

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Comprehensive River Management Plan Scoping Packet

The US Forest Service's (USFS) Siuslaw National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Coos Bay District are proposing to adopt a comprehensive river management plan for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers. In 2019, Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek were designated as additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Dingell Act) (Public Law 116-9). Wasson Creek is located on lands managed by the Coos Bay District and the Siuslaw National Forest. Franklin Creek is exclusively located on lands managed by the Siuslaw National Forest. The designated segments include 10.1 miles of Wasson Creek and 4.5 miles of Franklin Creek. The Coos Bay District and Siuslaw National Forest are pursuing an interagency strategy for the management of these wild and scenic river corridors.

An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists has developed a proposed action to address the purpose and need and requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as outlined in the following sections. An online interactive map that utilizes ArcGIS Online software has also been developed to help display some of the information in this scoping packet, including the proposed final boundaries.

The online map is located here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/270745361b3d4205a1bdb6eff93f6934>



Franklin Creek



Wasson Creek

Table of Contents

Background	3
Project Location	3
Wild and Scenic River Designations	5
Outstandingly Remarkable Values	5
Desired River Conditions	9
Environmental Analysis and Documentation	13
Purpose and Need for Action	13
Proposed Action	13
Wild and Scenic River Boundaries	14
Visitor Use Management & Capacity	15
Proposed and Potential Management Actions	16
Forest Plan Amendment	17
Appendix A: Maps	19

Figures

Figure 1. Vicinity map	4
------------------------------	---

Tables

Table 1. Description of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek designated river segments	5
Table 2. Outstandingly remarkable values identified for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creeks	8
Table 3. River value assessment findings compared to 1990 forest plan	9
Table 4. Proposed desired conditions for Wasson and Franklin Creeks	10
Table 5. Proposed standards and guidelines for Wasson and Franklin Creeks	11
Table 6. Proposed non-ground disturbing management actions	16
Table 7. Potential management actions	17

Background

Project Location

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are located in the central Oregon Coast Range, approximately 20 miles east of Reedsport and 70 miles southwest of Eugene (Figure 1). Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River is a total of 10.1 miles long, with the BLM managing the eastern segment and the Forest Service managing the western segment. Downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary, Wasson Creek flows north for 6.5 miles before emptying into Smith River. Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River is 4.5 miles long and is managed entirely by the Forest Service. Downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary, the creek flows another 0.5 miles southwest before emptying into the Umpqua River.

The two wild and scenic rivers are in an isolated, undeveloped, and rugged portion of the Oregon Coast Range. The surrounding terrain is characterized by dense vegetation and steep slopes. The wild and scenic rivers range in elevation from 100 feet to 1,200 feet above sea level, with nearby slopes rising to 1,650 feet. Both creeks' drainages are dominated by late-successional temperate rainforest communities that have not been logged or significantly disturbed by other human activities. These upland and riparian areas provide habitat for a wide range of mammals, birds, amphibians, resident fish, and anadromous fish. There are few roads near the wild and scenic river corridors, nor are there system trails or developed facilities in the immediate area. Public use of Wasson and Franklin Creeks is low and mainly consists of backcountry recreation. All of Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River and most of Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River overlap with the Devil's Staircase Wilderness, which was also designated in the Dingell Act.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are located within the ancestral territory of the Quuiich (Lower Umpqua) People, and the upper portion of Wasson Creek is also part of the territory claimed by the Yoncalla Kalapuya. The Quuiich People are members of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The Yoncalla Kalapuya are members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

