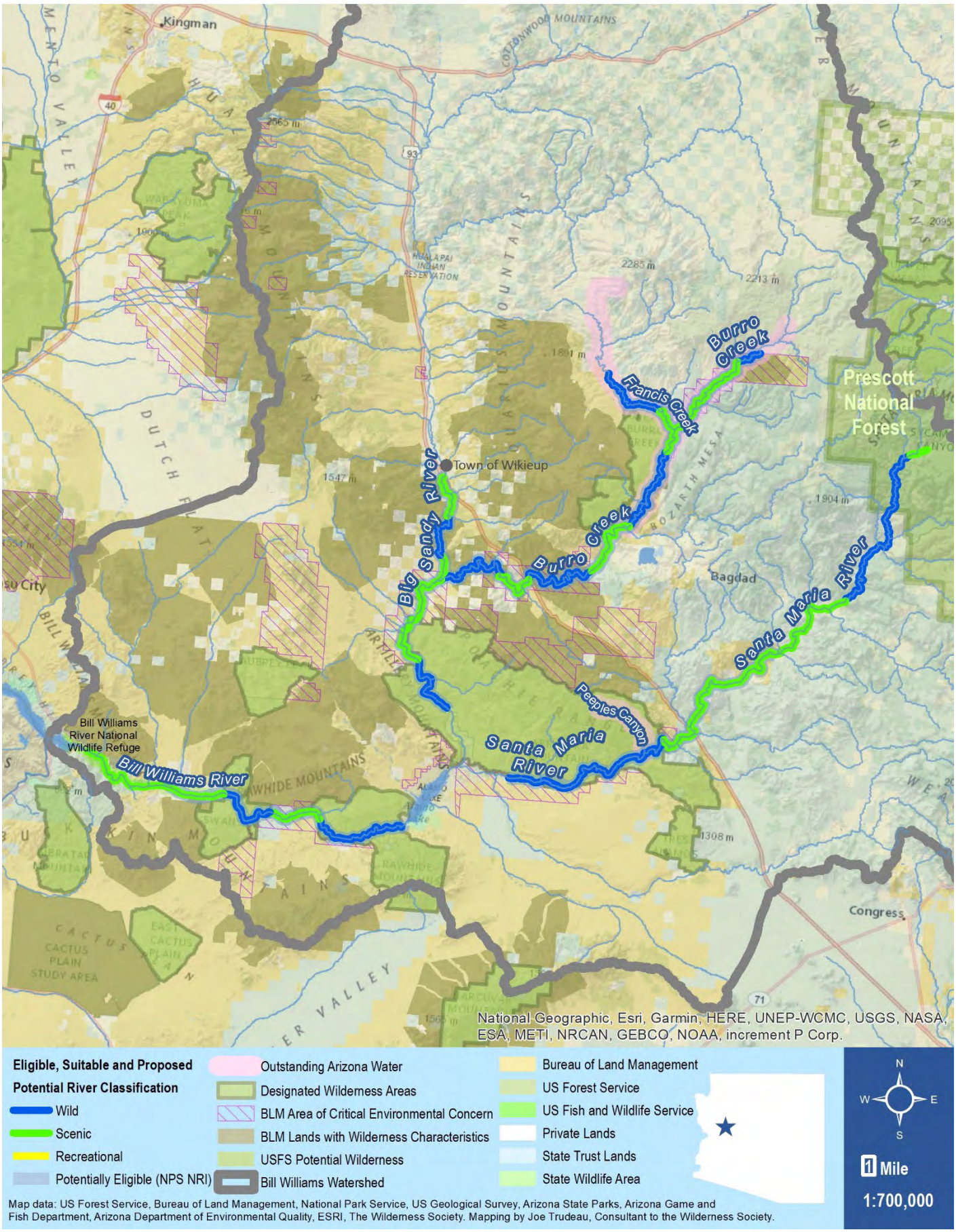
Top: The Hassayampa River as it descends into the Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness area. Photo by Matt Turner.
Bottom left: The Hassayampa River wraps around a point called “The Long Tongue” on old maps. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom right: Waterfalls of snowmelt pour into the Hassayampa River on protected private lands. Photo by Joe Trudeau.

THE BILL WILLIAMS RIVER WATERSHED

Perhaps the least recognized of Arizona's river systems is the Bill Williams River and its tributaries of Burro Creek and the Big Sandy and Santa Maria Rivers. These streams pass through the harshest arid desert of any in the state. Despite the barren and seemingly scorched uplands, these rivers support outstanding riparian habitat, abundant water, and provide habitat for some of the most imperiled wildlife in the southwest. This river system features a range of protected public lands, including four Wilderness areas, a National Wildlife Refuge, a State Wildlife Conservation Area, three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and numerous wild, roadless, and otherwise undeveloped lands. Wild and Scenic River designation is a powerful – and much needed – tool to unify management of this watershed for the protection of its numerous values.

A VIBRANT GREEN OASIS AMIDST THE VAST MOJAVE AND SONORAN DESERTS
BILL WILLIAMS RIVER, BILL WILLIAMS RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
PHOTO BY ALICIA ARCIDIACONO

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Bill Williams River Watershed



Burro Creek and Francis Creek

Status:	Eligible and Suitable, and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles (Burro):	30.4	23.8	0	54.2
Miles (Francis):	7.2	2.6	0	9.8
Private land:	Burro: 13.8 miles. Francis: 2.4 miles			
State Trust land:	Burro: 3.2 miles. Francis: 0.4 miles			

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Yavapai and Mohave
Watershed: Burro Creek
Region: Bill Williams River Watershed

Burro Creek starts at 5,310 feet in the Luis Maria Baca Float #5, an old Spanish land grant now run by the O-R-O Ranch, and flows southward to the Big Sandy River, a tributary of the Bill Williams River. The upper section of Burro Creek is diverse both in the number of species it supports and the scenic qualities of the river and surrounding vistas. The riparian vegetation is lush and varied with the river banks literally springing to life due to the presence of water. Junipers and saguaros grow in the same area on the surrounding hills, one of the few places in Arizona where this plant association occurs. The lower stretches of the river also contain variety in wildlife and geology, with an abundant riparian community. The canyons give way to a barren beauty with impressive geologic diversity. Burro Creek is perennial and free-flowing along its entire length, although the portions of the lower stretch may be reduced to pools in very dry years. Burro Creek is classified as Wild on the BLM segments which are almost entirely in wild, unroaded lands, and classified as Scenic outside of BLM lands. Francis Creek also emerges on the Baca Float, and is perennial downstream of the thermal springs which are several miles upstream of Burro Creek. During low rain seasons, it is estimated that Francis Creek supplies approximately 85% of the downstream flow in Burro Creek. Wells in a small parcel of private land along Francis Creek are a water source for the town of Bagdad. The proposed stream classifications are Wild above the pumping station, and Scenic below.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenery: The river runs through terrain of incredibly varied geologic and scenic quality. There are gorges, narrows, pools of clear water, cascades, and wide open, gentle stretches. In some sections, high rock walls line deep pools and waterfalls.

Geology: The geology of the Burro Creek watershed is complex, manifesting evidence of several distinct periods of volcanism. Areas of undivided schist, granite, and silica volcanic rocks may be found in the Boulder Creek drainage, interspersed with Precambrian granites and quartz monzonite. Breccia pipes, extinct volcanic structures, and extensive faulting remain in the Burro Creek drainage, testifying to the area's violent geologic past. Gila conglomerate and related deposits of Tertiary origin form the major sedimentary rock types in the area, and are found along the bottoms of the river valleys. The headwaters flow across recent Tertiary volcanics, mostly basalts, and incise pre-Cambrian granitic gneiss further downstream.

Recreation: Burro and Francis Creeks are outstanding destinations for backpacking, canyoneering, sightseeing, nature observation, photography, fishing, hunting, swimming, and even extreme whitewater kayaking. The designated wilderness area and other large blocks of unfragmented wilderness-quality lands provide immersive multi-day backcountry experiences, while a public campground and roadside swimming holes are much more accessible to the general public.

