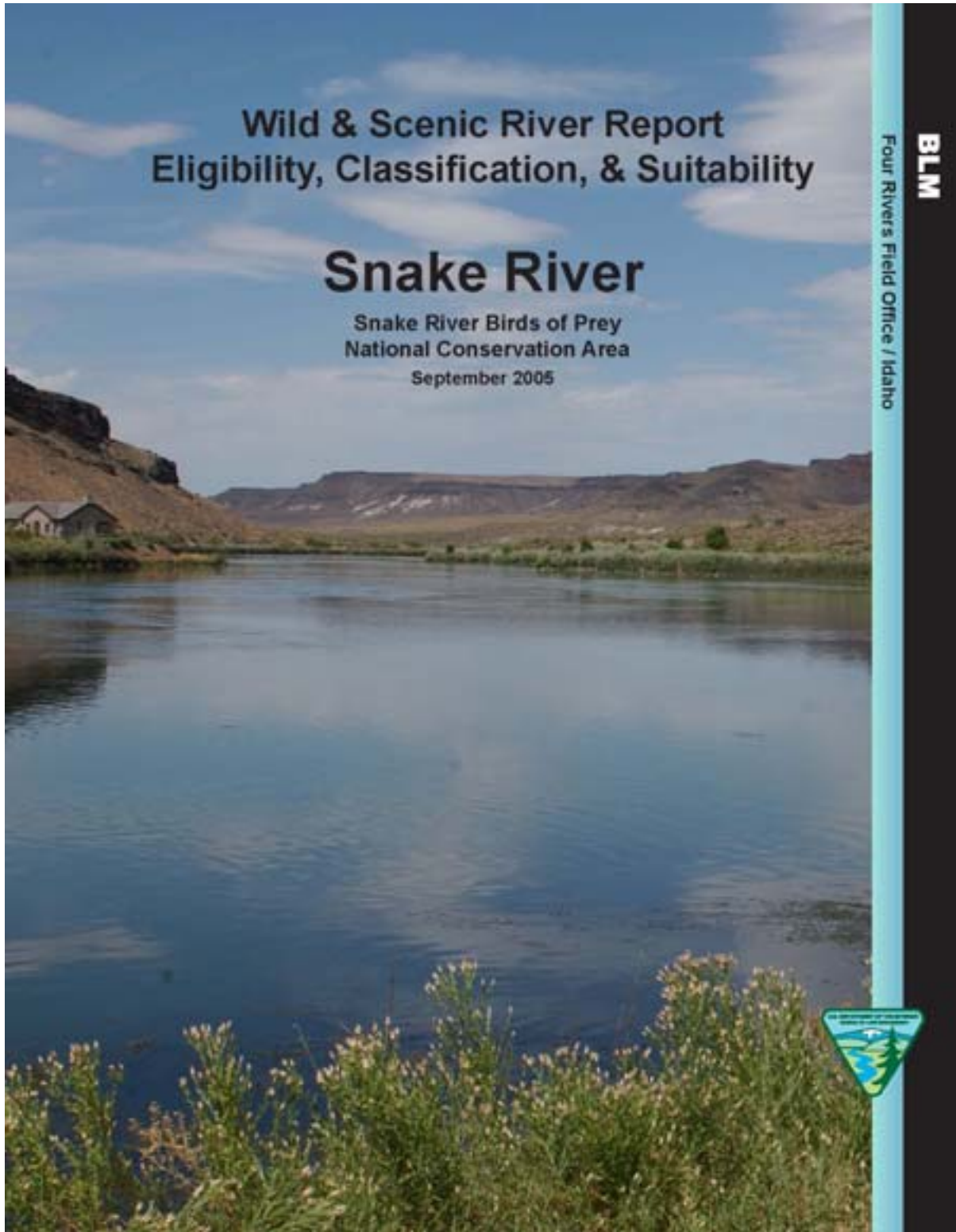


APPENDIX 14. SNAKE RIVER WILD AND SCENIC RIVER REPORT



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Snake River Wild & Scenic River Report Eligibility, Classification, & Suitability

I. Introduction

As part of the planning process for the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP), a BLM interdisciplinary (ID) team completed a Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) study under Section 5(d)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA). This study reviews BLM-administered public land along the 82 miles of the Snake River, evaluates and makes determinations regarding eligibility, makes preliminary classifications to those river segments found eligible, and makes suitability recommendations for all eligible segments.