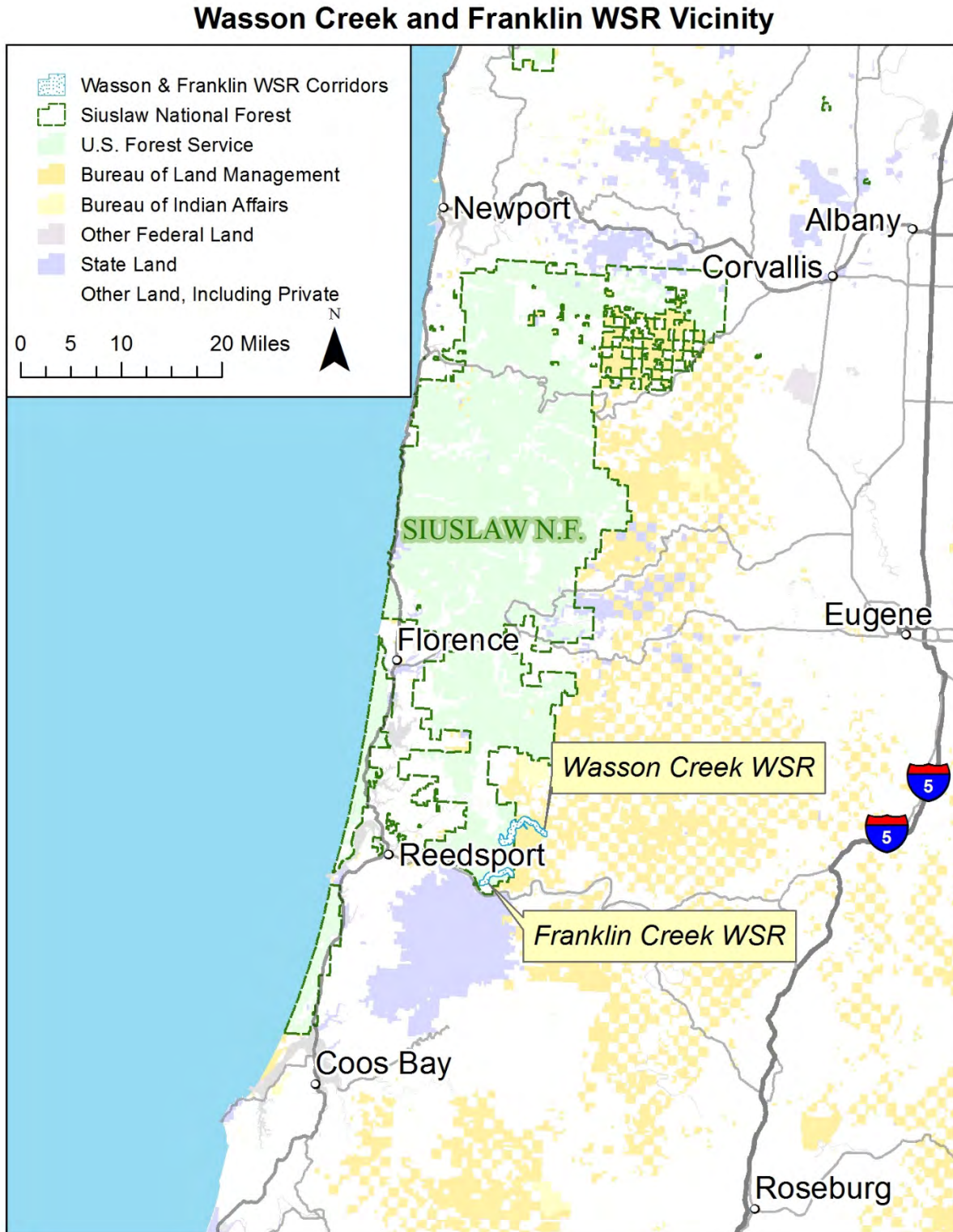


Figure 1. Vicinity map

Wild and Scenic River Designations

The Dingell Act classified the designated segments as wild (Table 1). As described in section 2(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a wild river is “a river or segment of a river that is free of impoundments and inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.”

Table 1. Description of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek designated river segments

Designated Segment	Length (mi.)	Classification	Administering Agency	Upstream Terminus	Downstream Terminus
Wasson	4.2	Wild	Bureau of Land Management	Headwaters in section 17, T21S, R9W	BLM-USFS boundary in section 14, T21S, R10W
Wasson	5.9	Wild	US Forest Service	BLM-USFS boundary in section 14, T21S, R10W	Private land boundary in section 22, T21S, R10W
Franklin	4.5	Wild	US Forest Service	Headwaters in section 2, T22S, R10W	Private land boundary in section 8, T22S, R10W

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Rivers designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act possess outstandingly remarkable values that may include one or more of the following: “scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values” (Section 1(b)). In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Dictionary definitions of the words “unique” and “rare” indicate that such a value would be one that is a conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary. A river values assessment was prepared by an interdisciplinary team to evaluate the outstandingly remarkable values and assess water quality and free-flow condition. Wasson Creek was found to possess outstandingly remarkable values for scenery, primitive recreation, fisheries, beaver habitat, and ecological systems; and Franklin Creek was found to have outstandingly remarkable values for scenery, fisheries, beaver habitat, and ecological systems. The river values for each river form the basis of the proposed action and are summarized below.

Scenery

Wasson Creek

The hydrology and geology of the creek combine with the old growth forest and topography to create an exemplary scenic setting. This applies to the entire wild and scenic river segment. The individual scenic elements may not be outstandingly remarkable on their own, but they combine with each other and with seasonal changes in vegetation, light, and shadow to create an impressive visual experience. The creek’s remoteness and undisturbed qualities are key elements of this exemplary scenery, and the length of the undisturbed scenic setting is also rare within the region of comparison.

