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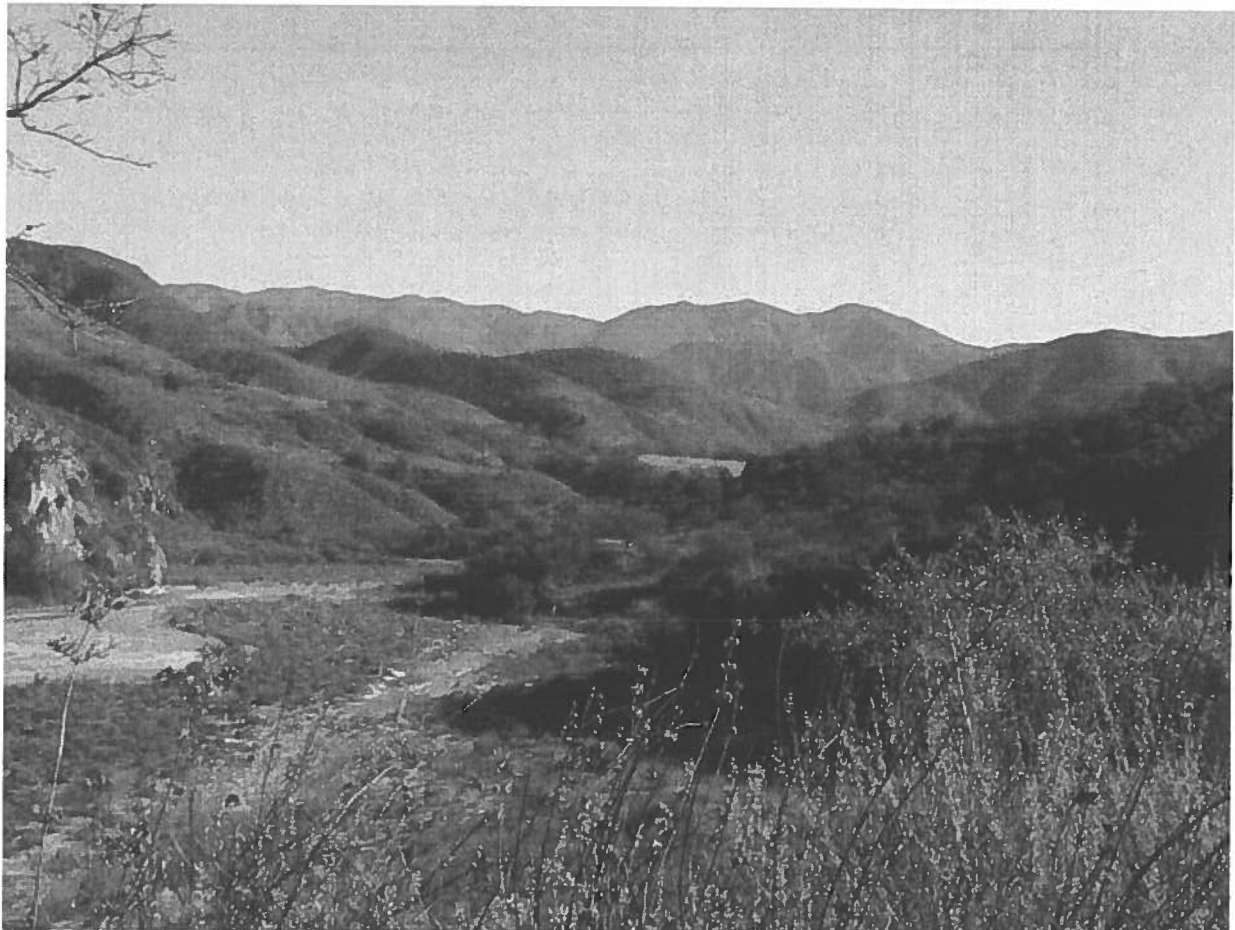
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Comprehensive River Management Plan

Sisquoc River

Los Padres National Forest



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Introduction

The Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Act (16 U.S.C. 1271-1287) was amended in 1992 to designate a portion of the Sisquoc River as an additional component of the National WSR System (Public Law 102-301) in order to preserve and protect for present and future generations its outstandingly remarkable values. The river segment was described as (see attached map):

SISQUOC RIVER - The 33-mile segment of the main stem of the river extending from its origin downstream to the Los Padres Forest boundary, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a wild river.

