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National Wild and Scenic Rivers and State Scenic Waterways in Oregon

by Andy Kerr¹

Abstract

Oregon has more units and miles of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS) than any other state. There are 59 units of the NWSRS in Oregon, totaling over 1,908 stream miles, representing 29 percent of the individual units and 15 percent of the miles in the national system. The area of water and land protected in these Oregon units of the NWSRS is 595,456 acres. The Oregon Scenic Waterways System (OSWS) is complementary to the NWSRS and includes 1,126 miles in 21 units; 71 percent of OSWS miles are also in the NWSRS. Still, fewer than 1 percent of Oregon streams are included in the NWSRS. An estimated additional 10,000 miles (less than 3 percent of the total mileage) of Oregon streams are eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS and OSWS.

Introduction

In the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, Congress stated with unusual eloquence:

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. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dams and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.²

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² The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, 16 U.S.C. § 1271.

The original Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA), establishing the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS), included eight stream segments totaling 774 miles, among them the Lower Rogue River in Oregon. Since then, the WSRA has been amended repeatedly by Congress so that as of August 2018 the NWSRS included 209 units totaling 12,753.5 miles.³ Congress added more Oregon segments to the system in 1975, 1984, 1988, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2009 and 2013.

Oregon's National Wild and Scenic Rivers

The 58 units of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in Oregon, totaling 1,908 stream miles, are shown in Table 1. These represent 28 percent of the individual units and 15 percent of the stream miles in the national system. The area of land and water protected in these Oregon units of the NWSRS is 594,624 acres.



Figure 1. *Koosah Falls on the McKenzie River. The segment between Clear Lake and Carmen Reservoir is included in both the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the Oregon Scenic Waterways System.* George Wuerthner.

³ [River Mileage Classifications for Components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System](https://www.rivers.gov/documents/rivers-table.pdf), December 2016, <https://www.rivers.gov/documents/rivers-table.pdf>.

Table 1. Units of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in Oregon									
Stream Segment	Federal Administrative Unit	Year	Miles				Upper Terminus	Lower Terminus	EPA Level III Eco-region
			Wild	Scenic	Rec.	Total			
Big Marsh Creek	Deschutes National Forest	1988	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0	NE1/4, S15, T26S, R6E ⁴	Confluence with Crescent Creek	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
Chetco River	Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest	1988	25.5	8.0	11.0	44.5	Headwaters	Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest boundary	Klamath Mountains
Clackamas River	Mount Hood National Forest	1988	0.0	20.0	27.0	47.0	Big Springs	Big Cliff Reservoir	Cascades
Collawash River	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	0.0	11.0	6.8	17.8	Headwaters of East Fork Collawash River	Confluence with Clackamas River	Cascades
Crescent Creek	Deschutes National Forest	1988	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0	SW1/4, S11, T24S, R6E	W line of S13, T2S, R7E	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
Crooked River	Prineville District, BLM	1988	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0	Crooked River National Grasslands boundary	Confluence with Dry Creek	Columbia Plateau
Crooked River, North Fork	Ochoco National Forest, Prineville District, BLM	1988	11.9	8.5	13.8	34.2	Source at Williams Prairie	One mile upstream from confluence with Deschutes River	Blue Mountains
Deschutes River	Deschutes National Forest, Prineville District, BLM	1988	0.0	30.0	143.4	173.4	(a) Wickiup Dam; (b) Odgen Falls; (c) Pelton Reregulating Dam	(a) Bend Urban Growth Boundary (SW corner, S13, T18S, R11E); (b) Reservoir Billy Chinook; (c) Confluence with	East Cascades Slope and Foothills, Columbia Plateau

⁴ Some terminus locations are indicated using the section-township-range system, where NE1/4, NW1/4, S15 denotes the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of section 15, T26S means township 26 south, and R6E means range 6 east. All of Oregon is defined by the Willamette Meridian (WM).

