

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the essential findings of the study, summarizes the four alternatives that were considered for future management of the New River study area, and indicates a finding of the alternative appropriate at this time.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study has been to provide essential information that will allow federal and state decision-makers, and the interested public, to draw informed conclusions regarding whether the New River from the Route 460 Bridge in Glen Lyn, Virginia, to the point where the river enters Bluestone Lake near Hinton, West Virginia, should be designated as a national wild and scenic river; and, if so, how the river and surrounding public lands should be managed. Following is a summary of the study's major findings.

Eligibility and Classification (Chapter 3)

The study area is eligible for designation. It meets WSRA requirements for free-flowing condition and it possesses multiple outstandingly remarkable values including geology/hydrology, scenery, fish and other aquatic species, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources. The presence of any one of these outstanding values would make the river eligible. In combination, they suggest that this is a very important resource, both to the region and the nation.

Of the three possible classifications under the WSRA ("wild," "scenic," and "recreational"), scenic classification is most appropriate for the study area. This is due to the area's relatively undeveloped character, moderate degree of accessibility, and acceptable but not pristine water quality.

In addition to being a required part of the study process, the evaluation of a river's free-flowing condition, outstandingly remarkable resource values, and potential classification has important implications for management if the river is designated. The WSRA requires that the free-flowing condition and identified outstandingly remarkable values of each designated river be protected and, wherever possible, enhanced. The Act also requires that the river corridor be managed in a way that will sustain the river's classification over time. This does not mean that nothing in the river corridor can change, but rather that the general character and level of development of the corridor at the time of designation should be sustained. In the case of the New River study area, this would mean maintaining the area's current relatively undeveloped character.

Simply because a river is found eligible does not necessarily mean it should or will be designated. Rather, it establishes that the river in question meets basic resource requirements and is worthy of further study.

Issues (Chapter 4)

Interested agencies and the public identified a wide range of issues related to current and potential future use and management of the New River study area. These fall into six primary categories.

(1) *Wildlife Management:* The predominant issue raised by the West Virginia DNR and certain other stakeholders (including some users of the area, local officials, and local economic interests) during the study process relates to the possibility of the New River study area being designated as a national wild and scenic river and administrative responsibility for the federal lands being transferred from the ACE to the NPS. The DNR and the other stakeholders are concerned that NPS wildlife management standards differ from those of WVDNR. The DNR and these stakeholders want assurances that the same opportunities for traditional uses such as hunting, fishing and trapping will continue to be available as under the current DNR wildlife management.

(2) *Traditional Uses:* Many are concerned that long-standing traditional uses of the study area such as hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, and boating need to be recognized as priorities for future management.

(3) *Management in Virginia:* Virginia residents and state and local government representatives view the Virginia portion of the study area as a highly valuable resource, and are concerned that it is being degraded and is not being managed to its full potential.

(4) *River Protection:* Many are concerned that future proposals for major energy, transportation, communications, and water resources projects could jeopardize the river and its special values. They see wild and scenic river designation as a unique opportunity to protect the river for the long-term.

(5) *Contribution to the Region:* The four-county region is seeking to establish itself as a high-quality environment in which to live, work, and recreate. County, city, and town officials and local residents see opportunities to capitalize on the study area's significant values and strategic location to enhance the livability and economy of the region.

(6) *Other Concerns about Wild and Scenic River Designation:* While expressing support for conservation of the study area's significant values, many are concerned that the river corridor might be managed differently and the values they hold dear might be altered if the river receives federal designation.

These issues served as underpinning for the development of management alternatives in Chapter 5.

Alternatives for Future Management (Chapter 5)

In many respects, the identification of alternatives for future management of the New River study area was the central component of this study. In the initial consideration of potential alternatives for the study area, it was recognized that future management could be approached in a variety of ways and that all of these deserved consideration. As a result, potential management alternatives were explored with the specific intent of identifying a range of reasonable alternatives, all of which could be capable of garnering support from many, if perhaps not all, of the affected agencies, interested citizens, and other stakeholders.

Ultimately, four alternatives were considered in detail:

- *Alternative 1:* Continuation of current management
- *Alternative 2:* National Wild and Scenic River administered by the Army Corps of Engineers
- *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

Alternative 1 is the so-called “no-action” alternative, while the other three are all considered “action” alternatives.

To ensure that each action alternative would achieve essential objectives, a series of goals, principles, and assurances were developed that would apply equally to these three alternatives. These goals, principles, and assurances provide important direction for future conservation and management of the study area. (Many of these provisions, but not all, would apply under the no-action alternative as well.)