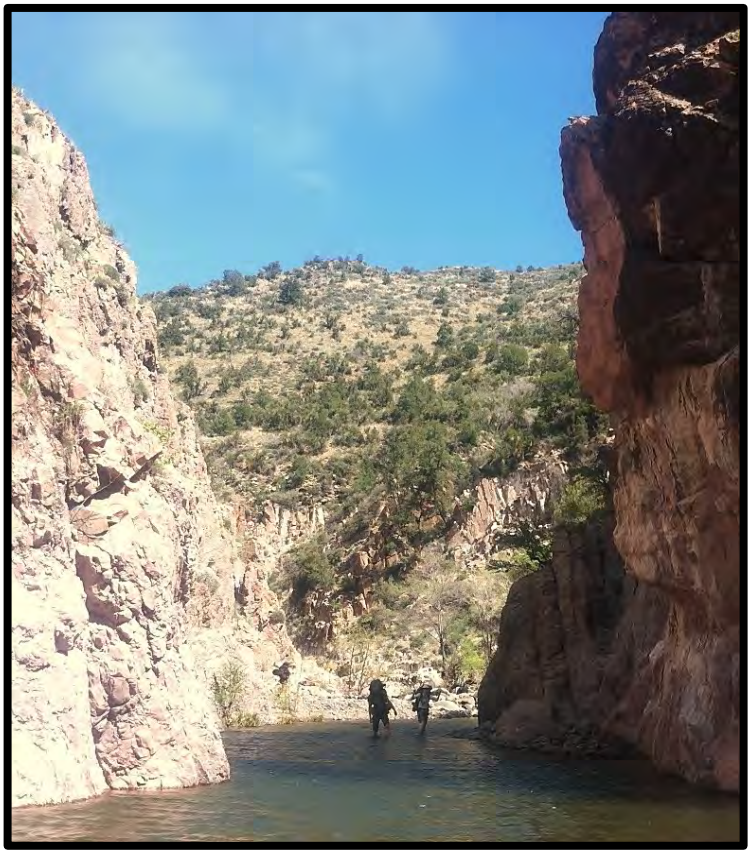
Fish and Wildlife: Burro Creek and Francis Creek are incredibly rich in biodiversity. They are managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department as they have self-sustaining populations of roundtail chub, desert sucker, Sonora sucker, longfin dace and speckled dace, lowland leopard frogs, Sonoran mud turtles, black-necked garter snakes, and the greatest diversity of birds of prey in the United States.

Cultural and Historic: Burro Creek's riparian corridor contains many sites of prehistoric cultural value. It was a place where the Prescott Culture of the Patayan people made their homes in the early part of this millennia. Important petroglyph sites have been discovered on canyon walls. A prehistoric obsidian mine was unearthed in the area and dwellings which are the western-most known occurrence of multi-storied stone masonry pueblos of the Prescott Culture from 1200 A.D. are present.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ Both Creeks were listed in 1993 as potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the NPS Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Both creeks were found Eligible by the BLM. Burro Creek segments on BLM land were found Suitable for Wild and Scenic River protection in the 1997 Statewide Study Report. However, BLM found Francis Creek non-Suitable.
- ✓ 9.2 miles of Burro Creek and 3.4 miles of Francis Creek flow through the Upper Burro Creek Wilderness
- ✓ In 2015, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs). Burro Creek flows through these LWCs: 2.7 miles in Scratch and Jerky Canyons LWC, 9 miles in Lower Burro Creek LWC, and 7.5 miles in Greenwood Peak LWC. The BLM later inventoried these units and largely concurred with the proposals.
- ✓ 31.8 miles of Burro Creek, including BLM, State Trust, and private lands, are encompassed by the Burro Creek Riparian and Cultural Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and 1.2 miles are within the Three Rivers ACEC, both established in the 1995 Kingman Field Office Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ 29 miles of upper Burro Creek and 23 miles of Francis Creek were classified as Outstanding Arizona Waters by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality in 1992.

Burro Creek and Francis Creek



Top left: Backpacking in Burro Creek often requires hiking down the creek beneath canyon walls. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Top right: Backpackers descend into upper Burro Creek Canyon by way of Scratch Canyon. Photo by Joe Trudeau.
Bottom: Volcanic rocks glow at sunset in Lower Burro Creek, near the U.S. Highway 93 bridge. Photo by Joel Hazelton.

Santa Maria River complex

Managing Agencies: Bureau of Land Management, Prescott National Forest, Arizona State Land Department
County: Yavapai and Mohave
Watershed: Santa Maria River
Region: Bill Williams River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Suitable, and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	36.8	30.6	0	67.4
Private land:	11.75 miles			
State Trust land:	21.4 miles			

In 1991, the Arizona Rivers Coalition proposed Wild and Scenic River protection for the entire Santa Maria River, along with its contiguous upstream reaches of Sycamore Creek and Cottonwood Canyon. This continuous stretch of perennial and intermittent river, from Cottonwood Spring on the Prescott National Forest, to the upper extent of Alamo Lake at full levels, is one of the longest river systems in Arizona, and the longest in the states' western desert. The river begins in ponderosa pine woodland, and drops through wild canyons, including through the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness, which the BLM found Suitable for designation in 1997. The river is prone to massive floods as it captures rain and snow flowing off the mountains and plateaus of the Prescott National Forest.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The Santa Maria passes a variety of highly scenic canyons, mountains, and ecosystems as it drops 4,000 feet from Cottonwood Spring to Alamo Lake. Narrow and winding canyons, natural arches, broad valleys, deep pools, tumbling cascades, and other features are found along the river. Ponderosa pines, pinyon pines and junipers transition to willows, cottonwood, and sycamores which line the riparian area, with saguaros and palo verdes on the arid banks. Shorelines in the Wild segments are completely undeveloped, and only a few sections in the Scenic segment are touched by roads with operational ranches perched above the river's floodplain.

Recreation (ARC, BLM): The Santa Maria River provides outstandingly remarkable recreational opportunities by virtue of providing a lush year-round desert oasis with miles of pristine canyons for the hiker, backpacker, photographer, or horseman. The scenery, wildlife, and vegetation combine to create an area well-suited to recreation. Long sections through Wilderness or Roadless Areas provide outstanding solitude and backpacking along perennial waters. Sportsman too can find new challenges in the abundance of wildlife produced in the riparian habitat and diverse uplands. Segments near roads are popular for swimming.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): Yellow-billed cuckoo, southwestern willow flycatcher, and northern-Mexican garter snake are known to occur along the Santa Maria above Alamo Lake. Mesquite bosque and mature gallery forests surrounding flowing waters support bald eagle, peregrine falcon, Arizona toad, lowland leopard frog, desert tortoise, and many other rare wildlife. The river is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, with healthy populations of desert sucker, longfin dace, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, and speckled dace in upper reaches.

Cultural and Historic (ARC): The Santa Maria River's cultural history begins with evidence of the Patayan culture in the river canyon, including both petroglyphs, pictograph panels, and pottery sherds. There is also evidence of Spaniards' presence in the river as early as 1604 when Juan De Onate passed through the canyon in a search for a route to the Pacific Ocean.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ The Santa Maria River and portions of Sycamore Creek, Smith Canyon, and Cottonwood Canyon were proposed for Wild and Scenic River protection by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 "Lifeblood of the Desert" proposal.
- ✓ The segment from State Highway 96 down to Army Corps of Engineers lands encompassing Alamo Lake was listed in 1993 as a potential Wild and Scenic River candidate in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Two segments managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection in the 1995 Kingman Resource Management Plan. The segment within the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness was found Suitable/Wild in the 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report, while the Scenic segment in the Crosby Mountain area was found non-Suitable due to private land ownership along that segment.
- ✓ A 6.5-mile segment of Cottonwood Canyon flows through the Sheridan Mountain Roadless Area on the Prescott N.F.
- ✓ 16 miles of the Santa Maria River flows through the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness, designated in 1990.
- ✓ Portions of the river outside of the BLM wilderness area are within the Three Rivers Area of Critical Environmental Concern, established in the 1995 Kingman Field Office Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ Peoples Canyon, a tributary arising within the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness, is classified as an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

Top left: The Santa Maria River from State Trust Land below Muleshoe Ranch. Photo by Matt Turner.
Top right: Monsoon flooding on the Santa Maria River on State Trust Land above State Highway 96. Photo by Matt Turner.
Bottom: The Santa Maria River flows through BLM land just beyond the Palmerita Ranch. Photo by Alicia Arcidiacono.