The boundaries of the Sisquoc River component of the National WSR System were published in the Federal Register (67 Federal Register 43:9953, March 5, 2002) as follows:

The Sisquoc River, California, Wild and Scenic River is located in the Los Padres National Forest, in the County of Santa Barbara, State of California. The following description refers to the attached maps titled ZACA LAKE QUADRANGLE; BALD MOUNTAIN QUADRANGLE; HURRICANE DECK QUADRANGLE; SALISBURY POTRERO QUADRANGLE; SAN RAFAEL MOUNTAIN QUADRANGLE; AND BIG PINE MOUNTAIN QUADRANGLE, dated 1995. Being the bed of said river and strips of land extending 1320 feet from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of said river as represented on the maps and described as follows:

The 33-mile segment of the main stem of the river extending from its origin downstream to the Los Padres Forest boundary.

Description of River Setting and Values

Regional River Setting

The Sisquoc River is located in Santa Barbara County approximately 25 miles north of Santa Barbara, California. The Sisquoc River originates in the San Rafael Mountains, a part of the California Coast Range, and flows into the Cuyama River east of Santa Maria, California. The Sisquoc watershed includes those lands that drain into the Sisquoc River and its tributaries. The watershed is bordered on the south by the San Rafael Mountain Range and on the north by the Sierra Madre Mountain Range. The designated WSR corridor lies entirely within the administrative boundaries of the Los Padres National Forest. All but 1.5 miles on the west end (on the south side of the river) lies within the San Rafael Wilderness. A short section, approximately 1.25 miles, traverses the Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary. The closest population centers are Santa Barbara to the south, and Santa Maria to the west.

Elevations within the watershed range from 1200 feet at the downstream terminus of the designated Wild River segment to 6,590 feet atop San Rafael Mountain. The climate is one of a temperate, Mediterranean type; typified by warm, dry summers, and cool, moist winters. Precipitation ranges from an annual rainfall of 13 to 38 inches with approximately 95 percent falling between November and April.

Access to the Sisquoc WSR corridor is limited. The nearest public vehicle access is a trailhead located near the Nira Campground at the northern terminus of the Sunset Valley Road (Forest Route 8N09). Private and administrative vehicle access extends to Manzanita Schoolhouse Campground on the Davis Road (Forest Route 31W13). The Buckhorn Road (Forest Route 9N11) provides administrative access to the headwaters of the Sisquoc River.

Numerous trails access the WSR corridor from the north and south. A hiking and equestrian trail (Forest Trail 30W12) parallels the Sisquoc River for the entire length of the WSR corridor.

Free-flow Values and Impacts

The Sisquoc River is free flowing without past or present diversions. Horse Canyon, a tributary to the Sisquoc River, contains a small dam (about three meters high), which is filled with sediment creating a wet riparian zone behind it. This structure is within the WSR corridor, however, it is not restricting water on the Sisquoc River.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Scenic: The scenic value of the river is associated with the narrow corridor of the river itself and the contrast of the geologic features, water, and riparian vegetation. These components in different combinations create color, size, and shape contrasts that create outstanding scenery. The entire length of the river is natural, undisturbed, and part of a larger area known as the San Rafael Wilderness. Occasional vistas that allow wide views of the landscape enhance the contrast of the riparian zone in the river corridor against the expansive chaparral vegetation on steep hillsides to create unique scenery. The river includes diverse landforms and vegetation ranging from wide floodplains in the lower segments, to narrow, rocky areas in the upper segments. In the upper portion of the river, there are rocky areas that include falls and deep pools in the river supporting steelhead trout. Alder and sycamore trees also line the riparian area in the upper portion and remain cool and green, even in the heat of summer. In the lower portion of the river, the floodplain is wide and covered with cobbles.

Recreation: The river corridor offers excellent opportunities for solitude, primitive camping, hiking, horseback riding and other wilderness oriented activities. There is an established trail system that generally parallels the river out of the floodplain that periodically crosses the river at right angles as it moves from side to side. The river corridor provides a cool and scenic area with access to water that enhances recreation.

Wildlife: Several endangered, threatened, or Forest Service designated sensitive wildlife species are found in a relatively undisturbed riparian habitat. The combination of this habitat with the presence of above ground water for 9-12 months a year and the area's remoteness constitute an outstanding value for the area. These species include southern California steelhead (*Onocorhynchus mykiss*), Arroyo toads (*Bufo californicus*), Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), and California condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) federally designated endangered, California red-legged frogs (*Rana aurora draytonii*) federally designated threatened, California spotted owls (*Strix o. occidentalis*), Southwestern pond turtles (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*), and Two-striped garter snakes (*Thamnophis hammondi*) Forest Service designated sensitive.