In addition to the scenic quality of the entire wild and scenic river corridor, the scenic values of Devil’s Staircase waterfall and Wasson Lake stand on their own. The hydrology, geology, and monumental scale on display at Devil’s Staircase create a highly attractive and exemplary visual feature. The waterfall’s setting against a remote old-growth backdrop is also rare in the region of comparison. Likewise, the views from the

Wasson Lake shoreline are exemplary, capturing a small, landslide-formed lake with an undisturbed forest backdrop.

Franklin Creek

The hydrology and geology of the creek combine with the old growth forest and topography to create an exemplary scenic setting. This determination applies to the entire length of the wild and scenic river corridor. The individual scenic elements may not be outstandingly remarkable on their own, but they combine to create an exemplary visual experience.

The undisturbed quality of the wild and scenic river corridor is a key element of this exemplary scenery; this visual setting emphasizes a sense of remoteness and solitude. The view of the drainage from the Umpqua River further supports the remoteness and wildness of Franklin Creek; this is considered to be an exemplary view of a small, rugged drainage within the region of comparison.

Recreation

Wasson Creek

Wasson Creek provides an exemplary opportunity for primitive recreation in a rugged, remote, and wild setting. The area also provides an outstanding opportunity for solitude. Personal challenge, isolation, and undisturbed surroundings are key elements of the recreation experience in the Wasson Creek drainage. There are limited opportunities for this wilderness experience in the region of comparison, and Wasson Creek is recognized as one of the foremost settings for this type of recreation.

For this outstandingly remarkable value, the focus was on the Devil's Staircase waterfall. It is lightly visited (relative to other recreation attractions in the region of comparison), but it is a regionally recognized backcountry destination with a "hidden gem" quality. Though waterfalls of this nature are not rare in the region of comparison, it is unusual to see a waterfall of this size attracting recreational use in a wilderness setting. Overall, the Devil's Staircase waterfall is an exemplary case of a creek-based attraction in a backcountry location; in this situation, the creek itself and the surrounding wilderness are both integral to the recreational experience visitors are seeking.

Fish Species, Populations and Habitat

Wasson Creek

The creek provides 10 miles of exemplary and intact habitat for a variety of native fish species, and it is rare within the region of comparison to see such a long, continuous stretch of high-quality habitat. The designated segment's intact and mature riparian area is critical to these high-quality habitat conditions. Of particular note is the habitat for several sensitive anadromous species (Pacific Lamprey and Winter Steelhead) between the downstream wild and scenic river boundary and the Devil's Staircase waterfall. Additionally, the designated segment provides cold and clean water that is important for the Coho, Chinook, and Steelhead habitats that are downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary. This is a critical input and ecosystem component of fish habitat, even though the habitat in question does not occur within the wild and scenic river corridor.

Regarding fish populations, the designated segment features two Regional Forester's Sensitive Species, Steelhead and Pacific Lamprey, between the lower wild and scenic river boundary and the Devil's Staircase. The entire length of the wild and scenic river segment also supports a population of resident cutthroat trout. Of note, the cutthroat trout above the Devil's Staircase are an isolated population, and it is

rare within the region of comparison to find this type of isolated population in such a large and intact stream and lake system.

Franklin Creek

Franklin Creek provides exemplary habitat for a number of important fish species, including Coho, Chinook, Steelhead, Cutthroat, and Pacific Lamprey. Populations of these species are also present in the creek. Coho is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act while Steelhead and Pacific Lamprey are Sensitive Species for the BLM and Forest Service. Franklin Creek is not the only stream in the region of comparison with habitat for and populations of these species. However, the creek is exemplary for its relatively undisturbed drainage and intact riparian conditions; these intact conditions are critical for the creek's high-quality habitat and are also critical for supporting the creek's fish populations. There are no known fish passage barriers in Franklin Creek, and salmonid spawning and rearing behavior has been documented throughout the length of the wild and scenic river segment. Agency staff have identified several sections of the creek with subsurface flows during summer low flow conditions. However, fish would likely be able to survive in the creek's deep pools even under the summer dry period.

Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife: Beaver Habitat

Both creeks provide exceptionally high-quality beaver habitat, and beaver populations are present in both drainages. While beaver is not considered a declining species, it is regionally significant due to its contributions to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. For example, beaver activity can provide habitat for other species, with research indicating that beaver dams improve rearing habitat for juvenile salmon.

Beaver habitat has also been declining throughout the Oregon Coast Range, which means that the habitat in Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek is of even greater significance. In acknowledgement of these factors, the interdisciplinary team has determined that it is important to recognize, protect, and enhance the beaver habitat values in both wild and scenic river drainages.