								Columbia River	
Donner und Blitzen River	Burns District, BLM (Steens Mountain Coop. Mgmt. and Protection Area)	1988	72.7	0.0	0.0	72.7	Headwaters	Confluence with South Fork Blitzen and Little Blitzen; including tributaries: Little Blitzen River, South Fork Blitzen River, Big Indian Creek, Little Indian Creek, Ankle Creek, South Fork Ankle Creek, Fish Creek	Northern Basin and Range
		2000	14.8	0.0	0.0	14.8			
	Total		87.5	0.0	0.0	87.5			
Eagle Creek	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	8.3	0.0	0.0	8.3	Headwaters	Mount Hood National Forest boundary	Cascades
Eagle Creek	Wallowa-Whitman National Forest	1988	4.0	6.0	17.0	27.0	Headwaters below Eagle Lake	Wallowa-Whitman National Forest boundary at Skull Creek	Blue Mountains
East Fork Hood River	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	0.0	0.0	13.5	13.5	Oregon Highway 35	Mount Hood Forest boundary	Cascades
Elk River	Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest	1988	2.0	1.5	17.0	20.5	Sources of North Fork and South Fork	Confluence of main stem with Anvil Creek	Coast Range
		2009	7.7	0.0	0.0	7.7			
	Total		9.7	1.5	17.0	28.2			

<u>Elkhorn Creek</u> ⁵	Willamette National Forest	1996	5.8	0.6	0.0	6.4	Willamette National Forest southern boundary	Where the segment leaves BLM land	Cascades
<u>Fifteenmile Creek</u> ⁶	Mount Hood National Forest, Prineville District, BLM	2009	10.5	0.6	0.0	11.1	Senacal Spring	Western edge S20, T2S, R12E, WM	Cascades, East Cascades Slopes and Foothills
Fish Creek	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	0.0	0.0	13.5	13.5	Headwaters	Confluence with Clackamas River	Cascades
Grande Ronde River	Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests and Vale District, BLM	1988	26.4	0.0	17.4	43.8	Confluence with Wallowa River	Washington border	Blue Mountains
Illinois River	Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest	1984	28.7	17.9	3.8	50.4	Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest boundary	Confluence with Rogue River	Klamath Mountains
Imnaha River	Wallowa-Whitman National Forest	1988	15.0	4.0	58.0	77.0	Headwaters of South Fork Imnaha River	Confluence with Snake River	Blue Mountains
John Day River	Prineville District, BLM	1988	0.0	0.0	147.5	147.5	Service Creek	Tumwater Falls	Blue Mountains and Columbia Plateau
John Day River, North Fork	Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests	1988	27.8	10.5	15.8	54.1	Headwaters in North Fork John Day Wilderness	Confluence with Camas Creek	Blue Mountains
John Day River, South Fork	Malheur National Forest	1988	0.0	0.0	47.0	47.0	Malheur National Forest boundary	Confluence with Smoky Creek	Blue Mountains
Joseph Creek	Wallowa-Whitman National Forest	1988	8.6	0.0	0.0	8.6	Joseph Creek Ranch 1.0 mile downstream	Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Boundary	Blue Mountains

⁵ Congress provided for “double-wide” lateral boundaries.

⁶ Ditto.

							m from Cougar Creek		
Kiger Creek	Burns District, BLM (Steens Mountain Coop. Mgmt. and Protection Area)	2 0 0 0	4.3	0.0	0.0	4.3	Headwaters	Where creek leaves Steens Mountain Wilderness	Northern Basin and Range
<u>Klamath River</u> ⁷	Lakeview District, BLM	1 9 9 4	0.0	11.0	0.0	11.0	J.C. Boyle Powerhous e	California border	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
Little Deschutes River	Deschutes National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	0.0	12.0	12.0	Source in NW1/4 of S15, T26S, R6E	N Line, S12, T26S, R7E	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
Lostine River	Wallowa- Whitman National Forest	1 9 8 8	5.0	0.0	11.0	16.0	Headwaters in Eagle Cap Wilderness	Wallowa- Whitman National Forest boundary	Blue Mountain s
Malheur River	Malheur National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	7.0	6.7	13.7	Confluence with Bosonberg Creek	Malheur National Forest boundary	Blue Mountain s
Malheur River, North Fork	Malheur National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	25.5	0.0	25.5	Headwaters	Malheur National Forest boundary	Blue Mountain s
McKenzie River	Willamette National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	0.0	12.7	12.7	Clear Lake	Confluence with Scott Creek, not including Carmen and Trail Bridge reservoirs and dams	Cascades
Metolius River	Deschutes National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	17.1	11.5	28.6	Deschutes National Forest boundary below Springs of the Metolius	Reservoir Billy Chinook	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
Middle Fork Hood River	Mount Hood National Forest	2 0	0.0	3.7	0.0	3.7	Confluence of Clear	North section line	Cascades

