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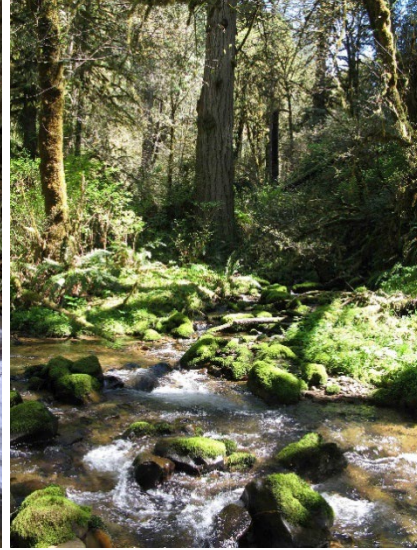


United States Department of Interior

Wasson and Franklin Creeks Comprehensive River Management Plan



Wasson Creek



Franklin Creek



Forest Service
Siuslaw National Forest
Central Coast Ranger District



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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2019, Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek were designated as additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Dingell Act) (Public Law 116-9). Section 3(d)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires the Federal agencies charged with the administration of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to prepare a comprehensive river management plan for each designated river segment to provide for the protection of the segment’s river values.

Prior to the wild and scenic river designation, Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek were managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under a multiple use mandate. The two creeks are located within the ancestral territory of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The majority of the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek project area is within the Devil’s Staircase Wilderness, which was also designated through the Dingell Act.

Rivers designated by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act are classified as wild, recreational and scenic (section 2(b)). The Dingell Act classified the designated segments as wild (table 1). As described in section 2(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a wild river is “a river or segment of a river that is free of impoundments and inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.”

Table 1. Description of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek designated river segments

Designated Segment	Length (mi.)	Classification	Administering Agency	Upstream Terminus	Downstream Terminus
Wasson	4.2	Wild	Bureau of Land Management	Headwaters in T21S, R9W, Section 17	BLM-USFS boundary in T21S, R10W, Section 14
Wasson	5.9	Wild	US Forest Service	BLM-USFS boundary in T21S, R10W, Section 14	Private land boundary in T21S, R10W, Section 22
Franklin	4.5	Wild	US Forest Service	Headwaters in T22S, R10W, Section 2	Private land boundary in T22S, R10W, section 8

The Bureau of Land Management Coos Bay District and Siuslaw National Forest collaborated to develop the following interagency strategy for the management of these wild and scenic river corridors.

Purpose of the Comprehensive River Management Plan

The purpose of the comprehensive river management plan is to establish overall management direction to protect and enhance the values for which Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek were designated (free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values) for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. This plan establishes river corridor boundaries and identifies river-specific desired future conditions, standards and guidelines, user capacities, monitoring, and other management practices necessary to protect and enhance the river values.

This management plan does not propose ground disturbing management activities. The plan recommends inventory activities to inform the baseline condition. It also recommends monitoring that should occur to determine what potential impacts are occurring over time. The plan identifies potential management actions that could be considered to maintain and enhance the values for which these water bodies were designated. If managers determine that action is needed to maintain or enhance these values, additional environmental review may be required at that time.

Documentation and analysis that supports and expands on the information contained in this management plan includes:

- The Final Environmental Assessment for Wasson and Franklin Creeks Comprehensive River Management Plan (August 2022),
- The Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact Statement for Wasson and Franklin Creeks Comprehensive River Management Plan (August 2022)
- The River Values Report for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers (March 2021, updated November 2021), and
- The Capacity Report for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild & Scenic Rivers (November 2021)

These documents are located on the [project web page](#) and in the project record.

Planning Context

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

Enacted in 1968, the [Wild and Scenic Rivers Act](#) (16 U.S.C. 1271-1278) preserves selected rivers and their immediate environments in free-flowing conditions in order to protect them for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires river-administering agencies and other federal agencies to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated. The following statutory provisions highlight this “protect and enhance” mandate:

Section 10(a): Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features. Management plans for any such component may establish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development, based on the special attributes of the area.

The relevant sections of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act are described throughout this management plan and provide the overarching planning context.

2019 John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Public Law 116-9)

The John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 is an omnibus lands act that protected public lands and modified management provisions. Specifically, as related to Wasson and Franklin Creeks, The Dingell Act amended Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) by adding at the end the following:

(214) FRANKLIN CREEK, OREGON.—The 4.5-mile segment from its headwaters to the private land boundary in sec. 8, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a wild river.

(215) WASSON CREEK, OREGON.—The 10.1-mile segment in the following classes:

(A) The 4.2-mile segment from the eastern boundary of T. 21 S., R. 9 W., sec. 17, downstream to the western boundary of T. 21 S., R. 10 W., sec. 12, to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior as a wild river.

(B) The 5.9-mile segment from the western boundary of T. 21 S., R. 10 W., sec. 12, downstream to the eastern boundary of the northwest quarter of T. 21 S., R. 10 W., sec. 22, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a wild river.

Devil's Staircase Wilderness

Most of the project area is located within Devil's Staircase Wilderness. These lands were also designated under the Dingell Act in 2019, and therefore are not displayed as wilderness in the 1990 Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan or the 2016 Bureau of Land Management Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan. A site-specific wilderness management plan has not been developed for the Devil's Staircase Wilderness. The provisions of the Wilderness Act apply within the wilderness, as do Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management wilderness policy (as conveyed in Forest Service Manual 2320 and Bureau of Land Management Manual 6340). The Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan also contains a forest-wide goal to "preserve the values and character of designated wildernesses" while "providing semi-primitive non-motorized recreational opportunities" in each wilderness area. The wilderness designation provides opportunities for natural ecological processes, solitude, and a primitive recreation experience. It is also highly protective of natural landscapes and natural scenery.

