

# Wild & Scenic Designation Process

In a nutshell, this is how the wild and scenic rivers designation process works:

First, there is an eligibility study to determine if the rivers meet the basic criteria to be designated wild and scenic. The simplest way to think of this is this is to determine if they COULD be designated. If rivers are found to be eligible, then the forest is required by law to manage them so that they remain eligible until we conduct a suitability study.

So that brings us to the second part of the process, which is the suitability study. This is another, separate process that examines all of the eligible rivers to inform the responsible official (the forest supervisor) to make a decision of whether they are suitable to be designated. So in this study, what is being decided by the forest supervisor is if the eligible rivers SHOULD be designated. This would serve as a recommendation to congress from the agency of whether or not to designate rivers. We also have to protect suitable rivers to preserve their suitability to be designated, but any previously eligible rivers that are not found to be suitable are also no longer considered to be eligible, and there is no longer a requirement to manage them as an eligible river.

And the last step of the process would be designation. At this point, it has moved beyond all Forest Service authority and is entirely in the hands of congress. They can either follow the forest supervisor's decision that a river is suitable to be designated, or not. Congress makes that decision, and they can designate any river they choose, or choose not to designate them.

So in answer to your question, there are currently no rivers that have been designated as wild and scenic by congress here on the Gila. We also have never undertaken any suitability studies, so there are also no suitable wild and scenic rivers on the forest.

We currently only have the eligible rivers from the 2002 study process. After the plan revision decision is signed, any additional rivers from the current process that are determined to be will also be eligible.

I hope this answers your questions Alex, but if not please follow up with me and I'll help any way I can.

Take care, and have a great day,

-Eric

Forest Service Shield

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