This report is the official record of the eligibility and suitability determinations made by the ID Team. This report: 1) discusses the definition of free-flowing and whether or not the Snake River fits that definition; 2) describes the criteria for evaluating outstandingly remarkable values; 3) describes and assesses resource values, and determines if specific resource values are outstandingly remarkable; 4) determines preliminary classification for all eligible river segments; and 5) determines suitability recommendations for all eligible river segments.

Purpose

The WSR Act, passed by Congress in October 1968, instituted a legislative program to study and protect free-flowing river segments by making them part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). Congress did not intend to protect every remaining free-flowing river, but rather sought to conserve a representative sample of many of our most important natural and recreational rivers.

Directives in BLM Manual 8351 and "The Wild and Scenic River Study Process" technical report prepared for the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, 1999, were followed for integrating a wild and scenic river study within the resource management planning process.

Study Boundary

The study area boundary includes 82 miles of the Snake River from the upstream NCA boundary at about river mile 527 downstream to the western NCA boundary at approximately river mile 445 (Figure 1). Only those river segments that met the initial free flowing criteria were further evaluated for outstandingly remarkable values in this report.



The boundaries of any river proposed for potential addition to the NWSRS, as specified in section 4(d) of the WSR Act, are usually limited to that area measured within one-quarter mile above the ordinary high watermark on each side of the river. The study boundary for this evaluation of the Snake River used the one-quarter mile area as a starting point, but in some locations extended this distance to 100 feet beyond the canyon rim to include the entire expanse of the Snake River Canyon. In evaluating the river's scenic values, the surrounding background, when viewed from the canyon rim, was considered as part of the view shed.