Multi-agency policy recognizes five qualities of wilderness: untrammled, natural, undeveloped, opportunities for solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation, and other features of value. The agencies' wilderness stewardship framework is centered on the protection of these five qualities, and all these qualities support preservation of fish and wildlife habitat, natural scenery, and opportunities for a primitive recreational experience. In situations where a unit's resource management plan components conflict with wilderness law and policy, the more restrictive wilderness direction applies.

Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan (1990)

The [Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan](#) guides planning on the forest through land allocations or Management Areas, and each management area contains objectives, desired conditions, and standards and guidelines. The Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan does not include a management area specific to designated wild and scenic rivers. The Forest Service portion of the project area is located within Management Area 11 – Undeveloped Areas, as defined by the Land and Resource Management Plan. Desired conditions and specific standards and guidelines for Management Area 11 are located on pages IV-96 through IV-98 of the Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan.

The primary goals for Management Area 11- Undeveloped Areas are to: "maintain or recreate an essentially undeveloped condition; facilitate semi-primitive non-motorized recreational use at full capacity, utilizing rudimentary recreational facilities where needed; and allow relatively natural development of stream habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms." Additional goals are to "protect old-growth stands and provide habitat for the northern spotted owl." (Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan, page IV-96). The desired conditions for the area speak to undisturbed forest stands, high-quality stream channels, and a recreation setting with rustic recreation facilities, rugged trails, few visitor encounters, and isolation from the sights and sounds of human activities. The visual quality objective for Management Area 11 is identified as retention. All lands in Management Area 11 are categorized as unsuitable for timber production.

The Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan also prescribes recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classifications for the Forest Service managed lands in the project area. Each recreation opportunity spectrum classification guides recreation management by defining an area's appropriate physical, social, and managerial characteristics. The majority of Forest Service land is classified as semi-primitive non-motorized with a few small portions of roaded natural. The semi-primitive non-motorized classification complements the components of Management Area 11 by calling for fairly low levels of development, managerial presence, and evidence of human use. It also specifies a range of acceptable visitor encounters; the range is 6-15 groups or individuals per day, depending on the characteristics of the specific management area. The roaded natural classification allows for higher levels of development, greater human impacts, and higher encounter rates. However, many aspects of the roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum class are overridden by the more stringent provisions of the Wilderness Act.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires the preparation of forest plans to direct management of each national forest. The comprehensive resource management program for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers will be incorporated into the Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan through an amendment. This programmatic forest plan amendment would be applied specifically to the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers project area. The interim wild and scenic river boundary would be adjusted and finalized, and the management area allocations that applied to the area under the Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan would be amended. The wild and scenic river management area would also apply to any wild and scenic river corridors designated in the future. Application of the wild and scenic river management area to areas outside of the Wasson and Franklin Creeks Wild and Scenic River corridors would require site-specific analysis and plan amendment.

Northwest Forest Plan

The Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan was amended by the [Northwest Forest Plan](#) in 1994. The decision incorporated seven land use allocations into the amended Forest Plan; these land use allocations overlap with the pre-existing Forest Plan management areas. The Northwest Forest Plan applies to all National Forest System lands, including the designated wild and scenic segments, administered by the Siuslaw National Forest.

The Forest Service-managed portion of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are within the Northwest Forest Plan Riparian Reserve land use allocation. Riparian Reserves include areas along rivers, streams, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and unstable or potentially unstable areas where the conservation of aquatic and riparian-dependent terrestrial resources receives primary emphasis. Riparian Reserves are designed to protect the health of the aquatic system and its dependent species. The standards and guidelines for Riparian Reserves are found in the Northwest Forest Plan Record of Decision, pages B-12 to B-17. These standards and guidelines are also part of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy found in the Northwest Forest Plan Record of Decision, pages B-9 to B-11. The Aquatic Conservation Strategy was developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems contained within them on public lands. The strategy protects salmon and cutthroat habitat on federal lands managed by the Forest Service within the range of Pacific Ocean anadromy. Bureau of Land Management-managed lands within the Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor are under a riparian reserve allocation defined in the Bureau of Land Management Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan.

Another component of the aquatic conservation strategy is watershed analysis, which includes evaluation of the geomorphic and ecologic processes operating in specific watersheds, in addition to delineating the final riparian reserve widths (Northwest Forest Plan, pg. 8-1). These analyses should enable watershed

planning that achieves aquatic conservation strategy objectives (Forest Northwest Forest Plan, pg. B-11). Watershed analysis provides the basis for monitoring and restoration programs and the foundation from which riparian reserves can be delineated (Northwest Forest Plan, pg. B-12). A watershed analysis also provides background and existing condition information on the water resources located within the watershed, including designated wild and scenic river segments. The applicable watershed analyses for these areas are the [Smith River Watershed Assessment](#) (Bureau of Land Management 1997) for Wasson Creek, and the [Lower Umpqua River Watershed Assessment Final Report](#), (Snyder et al. 2006) for Franklin Creek.

Watershed Condition Framework and Water Quality Management

The Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework was completed in 2010 and reassessed in 2015. The objective of the framework is “to protect National Forest System watersheds by implementing practices designed to maintain or improve watershed condition, which is the foundation for sustaining ecosystems and the production of renewable natural resources, values, and benefits” (FSM 2520). The framework describes the watershed conditions for Wasson and Franklin Creeks and identifies areas that would benefit from watershed restoration practices (USDA 2011). There are twelve watershed condition indicators within the framework, and each indicator is assigned a score of “Good,” “Fair,” or “Poor” based on available data. These scores are the basis for identifying appropriate watershed restoration projects. The individual indicator scores are also combined to create a single, overall “watershed condition class” rating for the entire watershed; the possible ratings are “functioning properly,” “functioning at risk,” or “impaired function.”

The Forest Service applies the watershed condition framework to 6th Level Watersheds (6th Field Hydrologic Unit Code, or HUC). The indicator scores for the Wasson Creek watershed and the Dean Creek-Umpqua River watershed (which includes Franklin Creek) are displayed in table 2, below.