Each of the alternatives has been described in detailed narrative form (see Chapter 5), and key provisions have been summarized in a table to facilitate comparison of similarities and differences (see Appendix 5.A). In addition, specific resource management standards were developed for each action alternative (see Appendix 5.C). The applicable standards would guide future management activities in the area if one of the action alternatives were implemented.

All three action alternatives share the same suggested wild and scenic river boundaries, that is, 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, downstream to the confluence with Buffalo Creek near Steer Island in Summers County, West Virginia. Federal lands within the Bluestone Lake Project Area adjacent to this river segment also would be included in the designated area. A more detailed description and maps are provided in Chapter 5.

Suitability (Chapter 6)

The New River study area was found to be “not suitable” for designation under each of the action alternatives because it did not meet two of the important public policy criteria:

- (1) The river corridor possesses natural, recreational, and cultural values that are worthy of long-term conservation.
- (2) The provisions of each action alternative, including wild and scenic river designation, would provide additional protection for the river and important natural, recreational, and cultural values. However, there does not appear to be any threats to these resources at this time.
- (3) There does not appear to be a commitment to manage the area as envisioned by this study report among those agencies that would potentially manage the area if the area were designated a national wild and scenic river,
- (4) There appears to be little support or interest by state or local agencies, user groups or some local residents to seek designation of the river.

The fact that the river has been found not suitable for wild and scenic river designation does not necessarily mean that it will not be designated. It simply means that the river and the management regimes envisioned under the three action alternatives did not meet essential public policy tests. The President and Congress will make the final decision as to whether or not to designate the river.

Appropriate Alternative

Given that the NPS found the river eligible but not suitable for wild and scenic river designation, NPS finds that Alternative Number One, the No-Action Alternative, is the only appropriate alternative at this time. This finding is based on the determination that the river and its resources are being adequately protected under the current management arrangements and that there are no current threats to those resources.

This finding is also based to a large degree on the fact that little support was demonstrated during the study process by state or local officials, agencies, residents or user groups for wild and scenic designation.

CHAPTER 8. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

This chapter identifies significant consultations with federal, state and local government representatives during the study process; public meetings held to provide information and solicit input; and other meetings held with non-governmental stakeholders including interest groups and industry. In addition to these more formal consultations, the study team also had frequent informal communication with various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders by telephone and email.

The chapter also identifies members of the study team and Interagency Work Group, as well as recipients of this report.

Agency Consultation

This section documents consultation with federal and state agencies. Also documented are consultations with the Interagency Work Group.

Federal Agency Consultation

Organization: NPS – New River Gorge National River

Date: June 16, 2003

Type: Conference call

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Date: June 17, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Huntington, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Bluestone Dam

Date: June 18, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and Bluestone Dam operations

Organization: NPS – New River Gorge National River

Date: June 19, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Glen Jean, WV

Purpose: Discuss river issues

Organization: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Project Coordination Team (PCT)
Date: July 31, 2003
Type: Meeting
Location: Hinton, WV
Purpose: Discuss Bluestone Dam projects and Wild and Scenic River Study background

Organization: U.S. Forest Service – Jefferson National Forest
Date: March 5, 2004
Type: Conference Call
Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, management alternatives, and potential USFS role

State Agency Consultation

Organization: WV Division of Natural Resources
Date: June 17, 2003
Type: Meeting
Location: Charleston, WV
Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: WV Division of Natural Resources – Wildlife Resources and State Parks
Date: June 18, 2003
Type: Meeting
Location: Indian Mills, WV
Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and Bluestone Wildlife Management Area operations

Organization: WV Division of Natural Resources
Date: July 31, 2003
Type: Meeting
Location: Hinton, WV
Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Date: August 1, 2003
Type: Meeting
Location: Blacksburg, VA
Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: WV Division of Natural Resources State Parks – Bluestone and Pipestem Resort State Parks
Date: July 13, 2004
Type: Meeting
Location: Pipestem, WV
Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and State Park operations

Interagency Work Group Consultation

Type: Meeting

Date: December 2, 2003

Location: Pipestem State Park, Pipestem, WV

Purpose: Discuss issues and management alternatives

Type: Conference Call

Date: February 26, 2004

Purpose: Discuss management alternatives and goals, principles and management assurances

Type: Conference Call

Date: April 7, 2004

Purpose: Discuss revised management alternatives and goals, principles and management assurances

Type: Meeting

Date: May 13, 2004

Location: Pipestem State Park, Pipestem, WV

Purpose: Discuss management alternatives

Type: Conference Call

Date: June 17, 2004

Purpose: Update on management alternatives and goals, principles and management assurances