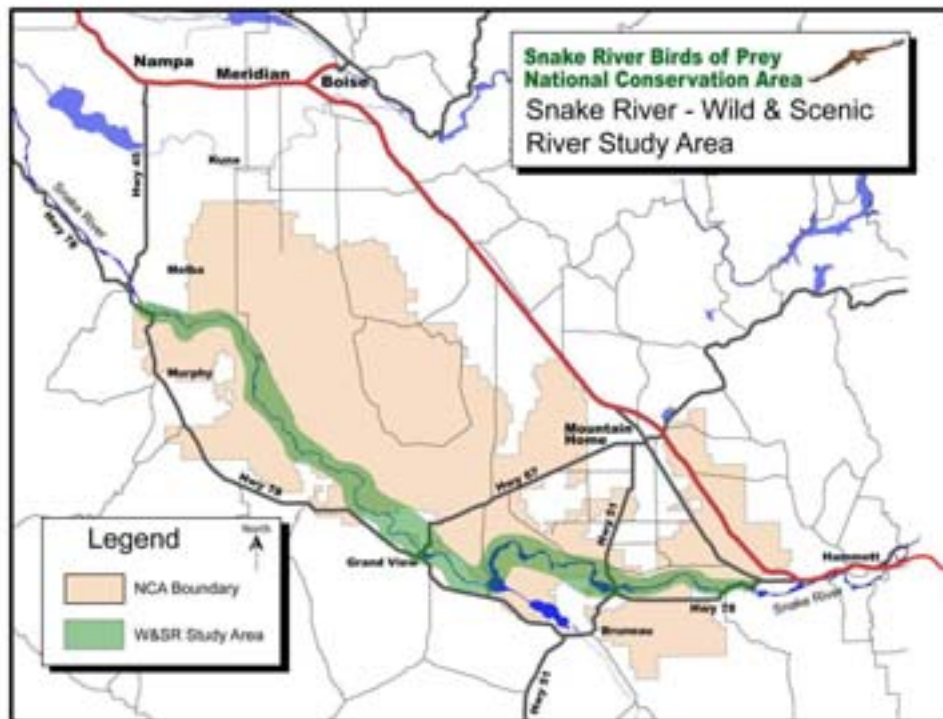


Figure 1 Snake River Wild & Scenic River Study Area

The Snake River's special values were assessed as to whether they are unique, rare or exemplary within the state, region, or nation. For purposes of this report and in order to better define the evaluation criteria, "regionally significant" refers to the portion of the United States that includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana, northern Nevada, northern Utah, and western Wyoming.



Overview of the W&SR Study Process

The first phase of a WSR study is the eligibility determination, an analysis to see whether the river is eligible to be considered for WSR designation.

To be considered eligible a water course:

1. Must be a: River – defined as:

A flowing body of water, or estuary, or section, portion, or tributary thereof, including: rivers, streams, creeks, runs, kills, rills, and small lakes.

2. Must Be: Free flowing – defined as:

Existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, with exceptions (low dams, diversion works, and other minor structures), diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway (channelization).

Can: be any size or length, lie between impoundments or major dams, be non-floatable or non-boatable, be intermittent, or non-perennial.

3. And must possess at least one (1) outstandingly remarkable value, such as:

Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish and Wildlife, Historic, Cultural, or other similar values including Biological, Botanical, Ecological, Hydrological, or Paleontological.

The second phase of the study is the classification analysis, which determines whether the river should be tentatively classified as a recreational, scenic, or wild river if it were designated by Congress. This tentative BLM classification is based on the level of development present within the river corridor.

The third phase of the study is the suitability assessment which looks at the possible impacts of designation, weighs various elements such as public access, long-term protection of resources, and traditional resource uses, and asks the basic question of would this be a worthy addition to the National Wild & Scenic River System.

II. Free Flowing Criteria and Determinations

Free flowing is defined by Section 16(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as "existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway. The existence of low dams, diversion works, or other minor

structures at the time of evaluation does not automatically disqualify a stream from consideration.

Swan Falls Dam and C.J. Strike Dam create impoundments at two different locations along the 82 miles of the Snake River. Swan Falls Reservoir extends 9.5 miles upstream from Swan Falls Dam. CJ Strike Reservoir extends 24 miles upstream from CJ Strike Dam. These two reservoirs on the Snake River do not meet the initial criteria as free flowing. The remaining segments of the Snake River do meet the initial criteria of free flowing (Table 1 and Figure 2).