⁷ State scenic waterway designated in 1988 and included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the secretary of the interior at the request of the governor of Oregon pursuant to Section 2(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. § 1273(a)).

		0 9					and Coe Branches	of S11, T1S, R9E, WM	
Minam River	Wallowa- Whitman National Forest	1 9 8 8	39.0	0.0	0.0	39.0	Headwaters at south end of Minam Lake	Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary, 0.5 miles down- stream from Cougar Creek	Blue Mountain s
North Fork of the Middle Fork Willamette River	Willamette National Forest	1 9 8 8	8.8	6.5	27.0	42.3	Source at Waldo Lake	Willamette National Forest boundary at Westfir	Cascades
North Powder River	Wallowa- Whitman National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	6.0	0.0	6.0	Headwaters in Elkhorn Mountains	Wallowa- Whitman National Forest boundary	Blue Mountain s
North Umpqua River	Umpqua National Forest, Roseburg District, BLM	1 9 8 8	0.0	0.0	33.8	33.8	Soda Springs Power- house	Confluence with Rock Creek	Cascades
Owyhee River	Vale District, BLM	1 9 8 4	120.0	0.0	0.0	120.0	(a) Idaho border; (b) confluence with Crooked Creek	(a) China Gulch; (b) Owyhee Reservoir	Snake River Plain
Owyhee River, North Fork	Vale District, BLM	1 9 8 8	9.6	0.0	0.0	9.6	Idaho border	Confluence with Owyhee River	Snake River Plain
Powder River	Vale District, BLM	1 9 8 8	0.0	11.7	0.0	11.7	Thief Valley Dam	Highway 203 Bridge	Blue Mountain s
Quartzville Creek	Willamette National Forest	1 9 8 8	0.0	0.0	12.0	12.0	Willamette National Forest boundary	Green Peter Reservoir	Cascades
Roaring River	Mount Hood National Forest	1 9 8 8	13.5	0.0	0.2	13.7	Headwaters	Confluence with Clackamas River	Cascades
Rogue River, Lower	Rogue River– Siskiyou National Forest, Medford District, BLM	1 9 6 8	33.6	7.5	43.4	84.5	Confluence with Applegate River	Lobster Creek Bridge	Klamath Mountain s

Rogue River, Upper	Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest	1988	6.1	34.2	0.0	40.3	Northern boundary Crater Lake National Park	Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest boundary at Prospect	Cascades
Salmon River	Mount Hood National Forest, Salem District, BLM	1988	15.0	4.8	13.7	33.5	Headwaters	Confluence with Sandy River	Cascades
Sandy River (Upper)	Mount Hood National Forest	1988	4.5		7.9	12.4	Headwaters	Mount Hood National Forest boundary	Cascades
Sandy River (Lower)	Salem District, BLM	1988		3.8	8.7	12.5	Dodge Park	Dabney State Park	Willamette Valley
Smith River, North Fork	Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest	1988	8.5	4.5	0.0	13.0	Headwaters	California border	Klamath Mountains
<u>Snake River</u> ⁸	Wallowa-Whitman National Forest	1975	32.5	34.4	0.0	66.9	Hells Canyon Dam	An eastward extension of the north boundary of S1, T5N, R47E	Blue Mountains
South Fork Clackamas River	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	4.2	0.0	0.0	4.2	Confluence with East Fork of the South Fork Clackamas	Confluence with Clackamas River	Cascades
South Fork Roaring River	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	4.6	0.0	0.0	4.6	Headwaters	Confluence with Roaring River	Cascades
Sprague River, North Fork	Fremont-Winema National Forest	1988	0.0	15.0	0.0	15.0	Head of river in NW1/4, S11, T35S, R15E	SW/14, S15, T35S, R16E	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
<u>Squaw Creek</u> ⁹	Deschutes National Forest	1988	6.6	8.8	0.0	15.4	Source, including the Soap Fork Squaw Creek, the	800 feet upstream from McAllister Ditch intake	East Cascades Slope and Foothills

