

CHAPTER 5. ALTERNATIVES FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

This chapter considers how the New River study area could be managed in the future, with a focus on four alternative strategies that were identified for detailed consideration during the study process. Alternative 1 represents a continuation of the current situation; this is the “no-action” or no designation alternative required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 are “action” alternatives; that is, each includes changes from the current framework for managing the area.

The chapter includes (1) a brief background on how the alternatives were developed, (2) an articulation of goals and other critical management concepts that would apply if the river were designated as a national wild and scenic river, (3) a description of several other features that are shared by the three action alternatives, (4) a summary description of the four alternatives, and (5) a comparison of similarities and differences among the four alternatives. More detailed information on important aspects of the four alternatives is provided in Appendix 5.A.

The discussion of future management presented in this chapter and related appendices may be more detailed and complicated than is typical for wild and scenic river study reports focused on rivers flowing through federal lands. The study team concluded that this depth was necessary in order to provide both the public and the affected agencies with sufficient information for making informed decisions about the alternatives and how the river corridor could be managed in the future.

Background

Process for Identifying Alternatives

As described in Chapter 1, “Public Involvement and Study Scoping,” (see page 2) and documented in Chapter 8, from the fall of 2003 through the fall of 2004, the study team worked with the Interagency Work Group and the public to define a reasonable range of alternatives for the future management of the New River study area. Initially, the team and Work Group thought as broadly as possible and identified nineteen possible alternatives involving different lead agencies and different designations that could enhance the current conservation and management of the area. This list was narrowed down to six alternatives that were presented at the public meetings held in July, 2004, in Hinton, West Virginia, and Rich Creek, Virginia. Based on public input at those meetings and further discussions with the Interagency Work Group, the range was further narrowed to the final set of four alternatives that are described in detail in the “Summary of Alternatives” section of this chapter (see page 92) and in Appendix 5.A. The four final alternatives are:

- Alternative 1: Continuation of current management (No Action)
- Alternative 2: National Wild and Scenic River administered by the ACE
- Alternative 3: National Wild and Scenic River administered by the NPS

- Alternative 4: National Wild and Scenic River administered by the states of Virginia and West Virginia

Alternatives Not Considered in Detail

Table 5.1 identifies (15) alternatives that were included in the original list of preliminary alternatives but that the study team and Interagency Work Group later rejected from detailed consideration and analysis. The rejected alternatives are arrayed in five categories according to the agency or agencies that would have overall lead responsibility for implementation, as follows: (1) Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), (2) National Park Service (NPS), (3) U.S. Forest Service (USFS), (4) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and (5) the states of Virginia (VA) and West Virginia (WV).

Table 5.1. Alternatives rejected and the rationale for these decisions.

Rejected Alternative	Decision Sequence	Rationale for Decision
1. Alternatives w/ ACE Lead:		
1.1. Enhanced management with no national designation	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	Viewed as not being distinct from the continuation of current management (Alternative 1).
1.2. National W&S River administered by ACE and managed by Giles County in VA & by DNR in WV	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	County not experienced in managing an area of this size and type and does not see a need to be an active manager when other options are available.
1.3. National Recreation Area (NRA) & National W&S River administered by ACE	Retained as one of six initial alternatives presented to the public in July 2004. Rejected during the development of final alternatives.	Establishing NRA would potentially support regional tourism efforts. Advantages may not outweigh the added administrative cost. Little public support for this alternative.
2. Alternatives w/ NPS Lead:		
2.1. National W&S River administered by NPS & managed by Giles County in VA & by DNR in WV.	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	See rationale for 1.2.

2.2. National WS River administered and managed by NPS with no state or county involvement.	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	History of Bluestone NSR as joint federal/state venture suggests that continued state involvement was preferable to federal-only management.
2.3. NRA & National W&S River administered by NPS.	Retained as one of six initial alternatives presented to the public in July 2004. Rejected during the development of final alternatives.	See rationale for 1.3.
2.4. National Park administered and managed by NPS with no state or county involvement.	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	Local residents want to retain the WV portion of this area as a wildlife management area. New River Gorge National River is already established nearby and there does not appear to be a need to duplicate the opportunities provided there.
3. Alternatives with USFS Lead:		
3.1. National W&S River administered and managed by USFS with no state or county involvement	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	USFS declined to become involved due to other commitments. Many stakeholders feel there is no advantage in adding a new agency to those already in managing the study area.
3.2. National W&S River administered by USFS and managed by Giles County in VA & DNR in WV.	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	See rationale for 1.2.
3.3. National W&S River administered by USFS w/ state wildlife management	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	See rationale for 3.1.
3.4. NRA & National W&S River administered by USFS	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	See rationale for 3.1 and 1.3.

4. Alternatives w/ USFWS Lead:		
4.1. National Wildlife Refuge and National W&S River administered and managed by USFWS with no state or county involvement	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	USFWS mission & skills are similar to the state fish & wildlife agencies. Given the similarity, many stakeholders feel there is no advantage to adding USFWS. (USFWS was not contacted to solicit interest.)
5. Alternatives w/ State Lead:		
5.1. State-owned and managed Wildlife Management Area and state-administered National W&S River in WV only	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	This alternative does not address management issues in VA.
5.2. Interstate Park and state-administered National W&S River	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	Strong desire among local residents to retain the WV portion of this area as a wildlife management area. No advantage detected for this interstate scenario over separate but coordinated efforts in the two states.
5.3. State-owned and managed Wildlife Management Area (or State Park in VA) and state-administered National Wild and Scenic River designated under Section 2(a)(ii) of the WSR ¹	Rejected during preliminary examination of alternatives.	This alternative holds no advantages over Alternative 4 in the set of final alternatives. Also, the Section 2(a)(ii) designation would introduce unnecessary complexity.

Two of the rejected alternatives: National Recreation Area and National Wild and Scenic River administered by ACE (1.3 in Table 5.1), and National Recreation Area and National Wild and Scenic River administered by NPS (2.3), were presented to the public in July, 2004, along with the four alternatives that ultimately made the final list of alternatives. These two alternatives

¹ Section 2(a)(ii) of the WSR provides for designation by administrative action of the Secretary of the Interior upon request from the governor(s) of the state(s) involved and subsequent to the river's inclusion in the state(s)'s river protection program(s). This is different from the more common procedure of designating rivers through Congressional action.

envisioned a National Recreation Area that would encompass the study area and other adjacent public lands (including the portion of the Bluestone WMA surrounding Bluestone Lake, the Bluestone NSR (and potentially Bluestone and Pipestem State Parks) in a multi-agency collaborative conservation and recreation area. While there was some support for both of these alternatives, the level of support was not as high as for the four other alternatives that ultimately were selected for detailed analysis. The public viewed the National Recreation Area alternatives as too complex to be feasible. As a result of the rejection of the two National Recreation Area alternatives, all four of the final alternatives focus exclusively on the study area. However, the idea of greater inter-jurisdictional collaboration among the different management areas within the Bluestone Lake Project Area and other nearby public lands has not been totally discarded. Opportunities for collaboration with adjacent and other public conservation lands are explored in the next section of this chapter.