Big Sandy River

Managing Agency: Bureau of Land Management
County: Mohave
Watershed: Big Sandy River
Region: Bill Williams River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Suitable, and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	11.6	17.6	0	29.2
Non-federal land:	11.4 miles private land in 2 Scenic segments			

The Big Sandy River drains a large area of western Arizona, with the Hualapai Mountains to the west, and the Aquarius Mountains to the east. It is fed by significant streams such as Trout Creek and Burro Creek. The area is the northernmost extension of the upland Sonoran Desert vegetation type, and is the transition zone to the Mojave Desert. Other than the small town of Wikieup, much of the surrounding area is sparsely populated, mostly by small cattle ranches. The complex of the Big Sandy, Bill Williams, and Santa Maria Rivers, and Burro Creek, is one of the most extensive and significant interconnected desert riparian systems in Arizona. An alluvial aquifer supports perennial flow along much of the river, although that is imminently threatened by foreign companies proposing to dig several massive lithium mines. Wild burros are widespread and have harmful impacts to the riparian ecosystem.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The Bureau of Land Management's 1997 Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report described Scenery and Fish and Wildlife ORVs for the Big Sandy River. Since then, recreation has increased in importance, and a Recreation ORV is added.

Scenery: According to the BLM's report, the Suitable segment of the Big Sandy River possesses "outstanding scenic qualities consisting of diverse landforms including canyons, mountain slopes, rolling hills, and the broad river channel. The Artillery Mountains rise steeply to the west of the river, dominated by the striking red visage of Artillery Peak. To the east, the Poachie Range rises to nearly 5,500 feet. The riparian plant community, the diverse upland vegetation, and abundant wildlife complement the scenic landscape."

Recreation: The Big Sandy River provides outstanding backcountry recreation opportunities in the wild lands within the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness and the Devils Canyon Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, as well as contiguous BLM lands which are not within either of those management units. Portions of the river are locally popular as summer swimming spots, and the extensive cottonwood-willow riparian forest is an outstanding birding destination.

Fish and Wildlife: The BLM's report found the river had fish and wildlife ORVs. The upper Scenic segment is designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected northern Mexican garter snake. Most of the river is designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected southwestern willow flycatcher, and the entire river is designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected yellow-billed cuckoo. The river is managed as a medium priority Conservation Opportunity Area for native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, largely due to the importance of the northern Mexican garter snake populations as well as occurrence of longfin dace, roundtail chub, and lowland leopard frog. It provides winter and breeding habitat for bald eagles and peregrine falcons, as well as riparian connectivity throughout the Bill Williams River watershed.

Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ A segment from Highway 93 to Signal townsite was recommended as Eligible/Scenic, and from Signal townsite to Alamo Lake as Eligible/Wild, in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory and 1995 Kingman Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ From Highway 93 to Alamo Lake was listed in 1993 as a potential candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ The Bureau of Land Management's 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report determined that a 6.7-mile segment entirely within the Arrastra Mountain Wilderness was Suitable for designation with a Wild designation. The Arrastra Mountain Wilderness Area was designated in 1990.
- ✓ A 10-mile Scenic segment outside of designated Wilderness is within the Three Rivers Area of Critical Environmental Concern, established in the 1995 Kingman Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ A 5-mile Wild segment flows through the BLM's Devils Canyon Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, which was proposed to BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2018, and inventoried by BLM in 2019.

Top: The Big Sandy River on BLM land upstream from Alamo Lake State Wildlife Area. Photo by Alicia Arcidiacono.
Bottom: The Big Sandy River flows through the Poachie Range in the Arrastra Wilderness. Photo by Brian Stultz.

Bill Williams River

Managing Agencies: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service, and Arizona Game and Fish Department
County: Mohave and La Paz
Watershed: Bill Williams River
Region: Bill Williams River Watershed

Status:	Eligible and Suitable, and Proposed			
Classification:	Wild	Scenic	Recreational	TOTAL
Miles:	15.8	19.4	0	35.2
Private land:	1.6 miles through the Johnson Ranch			
State Land:	State Trust (2 miles), AGFD (5.2 miles)			

The Bill Williams River begins at the outlet of Alamo Lake, where the Big Sandy and Santa Maria Rivers merge. It is perennial in reaches and intermittent in others, but can flow at tremendous volumes under flood conditions. Steep canyons constrict the river through two large BLM Wilderness areas clad in Sonoran Desert vegetation. Downstream, the river corridor is managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in the newly established Planet Ranch Conservation Area, and then ultimately by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge. Regarded as one of the secret gems of Arizona's desert rivers, the Bill Williams River is a haven for wildlife and people.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Parentheses indicate ORV findings by the Arizona Rivers Coalition (ARC) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Scenery (ARC, BLM): The Bill Williams River has carved a beautiful, rugged, and remote gorge. The lush riparian flora contrast sharply with the sparse desert flora above the river. Steep cliffs of colorful bands of gneiss and schist are especially dramatic. Below the Swansea Wilderness, the river opens into a broad valley at the Planet Ranch Conservation Area. The final segment passes through canyons with lush riparian forest as the river nears its confluence with the Colorado River.

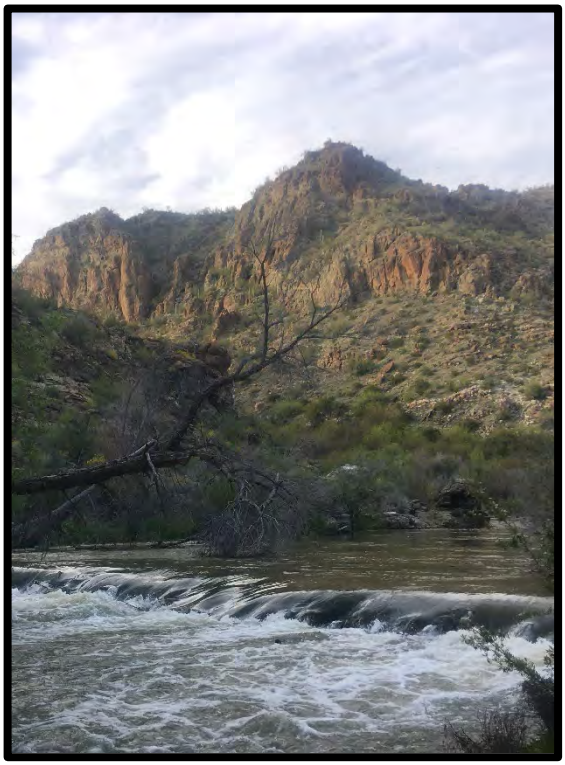
Recreation (ARC, BLM): Outstanding opportunities for solitude can be found in the two wilderness segments. When water levels are adequate, a fantastic non-motorized float trip is possible, using rafts, kayaks, or canoes. Hiking, backpacking, and nature observation are exceptional along the entire length. Wildlife viewing at the National Wildlife Refuge is world-renowned.

Fish and Wildlife (ARC, BLM): More than 350 species of birds, 48 mammals, and 34 reptiles and amphibians reside along the Bill Williams River. The riparian ecosystem has high raptor diversity, and is designated Critical Habitat for the federally protected northern Mexican garter snake, southwestern willow flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoo. Bighorn sheep thrive in the steep canyons. The river is managed as a high priority Conservation Opportunity Area for native aquatic species by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, largely due to the importance of the northern Mexican garter snake populations.