Table 2. Watershed condition framework indicator scores and watershed condition class scores for the Wasson Creek watershed and Dean Creek-Umpqua River watershed

Indicator	Wasson Creek	Dean Creek-Umpqua River (Franklin Creek)
Aquatic Biota	Good	Good
Riparian/Wetland Vegetation Condition	Good	Good
Water Quality	Good	Fair
Water Quantity	Good	Good
Aquatic Habitat	Good	Good
Roads and Trails	Good	Fair
Soil Conditions	Good	Good
Fire Effects/Fire Regime Condition	Good	Good
Forest Cover	Good	Good
Forest Health	Good	Good
Terrestrial Invasive Species Condition	Good	Good
Range Health	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Watershed Condition Class	Functioning Properly	Functioning Properly

The Watershed Condition Framework assessment and reassessment efforts did not identify any areas in Wasson or Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers that would benefit from restoration practices, at this time.

Franklin Creek exceeds the state temperature standard of 18.0 degrees Celsius (64.4 degrees Fahrenheit) that is designated to protect fish and aquatic life. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) identifies Franklin Creek as Category 5 for temperature on the current 2018/2020 Clean Water Act section 303(d) list. The ODEQ identifies waterbodies as *impaired* and adds them to the 303(d) list if they exceed protective water quality standards. For Franklin Creek, the 303(d) listing applies to the creek segment between the confluence with the Umpqua River and the confluence with Little Franklin Creek. Category 5 indicates that a designated use is not supported or a water quality standard is not attained, and that a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is required. A TMDL is the calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant allowed to enter a waterbody so that the waterbody will meet water quality standards for that particular pollutant. The ODEQ estimates that it will start the public process on the Umpqua TMDL in 2023, and this TMDL will include Franklin Creek. The deadline for Environmental Protection Agency approval or disapproval of the Umpqua TMDL is February 28, 2025 (ODEQ 2021; Michie 2021).

Bureau of Land Management - Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan (2016)

Bureau of Land Management's [Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan](#) (2016) provides management direction on congressionally reserved lands and national conservation lands, which include wild and scenic rivers and wilderness (BLM 2016, pgs. 55 and 56).

Management Objectives

Management objectives for these Congressionally Reserved Lands and National Conservation Lands are found on page 55 of the Resource Management Plan. The management objectives pertinent to wild and scenic rivers and wilderness are as follows:

- Conserve, protect, and restore the identified outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values of National Conservation Lands and other congressionally designated lands.
- Protect and enhance the free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of eligible, suitable, and designated wild and scenic river corridors.
- Preserve the wilderness character of designated wilderness areas.

Management Direction

The Bureau of Land Management administered lands along Wasson Creek are managed using the management direction found within the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan. Management direction for these Congressionally Reserved Lands and National Conservation Lands is found on page 56 of the Resource Management Plan. The management direction for wild and scenic rivers designated as wild and wilderness are as follows:

- Conduct management actions, including but not limited to fuels treatments, invasive species management, riparian or wildlife habitat improvements, forest management, and trail construction, in Wild and Scenic River corridors only if consistent with designated or tentative classifications and if any reductions in outstandingly remarkable values would be temporary and outstandingly remarkable values would be protected or enhanced over the long term.
- During wildfire management operations, use strategies and tactics that would protect the outstandingly remarkable values and classifications (or tentative classifications) within Wild and Scenic River corridors, except where the wildfire is deemed a threat to human safety or private property, or where use is essential for wildfire control, as determined by the Incident Commander.

- In designated Wilderness Areas, exclude all prohibited uses of wilderness (as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and BLM Manual 6340 – Management of Designated Wilderness (USDI BLM 2012b)), unless they have been demonstrated to be the minimum necessary (using the minimum requirements decision guide) to administer the area for the purposes of the Wilderness Act.
- Manage wildfires in designated wilderness areas using minimum impact suppression techniques wherever practicable, while providing for the safety of firefighters and the public and meeting fire management objectives. Address prohibited uses of wilderness in wildfire management consistent with BLM Manual 6340 – Management of Designated Wilderness (USDI BLM 2012b).

Lands, Realty, and Roads (Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Land and Resource Management Plan, pg. 81-82)

- Land Tenure Zone 1 includes designated wild and scenic river corridors and wilderness. Retain lands in Land Tenure Zone 1.
- Right-of-way exclusion areas include designated Wild and Scenic Rivers classified as wild and designated wilderness. In right-of-way exclusion areas, do not grant rights-of-way, except when mandated by law.

Leasable Minerals: Oil, Gas, or Coalbed Natural Gas Resources (Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan, pgs. 85 and 86)

- Apply site-specific stipulations, such as no surface occupancy or conditional surface uses, based on resource protection needs in designated and suitable Wild and Scenic River Segments (where not already closed by legislation).

Locatable Minerals (Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan, pg. 85)

- Recommend for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry designated and suitable Wild and Scenic River segments (where not already closed by legislation).

Saleable Minerals (Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan, pg. 86)

- Areas closed to saleable mineral material disposal include designated and suitable Wild and Scenic River segments (where not already closed by legislation).

Sustainable Energy (including Wind Energy Development) (Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan , pgs. 90 and 91)

- Exclude from sustainable energy development areas that are part of National Conservation Lands (such as Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Historic and Scenic Trails).

Visual Resource Management (Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan, pg. 94)

- Visual Resource Management Class I includes designated wild and scenic rivers that are classified as wild and wilderness areas. Manage Visual Resource Management Class I areas in accordance with natural ecological changes. Prohibit activities that would lower the Visual Resources Inventory class of Visual Resource Management Class I areas. The level of change to the characteristic landscape will be very low and will not attract attention. Changes will repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, texture, and scale found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Other Overlapping Designations in the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan

Upon the designation of Wasson Creek as a Wild and Scenic River, the designation becomes the primary land use allocation for lands within this corridor managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Comprehensive River Management Plan will be the guiding document for lands within this corridor.