Other Values: Ecological Systems

The two creeks feature exemplary temperate rainforest ecosystems. All elements of the ecological system are on display and interacting in a natural setting, including hydrology, geology, air, plants, aquatic wildlife, and terrestrial wildlife. Given the history of logging and development in the Oregon Coast Range, it is rare within the region of comparison to see drainages of this size with intact, high-functioning ecosystems. This is especially true of Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River, which contains 10 miles of nearly pristine ecosystem in the upland, riparian, and aquatic areas. These undisturbed ecological systems provide important habitats for many terrestrial and aquatic species. The systems also provide value as reference areas for understanding natural processes and sanctuaries of solitude for primitive recreation opportunities.

Our analysis indicates that the ecological systems of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are greater than the sum of their parts. The individual elements of the creeks' ecology may not necessarily rise to the level of outstandingly remarkable values on their own (though some do), but they combine to create an outstandingly remarkable system. For example, botany does not meet the outstandingly remarkable value criteria on its own; we do not have data indicating the presence of any rare plant species, and the existing plant communities are not rare, unique, or exemplary within the region of comparison. However, the drainages' intact late-seral plant communities are critical components of the ecosystem, especially in their contributions to habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species. Similarly, terrestrial wildlife (other than beaver habitat) does not meet the wildlife outstandingly remarkable value criteria, but the drainages' mammal, amphibian, and avian populations play key roles in the overall functioning of the ecosystem. Table 2 summarizes the outstandingly remarkable values identified for Wasson and Franklin Creeks.

Table 2. Outstandingly remarkable values identified for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creeks

Wasson Creek	Franklin Creek
Scenery	Scenery
Primitive Recreation	Fish Populations and Habitat
Fish Populations and Habitat	Beaver Habitat
Beaver Habitat	Ecological Systems
Ecological Systems	

Previous River Values Assessments and Designations

Wasson Creek

The segment of Wasson Creek on National Forest System lands was found to be eligible in a study for the 1990 Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan (Appendix L). The following Outstandingly Remarkable Values were identified and described in the Forest Service's 1990 Wasson Creek eligibility study.

Scenery: The segment of Wassen [now more commonly spelled as "Wasson"] Creek under study contains a section of stream and streamside environment which is completely undisturbed by human activity. This section is at least 7 miles long, and is probably the longest such reach for a stream of this size in the Coast Range. The vegetation in this section is mature or old-growth conifer. The streambed contains sections which are sandstone bedrock. There are numerous ledges and waterfalls, the largest of which, Devils Staircase, is a connected series of ledge drops totaling in excess of 30 feet.

Recreational: Wassen Creek is in the heart of an undeveloped area which, with adjacent land managed by BLM, is in excess of 5,000 acres. It, along with Drift Creek in the Drift Creek Wilderness, are the only two streams of their size in the Coast Range which provide opportunities for semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation.

Wildlife: There is at least one and possibly two active spotted owl nest sites within or in close proximity to the area.

Ecological: The area is included in the 1981 Oregon Natural Heritage Plan as currently filling two of the State's cell needs: Terrestrial Ecosystem #13 – Douglas fir/ salal, 100-150 years old (old burn), and Freshwater Aquatic Ecosystem #7 – Waterfall/ pool system on basalt/ sedimentary rock in western hemlock zone.

Under the Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation, the BLM listed Wasson Creek as having relevant and important values of fish, wildlife, and natural processes. It was recommended in the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry and excluded from the harvest land base. The 2016 RMP lists it as open for leasable mineral entry with no surface occupancy.

Wasson Creek is designated as an Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) by the BLM in the 2016 RMP. ERMA's are administrative units that require specific management consideration to address recreation use, demand, or recreation and visitor services program investments. The BLM manages ERMA's to support and sustain the principal recreation activities and the associated qualities and conditions of the ERMA. Management of ERMA's is commensurate with the management of other resources and resource uses.

Franklin Creek

No assessment for outstandingly remarkable values has been completed for Franklin Creek.

Since the 1990 Forest Plan, more rigorous minimum thresholds have been adopted and added to agency handbooks and manuals (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 82.14 and BLM Manual 6400, chapter 3-3). The interdisciplinary planning team has revised the outstandingly remarkable values identified in the Forest Plan based on an evaluation considering updated criteria as well as comments received during pre-scoping activities. Documentation of the evaluation can be found in the *River Values Assessment for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers*. The following table summarizes the findings and changes from those identified in the 1990 eligibility study.

Table 3. River value assessment findings compared to 1990 forest plan

Resource	Wasson Creek		Franklin Creek	
	1990	2021	1990	2021
Recreation	Yes	Yes	N/A	No
Wildlife	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Fisheries	No	Yes	N/A	Yes
Geological	No	No	N/A	No
Scenery	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Historical/Cultural	No	No	N/A	No
Other - Ecological	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes

Desired River Conditions

Desired river conditions (free-flowing condition, water quality, outstandingly remarkable values) for the wild and scenic rivers describe resource conditions, visitor experiences, and opportunities and services that the Agencies should strive to achieve and maintain within the river corridors. The proposed desired conditions for free-flowing condition and water quality are described below. Table 4 and Table 5 display the proposed desired conditions and standards and guidelines for Wasson and Franklin Creeks.