Treatment of Opportunities Involving the Larger Region

In the development of management alternatives for the study area, the project team and other participants were mindful of the fact that this section of the New River is part of a larger geographic, ecological, economic, and social region. Due to both its strategic location and the significance of its resources, the study area could play an important role in contributing to the future of the broader region. There was agreement, therefore, that some consideration should be given to possible approaches for integrating management of the river with the larger region.

A number of strategies were identified that could be used to more fully connect this section of the New River to the larger region. These strategies are described in Appendix 5.B. While these strategies could complement and enhance future management of the study area, readers should note that each of the four management alternatives presented in this chapter stands on its own and could be implemented independent of broader regional action.

Foundations for Future Management

An important part of the study process involved identifying key concepts to guide future management of this segment of the New River and the adjacent federal lands, particularly if the area is designated as a national wild and scenic river as called for in Alternatives 2, 3 and 4. The goals, management principles, and assurances articulated below are the outcome of that effort. They were identified through extensive consultation with the Interagency Work Group and dialogue with other key stakeholders, including local and county officials, sporting groups and other recreationists, businesses, conservation interests, residents, and other interested individuals.

These goals, management principles, and assurances are consistent with, and would supplement, the WSRA's general management policy of protecting and enhancing the free-flowing condition and outstanding resource values of all designated rivers (as described in Chapter 1, "Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation," page 6). The goals, management principles, and assurances would apply under each of the action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4) and are sufficiently important for future management that they should be included or at least referenced

in any federal legislation that would designate this segment of the New River as a national wild and scenic river, which would give them the weight of federal law. These provisions would not apply if the river area is not designated as a WSR (i.e., if Alternative 1 is ultimately selected).

Goals

The following goals will serve as the foundation for all decisions regarding management and use of the area. Consistency with these goals will be the primary measure for determining the range of management directions and actions that might be considered.

1. Recognizing existing upstream water management and the variability of natural conditions, maintain sufficient stream flow, water quality, and riparian corridor conditions to sustain the outstanding resource values that make the river eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Enhance these values wherever possible.
2. Maintain the existing conditions and functions of the river and adjacent lands.
3. Provide a range of habitats and conditions to support the existing diversity of species and healthy populations of fish and wildlife and ensure that these species and populations will persist into the future.
4. Protect special natural features, scenic landscapes, sensitive plant and wildlife species, and historic sites that are important to the area's natural and cultural heritage.
5. Retain the study area's predominantly undeveloped, rugged, and relatively remote character.
6. Provide opportunities for the public to participate in outdoor recreational activities that make use of, and are consistent with, long-term conservation of the natural environment, with an emphasis on traditional uses including hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife observation, camping, boating, and, in general, experiencing a remote outdoor setting. Provide an environment that allows people participating in these activities to have a high-quality experience.
7. Contribute to the region's livability and economy by providing appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities to both residents and visitors that complement other local and regional recreational opportunities.
8. Continue to provide flood control for communities downstream of the Bluestone Dam, and balance other demands for water use outside the study area (including for energy production, waste assimilation, water supply, commercial and industrial uses, and recreation) with maintenance of the river's environmental quality.

Management Principles

While goals define *what* should occur, management principles describe *how* those involved in management of the area will conduct their business.

1. Management will respect traditional patterns of use and adjacent ownership.
2. Management decisions will be made mindful of the broader regional context in order to contribute to regional objectives and complement regional activities.
3. Collaborative working relationships will be established and maintained with gateway communities, both up and downstream, with counties, and with other federal, state, regional, and local authorities with a stake in the management of the river and river corridor.
4. Meaningful public involvement opportunities will be provided, in order that the counties, municipalities, public and private organizations, and interested citizens can learn about – and become engaged in – the planning and management of the area.
5. An emphasis will be placed on consistency and continuity of management with adjacent public lands, including lands currently administered by the ACE upstream and downstream of the study area, and with other significant public lands in the region, including the New River Gorge National River, the Bluestone NSR, Bluestone and Pipestem State Parks, and the Jefferson National Forest.

Assurances

If any of the alternatives involving wild and scenic river designation ultimately is implemented, there are certain fundamental provisions that will apply. These assurances generally relate to the continuation of specific aspects of the current situation in the area, and are consistent with the goals and management principles identified in the previous sections.

1. The operation of Bluestone Dam for the authorized purposes of flood control, hydropower, fish and wildlife, and recreation will not be affected, nor will upstream flowage rights related to the Bluestone Lake Project that are held by the ACE. The dam may be retrofitted for energy production, subject to existing laws and regulations and consistent with the long-term conservation of the river's outstanding resource values.
2. Wildlife species and their habitats will be managed in a manner that provides healthy populations into the future.
3. High-quality hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities will be provided for current and future generations.

4. State and federal agencies will retain their existing authorities, as defined by federal and state law, over the management of fish and wildlife species and the regulation of hunting, fishing and trapping.
5. The operations of Appalachian Power’s Glen Lyn Plant and Claytor Dam will not be affected, unless changes to these facilities are proposed that could significantly affect water quality or the free-flowing condition of the river. State and federal water resource and/or environmental protection agencies will continue to make decisions regarding water quality and flow using applicable state and federal law. The substantive provisions of the existing lease of federal lands downstream of the Route 460 Bridge in Glen Lyn, Virginia, to Appalachian Power for fly ash disposal will not be affected, even if the lands are transferred from the ACE to another agency.
6. Other existing leases of federal lands in the area (i.e., for agriculture and the town park in Glen Lyn, Virginia) will continue for the life of those leases even if the lands are transferred from the ACE to another agency, provided the uses involved remain consistent with the overall direction and specific standards for management of the river corridor.
7. Lands in the West Virginia portion of the designated area will continue to be part of the Bluestone WMA, unless the West Virginia DNR chooses to remove them from the WMA.
8. The West Virginia DNR will continue to own and maintain the buildings at its administrative complex at Indian Mills unless it desires to transfer them to another willing party.
9. Applicable federal and state laws and regulations will continue to apply, including the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and state equivalents.
10. Condemnation (or “eminent domain”) will not be used as a means to acquire lands or easements for purposes of managing the project area. Any land acquisition will be through purchase from willing sellers or donation and will be used only when necessary to achieve critical management objectives (e.g., to secure important public access).

Elements Common to All Action Alternatives

In addition to the goals, management principles, and assurances described in the previous section, there are several other features that are common to all three action alternatives (i.e., Alternatives 2, 3 and 4). These are described below.