Geologic (ARC): Alternating layers of red and brown gneiss and schist produce a geological setting unique in Arizona.

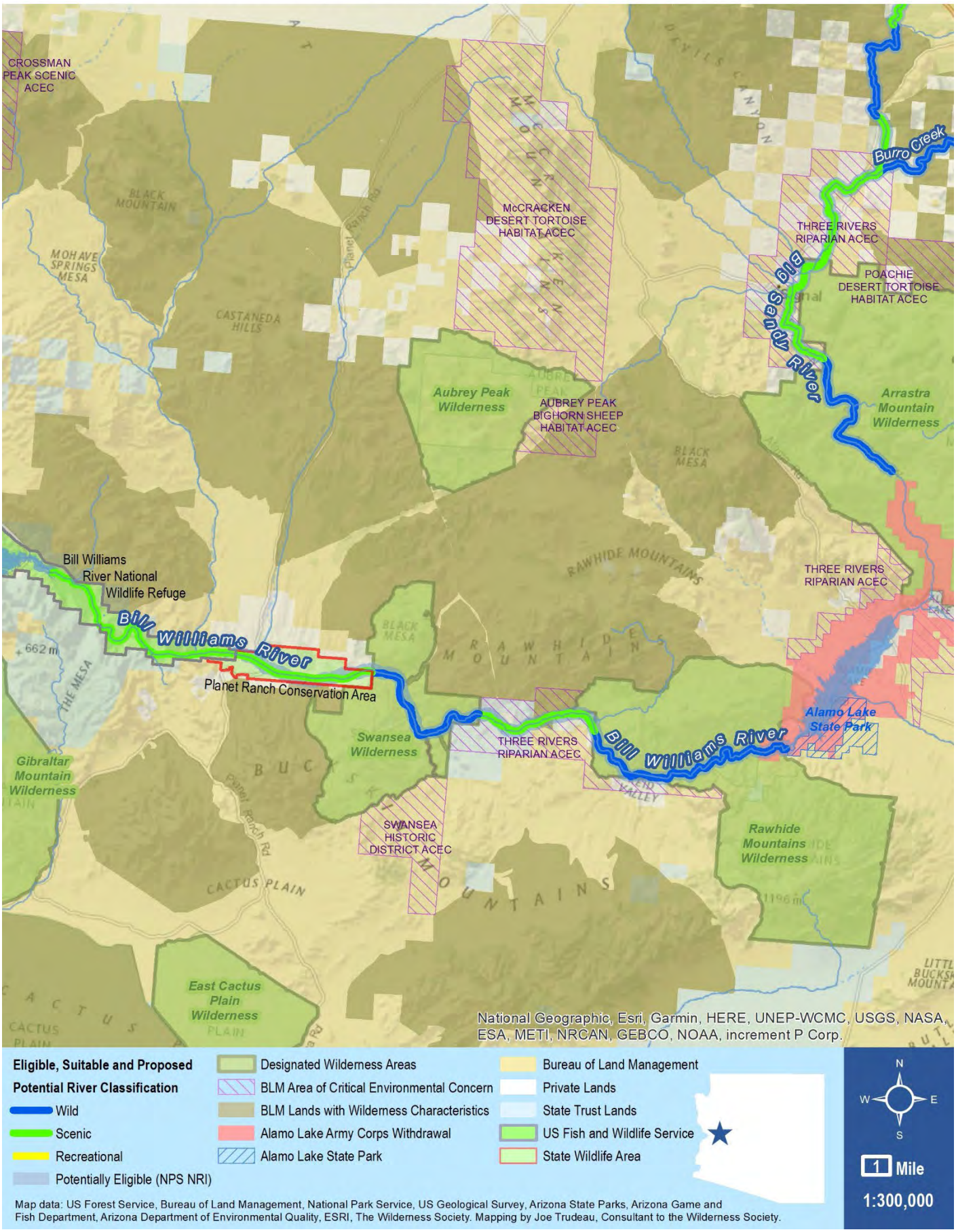
Conservation History and Additional Sources of Information

- ✓ Proposed by the Arizona Rivers Coalition in the 1991 proposal report titled "Lifeblood of the Desert."
- ✓ Segment from Alamo Dam to the upper limit of the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge in Planet Ranch were listed in 1993 as a potential Wild and Scenic River in the National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory.
- ✓ Segments managed by the Bureau of Land Management were found Eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection in the Kingman and Lake Havasu Resource Management Plans, then found Suitable in the 1997 Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report. Suitability determinations were incorporated into updated management plans.
- ✓ Wild segments managed by the BLM flow through the Rawhide Mountains Wilderness (6 miles) and Swansea Wilderness (9.3 miles), both designated in 1990.
- ✓ BLM Scenic segments outside of Wilderness Areas are protected by the Three Rivers Area of Critical Environmental Concern, established in the 2007 Lake Havasu Field Office Resource Management Plan.
- ✓ In 1944, the federal Flood Control Act approved Alamo Lake, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control reservoir.
- ✓ In 1969, the Army Corps of Engineers entered into a lease for Arizona State Parks Board to manage public facilities and for the Arizona Game and Fish Department to manage surface waters, creating Alamo Lake State Park.
- ✓ Designated as an Arizona Heritage Water for its exceptional ecological and cultural/historical values.
- ✓ The 3,400-acre Planet Ranch Conservation Area was created in 2017 by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission.
- ✓ The lower 9.2 miles are within the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge, which is included in the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, and is a designated Audubon Society Important Bird Area.
- ✓ In 2002, the Bill Williams River became one of eight rivers used to demonstrate the benefits of the Sustainable Rivers Project, a collaboration between The Nature Conservancy and the Army Corps of Engineers.