Free-flowing condition

The quantity and timing of water flows in streams, seeps, springs, and wetlands are sustained at a level that retains or enhances essential ecological functions in Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. Stream channels and associated flood plains occur within their natural flow regimes and the river is able to move freely across its floodplain. Soil and vegetation functions in upland and riparian settings are retained or enhanced to facilitate precipitation infiltration, and groundwater recharge. Largewood complexes form pools and store sediment, resulting in a variety of instream flow conditions.

Water quality

Water quality is sustained at a level that retains the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of the aquatic system and benefits survival, growth, reproduction, and migration of desired aquatic and riparian species. Water quality meets State of Oregon water quality standards and supports designated beneficial uses and desired aquatic species. Short-term exceedance of water quality standards (i.e., temporary periods of declining water quality) due to management activities occur only when they result in a long-term improvement in watershed health.

Table 4. Proposed desired conditions for Wasson and Franklin Creeks

Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Desired Conditions
Ecological	Contiguous late seral forest plant communities are present.
Ecological Scenery	Natural ecological processes and disturbance are the primary forces affecting biotic communities and the area's scenic character.
Ecological	Non-native invasive species are nonexistent or in low abundance and do not disrupt natural ecological functions.
Fisheries	Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek provide high-quality spawning and rearing habitat for native resident and anadromous fish. Additionally, the creeks provide a source of cold and clean water to support habitats that are downstream of the wild and scenic corridor boundary.
Ecological Fisheries Beaver Habitat Free Flow	Aquatic habitat components, including large woody debris, pools, riffles, beaver dams, and free-flowing conditions, remain undisturbed and are not detrimentally affected by public and administrative uses.
Water Quality	Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek meet Oregon Department of Environmental Quality standards for water quality. The creeks also serve as references for water quality conditions in watersheds in the Oregon Coast Range that have not been significantly impacted by human activities.
Ecological Fisheries Beaver Habitat	The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek drainages provide refugia from human-caused disturbances, and these refugia are accessible to native wildlife, fish, aquatic species, and plants, including beaver and threatened, endangered and sensitive species.
Recreation	A primitive recreation setting is maintained: The area is characterized by an essentially unmodified, natural environment. Concentrations of visitors are low, and evidence of human use is minimal. The area has high opportunity for isolation, solitude, exploration, risk, and challenge.
Recreation	The area provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, exploration, personal challenge, self-reliance, viewing wildlife in their native habitat, and immersion in a natural setting. Wasson Lake provides an opportunity for a more social and primitive camping experience.
Recreation Scenery	The sights and sounds of modern human civilization are not apparent, except limited or infrequent encounters with other visitors. Visitors also have opportunities to experience dark skies, and these dark skies contribute to the overall sense of remoteness and ruggedness.
Scenery	The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek watersheds meet agency visual quality objective (VQO) standards. Key scenery elements, including the old-growth forest, pools, riffles, cliff faces, and boulders, combine to create a scenic setting that is exemplary within the Central Oregon Coast Range.

Table 5. Proposed standards and guidelines for Wasson and Franklin Creeks

Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Standards and Guidelines
Fisheries Beaver Habitat Water	Human activities that degrade water quality are minimized. Mitigate or prevent conditions that result in bank erosion and sedimentation and ultimately reduce water clarity, especially near Devil's Staircase and Wasson Lake.
Scenery Fisheries Beaver Habitat	Discourage trampling of understory vegetation and the creation of patches of exposed soil in the river corridors, especially near Devil's Staircase Waterfall and Wasson Lake.
Scenery Fisheries Beaver Habitat	Minimize social trails so that their presence does not intrude visually on the river corridor.
Scenery Fisheries Water Quality	Retired roads within the wild and scenic river corridors are blocked and road surfaces are stabilized and narrowed to minimize negative impacts to scenery and water quality.
Water Quality Fish Beaver Habitat	Road and culvert maintenance activities shall not degrade river values and shall conform to Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
Scenery Ecological	Moss and lichen surfaces on large rocks and cliff walls are not visibly scarred or scraped away by visitor foot traffic, especially near Devil's Staircase and other large boulder fields.
Scenery Recreation	Discourage placement of dispersed campsites within 100 feet of the Wasson Lake shoreline and Devil's Staircase Waterfall. Campsites should be minimally intrusive when viewed from the Wasson Lake shoreline.
Ecological	Prevent invasive species infestations. Minimize or eradicate invasive species infestations through early detection and rapid response.
Ecological	Conduct post-fire monitoring for invasive plant species for at least three years after an incident.
Cultural	Public use remains at a level that minimizes impacts to cultural resources that have been largely untouched by historic land management activities.
Recreation Ecological	Horses or other domestic pack animals shall remain on system roads or trails.
Recreation	Designated trails should only be constructed if monitoring indicates an outstandingly remarkable value is