Wasson Creek is listed as a designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern within the Coos Bay District in the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan. There are 714 acres of Area of Critical Environmental Concern that overlap with the Wasson Creek designated river corridor. The Wasson Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern is described as a large block of undisturbed mid-age forest dissected by a creek with several waterfalls, plunge pools, and a small palustrine lake (BLM 2016). Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, defined in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, represent areas within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect or to prevent irreparable damage to any of the following categories: Important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources; other natural processes or systems; and safety from natural hazards. The Bureau of Land Management develops special management direction to protect relevant and important values but does not apply special management when other management mechanisms adequately protect the relevant and important values or where designation is not warranted.

The Bureau of Land Management portion of Wasson Creek is managed as an Extensive Recreation Management Area under the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan. This extensive recreation management area includes the portions of the project area that are outside wilderness. In general, the Bureau of Land Management manages each extensive recreation management area to support and sustain the principal recreation activities and the associated qualities of the area. The Coos Bay District's management framework for the Wasson Creek extensive recreation management area recognizes "solitude, primitive, and unconfined recreation in an area with a high degree of naturalness" as the area's important recreation values. The framework's outcome objectives also include visitor experiences such as "feeling good about solitude, being isolated and independent" and "enjoying risk taking adventure". The Wasson Creek extensive recreation management area overlaps with the Wasson Creek area of critical environmental concern.

No amendments are needed to the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan to adopt the comprehensive river management plan as wild and scenic rivers are already addressed. The comprehensive river management plan is an implementation level plan.

Stakeholder Involvement

In July 2020, the agencies conducted a targeted outreach to external entities who were likely to have knowledge and interest in the management of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. External entities were sent a copy of the agencies' preliminary river values analysis and were given an opportunity to provide input on current condition descriptions, outstandingly remarkable value determinations, and data sources. In total, the agencies sent outreach materials to three Tribes, two federal agencies, one state agency, six non-governmental organizations, two watershed councils, and two individuals. The agencies received responses from six recipients, and this information was incorporated into the interdisciplinary team's current condition inventories and outstandingly remarkable value determinations.

In February 2021, the agencies solicited comments on the public's interests, knowledge, and values regarding Wasson Creek, Franklin Creek, and Devil's Staircase Wilderness. This comment opportunity was not part of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for any specific proposed action.

Instead, due to the overlapping wilderness and wild and scenic river designations, the agencies asked the public for input on the overall management of the landscapes and resources within the project area. For this comment opportunity, the agencies employed an ArcGIS online comment platform with a georeferenced commenting option; this platform also provided a map of the project area, a description of law and policy for wilderness and wild and scenic rivers, and a preview of the upcoming planning process.

The agencies received a total of 14 comments through the online platform and via email. These comments provided additional information for the River Values Report and contributed to the interdisciplinary team's preparation of desired conditions and potential management actions. Comments covered a variety of topics, including: the project area's undeveloped, natural, and primitive character; trails and access; fish and wildlife habitat; road management; signs and public information; land acquisition; and active management.

On March 24, 2021, the agencies distributed scoping packages to 1,816 individuals, organizations, permittees, agencies, and congressional representatives. A public news release was also made to local media on March 24, 2021. The Wasson and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan project was identified on the Siuslaw National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and on the Bureau of Land Management National NEPA Register beginning April 2021. The scoping period was 30 days: beginning March 24, 2021 and ending April 23, 2021. Eight comment letters were received from external audiences. Key themes in the comment letters included the ecological importance and general protection of lands, waters, and river values, river corridor boundaries, trails and access, decommissioning and rehabilitation of closed roads, land acquisition, and management of areas outside of wilderness.

On January 6, 2022, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management asked for public comment on the draft environmental assessment, the draft comprehensive river management plan, and associated reports. The agencies accepted comments for 30 days and received eight responses during this time. The agencies reviewed these comments, prepared comment responses, and made the corresponding changes in the final environmental assessment and the final comprehensive river management plan. Comment responses are displayed in the final environmental assessment.

On July 13, 2022, the Bureau of Land Management released its draft decision record and draft finding of no significant impact for the comprehensive river management plan. The agency accepted public comments on the documents for 15 days. Updated drafts of the comprehensive river management plan and environmental assessment were also available for public review at this time. The Bureau of Land Management received four comment responses through the agency's E-Planning system. The agency's summary of these comments will appear in the final decision record for the comprehensive river management plan.

Government-to-Government Tribal Coordination

Throughout the planning effort, the agencies have engaged with three federally recognized Tribes with ancestral connections to the project area: The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. The initial outreach occurred in July 2020. Subsequently, the agencies have provided planning documents for review by tribal staff, and federal staff have provided project updates at annual federal-tribal program of work coordination meetings.

Wasson and Franklin Creeks Comprehensive River Management Plan

The agencies conducted focused consultation activities with the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians in spring 2021. This engagement focused on the comprehensive river management plan and the Tribes' continued access to the project area for traditional and cultural purposes. The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Comprehensive River Management Plan will maintain existing access to the area for the tribes.

Chapter 2: Regional Setting and River Values

This section establishes the baseline conditions of the river values that contributed to Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek’s designation within the National Wild and Scenic River System. The river values for each creek include free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values.

River Setting Description

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are located in the central Oregon Coast Range, approximately 20 miles east of Reedsport and 70 miles southwest of Eugene (figure 1). The Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River is a total of 10.1 miles long, with the Bureau of Land Management managing the eastern segment and the Forest Service managing the western segment. Downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary, Wasson Creek flows north for 6.5 miles before emptying into the Smith River. The Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River is 4.5 miles long and is managed entirely by the Forest Service. Downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary, the creek flows another 0.5 miles southwest before emptying into the Umpqua River. The number of acres within the Wasson and Franklin Creek river corridors is 2,721.8 and 1,408.6 acres, respectively.