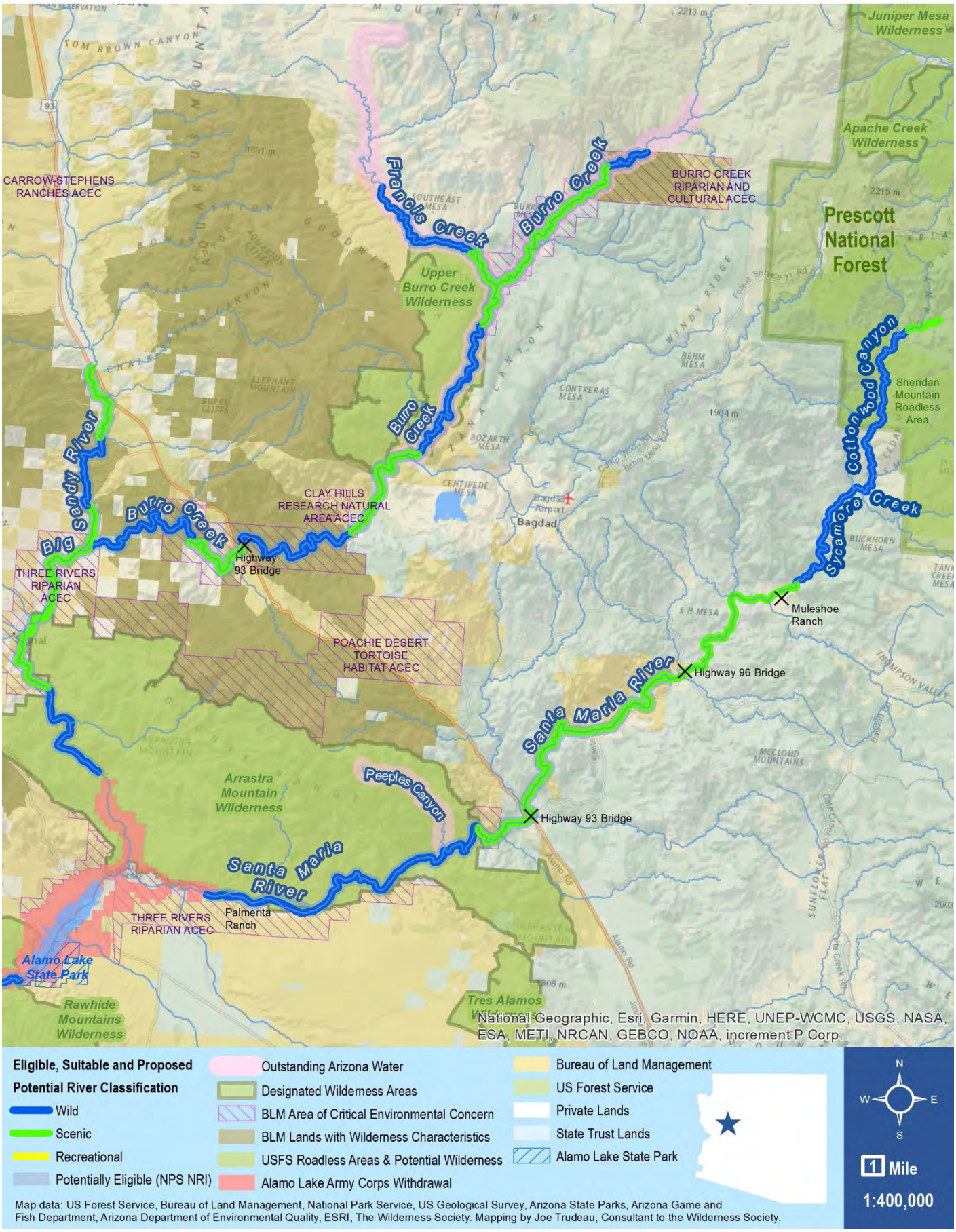


Top left: The Bill Williams River pours over a beaver dam in the Rawhide Mountains Wilderness. Photo by James Holderer.
Top right and bottom: The Bill Williams River in the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Alicia Arcidiacono.

Potential Wild and Scenic River Segments on the Bill Williams River



Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Headwaters of the Bill Williams River



Appendix A: Rivers Listed by Agency

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
West Fork of the Little Colorado River	Little Colorado	Little Colorado River Headwaters	Apache	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	8.1
East Fork of the Little Colorado River	Little Colorado	Little Colorado River Headwaters	Apache	Eligible	Scenic	9.3
South Fork of the Little Colorado River	Little Colorado	Little Colorado River Headwaters	Apache	Eligible	Scenic	7.3
Willow Creek	Little Colorado	Middle Little Colorado River	Coconino	Eligible	Wild	18.9
Woods Canyon	Little Colorado	Chevelon Canyon	Coconino	Eligible	Wild	4.9
Chevelon Creek	Little Colorado	Chevelon Canyon	Coconino/ Navajo	Eligible	Wild, Scenic, Recreational	31.2
Black River	Salt River	Black River	Apache/ Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	18.8
West Fork of the Black River	Salt River	Black River	Apache	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	11.6
East Fork of the Black River	Salt River	Black River	Apache/ Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Scenic, Recreational	12.7
North Fork of the East Fork of the Black River	Salt River	Black River	Apache	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	13.7
Fish Creek	Salt River	Black River	Greenlee	Eligible	Scenic	10.5
Bear Wallow Creek	Salt River	Black River	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	4.7
Campbell Blue Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	12.1
Blue River	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible & Suitable	Wild, Scenic	27.5
KP Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible & Suitable	Wild	11.3
Little Blue Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild	18.4
Turkey Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild	8.2
Pigeon Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	15.1
San Francisco River	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Scenic [a]	24
Coal Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Scenic, Recreational	18
Dix Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Scenic	3.3
Sardine Creek	Upper Gila River	San Francisco	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild	8.9
Eagle Creek	Upper Gila River	Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir	Greenlee	Eligible	Recreational	19.5
East Eagle Creek	Upper Gila River	Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir	Greenlee	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	14.5
					Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests total:	332.5 miles

a = Denotes streams where classifications listed here are different than the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest's eligibility determinations.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Tonto National Forest

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
Upper Salt River	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	59.4
Canyon Creek	Salt River	Upper Salt	Coconino/Gila	Eligible	Recreational	7.2
Coon Creek	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Proposed	Wild, Recreational	12.6
Greenback Creek	Salt River	Tonto	Gila	Eligible	Scenic	5.1
Salome Creek	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Eligible & Potentially Eligible [a]	Wild	20
Workman Creek	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Eligible & Potentially Eligible [a]	Wild, Recreational	9
Parker Creek	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Potentially Eligible [a]	Scenic	8.9
Fish Creek	Salt River	Lower Salt	Maricopa	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	5.7
Tonto Creek	Salt River	Tonto	Gila	Eligible	Wild, Scenic [b]	30.8
Christopher Creek	Salt River	Tonto	Gila	Eligible	Recreational	2.3
Haigler Creek	Salt River	Tonto	Gila	Proposed	Wild, Recreational	14.9
Spring Creek	Salt River	Tonto	Gila	Potentially Eligible [a]	Wild, Recreational	19.4
Reno Creek	Salt River	Tonto	Gila	Eligible	Scenic	3.6
Cherry Creek	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Potentially Eligible [a] & Proposed	Wild, Scenic, Recreational	32.8
Pueblo Canyon	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Eligible	Wild	1.7
Cold Spring Canyon	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Eligible	Wild	1.7
Devil's Chasm	Salt River	Upper Salt	Gila	Eligible	Wild	2.5
East Verde River	Verde River	Lower Verde	Gila	Eligible	Scenic, Recreational	33.2
Pine Creek	Verde River	Lower Verde	Gila	Eligible	Recreational	2.6
Tangle Creek	Verde River	Lower Verde	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic, Recreational	9.6
Lower Verde River	Verde River	Lower Verde	Yavapai	Eligible	Wild	9.2
Arnett Creek/ Telegraph Canyon	Upper Gila River	Middle Gila	Pinal	Eligible	Recreational	3.5
Ledni Líí Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic	5.2
					Tonto National Forest total:	300.9 miles

a = Denotes streams or portions of streams found potentially Eligible by the U.S. Forest Service Regional Office but later found not Eligible by the Tonto National Forest without a reasonable justification.

b = Denotes streams where classifications listed here are different than the Tonto National Forest's eligibility determinations.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Coronado National Forest

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
Cima Creek	Upper Gila River	San Simon	Cochise	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	3.5
Cave Creek	Upper Gila River	San Simon	Cochise	Proposed	Wild	3.6
Lower Cave Creek	Upper Gila River	San Simon	Cochise	Eligible	Recreational	5.7
South Fork of Cave Creek	Upper Gila River	San Simon	Cochise	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	8.8
Ash Creek	Upper Gila River	Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir	Graham	Eligible	Recreational	6.2
Grant Creek	San Pedro River	Willcox Playa	Graham	Eligible	Recreational	5.9
Post Creek	San Pedro River	Willcox Playa	Graham	Eligible	Scenic	2.7
Redfield Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Graham	Eligible	Scenic	10.2 (18) [a]
Bass Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Graham	Proposed	Wild	2.9 (11.8) [a]
Buehman Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Pima	Proposed	Wild, Recreational	4.5 (13) [a]
Canada del Oro	Santa Cruz River	Upper Santa Cruz	Pima	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	11.8
Romero Canyon	Santa Cruz River	Upper Santa Cruz	Pima	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	9.6
Sabino Canyon	Santa Cruz River	Rillito	Pima	Eligible	Wild, Recreational	12.5
Rucker Canyon	Sonora River	Whitewater Draw	Cochise	Eligible	Wild	6.3
Sycamore Creek	Sonora River	Rio Concepcion	Santa Cruz	Eligible	Scenic	6.3
					Coronado National Forest total:	100.5 miles

a = First mileage value listed is for USFS segment only. Mileage in parentheses incudes all segments across all land ownerships.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Coconino National Forest