Purpose

The fundamental purpose of the action alternatives is to provide added protection for the free-flowing condition and outstanding resource values of this stretch of the New River (as described in Chapter 3), while maintaining the current emphasis on fish and wildlife management and the established fish- and wildlife-dependent traditional public uses of the study area.

Wild and Scenic River Designation

Under all action alternatives, most of the New River and adjacent federal lands in the study area would be designated as a national wild and scenic river. The designated segment would be classified as a “scenic” river under the WSRA. The suggested boundaries of the area that would be designated as a WSR under each of the action alternatives are discussed in “Wild and Scenic River Implementation” below.

Management Guidance

For all action alternatives, management of the designated WSR segment of the New River would be consistent with the following: (1) the WSRA’s general policy of protecting and enhancing the area’s free-flowing condition and outstanding resources (see Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” page 6); (2) the goals, management principles, and assurances presented above in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83; and (3) the maintenance of conditions sufficient for meeting the WSRA “scenic” classification. In addition, detailed resource management standards for each action alternative were prepared during the study process. These standards, which are specific to each alternative, provide further guidance for future management. (See Appendix 5.C.) If one of the action alternatives is ultimately selected for implementation, the applicable standards and other management provisions considered to be central to that alternative should be referenced in the authorizing legislation in order to provide guarantees that these standards and management provisions would be implemented.

Also, as described in Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” a comprehensive river management plan would be prepared by the lead agency (or agencies) after designation. This plan would incorporate the goals, management principles, and assurances, and the management standards specific to the alternative selected. For the portion of the designated area in West Virginia, the comprehensive river management plan would incorporate provisions of WVDNR’s current five-year wildlife management plan for the broader Bluestone WMA to the greatest extent possible within the overall framework of the selected alternative. The comprehensive river management plan would replace the ACE’s Bluestone Lake Project Area master plan as the guiding document for the Virginia portion of the designated area. Potential components of the comprehensive river management plan are described in Appendix 5.D.

Wild and Scenic River Implementation

The NPS Northeast Regional Office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, would be responsible for reviewing any proposed projects that would fall under the provisions of Section 7 of the WSRA. (See description in Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation.”) This is because (1) in accordance with the WSRA, a federal agency must assume this responsibility, and (2) the NPS Regional Office has considerable experience implementing Section 7 on other rivers throughout the northeast.² Responsibility for implementing other aspects of wild and scenic river designation (such as developing a comprehensive management plan and managing the river and adjacent public lands) would vary under the different action alternatives, as described in “Summary of Alternatives,” page 92 below and Appendix 5.A.

Suggested Wild and Scenic River Boundaries

Under all of the action alternatives, the area that would be designated as a WSR is proposed to include the following:

River Area: The New River, from a line approximately 1-¼ miles below the Route 460 Bridge at the upstream end of the large bend in Giles County, Virginia (the southern boundary, as shown in Figure 5.1), downstream to the confluence with Buffalo Creek near Steer Island in Summers County, West Virginia (the northern boundary, as shown in Figure 5.2); and

Land Area: Federal (ACE) lands adjacent to the river segment described above and bounded on the northern and southern ends by the lines shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, respectively.³

The Study Team and Interagency Work Group developed this boundary proposal after careful consideration of several options. The rationale for the proposed boundaries is as follows:

Southern Boundary: While the entire study segment has been found eligible for wild and scenic river designation (i.e., beginning at the Route 460 Bridge), the study team and agency participants concluded that it would be more appropriate to begin the designation at the river bend roughly 1-¼ mile downstream of the Route 460 Bridge. This boundary would be downstream of the concentrated development around the bridge, including components of Appalachian Power’s Glen Lyn generating facility (such as the fly ash disposal site and several permitted wastewater discharges). To establish the proposed land boundary at this location, the river boundary was extended in a straight line on river right and river left because this was most straightforward approach and there were no compelling resource or management reasons for doing otherwise.

² For Alternatives 2 and 4, specific language would need to be included in the designation legislation authorizing the NPS to assume this role.

³ As discussed in “Treatment of Opportunities Involving the Larger Region,” page 83, other public lands close to the study area (including the federal/ACE lands around Bluestone Lake, Bluestone State Park, Bluestone NSR, and Pipestem Resort State Park) were considered in the development of alternatives, but ultimately were not included in any of the alternatives presented in this chapter. (See Appendix 5.B for further discussion.) The only exception is that under Alternative 3 there is potential that administrative and management responsibility for the Bertha Camping Area downstream of the potential WSR area could be transferred to the NPS. This issue is discussed further in the detailed description of Alternative 3 in “National Wild and Scenic River administered by the NPS,” on page 95.

Northern Boundary: With respect to the location of the suggested northern boundary, the confluence with Buffalo Creek was chosen because it is an easily identifiable feature at or very close to the 1,410-foot elevation above mean sea level. This is the maximum summer pool elevation of Bluestone Lake as identified in study authorizing legislation, and the point at which the New River is no longer free-flowing during summer pool conditions.

The land-based boundary on river left shown in Figure 5.2 was selected because it is easy to understand and would incorporate the Bull Falls Camping Area within the designated WSR area. This would keep the Bull Falls campground under the same managing agency as other upstream camping areas, thereby simplifying recreation management. The land-based boundary on river right was chosen primarily because it would not divide important ecological features – namely, Barton Ridge, the Buffalo Creek watershed, and the Dickinson Hollow watershed. While the net result is a suggested northern boundary that appears somewhat unusual on a map, it nonetheless appears to be preferable relative to other options because of these important management considerations.

Figure 5.1. Suggested southern boundary for wild and scenic river designation.