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Comprehensive River
Management Plan Scoping Packet

Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Standards and Guidelines
Ecological Fish Scenery	being adversely impacted and is at risk of being degraded.
Recreation Ecological	Campfires shall be restricted in times of high fire danger or where they would not be ecologically sustainable.
Recreation Ecological Scenery	Social trails and campsites resulting in adverse resource conditions should be actively rehabilitated or blocked and disguised to allow for recovery.
Recreation Scenery	Agency sign standards shall be followed. In general, signs should be located at access points and should only be provided where essential for resource protection.
Recreation Ecological Scenery Water Quality	Trash (including food waste) must be packed out. Visitors should be encouraged to “pack it in, pack it out” and to follow Leave No Trace Principles.
Ecological	The preservation of dark skies and dark nights for wildlife movement should be encouraged, including limiting night hiking.
Ecological	Intervention in natural processes through management actions should only occur where this would protect and enhance river values, protect public health and safety within and adjacent to the wild and scenic river corridors, or uphold other Federal laws and regulations.
Ecological Scenery	Fire operations within the wild and scenic river corridors should minimize effects to river values.
Recreation Ecological	Outfitter-guides shall be allowed to operate if there are no negative effects to river values, and if the use conforms to all other applicable law and policy.

Environmental Analysis and Documentation

Information received during scoping will be used to refine issues, establish analysis criteria, and explore possible alternatives and their probable environmental effects. The Forest Service and BLM expect to prepare a draft environmental assessment for the comprehensive river management plan for the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridors, as well as an amendment to the Siuslaw Forest Plan. You will have the opportunity to comment on the draft comprehensive river management plan, and draft environmental assessment during a formal 30-day comment period.

Purpose and Need for Action

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act mandates that agencies with jurisdiction over newly designated rivers complete comprehensive river management plans. The purpose of this proposal is to develop a comprehensive river management plan to protect and enhance the values for which Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers were designated (free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values) and to identify Forest Service and BLM management actions needed to protect these values on Federally managed lands within the wild and scenic river corridors. Another purpose of this proposal is to establish the final river corridor boundaries to facilitate the protection and enhancement of the outstandingly remarkable values, within the limits set in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The primary purpose of the comprehensive river management plan is to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values, water quality, and free-flowing characteristics of the designated wild and scenic rivers for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. Based upon the evaluation of corridor conditions, existing management direction, and need for action, the comprehensive river management plan would:

- address current conditions and other management practices, as required by law;
- protect and enhance outstandingly remarkable values;
- ensure free-flowing conditions and water quality are maintained;
- determine types and amounts of uses (visitor capacity) that each river can support while protecting river values;
- inform future management actions within the designated river corridors; and,
- develop a monitoring strategy to maintain desired conditions.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to adopt a comprehensive river management plan for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers and establish final boundaries for the rivers based on the requirements in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Specifically, the relevant comprehensive river management plan requirements would include the following:

- a description of the existing resource conditions including a detailed description of the river values;
- desired conditions for protecting river values;
- a determination of visitor use capacities;
- descriptions of consistent and inconsistent uses within the corridor;
- instream flow and water quality requirements;
- identification of regulatory authorities of other governmental agencies that assist in protecting river values; and,

- a monitoring strategy to maintain desired conditions.

This scoping packet includes the desired river conditions, proposed river boundaries, potential management actions, elements of the visitor use strategy, and Forest Plan amendment. No instream flow issues have been identified that would be addressed by this project. The other requirements have already been established in the Forest Plan and BLM Resource Management Plan, or will be developed using the scoping comments and continued coordination with Tribes and other government agencies.

Wild and Scenic River Boundaries

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that each federally administered river in the National System have a legally established boundary. Section 3(b) of the Act provides specific direction to the river-administering agencies.

The agency charged with the administration of each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system designated by subsection (a) of this section shall ...establish detailed boundaries...which boundaries shall include an average of not more than 320 acres of land per mile...measured from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of the river.

Establishing a wild and scenic river boundary that includes identified river-related values is essential as a basis from which to provide necessary protection. Section 10(a) of the Act describes factors which must be considered in wild and scenic river management and, therefore, provides direction on features which must be included within boundaries.

Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. In such administration, primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features.