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
Barbershop Canyon	Little Colorado	Middle Little Colorado	Coconino	Eligible	Wild	13.5
Leonard Canyon	Little Colorado	Middle Little Colorado	Coconino	Eligible	Recreational	23.6
East Clear Creek	Little Colorado	Middle Little Colorado	Coconino	Eligible (USFS land)	Scenic	38.7
				Proposed (non USFS)	Scenic	43.2
Sycamore Creek [d]	Verde River	Upper Verde River	Coconino/ Yavapai	Eligible	Wild	4.1
				Proposed	Wild	26.4
Oak Creek	Verde River	Upper Verde River	Coconino	Eligible	Recreational	10.7 (13.3) [a]
West Fork Oak Creek	Verde River	Upper Verde River	Coconino	Eligible	Wild	11.1
Wet Beaver Creek	Verde River	Upper Verde River	Coconino/ Yavapai	Eligible [b]	Wild, Recreational	18.8
				Proposed [c]	Recreational	16.7
West Clear Creek	Verde River	Lower Verde River	Coconino/ Yavapai	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	39.6
				Proposed [c]	Recreational	4.4
					Coconino National Forest total:	250.9

a = First mileage value listed is for USFS segment only. Mileage in parentheses incudes all segments across all land ownerships.

b = Includes 0.5 miles of private land found Eligible by the Coconino National Forest.

c = Includes a mix of National Forest and other land ownerships.

d = Sycamore Creek is shared with the Prescott and Kaibab National Forests as well, but it listed here under only the Coconino to avoid duplication

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Prescott National Forest

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
Upper Verde River and Granite Creek	Verde River	Upper Verde River	Yavapai	Eligible	Wild, Scenic, Recreational	38.2 [a]
				Proposed [b]	Scenic	7.3
Hassayampa River	Hassayampa River	Hassayampa River	Yavapai	Proposed [b]	Scenic	20 (71.3) [c]
Sycamore Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Proposed	Scenic	11.3 (19.8) [c]
Little Ash Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Proposed	Scenic	2.7 (5.2) [c]
Poland & Horsethief Basin Creeks	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Proposed	Wild, Scenic	11.6
					Prescott National Forest total:	91.8

a = Includes 1.83 miles of private land found Eligible by the Prescott National Forest.

b = Includes a mix of land ownerships.

c = First mileage value listed is for USFS segment only. Mileage in parentheses incudes all segments across all land ownerships.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Kaibab National Forest

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
Kanab Creek	Colorado River	Kanab	Mohave/Coconino	Eligible	Wild	20 (55.3) [b]
North Canyon Creek	Colorado River	Lower Colorado-Marble Canyon	Coconino	Eligible (GCNP) [a]	Wild	13 (31.4) [b]
South Canyon Creek	Colorado River	Lower Colorado-Marble Canyon	Coconino	Eligible (GCNP) [a]	Wild	12.8 (18.7) [b]
Saddle Mountain Creek	Colorado River	Lower Colorado-Marble Canyon	Coconino	Eligible (GCNP) [a]	Wild	3.6 (7.3) [b]
					Kaibab National Forest total:	49.4 miles

a = Eligibility determined during study of Grand Canyon creeks and adopted by National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service Enterprise GIS Warehouse.

b = First mileage value listed is for USFS segment only. Mileage in parentheses incudes all segments across all land ownerships.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers on Arizona Bureau of Land Management Lands

Stream Name	*River Basin*	*HUC 8 Watershed*	*County*	*Status*	*Classification(s)*	*Miles*
Paria River	Colorado River	Paria River	Coconino	Eligible & Suitable	Wild, Scenic	29.9
Virgin River	Colorado River	Lower Virgin River	Mohave	Eligible & Suitable	Wild, Scenic, Rec.	28.2
Kanab Creek	Colorado River	Kanab Creek	Mohave/Coconino	Proposed	Wild	21.9 (55.3) [a]
Gila River (Gila Box)	Upper Gila River	Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir	Graham/Greenlee	Eligible & Suitable	Scenic, Recreational	26.2
Bonita Creek	Upper Gila River	Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir	Graham	Eligible & Suitable	Recreational	8.4
San Francisco River	Upper Gila River	Upper Gila-San Carlos Reservoir	Greenlee	Eligible & Suitable	Recreational	6.5
Middle Gila River	Upper Gila River	Middle Gila River	Gila/Pinal	Eligible & Suitable	Recreational	7.4
Hassayampa River	Hassayampa R.	Hassayampa River	Yavapai/Maricopa	Formerly Eligible & Proposed	Wild, Recreational	13.6 (71.3) [b]
Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible & Suitable	Wild, Scenic	21.8
Ash Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic	1.5
Little Ash Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic	1.8
Sycamore Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic	3.3
Indian Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic	6.3
Silver Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Scenic	5.1
Bishop Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Wild, Scenic	7.2
Tank Creek	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Wild	3.4
Lousy Canyon	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Wild	5.3
Larry Canyon	Agua Fria River	Agua Fria River	Yavapai	Eligible	Wild	3.5
San Pedro River	San Pedro River	Upper San Pedro	Cochise	Eligible & Suitable	Recreational	45.8
Babocomari River	San Pedro River	Upper San Pedro	Cochise	Eligible & Suitable	Recreational	4
Aravaipa River	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Pinal/Graham	Eligible & Suitable	Wild	9.5
Turkey Creek	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Graham	Formerly Eligible	Recreational	2.7
Redfield Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Graham	Proposed	Wild	7.8 (18) [a]
Swamp Springs Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Graham	Formerly Eligible	Wild	4.3
Hot Springs Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Cochise	Formerly Eligible	Wild, Scenic, Rec.	6.5 (14) [a]
Bass Canyon	San Pedro River	Lower San Pedro	Graham/Cochise	Proposed	Wild	3.1 (11.8) [a]
Cienega Creek	Santa Cruz River	Rillito River	Pima	Eligible & Suitable	Scenic	11.1
Burro Creek	Bill Williams River	Burro Creek	Yavapai/Mohave	Suitable & Proposed	Wild, Scenic	37.2 (54.2) [a]
Francis Creek	Bill Williams River	Burro Creek	Yavapai/Mohave	Formerly Eligible	Wild, Scenic	7 (9.8) [a]
Santa Maria River	Bill Williams River	Santa Maria River	Yavapai/Mohave	Suitable & Proposed	Wild, Scenic	26 (67.4) [a]
Big Sandy River	Bill Williams River	Big Sandy River	Mohave	Suitable & Proposed	Wild, Scenic	17.8 (29.2) [a]
Bill Williams River	Bill Williams River	Bill Williams River	Mohave	Suitable & Proposed	Wild, Scenic	17.2 (35.2) [a]
					Bureau of Land Management total:	401.3 miles

a = First mileage value listed is for BLM segment only. Mileage in parentheses incudes all segments across all land ownerships.

b = First mileage value listed is for formerly Eligible BLM segment only. Mileage in parentheses incudes all proposed segments across all land ownerships.

Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers of the Grand Canyon Bioregion													
					OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES								
Creek Name	Classification	Status E=Eligible - S=Suitable	Miles	ARC Proposed	Recreation	Scenery	Geology	Fish & Wildlife	Ecology	Vegetation	Cultural	Hydrology	Geomorphology
Blacktail Creek	Wild	E	4.4		X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Boucher Creek	Wild	E	2.6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boulder Canyon Creek	Wild	E	2.5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bright Angel Creek	Wild	E	14		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Clear Creek	Wild	E	8.2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Colorado River	Wild	E	245	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cottonwood Creek	Wild	E	2.3		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cremation Creek	Wild	E	3.5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Crystal Creek	Wild	E	5.6	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Deer Creek	Wild	E	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fern Glen Creek	Wild	E	0.5		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Grapevine Creek	Wild	E	5.5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hance Creek	Wild	E	2.3		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Havasu River	Wild	E	3.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hermit Creek	Wild	E	4.2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kanab Creek (NPS)	Wild	E	13.4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kanab Creek (USFS)	Wild	E	20	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kanab Creek (BLM)	Wild	P	21.9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kwagunt Creek	Wild	E	3.3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lava Chuar Creek	Wild	E	6.7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Little Colorado River	Wild	E	2.7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lone Tree Canyon Creek	Wild	E	1.8		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Manzanita	Wild	E	3.2		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Matkatamiba Creek	Wild	E	2		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Monument Creek	Wild	E	3.4		X	X	X		X			X	X
Nankoweap Creek	Wild	E	4.3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
National Canyon Creek	Wild	E	1.5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
North Canyon Wash	Wild	E	31		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Olo Canyon Creek	Wild	E	1.5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Paria River (AZ NPS)	Scenic	S	3.3	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Paria River (AZ BLM)	Wild	S	26.6	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Paria River & tributaries (UT BLM)	W/S/R	S	99.4	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Phantom Creek	Wild	E	7.3		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pipe Creek	Wild	E	4.4		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Roaring Springs Creek	Wild	E	5.4		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Royal Arch Creek	Wild	E	3.7		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ruby Canyon Creek	Wild	E	3.8		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Saddle Canyon Creek	Wild	E	7.3		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Salt Creek	Wild	E	2		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Serpentine Canyon Creek	Wild	E	2		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Shinumo Creek	Wild	E	3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
South Canyon Creek	Wild	E	18.7		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Spring Canyon Creek	Wild	E	0.5		X	X		X	X	X		X	
Stone Creek	Wild	E	3.5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tapeats Creek	Wild	E	4.8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Thunder River	Wild	E	0.6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tuckup Canyon Creek	Wild	E	12.2		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vasey's Paradise	Wild	E	0.3			X		X	X			X	X
Virgin River	S/R	S	28.2	X		X	X	X	X	X			

Sources of Information

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

The original Act and all Amendments are available online at: https://www.rivers.gov/documents/act/complete-act.pdf

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System website is online at: https://www.rivers.gov/index.php

The Nationwide Rivers Inventory

The Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) is a listing of more than 3,200 free-flowing river segments in the United States that are believed to possess one or more "outstandingly remarkable" natural or cultural values judged to be at least regionally significant. Hence, NRI river segments are potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Available online at: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/rivers/nationwide-rivers-inventory.htm

Arizona Rivers Coalition Statewide Citizens Proposals

Arizona Rivers Coalition. 1991. *Arizona Rivers, Lifeblood of the Desert: A Citizen's Proposal for the Protection of Rivers in Arizona*.

Available online at: http://kinetichorizons.com/support/AZ-WSR/ARC1991.pdf

Arizona Rivers Coalition. 1993. *Arizona Rivers, Lifeblood of the Desert: A Citizen's Proposal for the Protection of Rivers in Arizona*. Second printing (revised).

Available online at: http://kinetichorizons.com/support/AZ-WSR/ARC1993.pdf

U.S. Forest Service Arizona Statewide Preliminary Eligibility Studies

U.S. Forest Service. 1993. *Preliminary Analysis of Eligibility and Classification for Wild / Scenic / Recreational River Designation: National Forest of Arizona*. Southwestern Region, U.S. Forest Service. January, 1993.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd480531.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 1993. *Resource Information Report: Potential Wild / Scenic / Recreational River Designation: National Forests of Arizona.* Southwestern Region, U.S. Forest Service. September, 1993.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd479538.pdf

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

U.S. Forest Service. 2009. *Eligibility Report for the National Wild and Scenic River System.* Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. June, 2009.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3851959.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2012. *Addendum to Eligibility Report for the National Wild and Scenic River System.* Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. April, 2012.

Available online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3851960.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2013. *Errata Sheet for the 2009 Eligibility Report for the National Wild and Scenic River System.* Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. January 10, 2013.

Available online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3851961.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2010. *Blue River and KP Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Study.* Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. September, 2009.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=26931&exp=overview

U.S. Forest Service. 2014. *Wild and Scenic Rivers Specialist Report: Forest Plan Revision FEIS.* Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. October, 2014.

Available online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3851905.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2015. *Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests: Apache, Coconino, Greenlee, and Navajo Counties, Arizona*. Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. August, 2015.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd521804.pdf

Coconino National Forest Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

U.S. Forest Service. 2013. *Inventory and Eligibility Review for the National Wild and Scenic River System*. Coconino National Forest. November, 2013.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd479684.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2018. *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Coconino National Forest: Coconino, Gila, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona*. Coconino National Forest. March, 2018.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd606737.pdf

Coronado National Forest Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

U.S. Forest Service. 2008. *Wild and Scenic Rivers Evaluation of 1993 Eligibility Analysis.* Coronado National Forest. May, 2008.

Available by request form the Coronado National Forest Supervisors Office: (520) 388-8300

U.S. Forest Service. 2018. *Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan: Cochise, Graham, Pima, Pinal, and Santa Cruz Counties, Arizona, and Hidalgo County, New Mexico.* Coronado National Forest. April, 2018.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd583208.pdf

Kaibab National Forest Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

U.S. Forest Service. 2014. *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kaibab National Forest Coconino, Yavapai, and Mojave Counties, Arizona.* Kaibab National Forest. February, 2014.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3791592.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2014. *Appendices for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Coconino, Yavapai, and Mojave Counties, Arizona: Appendix F: Wild and Scenic River Assessment.* Kaibab National Forest. February, 2014.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd517406.pdf

Tonto National Forest Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

U.S. Forest Service. 2017. *Tonto National Forest Draft Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Study: Gila, Maricopa, Pinal, and Yavapai Counties Arizona*. Tonto National Forest. October, 2017.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd594789.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2017. *Wild & Scenic Rivers Eligibility Rationale Spreadsheet*. Tonto National Forest. October, 2017.

Available online at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fs.usda.gov%2FInternet%2FFSE_DOCUMENTS%2Ffseprd594937.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

U.S. Forest Service. 2022. *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Management Plan Tonto National Forest Volume 4: Appendix B – Appendix H.* Tonto National Forest. March, 2022.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1000729.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2022. *Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan: Coconino, Gila, Maricopa, Pinal, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona.* Tonto National Forest. March, 2022.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1041664.pdf

Prescott National Forest Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

Sierra Club. 2011. *Upper Verde Wild and Scenic River: A Citizens' Proposal.*

Available online at: https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/grand-canyon-chapter/conservation/UVWSR%20Executive%20Summary.pdf

U.S. Forest Service. 2010. *Upper Verde River Eligibility Report Update for the National Wild and Scenic River System.* Prescott National Forest. December, 2010.

Available online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd479676.pdf

Bureau of Land Management Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

Bureau of Land Management. 1992/1994. *Safford District Resource Management Plan*.

Available online at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/81813/570

Bureau of Land Management. 1994. *Final Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement.* Arizona State Office. December, 1994.

Available online at: https://www.rivers.gov/documents/studies/arizona-blm-study-leis.pdf

Bureau of Land Management. 1994. *Final Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislative Environmental Impact Statement: Rivers Appendix.* Arizona State Office. December, 1994.

Available online at: https://www.rivers.gov/documents/studies/arizona-blm-study-leis-rivers.pdf

Bureau of Land Management. 1995. Kingman Resource Management Plan.

Available online at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/95447/510

Bureau of Land Management. 1997. *Final Arizona Statewide Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Report/Record of Decision.* Arizona State Office. February, 1997.

Available online at: https://archive.org/details/finalarizonastat00bolm

Bureau of Land Management. 2008. *Arizona Strip Field Office Resource Management Plan*.

Available online at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/95271/510

U.S. Forest Service. 2008. *Final Environmental Impact Statement Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study for National Forest System Lands in Utah Ashley, Dixie, Fishlake, Manti-La Sal, and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests: Appendix B: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) List of Rivers.* USDA Forest Service. November, 2008.