Heritage: The Sisquoc River corridor has abundant prehistoric and historic sites. Patterns of travel and settlement along the river's length, and the sites that stand in evidence of the past, reflect the distinctive nature of this drainage. The corridor frequently has narrow travel passages, and many adjacent high flats that were occupied in prehistoric times and often homesteaded and cultivated in more recent times. The area also has cultural significance to modern Native Americans. The most distinctive characteristic of this corridor is its potential for an interpretative strategy that respects and enhances the wilderness recreation experience.

Ecology: The extensive riparian corridor along the Sisquoc River remains relatively natural and surrounded by a large wilderness area. This contiguous, intact, and large protected ecosystem is rare in southern California, and the Sisquoc River has become a refuge for riparian dependent plant and animal species including many threatened and endangered

species. The vegetation is fire dependent and fire plays an important role in maintaining the landscape.

Resource Condition

Vegetation: Vegetation within the watershed is quite varied with large and small patches of grassland, scrub, woodland, and forest plant communities forming a heterogeneous mosaic across the landscape. The last large wildfire to effect a large portion of the watershed and the WSR corridor was the Wellman fire in 1966. Many plant communities have been described in the area including annual grassland (or potreros), ceanothus chaparral, chamise chaparral, mixed chaparral, sagebrush-rabbitbrush scrub, sage scrub, canyon live oak woodland, mixed hardwood-canyon live oak woodland, scrub oak woodland, grey pine woodland, riparian woodland with sycamore and willow, mixed evergreen forest (or mixed hardwood forest), ponderosa pine woodland, and Coulter pine woodland. Seeps, springs, rock outcrops, talus, and other edaphic features provide habitat for herbaceous plant communities that are not well described in the botanical literature. Habitat exists for eleven plant species listed as sensitive by the Regional Forester: Santa Barbara jewelflower (*Caulanthus amplexicaulis* var. *barbarae*), Blakley's spineflower (*Chorizanthe blakleyi*), Hall's woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum* ssp. *hallii*), Hoover's woolly star (*Eriastrum hooveri*), Palmer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri* var. *palmeri*), Ojai fritillary (*Fritillaria ojaiensis*), pale-yellow layia (*Layia heterotricha*), Baja navarretia (*Navarretia peninsularis*), Abram's oxytheca (*Oxytheca parishii* var. *abramsii*), pine-green gentian (*Swertia neglecta*), and Parish's checkerbloom (*Sidalcea hickmanii* ssp. *parishii*). Non-native plants, including at least three noxious weeds (medusa-head, tamarisk, and yellow star-thistle), are found within the river corridor.

Geology: The Sisquoc River watershed is within the southernmost extension of the Coast Ranges that extends northward to Oregon. Northwest trending structures and bands of lithologies are characteristic of the Coast Range. These ranges merge with the east-west trending Transverse Ranges east of the analysis area.

Predominant lithologies are folded Cretaceous and Tertiary sedimentary sequences of layered sandstone and shale units. There is a band of Franciscan Formation rocks that includes serpentine near the southern boundary of the watershed. Faults and folds largely control drainage patterns.

Mass wasting is an important geomorphic process in this area especially along steep slopes, in areas where shale units predominate, and in the highly sheared and serpentinized rocks of the Franciscan Formation.

Soil and air: The soils of the Sisquoc River are generally warm zone or thermic in nature with mean annual soil temperature of 59 to 72 degrees F. Annual precipitation ranges from thirteen to thirty-eight inches. Soils along the river are moderately deep to deep sandy loams, loams, and gravelly loams on sedimentary rocks. Vegetation includes chamise, ceanothus, manzanita, scrub oak, buckwheat and annual grasses.

Water: The Sisquoc River is a tributary of the Santa Maria River and provides groundwater and surface water recharge for the Santa Maria Valley. Existing stream courses provide water for domestic and agricultural use. As outlined in the California Unified Watershed Assessment (October 1998), the Santa Maria River is a Category 1 (Impaired) Priority Watershed. Category 1 watersheds are candidates for increased restoration activities due to impaired water quality or other impaired natural resource goals (emphasis on aquatic systems). The Santa Maria River watershed is considered impaired because of activities outside the Forest boundary.