Proposed Boundaries

The designating legislation established interim river corridor boundaries for Franklin and Wasson Creeks of ¼ mile on each side of the corridor as measured from the high water mark. Refinement of the interim boundaries for Wasson and Franklin Creeks utilized an interdisciplinary team and applied a multiple step process. Interim boundary expansion ideas were brainstormed by staff in February 2020. Initially, the interim boundary was expanded to include several streams tributary to Wasson and Franklin Creeks.

Potential boundary expansion suggestions were revisited by the interdisciplinary team during fall of 2020 to validate which specific outstandingly remarkable value was being protected by each proposed expansion. Additionally, the team also considered the degree to which each expansion provided additional protection for the outstandingly remarkable values, and whether a particular area was otherwise protected and if there were multiple or complimentary protections already provided (e.g., Wilderness, Late-Successional Reserve, Riparian Reserve, ACEC). As a general rule, the team did not expand the wild and scenic river boundary onto lands where the river values were otherwise protected by overlapping designations.

The team also considered the need for continued motorized access outside and along the Wilderness boundary and the necessity for maintenance and potential road restoration activities. Expansion into these roaded areas was also avoided. The majority of the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek interim wild and scenic river boundaries are within the Devil's Staircase Wilderness, and the team initially identified several Wasson Creek boundary expansions that went beyond the wilderness onto BLM-managed O&C

lands¹. Consistent with leadership's intent, the interdisciplinary team did not expand the wild and scenic river corridor onto these additional non-wilderness O&C lands. In two instances the interim boundary was contracted to avoid O&C lands outside the wilderness (total of 8.9 acres reduction). In one case, the interim boundary was extended to the wilderness boundary to provide for management of a visitor-created access point to further protect the outstandingly remarkable values (~13-acre increase). The Wasson Creek river corridor was also expanded in another location to include exceptional beaver habitat (~31 acres increase).

Currently, the Franklin Creek river corridor is designated by the original interim boundary. The number of acres within the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek preliminary river corridors is 2,743.7 and 1408.6, respectively. Maps of the proposed boundaries are located in Appendix A of this document and available on the project website and shown on the story map for this project.

Visitor Use Management & Capacity

A visitor use management strategy would be developed as a component of the comprehensive river management plan. While visitor capacity estimates are a required component of the plan as mandated by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the visitor use management strategy would focus on identifying proactive approaches to address resource concerns and user conflicts related to recreational use within the river corridors, utilizing the nine step process developed by the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council.

The proposed action addresses the need for visitor management, outlines the approach to developing a visitor use management strategy, and identifies the desired river conditions. This proposal also identifies distinct areas of analysis for visitor use related to desired conditions for recreation resources. Responses to scoping are expected to inform the development of management strategies and capacity estimates for the draft comprehensive river management plan.

Requirements of the Act Related to Visitor Capacity

The Act directs that river-administering agencies manage visitor use to protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of designated rivers. Specifically, Section 3(d)(1) of the Act directs that the agency address user capacities. The 1982 *National Wild and Scenic Rivers System: Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification and Management of River Areas* define capacity as:

The quantity of recreation use which an area can sustain without adverse impact on the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing character of the river area, the quality of recreation experience, and public health and safety.

To further meet the requirement of the Act, the guidelines note that:

Management plans will state the kinds and amounts of public use that the river can sustain without impact to the values for which it was designated.

Visitor capacity is not the same as use limits. Limiting use is a specific management tool, whereas visitor capacity is an overall estimate of how much use an area can sustain while achieving desired conditions. Limiting use is only one of many tools available to managers to ensure visitor use does not cause adverse impacts to desired conditions. Other tools available to managers include providing visitor education, offering information about alternative opportunities, changing where or when use occurs, re-designing

¹The Oregon and California Railroad Revested Lands, known as the O&C Lands, lie in a checkerboard pattern through eighteen counties of western Oregon.

sites, re-distributing use, limiting the type(s) of use, limiting group size, and many others. Because the degree of potential resource damage associated with visitor use is dependent upon site conditions, timing and seasonality of use, visitor behavior, and other highly variable factors, rather than the total number of people in a given day or year, visitor capacities are only an estimate and have minimal utility for on-the-ground management. The visitor use management strategy would outline desired conditions, identify reasonable indicators for river values, establish a monitoring protocol for trends in resource conditions relative to visitor use, and most importantly, outline a suite of responses to avoid unacceptable impacts to river values.

Visitor Use Analysis Areas and River Value Considerations

The interdisciplinary team has identified four distinct areas of analysis for developing visitor use management strategies and capacity estimates within the planning area. These areas were identified based on desired conditions for a variety of visitor experience settings throughout the river corridor, including accessibility to the river from roads and trails, solitude, and a primitive recreation experience. Distinct visitor use analysis areas include: 1) Franklin Creek, 2) Wasson Lake and surrounding area, including the paved access road, 3) Devil's Staircase waterfall and surrounding area, and 4) the remaining portions of Wasson Creek.