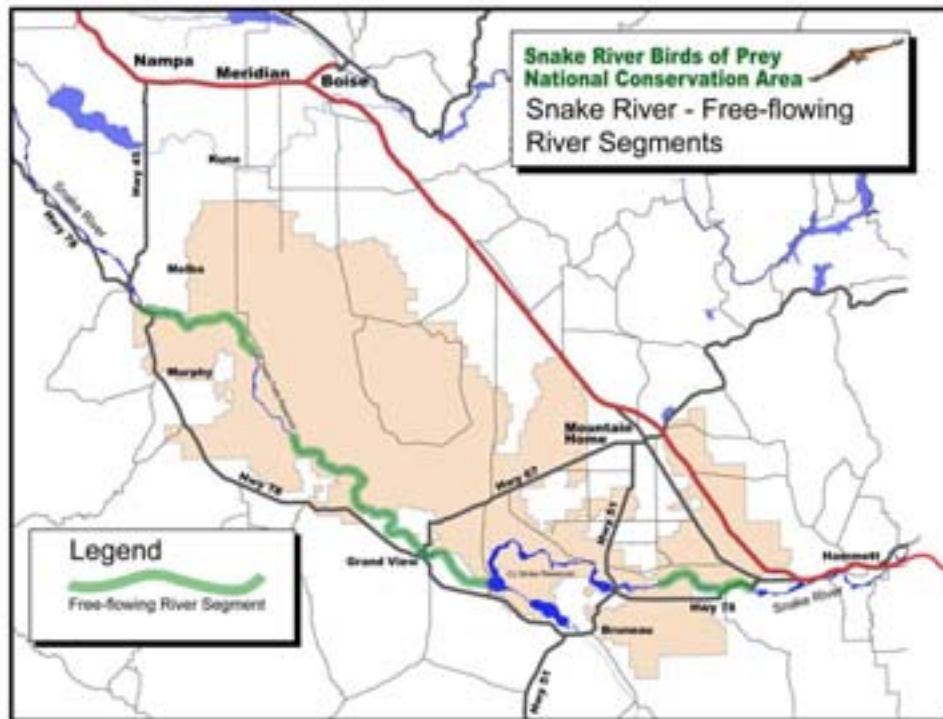


Figure 2 Free flowing segments of the Snake River



River Segment Description	Number of Miles	River Segment Name	Free Flowing Criteria Met
East boundary of the NCA to the backwaters of CJ Strike Reservoir	9	Indian Cove	Yes
Backwaters of C.J. Strike Reservoir to CJ Strike Dam	24	C.J. Strike Reservoir	No
Downstream of C.J. Strike Dam to the backwaters of Swan Falls Reservoir	26.5	Grand View	Yes
Backwaters of Swan Falls Reservoir to Swan Falls Dam	9.5	Swan Falls Reservoir	No
Downstream of Swan Falls Dam to the west boundary of the NCA	13	Swan Falls	Yes

Findings Summary: Three (3) segments of the Snake River (49 miles total) were found to meet the free-flowing criteria. Two (2) segments (33 miles total) did not meet the criteria.

The 26.5 mile Grand View segment has two distinct characters. The initial 17.5 miles downstream from CJ Strike Dam is visually characterized by being a wide valley floor with the canyon rim several miles to the north and no canyon rim south of the river. The ownership is predominately private land on both sides of the river, being either rural townships or agricultural fields and pasture lands. At the end of this segment the river turns north and the surrounding canyon closes back into a river characterized by vertical basalt cliffs on the north and broken cliffs and buttes to the south. The ownership changes to predominately public lands with some private lands spaced throughout. For this reason the Grand View segment will

be divided and evaluated as two segments – the Grand View Segment and the Jackass Butte Segment.

The Grand View segment extends from just below CJ Strike Dam at the Strike Dam Road Bridge downstream approximately 17.5 miles to Jackass Butte at River Mile 474. The Jackass Butte Segment extends from Jackass Butte downstream approximately 9 miles to the backwaters of Swan Falls Reservoir (Figure 3).

These four (4) free flowing segments (Indian Cove, Grand View, Jackass Butte, and Swan Falls) will be further analyzed as to their possible outstandingly remarkable values.