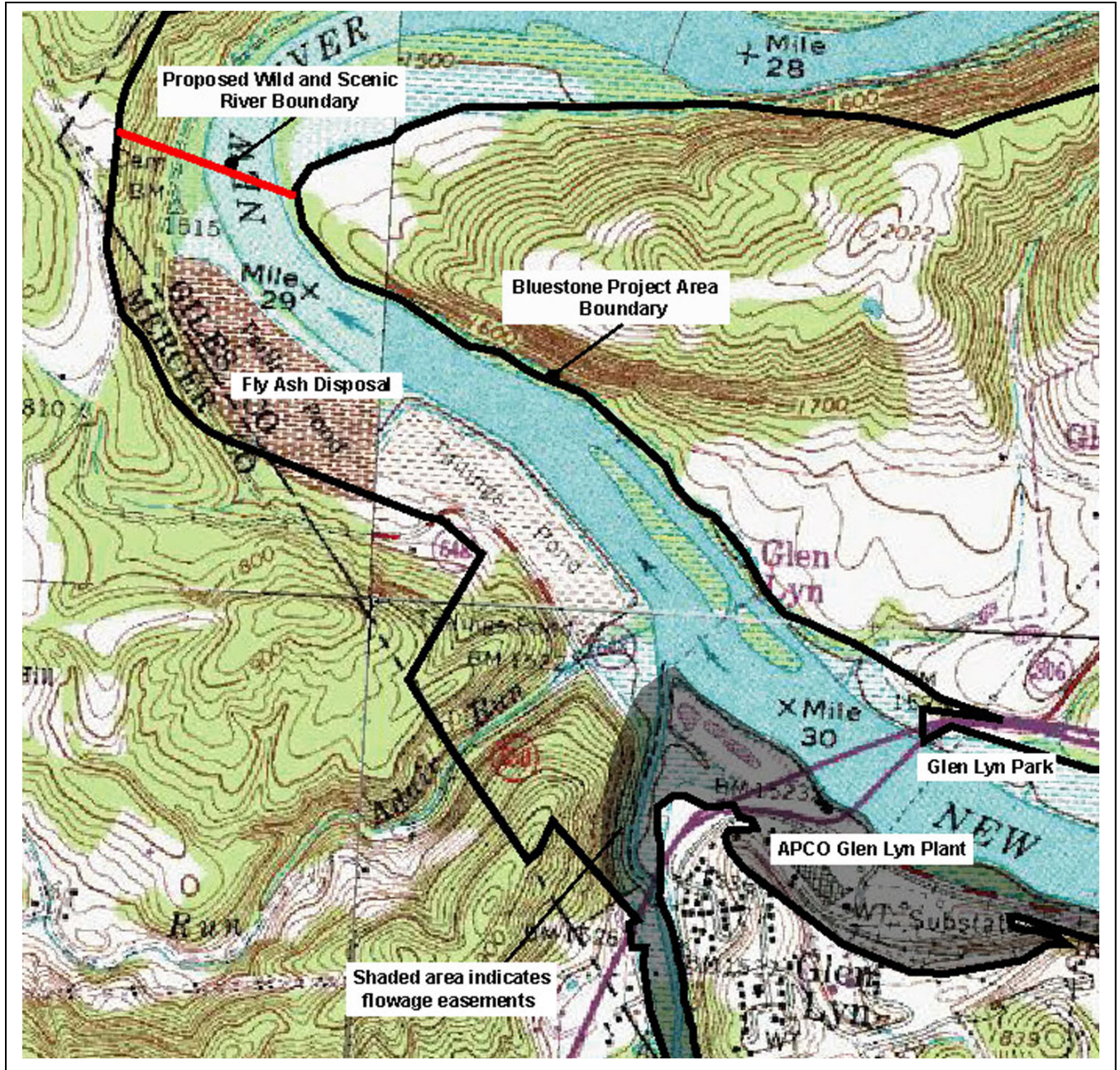
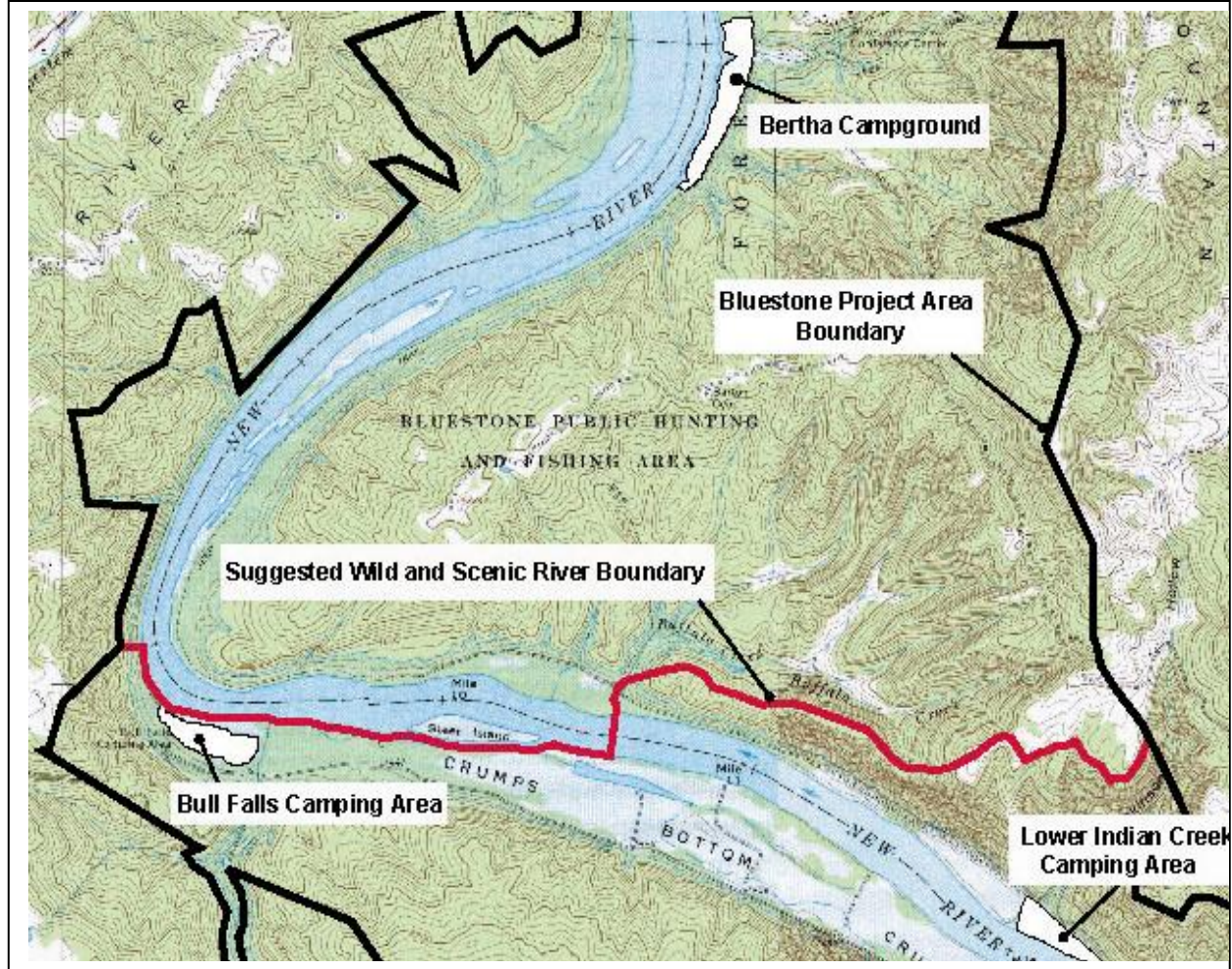


Figure 5.2. Suggested northern boundary for wild and scenic river designation.



Management of the River and Adjacent Federal Lands Upstream

Under all action alternatives, additional portions of the river and adjacent federal lands within the Bluestone Lake Project Area upstream of the suggested southern boundary would not be included as part of the designated WSR segment. However, those upstream areas have important ecological, public use, and management connections to the area downstream that would be designated. It is recommended that the upstream area be managed in the same way as the designated area – that is, according to the provisions described above under “Management Guidance.”