The largest Sisquoc River tributaries in this landscape are: La Brea Creek, South Fork Sisquoc, Big Pine Creek, Horse Canyon, Water Canyon, Abel Canyon, Sweetwater Canyon, and Judell Canyon, all having or potentially having populations of resident trout. Other tributaries are smaller and contain relatively few miles of suitable fisheries habitat. All tributaries within this analysis area contribute critically important cold water to the Sisquoc or Cuyama Rivers for the maintenance of anadromous fisheries in the Santa Maria Basin.

Fire/fuels: Wildfire is the primary natural disturbance process in the landscape. Before European settlement, lightning and Native American ignited fires were primary factors shaping the vegetation. Fire suppression became effective in the 1930s, due to improved access and technology. Since 1911, nine large fires of over 10,000 acres each have burned within the watershed, up to the 1993 Marre Fire. Currently, 90 percent of the fires are human caused with 10 percent of unknown origin. At present, about 80 percent of the watershed is at a critical level for hazardous fuels with older vegetation (30-80+ years in chaparral) which has a 45 percent and greater dead fuel component.

During the Wellman fire, which burned 93,600 acres in June of 1966, dozers were used within the wilderness to construct a road up the dry Sisquoc River riverbed. Fire lines were also constructed along the ridges, crossing the Sisquoc River one mile up from the Forest boundary.

The rainy season following large wildfires usually creates increased runoff and sedimentation, which scours the entire riparian corridor below the wildfire area.

Fish and Wildlife: Steelhead trout historically ran 25 miles up the Santa Maria River into the Sisquoc River. There is currently a small run of southern California steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Federally listed as endangered, that make it to the Sisquoc during years of high stream flow. The lower reaches of the Sisquoc are highly unstable with multiple channels that don't have enough water to support fish during dry periods. Approximately 38 miles of steelhead trout habitat would be accessible if steelhead trout could reach the upper portions of the Sisquoc River. Because the Sisquoc River is not impounded, water management downstream of the Forest affects steelhead trout migration into US Forest Service (USFS) managed lands.

Pacific lamprey, Arroyo chubs, speckled dace, and partially unarmored stickleback are native to this river system. Numerous aquatic invertebrate insects inhabit all flowing and standing water bodies in the analysis area.

Green sunfish and black bullheads are exotic species introduced to the Sisquoc River. These exotic species are competitors and/or predators of steelhead trout. In a statewide survey of non-indigenous species, Dudley and Collins (1995) concluded that the South Coast Bioregion was particularly hard hit, with more non-native species than any other California bioregion.

Wildlife habitats are determined by the distribution and structure of vegetation communities, landscape features such as soil and rock types, and climate. The analysis area supports a variety of wildlife species representative of animals found throughout central California. The mix of species is diverse because of the range of habitats found within this large watershed, from small intermittent streams to high mountain forests.

Most of the watershed is covered by dry coastal sage chaparral and mixed chaparral, and the wildlife species present reflect this habitat. More commonly known denizens of the chaparral include California quail, bobcat, black-tailed deer, black bear, mountain lion, and hundreds of other vertebrate species.

The perennial, un-dammed, and mostly pristine (on USFS land) Sisquoc watershed supports many riparian-dependent species that are not found in abundance elsewhere on the Central

Coast of California. Federally endangered species such as the Arroyo toad (*Bufo microscaphus californicus*) and, the least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) have been found along the Sisquoc River. Federally threatened red-legged frogs (*Rana aurora draytoni*), and USFS Region 5 sensitive western pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*) and two-stripe garter snakes (*Thamnophis hammondi*) are common here.

This watershed also contains the Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has a California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) release site on Sierra Madre Ridge, above the WSR corridor. Condors regularly use this watershed. At the top of the watershed from Big Pine Mountain to Figueroa Mountain, a rare (within the LPNF) old-growth canopy of Douglas-fir, Jeffrey pine, incense-cedar, and sugar pine support California spotted owls (*Strix occidentalis*) and possibly the northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and Mt. Pinos blue grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*).

Ecology: The Sisquoc River Watershed is large and diverse. The WSR corridor is approximately 33 miles long and flows from narrow headwater streams in the east, toward the wide and cobbly river corridor in the west. The mix of wildlife species is diverse because of the wide variety of habitats along this corridor. The perennial, and pristine Sisquoc River supports many riparian-dependent species that are not found in abundance elsewhere on the Central Coast of California. Wildfire and flooding are the primary natural disturbance processes in the landscape.