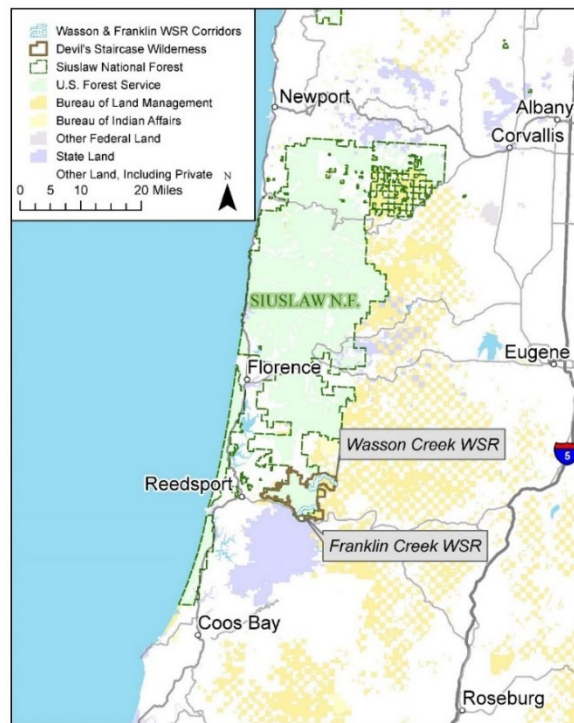


Figure 1. Wasson and Franklin Creek vicinity map

The two wild and scenic rivers are in an isolated, undeveloped, and rugged portion of the Oregon Coast Range (figure 2 on page 12, and figure 3 and figure 4, appendix A). The surrounding terrain is characterized by dense vegetation and steep slopes. The wild and scenic rivers range in elevation from 100 feet to 1,200 feet above sea level, with nearby slopes rising to 1,650 feet. Both creeks’ drainages are dominated by late-successional temperate rainforest communities that have not been logged or significantly disturbed by other human activities. These upland and riparian areas provide habitat for a wide range of mammals, birds, amphibians, resident fish, and anadromous fish. There are few roads near

the wild and scenic river corridors, and there are no system trails or developed facilities in the immediate area. Public use of Wasson and Franklin Creeks is low and mainly consists of backcountry recreation.

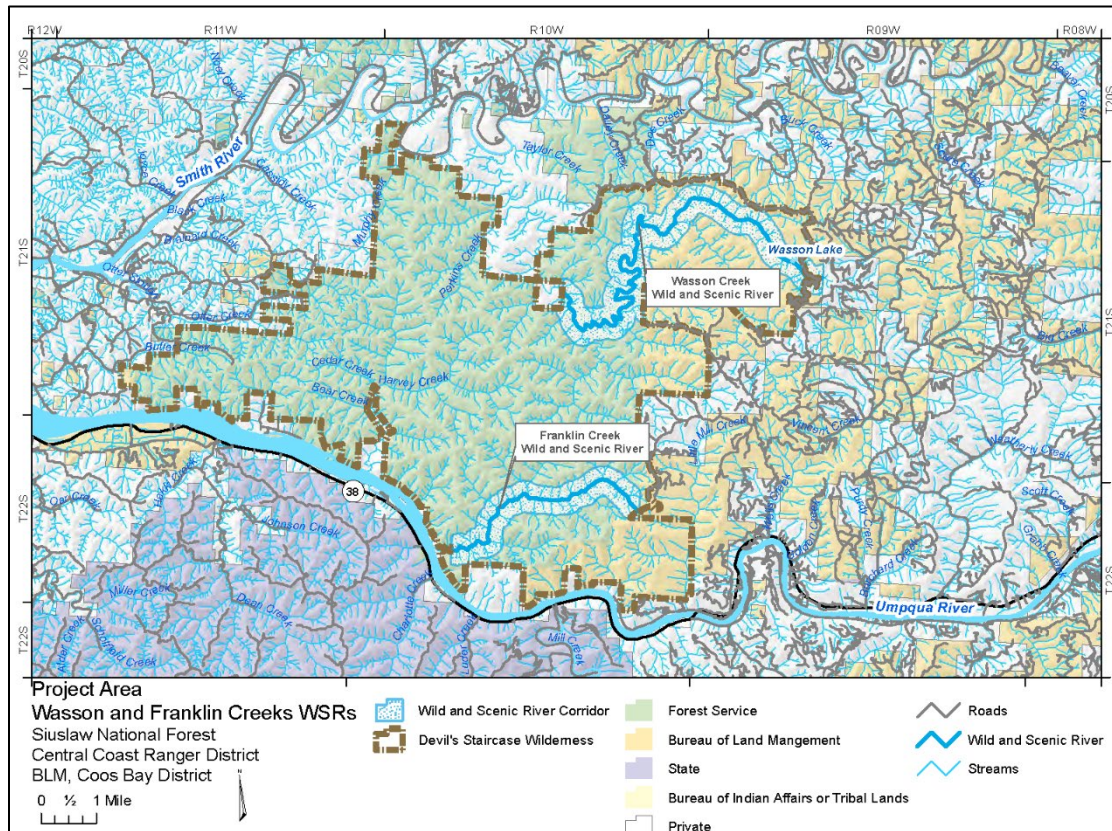


Figure 2. Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River Project Area

Free-Flowing Condition

Wasson Creek Baseline Conditions

Wasson Creek is free flowing along its entire length and does not contain any impoundments, diversions, or riprap that interfere with free flow. However, road crossings do occur; the most obvious is at BLM 21-9-10.0 in T21S, R9W, Section 17 near the east end of the wild and scenic river corridor. More data collection is necessary to determine if and how roads, ditches, and culverts influence flow in the upper watershed. There are no stream gages present on Wasson Creek, and no discharge records are available. Annual stream flow is primarily driven by rainfall, with peak flows occurring in the winter and low flows occurring in the summer. There are no water rights on record for Wasson Creek (OWRD, 2019).