Summary of Alternatives

This section provides an overview of the four alternatives for future management selected for detailed consideration. The description focuses on the management structure and general direction for resource management that would be used for each alternative. Further information on these and other important features of the alternatives is presented in Appendix 5.A.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that a reasonable range of alternatives be considered in addition to the no-action alternative. As discussed in “Alternatives Not Considered in Detail,” page 80, a wide range of preliminary alternatives was initially considered. Some had similar attributes. When this was the case, one alternative was selected that appeared to have the most merit, both in terms of its potential environmental effects and its management feasibility. The study team and Interagency Work Group determined that the four alternatives presented below represent a reasonable range for the following reasons:

- All four alternatives are technically and economically feasible.
- Each of the alternatives represents an approach to management for which there is a reasonable expectation that the agencies involved could and would successfully implement the alternative if it were selected.
- The action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3 and 4) are consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the goals, management principles, and assurances for future management presented in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83.
- The alternatives address only the immediate study area of the New River and do not incorporate larger regional possibilities (which were seen by some participants as beyond the purview of the study and too complicated).
- The agencies identified as potential administrators or on-the-ground managers for the four alternatives include only federal and state agencies that have existing management responsibilities in the study area or other nearby parts of the New River upstream or downstream. These agencies are knowledgeable about the area and, assuming that federal funding is available, are in a position to integrate these new responsibilities with other ongoing activities.

Alternative 1: Continuation of Current Management (No-Action Alternative)

Under this alternative, the current situation would continue with no significant changes in administration, ownership, or management. The river area would not be designated as a national wild and scenic river. No other new mechanisms, programs, or funding would be established as a result of this study to modify or enhance resource management in the study area. The Army Corps of Engineers would continue to administer all federal lands in the study area. Resource management in both states would continue to emphasize fish and wildlife (including priority game species) and identified traditional public uses (i.e., hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, boating, wildlife observation, and experiencing a remote outdoor setting). More specifically, resource management would continue to be conducted in accordance with the current practices and guidelines described in Chapter 2, “Management,” and Appendix 2.A.

In Virginia, ACE would continue to have primary responsibility for on-the-ground management. However, this management would continue to be limited due to funding and staff constraints and the lack of a management agreement with Virginia resource management agencies. The Virginia DGIF would continue its current role in fish and wildlife management (i.e., enforcing state fish and game regulations, and managing species and populations). The county sheriff would continue to assist ACE and DGIF with law enforcement and public safety.

In West Virginia, ACE would continue to delegate primary responsibility for most aspects of on-the-ground management on lands in the study area to the West Virginia DNR through the existing license. DNR would continue to manage the area as part of the Bluestone WMA. DNR–Wildlife Resources Section would continue to have lead responsibility for managing fish, wildlife, habitat, and related public uses (i.e., hunting, fishing and trapping) within the WMA. DNR–Parks would continue to have lead responsibility for managing other public uses, including campgrounds and related recreation facilities.

Alternative 2: National Wild and Scenic River administered by the Army Corps of Engineers

Under this alternative, most of the river and adjacent federal lands in the study area would be designated as a national wild and scenic river, with a “scenic” classification under the WSRA.⁴ This designation would provide added federal protection for the free-flowing condition and outstanding resource values of this stretch of the New River. Lands within the designated WSR area and other Bluestone Lake Project Area lands upstream in Virginia would continue to be owned by the federal government and administered by the ACE.

As in Alternative 1, management in both states would continue to emphasize fish and wildlife (including priority game species) and identified traditional public uses. ACE would have lead responsibility for preparing a comprehensive management plan for the designated WSR area in both states, in accordance with the WSRA. This plan would be consistent with (1) the authorizing legislation for the area; (2) the goals, management principles, and assurances presented in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83, and (3) WSRA policies requiring protection of the area’s attributes that make it eligible for designation and “scenic” classification. (See Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” page 6, for further discussion.)

In addition, resource management in both states would be guided by management standards presented in Appendix 5.C.1. These standards were developed during the study process by representatives from Virginia’s DGIF and Department of Conservation and Recreation, West Virginia’s DNR, and the ACE, with assistance from the study team. The standards would involve a significant enhancement of management in Virginia, while continuing many current practices in West Virginia (See Appendix 5 C.1 for details). If this alternative were chosen for implementation, the standards (along with the goals, management principles, and assurances

⁴ See “Suggested Wild and Scenic River Boundaries,” page 88, for a detailed description of the area that is suggested to be included in the designation.

presented in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83) should be referenced in federal legislation designating the river as wild and scenic.

Under Alternative 2, there are two options for on-the-ground resource management in Virginia: either ACE would continue to have primary responsibility, or ACE could delegate this responsibility to the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources (SONR) if the state agreed. If SONR assumed lead management responsibility, the area would be managed either as a state park (by the Department of Conservation and Recreation) or as a wildlife management area (by the DGIF). In either case, ACE and SONR would establish a formal management agreement spelling out respective roles and responsibilities. This agreement would be consistent with the goals, management principles, and assurances described in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83, and with the management standards described in Appendix 5.C.1.

Decisions by SONR about whether to take on a lead role in managing the Virginia portion and, if so, whether to manage the area as a state park or a wildlife management area could be made after the area was designated as a WSR. However, it would be preferable if these decisions were made before designation because they would provide the agencies involved, the public, and the U.S. Congress with a clear understanding of lead management responsibilities and the overall focus of management in Virginia (i.e., whether it would be oriented toward a state park or a wildlife management area).

Regardless of which agency had lead responsibility, significantly greater management attention would be given to the Virginia portion of the designated area under Alternative 2 than is currently the case (assuming allocation of sufficient resources). Greater emphasis would be placed on clean up and restoration of degraded sites, increasing law enforcement and public safety, enhancing river-related recreational opportunities, increasing management of river recreation, and capital improvements.

In West Virginia, the management structure and direction would essentially be the same as in Alternative 1. WVDNR would continue to have lead responsibility for on-the-ground management through its existing license with ACE, and the area would continue to be part of Bluestone WMA. DNR–Wildlife Resources Section and DNR–Parks would continue their existing responsibilities and approach for managing fish, wildlife, and public use and recreation. DNR–Parks would increase efforts to enhance existing campgrounds and manage river recreation if sufficient funding were available.

Under Alternative 2, the NPS Northeast Regional Office would have responsibility in both states for conducting the review of proposed projects in accordance with Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.⁵ (See Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic Designation,” page 6, for further discussion.) NPS review would be conducted in close consultation with other federal and state agencies involved in managing the New River corridor. Federal funding would be appropriated to enable ACE to conduct activities implementing the WSR designation. If SONR chose to assume lead on-the-ground management responsibility in Virginia, it would be recommended that federal funding be made available through the ACE to assist with start-up

⁵ Specific language would need to be included in the designation legislation authorizing the NPS to assume this role under Alternative 2.

costs, possibly through a federal/state cost-sharing arrangement.⁶ In Virginia and/or West Virginia, long-term state involvement in management would be supported by state funding and supplemented by other federal sources (such as the “Pittman-Robertson,” “Wallop-Breaux” and “Dingell-Johnson” programs, which are currently helping to fund WVDNR activities in the Bluestone WMA).