Heritage: The Sisquoc WSR corridor contains two heritage features that are especially important. The first is rock art that remains from the native population that lived in the area. The second is the Sisquoc Settlers Archeological District, an area that contains the remains of the 1860's community that lived along the Sisquoc River from the Forest boundary to the confluence of the South Fork of the Sisquoc River.

The Sisquoc River contains the traditional range of the Santa Ynez and Cuyama Chumash, the native population encountered by the first European explorers. A number of permanent villages dating from the period of first European contact are located within or closely adjacent to the analysis area. In addition, a number of seasonal villages or camps are known to exist within the analysis area.

With the increased Anglo population in southern California beginning in the mid to late 1860s, greater interest was shown in the mountainous interior of Santa Barbara County, including the analysis area. For example, during the 1870s, the Reverend Stephen Bowers, a notorious amateur archaeologist, made several forays into the Sisquoc drainage, excavating several sites and leaving detailed notes and disturbed archeological sites as a legacy. Real changes started to occur with the development of homesteads along the Sisquoc River and lower Manzana Creek during the 1880s. A wagon road was developed through and above the Sisquoc Ranch, linking several homesteads, a sawmill, and the Manzana Schoolhouse. These homesteads survived largely through dry farming and raising cattle with the use of surrounding lands for grazing. Burning of the chaparral to encourage growth of grass was a common agricultural practice in the homestead community along the Sisquoc.

Establishment of the Forest Reserves in the period extending from 1898 through 1907 eventually ended the practice of agricultural burning and brought limits to the numbers of grazing animals. The primary purpose for establishment of Forest Reserves within Santa Barbara County, including the analysis area, was for watershed protection. The primary means for accomplishing this purpose was fire protection. The Reserves relied on rangers who patrolled the mountainous interior, basing their operations from a number of camps and line cabins. Some of these camps remain in use today and traces of line cabins can be found within the analysis area. One landscape legacy of this period is the accumulation of chaparral fuels and the reversion of grassland to chaparral. Where once there was a landscape

altered significantly by Indian and settler use of fire, there is now a landscape reflective of modern policies of fire management and control.

The Forest Service soon recognized the primitive values of portions of the analysis area. The San Rafael Primitive Area, created in 1932, formed the core of what is now the San Rafael Wilderness Area, the first Wilderness area established under the Wilderness Act of 1964. In addition, Falls Creek Canyon was set-aside as a Condor Sanctuary in 1937 through activist efforts of local conservationists.

Recreation: The Los Padres National Forest is considered an "urban forest" because of its close proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles metropolitan area. The Sisquoc River is a focal point for recreation in the San Rafael Wilderness. Primitive camping, hiking, horseback riding, fishing, nature study, photography, swimming, and wading are popular activities. Overnight camping occurs at unimproved dispersed sites and at designated primitive campsites throughout the river corridor. The area is mostly used in spring and fall.

Other Land Uses

The lower half of the Sisquoc WSR corridor lies within the Sisquoc Grazing Allotment with an historical allocation of 400 cow/calf pairs. The last permitted use occurred in 1997 and allowed for 250 cow/calf pairs. The allotment is currently vacant. Resuming use of the allotment would require an environmental assessment.

Approximately 1.25 miles of the corridor fall partially within the Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary. The sanctuary prohibits public entry year-round.

There are no known mining claims in the Sisquoc WSR corridor. The WSR Act withdraws the lands in a WSR corridor designated as wild from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws and from operation of the mineral leasing laws. The designated corridor is described as 'being the bed of said river and strips of land extending 1320 feet from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of said river'. Most of the river is also contained within the San Rafael Wilderness, which is also withdrawn from mining.

River Classification

The entire length of the main stem of the Sisquoc River that is within the administrative boundaries of the Los Padres National Forest is designated a Wild River.

Planning Context

Relationship to Other Federal Regulatory Agencies

The Los Padres National Forest is required to consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration concerning how forest management activities may affect threatened and endangered species. The Southern California Conservation Strategy was developed in response to difficulties in balancing protection of threatened and endangered species and other resource uses.

Relationship to Tribal Governments

The Los Padres National forest recognizes a government-to-government relationship with the Santa Ynez band of Chumash Indians, and also consults with other organized Native

American groups and individuals known to the forest. Any future site-specific proposals will prompt coordination during planning.