⁸ Approximately one-half of protective corridor is in Idaho.

⁹ The creek has been officially renamed Wychus Creek, but the Wild and Scenic Rivers System name has yet to be changed.

							North Fork, the South Fork, the East and West Forks of Park Creek, and Park Creek Fork.		
Styx, River	Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve	2014	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.4	Where Cave Creek Submerges	Where Cave Creek Emerges	Klamath Mountains
Sycan River	Fremont-Winema National Forest	1988	0.0	50.4	8.6	59.0	NE1/4 of S5, T34S, R17E	Coyote Bucket at the Fremont-Winema National Forest boundary	East Cascades Slope and Foothills
<u>Wallowa River</u> ¹⁰	Vale District, BLM	1996	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0	Confluence with Minam River	Confluence with Grande Ronde River	Blue Mountains
Wenaha River	Umatilla National Forest	1988	18.7	2.7	0.2	21.6	Confluence of North and South Forks	Confluence with Grande Ronde River	Blue Mountains
West Little Owyhee River	Vale District, BLM	1988	57.6	0.0	0.0	57.6	Headwaters	Confluence with Owyhee River	Snake River Plain
White River	Mount Hood National Forest, Prineville District, BLM	1988	0.0	24.3	22.5	46.8	White River Glacier	Confluence with Deschutes River, save river miles 1.6 to 2.2.	Cascades, Columbia Plateau
Wildhorse Creek	Burns District, BLM (Steens Mountain Coop. Mgmt. and Protection Area)	2000	9.6	0.0	0.0	9.6	Little Wildhorse Creek and headwaters	0.36 stream miles into S34, T34S, R33E	Northern Basin and Range
Zig Zag River	Mount Hood National Forest	2009	4.3	0.0	0.0	4.3	Headwaters	Mount Hood National Forest boundary	Cascades

¹⁰ State scenic waterway designated in 1988 and included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the secretary of the interior at the request of the governor of Oregon pursuant to Section 2(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. § 1273(a)).

TOTAL		675.7	397.9	834.4	1,908.0			
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Oregon Scenic Waterways and Their Overlap with National Wild and Scenic Rivers

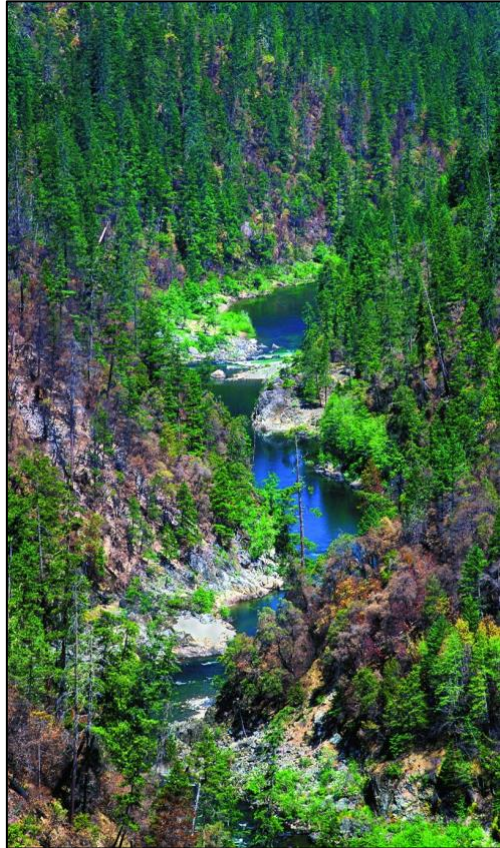


Figure 2. Most, but not all, of the Illinois Wild and Scenic River is also an Oregon scenic waterway. Ken Crocker