Alternative 3: National Wild and Scenic River administered by the National Park Service

As in Alternative 2, most of the river and adjacent federal lands in the study area would be designated as a national wild and scenic river with a “scenic” classification.⁷ However, Alternative 3 differs from Alternative 2 in that the NPS would be assigned lead federal responsibility for administering the designated WSR area. Responsibility for administering the federal/Bluestone Lake Project Area lands within the designated area and upstream would be transferred from ACE to NPS. NPS would administer the area through the New River Gorge National River office in Glen Jean, WV, as is currently the case with the Bluestone NSR and the Gauley River NRA. However, it is important to note that distinct management provisions would apply to the area under consideration in this alternative that may differ from the management regimes used in the New River Gorge National River, the Bluestone NSR, or the Gauley River NRA. Those provisions are discussed further below.

As in Alternatives 1 and 2, management in both states would continue to emphasize fish and wildlife (including priority game species) and identified traditional public uses. Under Alternative 3, NPS would have lead responsibility for preparing a comprehensive river management plan for the designated WSR area in both states, in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This plan would be consistent with (1) the authorizing legislation for the area; (2) the goals, management principles, and assurances presented in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83, and (3) WSRA policies requiring protection of the area’s attributes that make it eligible for designation and “scenic” classification. (See Chapter 1, Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” for further discussion.)

In addition, resource management in both states would be consistent with the management standards presented in Appendix 5.C.2. These standards were developed during the study process by NPS staff from the New River Gorge National River office, with assistance from the study team and in consultation with representatives from Virginia’s DGIF and Department of Conservation and Recreation and West Virginia’s DNR. In many respects these standards are the same or similar to those that would apply under Alternative 2, although there are differences for certain aspects of management as indicated in the comparative table presented in Appendix 5.C.3. The principal difference is that natural resource and forest/habitat management under NPS administration in Alternative 3 would tend to rely on passive natural selection processes rather than on the active management practices (e.g., timber harvesting, creating new clearings, stocking) that would be used more widely in Alternative 2. This reliance on natural processes in Alternative 3 derives from NPS’s generic management policies for units of the National Park

⁶ The ACE does not have funding in its budget at present that would allow for this. A new appropriation would be needed.

⁷ See “Suggested Wild and Scenic River Boundaries,” page 88, for a detailed description of the area that is suggested to be included in the designation.

System, updated most recently in 2006. If Alternative 3 is chosen for implementation, the management standards contained in Appendix 5.C.2 along with the goals, management principles, and assurances should be referenced in the designating legislation to indicate that the area will be managed according to these management standards. In Virginia, NPS would be the primary manager. NPS and Virginia DGIF would cooperate on management of fish and wildlife and the enforcement of related laws and regulations. (DGIF would have “concurrent jurisdiction” for law enforcement, as it does currently with ACE in the study area and with the U.S. Forest Service on nearby national forest lands.) As would be the case under ACE or Virginia SONR management in Alternative 2, NPS management of the Virginia portion of the designated area would entail a significant increase in management attention relative to that which currently exists. Aspects of management that would receive increased attention by NPS would be the same as described above for Alternative 2 (cleaning up and restoring degraded sites, increasing law enforcement and public safety, etc.).

In West Virginia, NPS would be the primary manager. NPS and DNR–Wildlife Resources Section would establish a cooperative partnership for the management of fish, wildlife, habitat, and related public uses (i.e., fishing, hunting, and trapping). NPS and DNR would formalize the relationship through a license agreement that would spell out respective authorities, roles, and responsibilities. This agreement would be modeled on the existing license between NPS and DNR for the Bluestone NSR and will reference the management standards in Appendix 5.C.2.

NPS would be the primary manager of camping, river recreation, and other public uses not related to fish and wildlife (e.g., hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking) in the West Virginia portion of the designated WSR area. NPS would assume administrative and management responsibility for the existing campgrounds in the designated area (Shanklin’s Ferry, Cedar Branch, Indian Creek, and Bull Falls).

Given the proximity, parallel designations, and similar resources and management of the designated WSR portion of the New River and the Bluestone NSR, under this alternative NPS would administer the two areas out of the same office as the New River National River and the Gauley NRA. The management agreement (or license) between NPS and DNR mentioned above would cover both the Bluestone NSR and the designated WSR area of the New River, a single management plan would be prepared, and the standards for resource management contained in Appendix 5.C.2 would apply to both areas. In addition, both areas would continue to be part of the larger Bluestone WMA (unless DNR chose to remove them from the WMA). As in Alternative 2, the NPS Northeast Regional Office would have responsibility in both states for conducting the review of proposed projects in accordance with Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. (See Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” for further discussion.) NPS review would be conducted in close consultation with other federal and state agencies involved in managing the New River corridor.

Federal funding would be appropriated to enable NPS to implement the WSR designation. West Virginia DNR’s long-term involvement in management would be supported by state funding and supplemented by other federal sources (such as the “Pittman-Robertson,” “Wallop-Breaux” and “Dingell-Johnson” programs).

Alternative 4: National Wild and Scenic River Administered by the States of Virginia and West Virginia

As in Alternatives 2 and 3, most of the river and adjacent federal lands in the study area would be designated as a national wild and scenic river with a “scenic” classification under this alternative.⁸ However, Alternative 4 differs significantly from Alternatives 2 and 3 in that ownership and management responsibility for all federal/Bluestone Lake Project Area lands within the designated area and upstream would be transferred from the ACE to the states of Virginia and West Virginia under this alternative. Lands in Virginia would be administered and managed by the Commonwealth’s Secretary of Natural Resources, while those in West Virginia would be administered and managed by the state’s DNR.⁹

As in the three other alternatives, management in both states would continue to emphasize fish and wildlife (including priority game species) and identified traditional public uses in this alternative. Virginia SONR and West Virginia DNR would share responsibility for preparing a comprehensive management plan for the designated WSR area in both states, in accordance with the WSRA. This plan would be consistent with (1) the authorizing legislation; (2) the goals, management principles, and assurances presented in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83, and (3) WSRA policies requiring protection of the area’s attributes that make it eligible for designation and “scenic” classification. (See Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” page 6, for further discussion.) The plan would require approval by the Secretary of the Interior to ensure consistency with WSRA requirements. Upon request and with available funding, the NPS could provide technical assistance to the states in developing the plan.