Relationship to Other Federal, State and Local Government Plans

The Los Padres National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, March, 1988) establishes long-range direction and associated goals and objectives. Specific direction for the management of wilderness areas and WSR are found in this document. The Sisquoc CRMP will be incorporated into the LRMP as an amendment.

Relationship to Other Regional Coordinating Bodies

The California State Water Resources Control Board has responsibility for enforcing requirements of the Clean Water Act. The Sisquoc River is within the Santa Maria watershed. As outlined in the California Unified Watershed Assessment (October 1998), the Santa Maria River is a Category 1 (Impaired) Priority Watershed. Category 1 watersheds are candidates for increased restoration activities due to impaired water quality or other impaired natural resource goals (emphasis on aquatic systems). The watershed is considered impaired because of activities outside the forest boundary.

The Sisquoc WSR corridor lies within the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District. The District is a non-attainment area for several California State Ambient Air Quality Standards. Prior to prescribed fire activities, the Forest Service prepares and submits a Smoke Management Plan that describes the planned activities and expected impacts to air quality. If approved, a permit is issued for the activity.

Legislative Direction Specific to the River

The Sisquoc WSR is almost entirely within the San Rafael Wilderness. The WSR Act states that any portion of a designated WSR within a wilderness area shall be subject to the provisions of both the Wilderness Act and the WSR Act and with respect to the preservation of river values, and in the case of conflict, the more restrictive provisions apply.

The Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary lies partially within the Sisquoc WSR corridor. The sanctuary is managed to provide maximum habitat protection and all other resource activities are discouraged. The public is not allowed to enter the sanctuary, except to pass through on the trail.

Desired Condition

Free Flowing Condition

Free flowing condition is one of the values for which the Sisquoc River was designated a "wild" river. The designation protects the river from having a dam built on it or the effects of a dam built in a lower portion of the river from reaching the wild and scenic portion. "Free flowing", does not exclude a river just because it has a low dam or diversion works on it. Horse Creek, a tributary at the downstream end of the Sisquoc WSR has a low dam that is within the boundary of the WSR corridor. The dam is completely filled in and not affecting the free flowing condition of the Sisquoc River.

Desired Condition – The Sisquoc WSR is maintained in a free-flowing condition, and connectivity of the river and tributaries is enhanced when compatible with other ORVs.

Water Quality

Water quality is one of the values for which the Sisquoc River was designated a “wild” river. A “wild” river in the WSR Act, among other things, has unpolluted waters. The Sisquoc River is located in the San Rafael Wilderness, which provides it a large measure of protection from most pollutants. Due to the pristine location and lack of pollutants, the upper Sisquoc is assumed to be unpolluted. Pollutants resulting from humans and animals using the area for recreation are fairly insignificant due to the low number of users and difficulty to access the area. Toilets exist in some key camping locations, such as Manzana Schoolhouse, due to the concentrated use that occurs at those sites. Sedimentation due to heavy rains following fire is the most significant effect to water quality. A large fire that consumes all vegetation will have a much larger effect than a smaller fire with unburned areas intermixed.

Desired Condition – Water quality is maintained in the Sisquoc River. If a water quality problem due to improper disposal of waste is suspected, measures are implemented to solve the problem. Measures could include adding additional wilderness toilets.

Sedimentation is a natural process that occurs on a continual basis each year with large amounts following disturbance, such as wildfire. Fire prevention, suppression and use (RX burning) activities are planned and used when feasible to limit the size of fires disturbing the watershed and affecting the rivers water quality.

Scenic

Scenic values were identified as an ORV. The river corridor, in conjunction with the larger area of the watershed that is natural and undisturbed, combines to create beautiful scenery. Threats to the scenery would include large catastrophic wild fire that would affect large blocks of vegetation in the watershed or river corridor. Man made scars on the landscape such as roads or dozer lines would also threaten the scenic value.

Desired Condition – Scenic values of the entire watershed and maintenance of a natural appearance are considered when managing, planning or implementing any projects in or around the Sisquoc River.

Recreation

Recreation was identified as an ORV. Current recreation consists of primitive camping, hiking, horseback riding and other wilderness-oriented activities. There is a system of trails along the river and on ridges with occasional primitive campsites that provide access to the wilderness area. The trails are in varying states of maintenance from highly maintained to impassable. Rock slides, high water, and growing vegetation make trail maintenance a constant, never ending job. Human use is low in this WSR corridor due to difficulty of access and seasonality of use (use is concentrated in the spring and fall due to harsh weather conditions). The closures of the Davis road and part of the Sierra Madre road (approximately 20 miles from the Santa Barbara Potrero to near McPherson Peak) to public motorized use makes access to the WSR corridor difficult. A hike of 7-9 miles is required to reach the Sisquoc River. Because access is difficult, the effects of recreation use are relatively low and concentrated along riparian areas.

