

River Democracy Act of 2021 (S.192)

Wild and Scenic Rivers in Oregon

There are approximately 110,994 miles of rivers, streams and creeks in Oregon, of which 2,173 miles (about 2%) are designated as Wild and Scenic. Introduced by Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, the River Democracy Act of 2021 (RDA) could increase the mileage of Wild and Scenic Rivers in Oregon by more than two-fold, therefore safeguarding vital watersheds for local communities, fish, and wildlife. Senator Wyden developed his bill by asking Oregonians to nominate rivers and streams for protection as Wild and Scenic Rivers. This process garnered over 15,000 nominations and resulted in a unique grassroots bill shaped by thousands of Oregonians.

Why Wild and Scenic?

Wild and Scenic River protection keeps free-flowing waterways dam free forever. Mining and other extractive uses are also prohibited on many of Oregon's Wild and Scenic Rivers. On public lands, a mile-wide corridor is established along the banks of such designated bodies so that the river's "outstandingly remarkable values" are protected and prioritized. These values include (but may not be limited to) fish and other wildlife, recreation, cultural and historic resources, scenery, and geology.

Benefits of Wild and Scenic Rivers

We are all connected to wild rivers, and we all benefit when they are healthy and free-flowing. Millions of Oregonians depend on clean drinking water sourced from existing or proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers. Healthy river ecosystems act as a natural filtration system, helping remove pollution so that water requires less treatment before it is safe to drink. Local communities also benefit from recreation, conservation, and restoration of Wild and Scenic Rivers, all of which can bring jobs and new economic opportunities to rural communities.

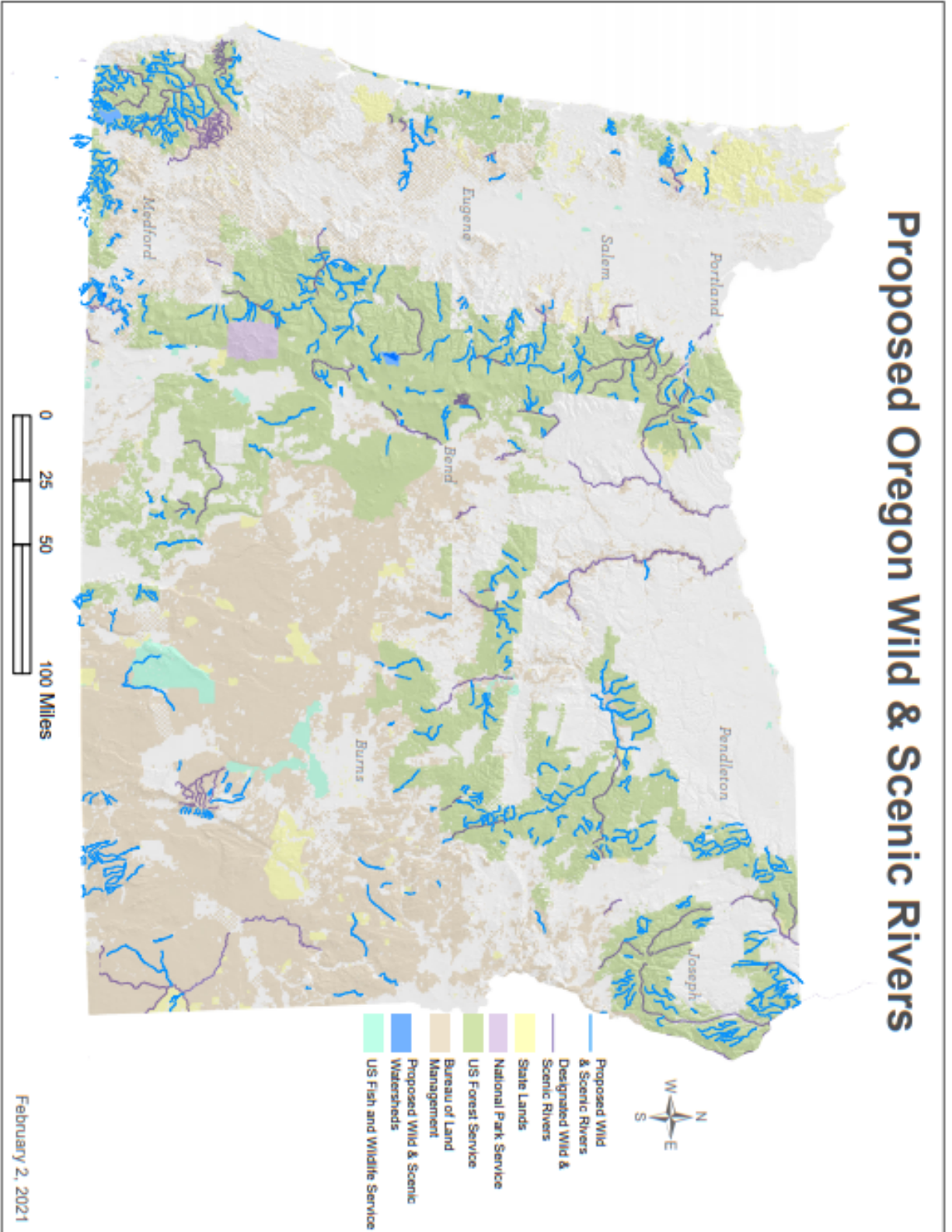
Public Management of Public Rivers

After Congress designates a Wild and Scenic River, public land managers (such as the U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management) must begin a process in which the local public can provide input towards a plan for how the river's outstandingly remarkable values will be protected and enhanced.

Wild and Scenic Rivers that flow through private land do not impact private property rights or land use. Existing water rights for irrigation are unchanged by Wild and Scenic River designation, and uses like livestock grazing can continue as long as they are not negatively impacting the river's recognized outstandingly remarkable values.



Proposed Oregon Wild & Scenic Rivers



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