In addition, resource management in both states would be in accordance with the same management standards that would apply under Alternative 2, as presented in Appendix 5.C.1. Representatives from Virginia’s DGIF and Department of Conservation and Recreation and West Virginia’s DNR developed these standards with assistance from the study team during the study process. The standards would involve a significant enhancement of management in Virginia, while generally representing a continuation of current practices in West Virginia. The standards are sufficiently important that they (along with the goals, management principles, and assurances presented in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83) should be referenced in the designating legislation if this alternative is implemented.

Each state would manage its lands independently, although there would be collaboration as appropriate. Examples could include coordinated management of river recreation and compatible management of fish, wildlife, and habitat.

⁸ See “Suggested Wild and Scenic River Boundaries,” page 88, for a detailed description of the proposed area that would be included in the designation.

⁹ A variation on this would be for the federal government to authorize a long-term lease (e.g., 99 years) to the states. This would relieve the ACE of much of its administrative burden while reducing potential criticism of the federal government for divesting its lands. At the same time, it would give the states long-term assurance that they would be justified in making significant investments in the area. Whether the lands were transferred in fee or through a long-term lease, the effect would be the same.

In Virginia, the Secretary of Natural Resources would determine whether the area would be managed as a state park by DCR or as a wildlife management area by DGIF.¹⁰ In either case, there would be a significant increase in management attention relative to that which currently exists. Aspects of management that would receive increased attention would be the same as described above for Alternative 2 (cleaning up and restoring degraded sites, increasing law enforcement and public safety, etc.).

In West Virginia, the area would continue to be part of the Bluestone WMA. DNR–Wildlife Resources Section and DNR–Parks would continue with their existing responsibilities and approach in managing fish, wildlife, and various types of public use and recreation. DNR–Parks would increase its efforts to enhance existing campgrounds if sufficient funding were available.

As in the other action alternatives, the NPS Northeast Regional Office would have responsibility in both states for conducting the review of proposed projects in accordance with Section 7 of the WSRRA.¹¹ (See Chapter 1, “Implications of Wild and Scenic River Designation,” for further discussion.) NPS review would be conducted in close consultation with other federal and state agencies involved in managing the New River corridor.

Federal funding could be provided to assist the states with the initial costs of implementing the designation (such as preparation of a comprehensive river management plan for the area, enhancing management in Virginia, and addressing essential infrastructure and other capital needs identified in a management plan). This could take the form of a federal/state cost-sharing arrangement. Long-term state management would be supported by state funding and supplemented by other federal sources (such as the “Pittman-Robertson,” “Wallop-Breaux” and “Dingell-Johnson” programs).

Comparison of Alternatives

Introduction

This section of the report summarizes similarities and differences among the four management alternatives presented in “Summary of Alternatives,” page 92, and in Appendices 5.A and 5.C. This summary is intended to provide a “snapshot” to give readers a relatively brief, general understanding of how the substantive provisions of the alternatives compare to one another. Readers who desire a more thorough understanding of the similarities and differences among the alternatives are advised to consult Appendix 5.A in particular. That appendix provides the most complete description of the alternatives, including specific provisions that would apply under each alternative for twenty-six separate management factors. By selecting any one of the

¹⁰ As with Alternative 2, a decision by Virginia SONR about whether to manage the area as a state park or a wildlife management area could be made after the area was designated as a Wild and Scenic River. However, it would be preferable if this decision were made beforehand because it would provide both the agencies involved and the public with a clear understanding of what the overall focus of management in Virginia would be (i.e., a state park or a wildlife management area).

¹¹ Specific language would need to be included in the designation legislation authorizing the NPS to assume this role under Alternative 4.

twenty-six factors in Appendix 5.A, the reader can scan across all four alternatives and get a detailed picture of key similarities and differences.

The following comparison focuses only on the substance of key provisions of the alternatives. It does not compare the environmental effects of implementation of the alternatives. That subject is addressed in Chapter 6.

Major Similarities and Differences Among the Alternatives

Major similarities and differences among the alternatives include the following:

- All of the action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4) would designate most of the study area as a national wild and scenic river, while Alternative 1 would not. The NPS Northeast Regional Office would be responsible for reviewing proposed projects under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- All of the action alternatives share the same purpose, foundations for future management (i.e., the goals, management principles, and assurances articulated in “Foundations for Future Management,” page 83), and general direction for management in both states. Under Alternative 1, existing agreements and coordination among the different managing agencies would continue.
- All of the action alternatives would entail a significant change in management of the river corridor in Virginia relative to Alternative 1. (See further discussion in “Comparison of Agency Responsibilities, Missions, and Management Experience,” next page.) There are significant similarities among all four alternatives in West Virginia. All seek to accomplish similar objectives and all would retain many important elements of the current management approach. Of the three action alternatives, Alternative 2 is most similar to Alternative 1 because in West Virginia it would essentially continue the current situation while adding an overlay of wild and scenic river designation.
- Alternative 3 is distinct because it is the only one in which the NPS would be involved in managing the river corridor. This would entail certain differences in the standards for resource management relative to the other alternatives, as discussed further in “Comparison of Resource Management Standards for the Four Alternatives,” next page, and Appendix 5.C.3.
- Alternative 4 is distinct because it would involve transferring the federal lands in the affected area to the two states. As a result, no federal agency would be involved in on-the-ground management operations or administering the river corridor – except for NPS review of proposed water resource development projects under WSRA Section 7 and review of the comprehensive river management plan.
- The alternatives include a variety of strategies for administering and managing the river corridor. Assuming adequate funding, all of the agencies that would be involved under the various alternatives have the capability to implement a high quality management program. However, each agency must follow its own applicable laws, mandates, policies and guidelines for carrying out management of natural, cultural, and recreational resources, which may result in different approaches to management of these resources.

Comparison of Resource Management Standards for the Four Alternatives

As discussed in “Management Guidance,” page 87, and “Summary of Alternatives,” page 92, and in Appendix 5.C, management standards that would apply in both states were prepared during this study for each of the three action alternatives. Comparable management standards do not exist for current management or for Alternative 1. However, as discussed in Chapter 2 and Appendix 2.A, guidelines were compiled during the study process that describe how resource management currently is conducted in the two states. For comparative purposes, these guidelines can be considered equivalent to management standards for Alternative 1.

In Virginia, the resource management standards for Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would entail a significant change from the continuation of current management envisioned under Alternative 1. For many aspects of management there would be no structured program or approach under Alternative 1, whereas under any of the action alternatives management in Virginia would be elevated to a standard consistent with that in West Virginia.

In West Virginia on the other hand, the resource management standards for Alternatives 2 and 4, are similar to the guidelines for continued current management under Alternative 1. This is because the management standards for the action alternatives were largely derived from West Virginia DNR’s current practices in recognition of the quality and stakeholder acceptance of that existing management. However, the standards for all of the action alternatives are somewhat more comprehensive than the guidelines for Alternative 1, and would require certain enhancements beyond current management in West Virginia (e.g., improvements to the existing campgrounds).

