



Big South Fork

Enabling Legislation

*Water Resources Act of
1974 (Public Law 93-
251, §108)*

The National River & Recreation Area (NRRA) was created “for the purposes of conserving and interpreting an area containing unique cultural, historic, geologic, fish and wildlife, archeologic, scenic, and recreational values, preserving as a natural, free-flowing stream the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River, major portions of its

Clear Fork and New River stems, and portions of their various tributaries for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, the preservation of the natural integrity of the scenic gorges and valleys, and the development of the area’s potential for healthful recreation.”





Big South Fork

Enabling Legislation: Special Mandates

Water Resources Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-251, §108)



The National Area is divided into the “gorge” and “adjacent area” (the plateau).

- In the “gorge:”
 - There is no mineral, petroleum, or gas development;
 - There is no motorized transportation except on designated access roads and certain other routes for administrative use and limited cemetery access.
- In the “adjacent area:”
 - There is no surface or strip mining
 - Mineral prospecting and extraction is permitted according to applicable regulations when the entrance is outside the National Area boundary.
 - Petroleum and gas prospecting and extraction is permitted according to applicable regulations.



Big South Fork

Enabling Legislation: Special Mandates

- All roads and facility construction must maintain the scenic and esthetic values of both the gorge and adjacent areas.
- The historical integrity of Rugby shall be preserved and enhanced by sensitive development and management of nearby National Area Lands.
- The Blue Heron Mine community shall be restored, preserved, and enhanced for public understanding and enjoyment of its historic value.
- Any construction or maintenance shall be accomplished in a manner that protects the declared values of the area.
- Water quality will be protected and enhanced in cooperation with others, with special emphasis on the New River watershed.





Big South Fork

Big South Fork Significance

From the Big South Fork Final General Management Plan



- Dramatic sandstone gorges, imposing bluff lines, some of the nation's largest water-crafted arches, and other notable geologic formations are found throughout the National Area.
- The Big South Fork is a free-flowing river system, flowing unhindered by water development projects except as it enters Lake Cumberland.
- The National Area contains a wide variety of habitats with associated flora and fauna of the Cumberland Plateau in a limited geographic area.
- Extremely large numbers and varieties of archeological, historic, and ethnographic resources, illustrating a long continuum of use, are found in the National Area, including farmsteads eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- National Area waters provide habitat for a world-class freshwater mussel assemblage and are an important refuge for many endangered mussel species. Few other river systems support this level of mussel diversity.
- The National Area provides a broad range of natural and cultural resource-based outdoor recreation and educational opportunities.



Obed Wild and Scenic River

Enabling Legislation

*From the Wild and
Scenic Rivers Act*

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.





Obed Wild and Scenic River

Obed Significance

*From the Obed Wild and Scenic River Strategic Management Plan:
October 1, 2005 to
September 30, 2008*



- The Obed Wild and Scenic River system is one of the last remaining wild rivers in the eastern United States where high stream gradients are intermingled with quiet smooth flowing stretches. The system supports ecologically diverse plant and animal life including over two dozen state and federally listed endangered and threatened species and their associated critical habitats. It is designated as a Tier III Outstanding Natural Resource Water under the Clean Water Act due to its superior water quality which supports diverse aquatic and riparian ecosystems.
- The rivers provide outstanding recreational, educational, and inspirational opportunities for visitors to experience a vestige of primitive America in a unique river gorge environment. Falling steeply off the Cumberland Plateau through pristine narrow and deep gorges, the Obed River System provides remarkable scenic vistas. The river gorge encompasses unique Cumberland Plateau geology including a collection of dramatic sandstones gorges, rock shelters, waterfalls, continuous bluffs, and natural arches.



Purpose Statements

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

The purpose of Big South

Fork National River and Recreation Area is stated clearly in its enabling legislation, and includes the following:

National park system units were established by Congress to fulfill specified purposes, based on each area's unique and "significant" resources. A park's purpose, as established by Congress, is the fundamental building block for its decisions to conserve resources while providing for "enjoyment of future generations."

- To preserve and interpret the area's cultural, historic, archeological, geologic, fish and wildlife, scenic, and recreational values;
- To preserve the free-flowing Big South Fork and portions of its tributaries;
- To preserve the natural integrity of the gorge; and
- To provide healthful outdoor recreation for the enjoyment of the public and for the benefit of the regional economy.



Obed Wild and Scenic River

The purpose of this park service unit is to preserve and protect the Obed Wild and Scenic River System and the surrounding area in an essentially primitive condition, with unpolluted waters, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