Available online at: https://www.rivers.gov/documents/studies/utah-study/appendix-b-blm-nps-rivers.pdf

The entire Utah Statewide Suitability Study is available here: https://www.rivers.gov/study.php

Bureau of Land Management. 2010. *Agua Fria National Monument Resource Management Plan*.

Available online at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/4507/510

Bureau of Land Management. 2019. *RMP for the San Pedro Riparian Area National Conservation Area.*

Available online at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/36503/510

Grand Canyon National Park Wild and Scenic River Studies and Documentation

Barnes, Joel. 2005. *Protecting Wild Waters in a Dry World: A Proposal for Wild and Scenic Rivers in Grand Canyon National Park: Narrative Catalog & Database*. Prescott College. April, 2005.

Available online at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275950246_Protecting_Wild_Waters_in_a_Dry_World_Grand_Canyon_National_Park_Wild_and_Scenic_River_Narrative_Catalog_Database

National Park Service. 2015. *Backcountry Management Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement*. Grand Canyon National Park. November 2015

Available online at: https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?projectID=22633

Arizona Game and Fish Department Wildlife Data and Management Priorities

The Arizona Wildlife Conservation Strategy is the official State Wildlife Action Plan for Arizona. The AWCS provides an interactive web-based version of AGFD's conservation strategy, offering tools and data resources for public use, including species distribution models, habitat profiles, and Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs). These tools were used extensively in the development of Fish and Wildlife Habitat ORV descriptions.

Available online at: https://awcs.azgfd.com/conservation-opportunity-areas

Audubon Society Arizona Important Bird Areas

The purpose of the Important Bird Area Program is to identify a network of sites that maintain the long-term viability of wild bird populations while engaging the public to conserve those areas of critical habitat. The Arizona IBA Program was established in 2001.

Available online at: https://aziba.org/?page_id=38

Arizona Heritage Waters

An interdisciplinary group of researchers established Arizona Heritage Waters to bring attention to these sites and the threats they are confronting. The project was undertaken in the hopes that beauty and importance of these sites will inspire state visitors, residents, and policy makers to make decisions that ensure their continued existence.

Available online at: http://azheritagewaters.nau.edu/designated_w.html

Outstanding Arizona Waters

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality classifies certain waterways of exceptional significance as Outstanding Arizona Waters under the Clean Water Act. The state law and list of current OAW's is linked below.

Available online at: https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/arizona/Ariz-Admin-Code-SS-R18-11-112

Arizona Audubon water-based recreation economic data

The Economic Impact of Arizona's Rivers, Lakes, and Streams is available online at: https://www.audubon.org/economic-impact-arizonas-rivers-lakes-and-streams

The Center for Arizona's Future Arizona polling data

The Arizona We Want: The Decade Ahead is available online at: https://www.arizonafuture.org/media/unfojhmh/cfa_arizona_we_want_the_decade_ahead_digital.pdf

Colorado College's public lands polling data

The *2023 Conservation in the West Poll* is available online at: https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2023.html

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to the following individuals and organizations for the ideas, conceptualization, feedback, careful editing, and many discussions that led to the production of this book: Mike Quigley, Michael Carroll, and Barbara Young with The Wilderness Society; Rachel Ellis and Mike Fiebig with American Rivers; Gary Beverly with Sierra Club-Yavapai Group and Citizens Water Advocacy Group; Kelly Burke with Wild Arizona; David Hodges with Natural Allies; Joel Barnes, Professor Emeritus at Prescott College; Kestrel Kunz with American Whitewater; Nathan Rees with Trout Unlimited; Scott Garlid with Arizona Wildlife Federation; Pat Lane with the Pew Charitable Trusts; Rob Peters, formerly with Defenders of Wildlife and now with Save the Scenic Santa Rita's; Kaia Hayes, a contractor to The Wilderness Society; Tim Flood with Friends of Arizona Rivers; Tricia Gerrodette with Friends of the San Pedro River; Tom Hollender with White Mountain Conservation League; Robin Silver, Todd Schulke and Randi Spivak at the Center for Biological Diversity; Denielle Perry and Christian Fauser at the Northern Arizona University Free Flowing Rivers Lab; Nancy Steele, Tracy Stephens, and Tony Gioia with the Friends of the Verde River; Travis Bruner with the Grand Canyon Trust; and Madeleine Carey and Erica Prather with WildEarth Guardians. I express sincere gratitude to former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt for contributing the book's opening letter. Mr. Babbitt also provided a letter for the original version of *Lifeblood of the Desert.*

Immense gratitude is owed to the Arizona Rivers Coalition, who produced the 1991 and 1993 citizens proposals that inspired and informed this current book. The coalition was led by Gail Peters with American Rivers and Neal Berg who managed report design and layout, with assistance from Rob Smith with the Sierra Club and Jim Norton from The Wilderness Society, as well as a tremendous amount of volunteer labor, field work, photography, mapping, and general contributions by numerous volunteers, including Sheila Kollasch, Tim Flood, Joni Bosh, Don Hoffman, Janie Hoffman, Nick Berezenko, Sheila Dean, Rob Elliott, Bill Gobus, Jeanmarie Haney, Doug Hulmes, Don Lyngholm, Dennis Roshay, Joel Rea, Jim Slingluff, Tanna Thornburg, Jerry Van Gasse, Anne Frazier, Josh Jenkins, Jean Marie Haney, Paul Lowes, Steve Warble, David Elms, Jerry Sieve, Congressman Jon Kyl, Ken Goldman, Roger Young, Debs Metzong, Dale Schicketanz, Dick Deitrich, and others.

This work would not be possible without the generous contributions of many photographers, including the following, listed in order of the number of photos appearing in this book: Joe Trudeau, Joel Hazelton (www.joelhazelton.com), Paul Gill (paulgillphoto.zenfolio.com), Lisa Hankinson (www.instagram.com/arizona.wildermiss), Jonathan Buford (www.instagram.com/jonathanbufordphotography), Nick Burruel (www.instagram.com/mountain_life20), Cecil Goodman at Prescott College, Richard Webster, Matt Turner (https://www.tierraimagery.com), Adrienne McLeod (www.adriennemcleod.com), James Holderer, Tim Flood, Jim Dublinski (www.xploreoutside.com), Alicia Arcidiacono (www.chasingchickadeesphotography.com), Robert Indrisie (www.instagram.com/robert.indrisie), Bill Gobus, Ron Stewart, Jonathan Patt, Sky Jacobs (http://skyjacobs.com), Dale Turner, Pete Hathaway (https://petehathaway.com), Robin Silver (www.robinsilverphoto.com), Maya Horner, Kestrel Kunz, Brian Stultz, Dennis Roshay, Johnida Dockens, Chris Grove, Joel Barnes, Sheila Kollasch, Meredith Meeks (https://gofish-productions.com), Amber Fields, Steph Hovater, Chris Baer (www.whereisbaer.com), Jim Rorabaugh, Pima County, Harrison Keane, and Mitch Tobin at www.waterdesk.org. A photo of Upper Swamp Springs Canyon and a photo of Romero Canyon are used under a Flickr Creative Commons license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/).

We also acknowledge the work of the employees of our federal land management agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In Arizona and across the country these federal employees are entrusted with the stewardship of our public lands. Often, that's a thankless task as various interest groups can be vocal and active about the differing perspectives on appropriate land management – both theoretically and on individual projects. Nevertheless, thousands of our fellow citizens take on that burden of negotiating conflict, regulations, changing politics, changing conditions on the ground, and more, in order to steward the nation's resources and keep our public lands public. In particular, there are many federal employees – often without individual attribution or recognition – who have contributed directly to this book through the careful and professional execution of their responsibilities in producing the eligibility and suitability studies upon which much of this material relies. It's our role, now, to see many of their recommendations implemented to assure protection of Arizona's wild and scenic rivers.