With respect to a comparison of resource management standards for the three action alternatives, Alternatives 2 and 4 share the same standards. The standards for Alternative 3 are the same as those for Alternatives 2 and 4 in many respects, but there are some important differences. In summary form, the differences include the following:

- Alternatives 2 and 4 would allow for creating new clearings for wildlife habitat purposes and planting of trees and shrubs that provide wildlife habitat. Alternative 3 would maintain existing clearings but otherwise would use natural processes to provide wildlife habitat and create new clearings.
- While giving preference to native species, Alternatives 2 and 4 would allow for the intentional introduction of certain non-native plants in clearings and along roads for wildlife purposes. Alternative 3 would not allow introduction of non-native plants, except on a case by case basis.
- Alternatives 2 and 4 would allow the use of a wide range of forest management techniques to achieve wildlife habitat objectives. Commercial contractors would be utilized for forest management when this was economically prudent. Alternative 3 would utilize natural processes such as blow downs from wind and death of trees from natural causes to open up clearings in the forest canopy rather than active forest management, and commercial timber harvesting would be prohibited.

- Alternatives 2 and 4 would maintain existing artificial wetlands and allow for new wetland projects, while Alternative 3 would continue existing wetlands projects but not develop new ones.
- Alternatives 2 and 4 would allow stocking of non-native species (mainly fish) for both ecological and public use reasons. Alternative 3 would allow stocking for ecological reasons but not to enhance hunting, trapping, or fishing. (The exception would be that the existing stocking of trout species in Indian Creek would be allowed to continue.)
- Alternative 3 would consider expanding the range of recreational uses if these were found to be appropriate through development of the area’s management plan. Alternatives 2 and 4 would be less likely to allow new uses and would use compatibility with wildlife management as a major criterion in making any such decisions.

For more details on management standards for the action alternatives, readers should refer to Appendix 5.C and especially 5.C.3, which compares management standards for Alternatives 2 and 4 with those for Alternative 3.

Comparison of Agency Responsibilities, Missions, and Management Experience

As mentioned above, one area in which clear distinctions can be drawn between the alternatives is management and administrative responsibility. Table 5.2 presents a summary of these responsibilities under each alternative.

While implementation of Section 7 of the WSRA is not an on-the-ground management responsibility, it is included in Table 5.2 to provide a complete picture of administrative and management responsibilities. As with other aspects of the comparison of the alternatives, readers are encouraged to consult “Summary of Alternatives,” page 92, and Appendix 5.A for more detailed descriptions of agency roles and responsibilities.

As shown in Table 5.2, West Virginia DNR would continue to be involved in management regardless of the alternative ultimately selected. DNR’s role and approach in managing fish and wildlife, habitat, and recreation would be essentially the same under Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 (although DNR would no longer need a license from ACE to manage the river corridor under Alternative 4).

Under Alternative 3, DNR–Wildlife Resources Section would be involved in managing fish, wildlife, and habitat in West Virginia in cooperation with the NPS, and there would be a greater emphasis on natural selection processes and limitations on active habitat management relative to the other alternatives. Also, the NPS would assume responsibility for recreation management in the West Virginia portion of the study area from DNR–Parks.

Table 5.2. Comparison of administrative and management responsibilities.

Agency	No Action	Action Alternatives		
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
ACE	X	X ¹²		
NPS (management)			X	
NPS (WSRA Sec. 7)		X	X	X
Virginia SONR		X ¹³		X
West Virginia DNR	X	X	X	X

Because much of the difference among the three action alternatives relates to which agencies would be involved, it is useful to consider each agency’s mission and experience with management of public lands and national wild and scenic rivers. This information is summarized in Table 5.3.

¹² Under Alternative 2, ACE would be the administering agency for the federal lands and the WSR designation (except for implementing Section 7 of the WSRA, which would be the responsibility of NPS). If Virginia SONR elected not to participate, ACE also would continue to have responsibility for resource management in Virginia.

¹³ Whether Virginia SONR would be involved in management under Alternative 2 has yet to be determined.

Table 5.3. Comparison of agency missions and relevant management experience.

Agency	Mission	Experience with public lands management	Experience with National Wild and Scenic Rivers
ACE	<p>“To provide quality, responsive engineering services to the nation including planning, designing, building and operating water resources and other civil works projects (Navigation, Flood Control, Environmental Protection, Disaster Response, etc.)... Environmental stewardship includes compliance measures to ensure that [ACE] projects must meet federal, state, and local environmental requirements... Conservation includes two different types of resource management at project sites: conservation and preservation. Conservation focuses on responsibly managing Army lands to ensure long-term natural resource productivity. Preservation focuses on resource protection in stewardship of natural and cultural resources.”</p>	<p>ACE administers and manages approximately 2,600 areas nationwide for public use and/or conservation purposes. Of these, roughly 85 are located within ACE’s Huntington (WV) District, which has responsibility for a 45,000 square mile area that includes parts of Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Ohio.</p>	<p>ACE currently administers part of one WSR (a 4.6-mile segment of the Cossatot River in Arkansas).</p>
NPS	<p>“The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.”</p>	<p>NPS administers and manages 388 areas nationwide, ranging from national parks and preserves to historic sites and battlefields. Approximately 75 of these areas are located within the 13 state NPS Northeast Region.</p>	<p>NPS currently administers and manages part or all of 35 WSRs throughout the country, totaling 2,826 river miles. NPS has acted as federal administrator and co-managed the Bluestone NSR with WVDNR since its designation in 1988.</p>
VA SONR	<p>DGIF: “To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.”</p> <p>DCR: “To conserve, protect, enhance, and advocate the wise use of the Commonwealth's unique natural, historic, recreational, scenic and cultural resources.”</p>	<p>DGIF owns and manages 30 wildlife management areas and 32 lakes for fishing. DCR manages 34 state parks, including the 57-mile New River Trail State Park in Grayson, Carroll, Wythe and Pulaski counties.</p>	<p>There are currently no designated WSRs in Virginia. DCR is involved in a wide range of state-level river management activities.</p>
WVDNR	<p>DNR (overall): “To provide and administer a long-range comprehensive program for the exploration, conservation, development, protection, enjoyment and use of the natural resources of the State of West Virginia.”</p> <p>Wildlife Resources Section: “The basic mission of our agency is to manage the state's wildlife resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.”</p> <p>Parks and Recreation Section: “Promote conservation and public recreation by preserving and protecting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic, scientific, cultural, archaeological or historic significance, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities while maintaining state parks in a natural condition.”</p>	<p>DNR-WRS manages nearly 100 wildlife management areas, including some on state and national forest lands. DNR– Parks manages a total of 49 units, including 34 state parks.</p>	<p>DNR has co-managed the Bluestone NSR corridor in conjunction with the NPS since its designation in 1988.</p>