In 1970, the people of Oregon voted to establish the Oregon Scenic Waterways System (OSWS):

The people of Oregon find that many of the free-flowing rivers of Oregon and Waldo Lake and lands adjacent to such lake and rivers possess outstanding scenic, fish, wildlife, geological, botanical, historic, archaeologic, and outdoor recreation values of present and future benefit to the public. The people of Oregon also find that the policy of permitting construction of dams and other impoundment facilities at appropriate sections of the rivers of Oregon and Waldo Lake needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve Waldo Lake and selected rivers or sections thereof in a free-flowing condition and would protect and preserve the natural setting and water quality of the lake and such rivers and fulfill other conservation purposes. It is therefore the policy of Oregon to preserve for the benefit of the public Waldo Lake and selected parts of the state's free-flowing rivers. For these purposes there is established an Oregon Scenic Waterways System.¹¹

Since then the Oregon Legislative Assembly has occasionally included additional waterways in the system, but the largest increase occurred by another vote

of the people in 1988. The OSWS is complementary to the NWSRS and in some ways provides potentially stronger conservation protection.¹² Only units of the NWSRS are fully protected against any kind of dam, but the OSWS offers regulatory means for conservation not available within the national system.

Table 2 lists Oregon scenic waterways and also notes stream segments of overlap with units of the NWSRS. Such overlap is significant but not total.

- 71 percent of Oregon scenic waterways (by mileage) are also national wild and scenic rivers.
- 42 percent of Oregon's national wild and scenic rivers are also Oregon scenic waterways.

¹¹ Oregon Revised Statutes 390.815. Reference to Waldo Lake added by Oregon Legislative Assembly in 1983.

¹² Oregon Revised Statutes 390.805 to 390.925

Table 2. Oregon Scenic Waterways and Their Overlap and Underlap with National Wild and Scenic Rivers				
River/ Waterway/ Segment	Upper Terminus	Lower Terminus	Miles	
			Oregon Scenic Waterway	National Wild & Scenic River
Chetco			14	14
	Headwaters	Steel Bridge	0	42
	Steel Bridge	Eagle Creek	2	2
	Eagle Creek	South Fork Confluence	3	3
	South Fork Confluence	Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Boundary	6	6
	Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Boundary	Southern boundary of Alfred A. Loeb State Park	3	3
Clackamas River			75	52
Upper Mainstem	Big Springs	Olallie Lakes Scenic Area		1
	Olallie Lakes Scenic Area	Big Cliff (North Fork) Reservoir	47	47
Lower Mainstem	River Mill Dam	Carver	12	
North Fork	Source	North Fork Reservoir	12	
South Fork	Confluence with an unnamed tributary near the western boundary of S7, T5S, R5E, Willamette Meridian (WM) / confluence with East Fork of the South Fork Clackamas River	Confluence with Clackamas River	4	4
Deschutes River			199	182
Uppermost	Little Lava Lake	Crane Prairie Reservoir	8	
	Gauging station below Wickiup Dam	General Patch Bridge	28	28
Sunriver	General Patch Bridge	Harper Bridge		12
Above Bend	Harper Bridge	Lava Island Camp	12	12
Above Bend	Lava Island Camp	COID diversion structure/northern boundary of Sunriver at the SW1/4 S20, T19S, R11E, WM	5	5
Below Bend	Robert Sawyer State Park	Tumalo State Park	6	
	Deschutes Market Road	Cline Falls hydroelectric facility	10	
Middle	Cline Falls hydroelectric facility	Oden Falls	5	
Middle	Oden Falls	Reservoir Billy Chinook	25	25
Lower	Pelton Reregulating Dam	Confluence with Columbia River	100	100
Elk River			29	29
Mainstem	Confluence of North and South Forks	Confluence with Anvil Creek/Elk River Fish Hatchery	17	17
North Fork	Source	Confluence with South Fork	6	6
South Fork	Source	Confluence with North Fork	6	6
Illinois River			46	50
Eight Dollar Mountain Stretch	Siskiyou National Forest boundary	Confluence with Deer Creek		4
Canyon Stretch	Confluence with Deer Creek	Confluence with Rogue River	46	46
John Day River			317	251
Mainstem	Parrish Creek	Service Creek	12	