Type: Float Trip

Date: July 14, 2004

Purpose: Field reconnaissance of study area

Type: Meeting

Date: July 15, 2004

Location: Pipestem State Park, Pipestem, WV

Purpose: Discuss management alternatives and issues needing further discussion, clarification, or research

Type: Conference Call

Date: August 2, 2004

Purpose: Discuss draft resource management standards and update on agency discussions regarding alternatives

Type: Conference Call

Date: September 22, 2004

Purpose: Agreement on final management alternatives to be analyzed; discussion on resource management standards; update on agency discussions regarding alternatives

Type: Conference Call

Date: November 10, 2004

Purpose: Discuss possible boundaries for wild and scenic river designation, resource management standards, and draft report

Type: Conference Call

Date: March 10, 2005

Purpose: Review of proposed changes to the Foundations for Future Management document, status of preparation of the study report, and discussion about review process for draft report

Local Government Consultation

This section documents consultation with local government, including counties, cities, and towns.

Consultation with Counties

Organization: Region One Planning and Development Council

Date: July 30, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: Giles County, VA

Date: August 1, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Pearisburg, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: Giles County, VA – Tourism Taskforce and Board of Supervisors

Date: December 3, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Pearisburg, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Organization: Summers County, WV Commissioners

Date: May 10, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Organization: Giles County, VA – Tourism Taskforce

Date: May 12, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Pearisburg, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Organization: Monroe County, WV Commissioners

Date: May 12, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Union, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Organization: Mercer County Commissioners

Date: July 13, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Princeton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Consultation with Cities and Towns

Organization: City of Hinton, WV

Date: July 30, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: Town of Glen Lyn, VA

Date: December 4, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Glen Lyn, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: City of Hinton, WV

Date: May 10, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss river issues and management alternatives

Public Participation

This section documents consultation with non-governmental stakeholders, including interest groups, industry, and individuals.

Public Meetings

Type: Open House

Date: December 3, 2003

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Type: Open House

Date: December 4, 2003

Location: Glen Lyn, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Type: Meeting

Date: July 12, 2004

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Type: Meeting

Date: July 13, 2004

Location: Rich Creek, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives discussion of

Other Consultations

Organization: National Committee for New River

Date: July 31, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Hinton, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: Appalachian Power Company – Glen Lyn Generating Plant

Date: December 4, 2003

Type: Meeting

Location: Glen Lyn, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background and river issues

Organization: Mountain State Sportsmen's Alliance, Ducks Unlimited, Southern WV Rocky Mountain Elk Association

Date: May 10, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Lewisburg, WV

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Organization: Appalachian Power Company – Glen Lyn Generating Plant

Date: May 12, 2004

Type: Meeting

Location: Glen Lyn, VA

Purpose: Discuss Wild and Scenic River Study background, river issues, and management alternatives

Study Participants

Study Team

David Lange (through October 2005)	NPS project manager	Master of Regional Planning; 20+ years experience in natural resource policy and planning; detailed experience with river planning projects.
Philip Huffman (through October 2005)	Project consultant, co-author of preliminary draft of the study report and environmental assessment (not involved in developing the final suitability determination or identification of appropriate alternative)	Master of Environmental Studies; Master of Public and Private Management; 20 years experience in natural resource policy and planning; experience with numerous wild and scenic river studies.
Drew Parkin (through October 2005)	Project consultant, co-author of preliminary draft of the study report and environmental assessment (not involved in developing the final suitability determination or identification of appropriate alternative)	Master of Community and Regional Planning; 20+ years experience in natural resource policy and planning; experience with numerous wild and scenic river studies.
Chuck Barscz (2005 thru 2008)	NPS, Wild and Scenic Rivers Program Manager, Northeast Region	Master of Landscape Architecture; 18 years experience with wild and scenic rivers and studies.

Interagency Working Group

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>	<i>Position</i>
James Allman	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	General Engineer
Roger Anderson	West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Section	Supervisor, Environmental Coordination
John Baker	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries	Wildlife Lands Manager
Robert Beanblossom	West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Section	District Administrator
Ben Borda	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Assistant Chief, Planning Division
Allen Boynton	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries	Regional Wildlife Biologist Manager
David Eskridge	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Past Manager, Bluestone Lake Project
Calvin Hite	NPS	Superintendent, New River Gorge National River
William B. Kittrell, Jr.	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries	Regional Fisheries Manager
Joseph Kolodziej	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Past Acting Manager, Bluestone Lake Project
Robert Munson	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	Environmental Programs Manager
Lorrie Sprague	NPS	Management Assistant, New River Gorge National River
Kenneth Stephens	NPS	Resource Management Specialist, New River Gorge National River
Toby Wood	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Acting Manager, Bluestone Lake Project