Proposed and Potential Management Actions

Section 10(a) of the Act requires that river-administering agencies protect and enhance the river values. Currently, the agencies are unaware of any conditions within the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek river corridors that are adversely impacting outstandingly remarkable values. However, to ensure that the agencies meet this requirement, the comprehensive river management plan would include proposed non-ground disturbing management actions (Table 6) to validate the accuracy of the baseline conditions. The comprehensive river management plan would also include potential management actions to ensure that river values are protected and enhanced into the future (Table 7). The potential management actions would require additional development of a proposed action and site-specific analysis.

Table 6. Proposed non-ground disturbing management actions

River Value Enhanced or Protected	Proposed Management Action
Scenery, Recreation, Ecological	Conduct surveys for non-native invasive species along trails, retired roads, and at destination points.
Water quality, Fish, Ecological	Conduct road inventories and Geomorphic Road Analysis and Inventory Package (GRAIP) surveys to identify potential slope failures and drainage concerns.
All	Evaluate opportunities for partnerships with Tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental groups for monitoring, public information, and stewardship of the wild and scenic rivers
All	Consider adaptive management strategies for monitoring, protecting, and enhancing river values.

Table 7. Potential management actions

River Value Enhanced or Protected	Potential Management Action
Water quality, Scenery, Recreation	Designate and maintain user-built trail to Wasson Lake. Designate one user-created route and block and rehabilitate the others.
Water quality, Scenery, Recreation	Based on monitoring, revegetate areas where bare soil is exposed, including along Wasson Lake shoreline (beyond existing dispersed site footprint) and along Wasson and Franklin Creek streambanks.
Ecological, Scenery	Treat invasive species to reduce or prevent spread within the river corridors.
All	Provide educational information on non-native invasive species, Leave No Trace, etc. at select access points. Supplement on-the-ground signage with web-based information.

Forest Plan Amendment

A programmatic amendment to the Siuslaw Forest Plan is necessary to modify plan components including land use allocations (management areas) and standard and guidelines. No amendments are needed to the BLM Northwestern & Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan to adopt the comprehensive river management plan.

The Forest Plan would be amended under the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219). The 2012 Planning Rule has different provisions than the 1982 Planning Rule under which the existing plan was developed. The purpose of this amendment is to make the Forest Plan consistent with the Dingell Act, specifically the wild river designations on the Siuslaw National Forest. All future projects and activities must be consistent with the amended plan.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Forest Service to identify which substantive rule provisions within 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 are directly related to the amendment, and these provisions must be applied to the amendment. The applicable substantive provisions apply only within the scope and scale of the amendment (36 CFR 219.13(b)(5)). The substantive requirements that are directly related to this amendment include the following:

- *36 CFR 219.8(a)(2)(iii) and (a)(2)(iv) –The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore water quality and quantity.*
- *36 CFR 219.8(3)(B) – The plan must include plan components, including standards and guidelines, to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of riparian areas, including plan components to maintain or restore function and connectivity, taking into account blockages of water courses.*
- *36 CFR 219.10(a)(1) – The plan must include plan components, including standards and guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, as well as consider the following: aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses.*

The amendment is modest in scope because it finalizes what Congress has already legislated and formalizes the management direction that has been applied since adoption of the Forest Plan in 1990. Currently, the designated wild river segments are managed under a variety of land use allocations. All of these lands are designated as Congressionally Reserved Areas under the Northwest Forest Plan. The lands within the corridors are also within Riparian Reserves. Riparian Reserves include areas along rivers,

streams, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and unstable or potentially unstable areas where the conservation of aquatic and riparian-dependent terrestrial resources receives primary emphasis. Riparian Reserves are designed to protect the health of the aquatic system and its dependent species. As such, these lands would continue to be managed under both the Riparian Reserve and Congressionally Reserved Areas standards and guidelines given the extensive overlap.

The Forest Plan guides planning on the forest through land allocations (Management Areas), and each management area contains prescribed standards and guidelines. The Forest Plan does not include a management area specific to designated wild and scenic rivers. These rivers are currently included in Management Area 11–Undeveloped Areas (MA-11). The Forest Plan would be amended to add a new management area that would apply to Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridors, as defined by the final adopted river boundaries. The new management area would adopt the applicable goals, desired conditions, and standards and guidelines identified for MA-11, in addition to those identified previously in this proposal. This management area would not apply to other designated rivers. Additional Forest Plan amendments would be required to apply this management area to other designated wild and scenic river corridors. Management direction in the Forest Plan, as amended, including Forest-wide standards and guidelines would still apply.

Appendix A: Maps