	Service Creek	Tumwater Falls	148	148
North Fork	Headwaters in North Fork John Day Wilderness Area at S13, T8S, R36E, WM	North Fork John Day Wilderness boundary		36
	North Fork John Day Wilderness boundary RM	Confluence with Camas Creek RM	20	20
	Confluence with Camas Creek	Northern boundary of the south one-half of S20, T8S, R28, WM	37	
Middle Fork	Confluence with Crawford Creek	Confluence with North Fork John Day River	71	
South Fork	Malheur National Forest boundary	Post-Paulina Road Crossing RM 35		19
	Post-Paulina Road Crossing	Confluence with Smokey Creek	28	28
	Confluence with Smokey Creek	Northern boundary of Murderers Creek Wildlife Area	1	
Klamath River			11	11
Mainstem	J. C. Boyle Powerhouse	California border	11	11
McKenzie River			27	41
Mainstem	Clear Lake	Carmon Reservoir	2	2
	Carmon Dam	Tamolitch Falls	2	2
	Tamolitch Falls	Trail Bridge Reservoir		2
	Trail Bridge Dam	Confluence with Scott Creek	7	7
	Confluence with Scott Creek	Paradise Campground	3	3
South Fork	Headwaters	Three Sisters Wilderness boundary		12
	Three Sisters Wilderness boundary	Cougar Reservoir	13	13
Metolius			12	38
Mainstem	Metolius Springs/Deschutes National Forest boundary below Metolius Springs	Candle Creek	12	12
	Candle Creek	Reservoir Billy Chinook		26
Minam River			46	37
Mainstem	Minam Lake	Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary 0.5 miles downstream of Cougar Creek	37	37
	Eagle Cap Wilderness boundary 0.5 miles downstream of Cougar Creek	Confluence with Wallowa River RM 0	9	
Molalla			13	0
	Confluence of Table Rock Fork	Pine Creek	7.5	
	Pine Creek	Trout Creek	5	
	Trout Creek	Glen Avon Bridge	0.5	
Nestucca River			26	0
Mainstem	McGuire Dam	Blaine	26	
North Fork Middle Fork Willamette River			42	42
Mainstem	Waldo Lake	1 mile above RR bridge near Westfir/Willamette National Forest boundary	42	42
Owyhee River			69	108
Upper	Idaho border	Three Forks	33	33
	Three Forks	China Gulch		34
Lower	Crooked Creek	Birch Creek	36	36
	Birch Creek	Owyhee Reservoir		5
Rogue River			124	124
Upper	Crater Lake National Park	Rogue River National Forest boundary	41	41