Desired Condition – All existing recreation opportunities such as campsites, use of stock, maintained trails, etc. will remain. Modifications may be needed to protect the outstandingly remarkable values of the Sisquoc River. Continue providing wilderness values, including a sense of solitude and lack of user conflicts, in the WSR corridor.

Wildlife

Wildlife values, particularly threatened and endangered species, were identified as an ORV. There are several endangered, threatened, or Forest Service sensitive wildlife species that are found in a relatively undisturbed riparian habitat. Recreational uses, such as camping and hiking on trails that cross the habitat and introductions of invasive exotic plant and animal species have the potential to impact threatened and endangered species and their habitats. A dam on Horse Creek blocks potential steelhead habitat that could be used during high flow years.

Desired Condition – Endangered, threatened and sensitive species are protected. Campers, hikers and equestrians are directed to campsites and well-maintained trails that minimize access to the water in areas that are frog or toad habitat. Stream crossings are kept to a minimum in an effort to disturb as little of the habitat as possible. Man-made barriers to fish passage will be considered for removal (Horse Creek dam). Efforts will be made to prevent introduction of and to remove non-native fish and other exotic and invasive animal and plant species continues.

Heritage Resources

Heritage resources were identified as an ORV. The Sisquoc River corridor has abundant prehistoric and historic sites. Some are experiencing damage due to age, weathering and exposure to use. A complete record and interpretation of sites has not been completed.

Desired Condition – Heritage resources are protected and preserved. Heritage values are recognized and interpreted for the public when appropriate. Sites are recorded and monitored through funded and volunteer programs.

Ecology

Ecology was identified as an ORV. The extensive riparian corridor, along the Sisquoc River remains relatively natural and surrounded by a large wilderness area.

Desired Condition - The natural ecology the Sisquoc River remains intact. The diversity of plants and animals remains or is enhanced. Wilderness values are considered for all activities including wildfire suppression.

River Corridor Boundary

The boundary for the Sisquoc WSR is totally within the administrative boundaries of the Los Padres National Forest. It extends ¼ mile on each side of the main stem of the Sisquoc River starting at the private land at the edge of the boundary on the west and extending approximately 33 miles to the headwaters in the east near Upper Bear Campsite. The lines are displayed on the 1995 Forest Service revision of the USGS 1988 1:24,000 topographic quadrangles.

Management Actions

The following are management actions recommended to protect or enhance ORVs. Site-specific analysis will be done as needed prior to implementation. Implementation will occur as opportunities arise.

In order to maintain the free flowing condition-

- Evaluate improvements to ensure free-flowing condition and stream connectivity remains.
- Consider removing landslides if they block stream connectivity.

In order to maintain water quality-

- Promote low impact camping techniques through public education at trailheads and public events such as fairs.
- Utilize wilderness toilets where needed.
- Relocate toilets away from riparian zones, when feasible.
- Consider opportunities to use prescribed fire in order to reduce the effect of catastrophic wildfires.
- Consider closing trails during the rainy season following a large wildfire if flooding is expected in the area.
- Strive to maintain system trails to standard to reduce erosion.

In order to maintain the scenic value-

- Maintain wilderness character.
- Do not allow surface occupation associated with oil and gas leasing or any mining activity that will be visible from the Sisquoc River on NF lands.
- Consider opportunities to use prescribed fire to create age class and vegetative diversity.

In order to maintain the recreation value-

- Strive to maintain and reconstruct system trails to Forest Service standards.
- Build or relocate campsites if needed, but don't reduce the number of campsites.
- Leave the Davis Road and part of the Sierra Madre road closed to motorized public access.
- Continue monitoring recreation use level and impacts on other ORVs. Resolve problems identified through future site-specific actions that could include adding campsites, cribbing weak trails, limiting group size, or implementing a permit system.
- Educate through off-site interpretive materials programs such as "Leave No Trace".
- Review and modify Forest Order that states where, how, and how long camping can occur on National Forest System lands to ensure protection of ORVs in the WSR corridor.
- Close or leave the Sisquoc allotment vacant.
- Reestablish and maintain cairns for river crossings as needed.
- Reestablish and mark high water trails and reduce stream crossings where feasible.