Wasson Lake is located in the upper Wasson drainage and is a 4-acre naturally occurring water body formed by a historic landslide. The lake attenuates peak flows to a limited extent, storing water for gradual release downstream; this storage is important for creek flows and aquatic habitat during the summer, when temperatures are high and precipitation is low. The lake features a wetland complex formed by beaver dams, as well as submerged and partially submerged stumps and snags. Beavers are also present downstream of the lake, and evidence of beaver activity (chew sticks and dams) can be found throughout the entire length of the creek.

Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

Franklin Creek is free flowing along its entire length and does not contain any impoundments, diversions, riprap, or other manmade installations that affect free flow. There are no stream gages present on Franklin Creek, and no discharge records are available. Annual stream flow is primarily driven by rainfall, with peak flows occurring in the winter and low flows occurring in the summer. During the dry season (generally May through September), some stream reaches have no surface flow, and other sections contain isolated pools not connected by surface flow. Certain sections of the creek exhibit subsurface flows. Beavers are present in the Franklin Creek drainage—chew sticks were found in the lower mile of the stream on October 13, 2020. According to the Oregon Water Resources Department, there is one water right on Franklin Creek, with a point of diversion just downstream of the wild and scenic river corridor (OWRD 2019). The water right is for domestic and irrigation uses, with a maximum withdrawal rate of 0.005 cubic feet per second.

Water Quality

Wasson Creek Baseline Conditions

Water quality data are not available for Wasson Creek, and Wasson Creek is not on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) list of impaired waters. Steams within the Wasson Creek wild and scenic river corridor are generally well removed from roads, which are a potential source of anthropogenic sediment input. The same is true of wilderness streams that drain into the Wasson Creek wild and scenic river corridor. There are approximately 0.9 miles of roads within 200 feet of streams within the wild and scenic river corridor, including 0.74 miles of the 21-9-10.0 Road. There are also approximately 0.69 miles of roads within 200 feet¹ of wilderness streams that drain into the wild and scenic river corridor. The land management agencies have identified a need to formally evaluate all roads within the Wasson Creek drainage for their potential to deliver surface flow and sediment to the creek.

The 2016 reassessment of the Forest Service’s Watershed Condition Framework assigned Wasson Creek a water quality indicator score of “Good.” Wasson Creek is vulnerable to landslides given the nearby steep slopes and high rainfall, and the rapid movement of soil, wood, and rock can have positive and negative effects on water quality.

Because it is located in a relatively undisturbed and fairly pristine watershed, Wasson Creek can act as a reference for naturally occurring water quality conditions in the region of comparison. This is a valuable attribute, as it helps land managers and scientists understand how aquatic and upland systems interact to determine water quality in the absence of human intervention. By studying reference creeks such as Wasson, land managers and scientists can also better understand how management activities alter water quality.

Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

Franklin Creek is on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) list for exceeding the state temperature standard of 64.4-degree Fahrenheit, which was designated to protect fish and aquatic life. This listing applies to the creek segment between the confluence with the Umpqua River and the confluence with Little Franklin Creek. The Coos Bay District Bureau of Land Management completed continuous water temperature monitoring in Franklin Creek during summer 2020 and found seven-day average maximum temperatures

¹ 200 feet is the sediment delivery distance used in modelling potential sediment delivery to streams (USDI BLM 2016)

(7DAMTs)² to be near the 64.4-degree Fahrenheit threshold. Five stations distributed from the private-Forest Service boundary to river mile 2 have 7DAMTs of 65.4, 64.3, 64.7, 59.4, and 64.2 degrees Fahrenheit, respectively. Water temperatures are near the 64.4-degree standard due to solar exposure. Franklin Creek is susceptible to heating because the stream, in a relatively wide valley, is not fully shaded even in areas with undisturbed, mature riparian vegetation.

The 2016 reassessment of the Forest Service's watershed condition framework assigned the Dean Creek – Umpqua River watershed a water quality indicator a score of "Fair,"; the 303(d) listing for Franklin Creek contributed to this score. Franklin Creek is vulnerable to landslides given nearby steep slopes and high rainfall, and the rapid movement of soil, wood, and rock can have positive and negative effects on water quality. LiDAR images show evidence of several such landslides in the upper part of the watershed. Like Wasson Creek, Franklin Creek can serve as a reference for undisturbed water quality conditions in the region of comparison.

Streams within the Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor are generally well removed from roads, which are a potential source of anthropogenic sediment input. The same is true of wilderness streams that drain into the Franklin Creek wild and scenic river corridor. There are 0.03 miles of the 22-10-1.0 Road within 200 feet of streams inside the wild and scenic river corridor. There are also approximately 0.57 miles of roads within 200 feet of wilderness streams that drain into the corridor. The land management agencies have identified a need to formally evaluate all roads within the Franklin Creek watershed for their potential to deliver surface flow and sediment into the creek.

Instream Flow Requirements

According to the Oregon Water Resources Department, there is one water right on Franklin Creek, with a point of diversion just downstream of the wild and scenic river corridor. The agencies have not identified any concerns associated with this water right. The Bureau of Land Management maintains the Steampot Waterhole in the Wasson Creek drainage as a fire water source. The pond is near a ridge in T. 21 S., R. 09 W., Section 18, well outside the river corridor boundary.