Lower	Confluence with Applegate River	Confluence with Lobster Creek/Lobster Creek Bridge	83	83
Sandy River			12	24
Upper	Headwaters	Mount Hood Wilderness boundary		12
Lower	Confluence with Bull Run River / Dodge Park	Stark Street Bridge / Dabney State Park	12	12
Santiam River, Little North Fork			7	0
Mainstem	Confluence of Battle Ax and Opal Creeks	Willamette National Forest boundary	7	
North Umpqua River			41	34
Upper	Mt. Thielsen Wilderness	Lemolo Reservoir	7	
Lower	Soda Springs Powerhouse	Confluence with Rock Creek	34	34
Walker Creek			3	0
Mainstem	Source	Confluence with Nestucca River	3	
Wallowa River			10	10
Mainstem	Confluence with Minam River	Confluence with Grande Ronde River	10	10
Waldo Lake (mileage estimated; a better metric is that the lake is 6,672 acres in area)			6	6
	13 miles north of Oregon 58 in the Willamette National Forest		6	6
Oregon scenic waterways (miles)			1126	
National wild and scenic rivers (miles)				1,073
National wild and scenic rivers that are not Oregon scenic waterways (miles)				205
Oregon scenic waterways that are not national wild and scenic rivers (includes only those national wild and scenic rivers on streams that also have Oregon scenic waterways) (miles)			242	
Complementary overlap of Oregon scenic waterways and national wild and scenic rivers (miles)			797	

In a country where nature has been so lavish and where we have been so spendthrift of indigenous beauty, to set aside a few rivers in their natural state should be considered an obligation.

—Senator Frank Church (D-ID), 1968

Potential Oregon Additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

In 2000, the Larch Company commissioned the compilation of a list of Oregon stream segments not yet in the NWSRS that qualified for inclusion in the NWSRS based on a review of the Land and Resource Management Plan for each federal administrative unit (national forest, BLM district, and so on). We found that 2,324 miles of free-flowing stream segments had—according to the land management agency—at least one “outstandingly remarkable” value, which is the minimum requirement specified in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for a stream segment to be included in the NWSRS. (Similar criteria exist for Oregon scenic waterways.) We also found the agency inventories to be quite incomplete and sometimes sloppily done for what they did inventory.¹³

Choosing to save a river is more often an act of passion than of careful calculation. You make the choice because the river has touched your life in an intimate and irreversible way, because you are unwilling to accept its loss.

—David Bolling, *How to Save a River: Handbook for Citizen Action*

¹³ For more on what qualifies for inclusion as a unit of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, see Andy Kerr, “Persuading Congress to Establish a Wilderness and/or Wild & Scenic River: A Checklist,” Larch Occasional Paper #1 (Ashland, OR: The Larch Company, 2011), available at www.andykerr.net/downloads.

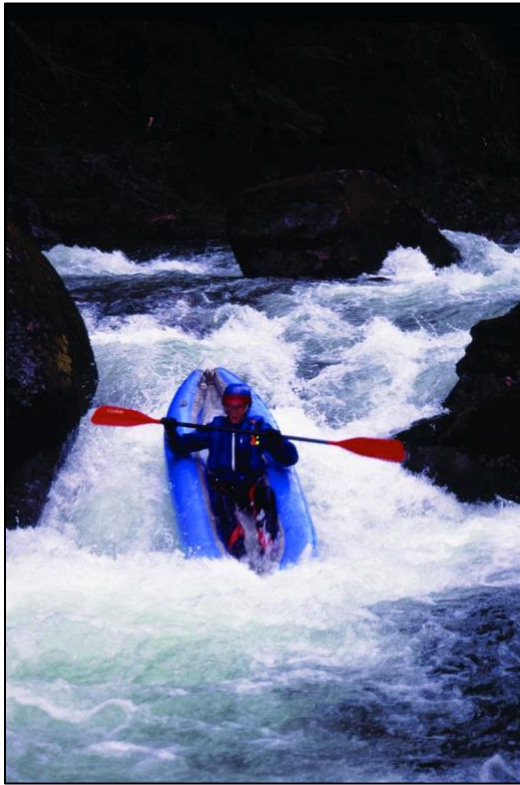


Figure 3. *Brice Creek on the Umpqua National Forest qualifies for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System even though the stream has not been recognized by the Forest Service for its outstandingly remarkable whitewater boating.* David Stone, Wildland Photography

The Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) “maintained” by the National Park Service lists stream segments eligible in their view for inclusion in the NWSRS. Their Oregon inventory, at least, is quite out of date, poorly constructed, and poorly maintained. However, the fact that the inventory is deficient shouldn’t count against free-flowing streams with outstandingly remarkable values. The inventory has some overlap with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management inventories and some stream segments have become units of the NWSRS since being listed in the NRI inventory.¹⁴ Still, approximately 2,500 miles of streams in Oregon listed in the NRI qualify for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The NRI list of Oregon stream segments doesn’t overlap much with the list of candidate stream segments culled from the agency inventories. This is because: (1) the former was not constrained by having to be primarily on federal public land, while the latter generally was; and (2) the agency inventories include many more streams higher in the watersheds. As a result, the estimated total of Oregon stream segments that qualify for inclusion in the NWSRS based on the NRI list and the agency inventories is almost 5,000 miles.

But there are other qualifying stream segments as well. As one examines maps of Oregon, a significant

number of free-flowing streams with at least one outstandingly remarkable value come readily to mind. These are stream segments that (1) are not yet included in the NWSRS, (2) are not on the NRI list of Oregon stream segments, and (3) are not in the Forest Service and BLM inventories. I conservatively estimate that when these are added to the candidate list, a total of about 10,000 miles (about 3 percent of the total mileage) of Oregon streams qualify for inclusion in the NWSRS.

It is up to the conservation community to insist that the federal land management agencies do what is required of them by the WSRA. Here is what the act says:

Continuing consideration by Federal agencies to potential national, wild, scenic and recreational river areas

(1) In all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources, consideration shall be given by all Federal agencies involved to

¹⁴ National Park Service, Nationwide Rivers Inventory, Oregon Segments, www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/nri/states/or.html.

*potential national wild, scenic and recreational river areas, and all river basin and project plan reports submitted to the Congress shall consider and discuss any such potentials. The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall make specific studies and investigations to determine which additional wild, scenic and recreational river areas within the United States shall be evaluated in planning reports by all Federal agencies as potential alternative uses of the water and related land resources involved.*¹⁵

Conclusion

An estimated 292,000 miles of streams flow in Oregon.¹⁶ Most do not qualify for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and/or the Oregon Scenic Waterways System as they have been dammed, dewatered, ditched, denuded, and/or otherwise degraded, if not destroyed. Today, 0.7 percent of Oregon streams are in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. A lot more eligible streams could be.



Figure 4. *The Nestucca Oregon Scenic Waterway is not also a national Wild and Scenic River.* Yet. Erik Fernandez, Oregon Wild.

¹⁵ 16 U.S.C. § 1276(d).

¹⁶ USDI Geological Survey. National Hydrography Dataset. www.nhd.usgs.gov.

Acknowledgments

A handy source of river-related quotations, some of which I used herein, can be found at www.rivers.gov/quotations.html. For the development of this paper I am indebted to Erik Fernandez of Oregon Wild.

Who hears the rippling of rivers will not utterly despair of anything.

—Henry David Thoreau

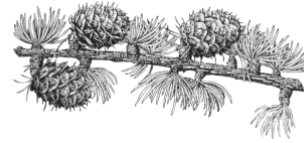
Additional Resources

- Interagency (mainly National Park Service) website on the NWSRS (www.rivers.gov)
- American Rivers (www.americanrivers.org), the nation's premier conservation advocate for the NWSRS
- Oregon Wild (www.oregonwild.org), working to include numerous Oregon streams in the NWSRS
- [Oregon Scenic Waterways Program](https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/RULES/pages/waterways.aspx) (<https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/RULES/pages/waterways.aspx>)
- National Park Service's Nationwide Rivers Inventory, Oregon Segments (www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/nri/states/or.html)
- Kerr, Andy. LOP #1: "Persuading Congress to Establish a Wilderness and/or Wild & Scenic River: A Checklist." Ashland, OR: The Larch Company, 2007. Available at www.andykerr.net/downloads.
- Kerr, Andy, and Mark Salvo. LOP #7: "Overlapping Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River Designations Provide Maximal Conservation Protection for Federal Public Lands." Ashland, OR: The Larch Company, 2008. Available at www.andykerr.net/downloads.

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