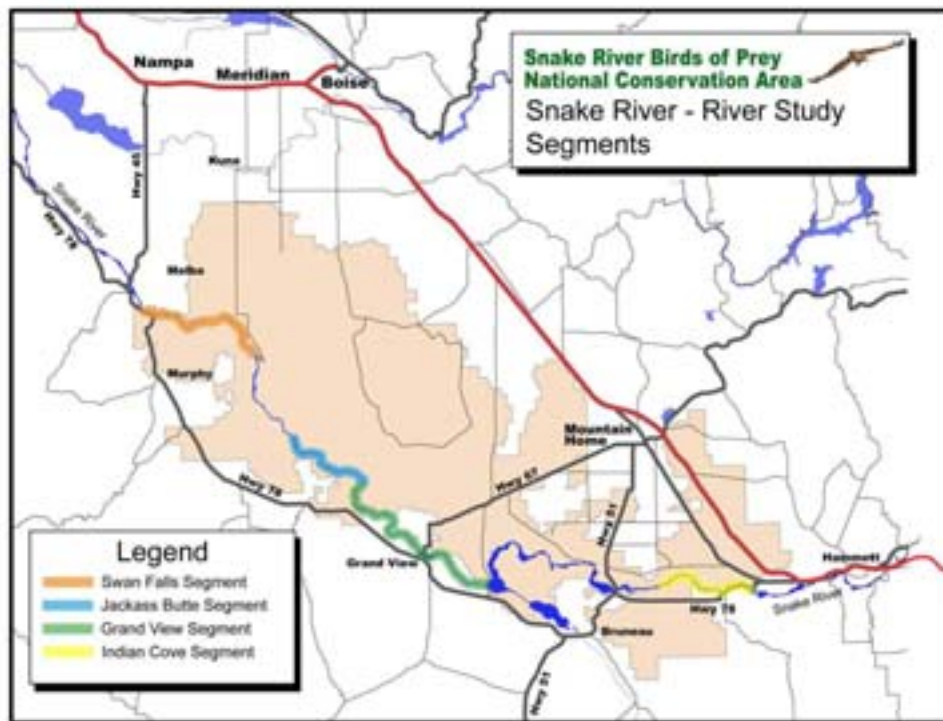


Figure 3 Snake River Eligibility Study Segments



III. Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)

The determination that a river area contains ORVs is a professional judgment on the part of the interdisciplinary study team (ID team), based on objective, scientific analysis. In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative state, regional or national scale. Dictionary definitions of the words "unique" and "rare" indicate that such a value would be one that is a conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary.

The ID team evaluated 49 miles of the Snake River, which met the free flowing criteria, by listing all of the river's special values and then assessing whether they were unique, rare or exemplary within the state, region, or nation. Only one such value is needed for a segment to be eligible. Of the 82 miles of the Snake River in the study area, four segments (49 miles) were identified for further analysis for the presence of outstandingly remarkable values and are discussed in greater detail below.

The values, which must be directly river-related or owe their location or existence to the river ecosystem, are considered outstandingly remarkable if they are unique or exemplary compared to similar values of other rivers within a geographic region of comparison. The regions used for comparison in this study are the Northern Great Basin and the Northern Rocky Mountains.

The following eligibility criteria were used and are intended to set minimum thresholds to establish ORVs and are illustrative but not all-inclusive. The "standard" criteria for each resource and the Outstandingly Remarkable Value Rating used are from BLM Manual 8351 and are an interagency standard for greater consistency within the federal river-administering agencies.

Discussion of River-Related Values

Scenic (S)

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value Rating

The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. The BLM Visual Resource Inventory handbook, H-4810-1 may be used in addressing visual quality and in evaluating the extent of development upon scenic values. The rating must be a scenic quality "A" as defined in the BLM Visual Inventory Handbook. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors – such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time

negative intrusions are viewed -- may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.



Figure 4 View east of Indian Cove Segment of the Snake River

Evaluation of Present Situation

The general scenic character of the Snake River is one of vertical canyon cliffs interspersed with wide expansive views of valley floor and rolling hills leading south toward the Owyhee Mountains. The Swan Falls segment is the most enclosed, having cliffs on both sides of the river for the majority of the segment. The four segments, while similar, have slightly different visual characteristics.

The Indian Cove segment begins with canyon cliffs rising 400 feet along both sides of the river and then opening to distant views of hills and buttes to the south after approximately 2 miles. The canyon closes back in on the river again at approximately 6 miles (Figure 4.). The Grand View segment is privately owned land in some form of agricultural development for almost the entire length. This segment of the river opens into a large flood plain with the canyon rim typically 2-3 miles from the river on the north and no rim to the south (Figure 5). The downstream portion of the segment begins to move into open rangelands and the canyon rim comes back to within 1 mile of the river and starts to create a more enclosed canyon. At this point, the Jackass Butte segment begins.