In order to maintain wildlife values-

- Locate and reconstruct trails, stream crossings and campsites to minimize impacts on threatened and endangered species and their habitats.
- Look for opportunities to improve habitats, when consistent with other ORVs, in site-specific projects.

- Promote proper use of riparian habitats through dissemination of “Leave No Trace” ethics.
- Continue monitoring in conjunction with on-going funded activities. Resolve problems identified through future site-specific actions.
- Remove invasive exotic species that present a threat (such as tamarisk) using appropriate manual, biological, and chemical controls.
- Educate recreationists about threats of exotic species, use of weed-free hay, damage to riparian areas, and protection of T&E species through ecological interpretive signing, pamphlets and or educational events.
- Coordinate with USF&WS, NOAA-Fisheries, and CDF&G on species management, introductions and monitoring.
- Consider removing the dam on Horse Creek to improve steelhead habitat,

In order to maintain Heritage values-

- Locate and design trails and campsites to reduce or eliminate impacts to heritage sites.
- Educate the public on heritage resource laws and protection needs and methods.
- Interpret sites as appropriate and when consistent with other ORVs.
- Continue monitoring sites through programs such as the Site Steward Program, and other funded and volunteer programs. Resolve problems identified through future site-specific actions.
- Continue working with the Chumash Tribe on heritage issues and opportunities.
- Inventory, thematically evaluate, and nominate sites to the National Register of Historic Places (including Homestead District) as appropriate. Record sites as opportunities arise.
- Conduct stabilization needs assessment and evaluate Manzana Schoolhouse and South Fork Cabin.

In order to maintain ecology values-

- If needed and consistent with other ORVs, use tools such as focused, temporary grazing or prescribed fire to increase plant species and age class diversity, and to protect old-growth Jeffrey pine stands.
- Monitor for trespass livestock as part of on-going wilderness management activities. Deal with livestock trespass according to existing administrative procedures.
- Utilize wildfire situation analysis and resource advisors during fire suppression activities to ensure protection of ORVs.

Monitoring Strategy

The effects of large, catastrophic wildfire are the biggest threat to ORVs at this time. Human caused threats to the ORVs in the Sisquoc WSR are considered low at this time due to the wilderness designation, the remote location, and the low use experienced by the area. The following monitoring strategy has been developed to maintain desired future conditions for the Sisquoc WSR and the ORVs.

Standards

The Outstandingly Remarkable Values, the desired condition for each, and management actions will be the basis for monitoring. Monitoring will occur during on-going planned activities.

Tools such as the use of fire restrictions, fire closures, forest closures and fire clearance are used to help prevent human caused wildfires.

Physical inspections are a current tool for assessing ORVs in the WSR corridor. Periodic trips up the Sisquoc WSR corridor will be made by Forest and /or District personnel, contractors, volunteers, and visitors. These trips will be used to accomplish monitoring that would alert the District to changes in the use or condition of the river corridor that would require action. The District may utilize a checklist of items to look for while visiting the area, to aid monitors who collect information.

Trailhead register boxes are the current tool for assessing visitor use. Currently the registers include the San Rafael Wilderness trip report that is a computer readable form placed at the trailhead register boxes for visitors to fill out on a voluntary basis. Information collected at the register boxes indicates the location, time of year, and volume of visitor use.

Verbal and/or written reports should be documented and given to the appropriate staff or the District Ranger. Information from the monitoring will be used to determine if specific actions, projects, or additional monitoring needs to be planned.

Indications for Management Actions

Possible indicator for management actions include:

Condition of the trail

Types and locations of problems

Condition of the camps

Condition of fire clearance around campfire areas

People encountered on the trip - numbers and locations

Noxious or invasive weeds - type, location

Trash - location, type

Toilet paper or other indications of improper disposal of waste

Water levels

Encounters with wildlife

Fire rings outside of camps- describe location

Saddle and pack stock - number, location

Trespass cattle or other livestock

Fire Danger Indicators – fuel moisture, weather conditions

Process

This monitoring plan relies heavily on coordination by the recreation staff with the reception desk, other district and forest functions such as wildlife, range, watershed and fire, and volunteers. Volunteer program participants and forest visitors will likely be able to visit the area more frequently than agency personnel and could provide important information to indicate trends or changes in the WSR corridor that might need additional concentrated monitoring. Specific monitoring techniques, such as "Limits of Acceptable Change" monitoring of campgrounds, or other methods could then be scheduled and used.