The river values of recreation, wildlife, fisheries, scenery, and ecology are affected by seasonally low surface water levels, but not threatened. The low flow season is generally May through September. Rain is infrequent in the summer, so it is common for reaches of Wasson and Franklin to have low but continuous surface flow, discontinuous surface flow, or no surface flow. Late summer visitors may be surprised by dry reaches of stream, but these reaches are typical of the Coast Range. Seasonal low flows do not appear to lead to the long-term (several year) extirpation of species typical to the area. The ecology of the area is driven by and adapted to seasonal changes in precipitation and streamflow. The amount and timing of rainfall are the primary drivers of streamflow in Wasson and Franklin, much more so than management at the periphery of the wilderness area.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The following section describes the outstandingly remarkable values for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers. Each outstandingly remarkable value subsection states the evaluation criteria, describes current conditions, and states the rationale for the outstandingly remarkable determination. The current conditions descriptions and outstandingly remarkable value determinations are

² Seven-day average maximum temperature is the average of the maximum temperatures from the seven warmest consecutive days during the summer. This temperature is calculated from continuous temperature data and compared to the applicable temperature criterion.

consolidated when the findings are substantially similar for both creeks. For values where conditions and findings are different, Wasson Creek is discussed first, followed by Franklin Creek. The following outstandingly remarkable value categories were evaluated: scenery, recreation, geology, fish, wildlife, cultural resources (pre-history and history), botany, and ecological systems.

The project interdisciplinary team identified outstandingly remarkable values for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek in August 2020. For this analysis, the team used outstandingly remarkable value criteria described in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, chapter 80, section 82.73a (2015), BLM Manual 6400, Chapter 3, section 3 (2012), and [The Wild and Scenic River Study Process: a technical report of the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council \(1999\)](#). The interdisciplinary team developed project-specific definitions and criteria for the *ecological systems* outstandingly remarkable value since this value is not covered in the agency handbooks or the Coordinating Council's criteria.

Scenery

Outstandingly Remarkable Values Criteria

The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. 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. The popularity of iconic scenic settings can also be a contributing factor.

Wasson Creek Baseline Conditions

Wasson Creek is a pristine stream set against a rugged backdrop of old-growth forest and steep slopes. When combined together, the creek's water features, undisturbed vegetation, topography, and geology create an exemplary scenic setting throughout the wild and scenic river corridor. Specific elements contributing to this scenic character include mature old-growth forest in the riparian and upland areas; understory and ground cover plants such as lichen and ferns; rocks (of all sizes) and deep alluvium; pools, riffles, and waterfalls; and cliff faces. The creek's scenery also displays seasonal variation: summer creates a setting of lush understory vegetation and low water flows, while fall and winter yield higher flows and fall colors. The scenery is further defined by the play of light and shadow that accentuates vegetation and adds color and interest to moving water.

Wasson Creek's undeveloped character also contributes to its scenery. Other than Road 21-9-10.0 near Wasson Lake, there are no human developments or disturbances visible within the wild and scenic river corridor. This undisturbed scenic setting reinforces the creek's isolated wilderness character. The length of this undisturbed scenery (approximately ten miles) is also unusual within the Oregon Coast Range and further adds to the wildness of the area.

In addition to the scenery throughout the corridor, Wasson Creek also features several notable scenic attractions. The sandstone stairsteps and plunge pools of Devil's Staircase waterfall form a striking visual attraction that is monumental in scale, while seasonal variations in water flow create an interesting dynamic. The Devil's Staircase waterfall has been the subject of numerous photos by amateur and professional photographers, and these photos are available in a variety of outlets. Wasson Lake is another feature of note: scenic views from the shoreline are exemplary, capturing a small and remote lake with an undisturbed forest backdrop. Social trails lead from the dispersed camping site to shoreline locations that feature constrained views of three discrete aquatic environments. These environments include a marsh

with partially submerged trees at the inflow point; a ghost forest in the central portion of the lake; and another marshy area defined by beaver dams at the outflow.

Wasson Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Scenery is an outstandingly remarkable value for Wasson Creek. The hydrology and geology of the creek combine with the old-growth forest and topography to create an exemplary scenic setting. This applies to the entire wild and scenic river. The individual scenic elements may not be outstandingly remarkable on their own, but they combine with each other and with seasonal changes in vegetation, light, and shadow to create an impressive visual experience. The remoteness and undisturbed quality are key elements of this exemplary scenery, and the length of the undisturbed scenic setting is also rare within the region of comparison.

In addition to the scenic quality of the entire wild and scenic river corridor, the scenic values of Devil's Staircase waterfall and Wasson Lake stand on their own. Both locations showcase iconic views of exemplary features within the corridor. The hydrology and geology on display at Devil's Staircase create a highly attractive and exemplary visual feature. The waterfall's setting against a remote old-growth backdrop is also rare in the region of comparison. Likewise, the views from the Wasson Lake shoreline are exemplary.

Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

The scenery at Franklin Creek highlights the area's rugged character and conveys a sense of wildness, remoteness, and solitude. Like Wasson Creek, Franklin Creek is a pristine stream set against a backdrop of old-growth forest and steep slopes. No evidence of human development or disturbance is visible within the creek corridor. Cattle trails and invasive plants can be seen from the downstream wild and scenic river boundary, but no buildings or other modifications are within visual range.

When combined, the creek's water features, vegetation, topography, geology, and undisturbed appearance create a distinctive scenic setting throughout the length of the wild and scenic river corridor. Specific elements contributing to this scenic character include mature old-growth forest in the riparian and upland areas; understory and ground cover plants such as lichen and ferns; rocks (of all sizes) and deep alluvium; pools, riffles, and waterfalls; and cliff faces. Certain portions of the creek flow underground, creating an interesting visual effect as the creek appears and then disappears in the stream bed. The creek's scenery also displays seasonal variation: summer creates a setting of lush understory vegetation and low water flows, while fall and winter yield higher flows and fall colors.

The view looking up the Franklin Creek watershed from the Umpqua River is also quite remarkable. This landscape view highlights the watershed's steep topography, undisturbed old-growth forest, and rugged character. Though the viewing point is outside the wild and scenic river corridor, the agencies considered the integrity of this vista when developing management direction for the Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River.

Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Scenery is an outstandingly remarkable value for Franklin Creek. The hydrology and geology of the creek combine with the old growth forest and topography to create an exemplary scenic setting. This determination applies to the entire length of the wild and scenic river corridor. The individual scenic elements may not be outstandingly remarkable on their own, but they combine to create an exemplary visual experience.

The undisturbed quality of the wild and scenic river corridor is a key element of this exemplary scenery; this visual setting emphasizes a sense of remoteness and solitude. The view of the watershed from the Umpqua River further supports the remoteness and wildness of Franklin Creek. The agencies consider this an exemplary view of a relatively small, rugged drainage within the region of comparison.

Recreation

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison, or are unique, rare, or exemplary within the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. Additionally:

- Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from outside the region of comparison.
- The river may provide, or have the potential to provide, settings for national or regional usage or competitive events.

Wasson Creek Baseline Conditions

The Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor offers opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in a rugged wilderness setting. Visitors place a high value on this wilderness setting and the dispersed opportunities that come with it. No developed trails or developed facilities exist within the corridor, and a single paved road (BLM Road 21-9-10.0) crosses through the eastern end of the drainage.

Wasson Lake, the Devil's Staircase waterfall, and the Dark Grove are three features that are known to draw recreation use. Wasson Lake is less than .25 mile from BLM 21-9-10.0, and features dispersed camping, fishing, picnicking, and scenic viewing opportunities at the lakeshore. Devil's Staircase waterfall is a regionally-known recreation attraction that draws advanced backcountry adventurers from around the area. To access the Staircase, hikers must follow the creek or traverse several miles of steep slopes and dense vegetation. Visitors have created several social hiking trails down to the Staircase, though advanced wilderness skills are needed to safely navigate the area. The Dark Grove is a stand of large and impressive old-growth trees near Wasson Creek that offers a similar backcountry experience to the Devil's Staircase. During certain times of year, it is possible to kayak downstream to the Staircase and the Dark Grove from Wasson Lake, though this is a difficult journey that is rarely undertaken. According to visitors, Wasson Creek's rugged and remote setting is a key part of the experience for those who make the trip to the Staircase or the Dark Grove.

The Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor is a lightly visited area. Estimates provided by advocates suggest a backcountry visitation rate of 100 to 200 individuals per year. The agencies have also begun collecting road counter data for Road 21-9-10.0 near Wasson Lake; preliminary data suggests 25 vehicle trips through this area per week during the summer.

Wasson Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Primitive recreation is an outstandingly remarkable value for Wasson Creek. Wasson Creek provides an exemplary opportunity for primitive recreation in a rugged, remote, and wild setting. The area also provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, viewing dark skies, and immersion in natural soundscapes. Personal challenge, isolation, and undisturbed surroundings are key elements of the

recreation experience in the Wasson Creek drainage. There are limited opportunities for this wilderness experience in the region of comparison, and Wasson Creek is recognized as one of the foremost settings for this type of recreation.

For this outstandingly remarkable value, the agencies focus particular attention on the Devil's Staircase waterfall. The waterfall is in and owes its existence to the creek. It is lightly visited (relative to other recreation attractions in the region of comparison), but it is a regionally recognized backcountry destination with a "hidden gem" quality. Though waterfalls of this nature are not rare in the region of comparison, it is unusual to see a waterfall of this size attracting recreational use in a wilderness setting. Overall, the Staircase is an exemplary case of a creek-based attraction in a backcountry location; in this situation, the creek and the surrounding wilderness are both integral to the recreational experience visitors are seeking.

Fish

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations, habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.

- **Populations:** The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or Federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."
- **Habitat:** The river provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or Federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."

Wasson Creek Baseline Conditions

Wasson Creek provides excellent habitat for numerous fish species. The wild and scenic river segment features approximately 10 continuous miles of intact aquatic and riparian habitat, with very few indications of anthropogenic disturbance. Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River also provides cold and clean water to support fish habitat downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary. The creek has two major waterfalls which form natural fish passage barriers: Lower Wasson Falls (located approximately 1.8 miles downstream of the western wild and scenic river boundary) and Devil's Staircase Waterfall (located approximately 1.7 miles upstream of the western wild and scenic river boundary).

The lower reaches of Wasson Creek downstream of the wild and scenic river segment support excellent spawning habitat for coho, fall chinook, and winter steelhead. These spawning habitats are designated as Essential Fish Habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Coho Critical Habitat under the Endangered Species Act. Coho and chinook distribution is restricted by Lower Wasson Falls. However, steelhead and Pacific lamprey have been observed between Lower Wasson Falls and the Devil's Staircase, indicating that these species can pass over Lower Wasson Falls during certain flow conditions. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have identified winter steelhead and Pacific lamprey as sensitive species, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service has also identified Pacific lamprey as a species of concern. In addition to steelhead and Pacific lamprey, Coastal cutthroat trout, Western brook lamprey, speckled dace, and a number of other fish species have been documented between the lower wild and scenic river boundary and Devil's Staircase. Unlike Lower Wasson Falls, Devil's Staircase waterfall functions as a

complete fish passage barrier. Isolated populations of Coastal cutthroat trout and sculpin are present above Devil's Staircase all the way to the creek's headwaters and Wasson Lake. Wasson Lake also supports a population of cutthroat trout.

Wasson Creek has a low gradient (less than two percent) throughout most of its length. Within the wild and scenic river segment, most of the streambed is dominated by bedrock with some reaches dominated by gravel. A number of riffles are present, as are a number of pools with varying quality and complexity. Large woody debris jams and large boulders are less prevalent in the wild and scenic river segment, in comparison to the lower reaches downstream. Beavers are present at Wasson Lake and throughout the length of the Wasson Creek, and beaver activity provides benefits for fish habitat.

Wasson Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Fish habitat and fish populations are outstandingly remarkable values for Wasson Creek. The creek provides 10 miles of exemplary and intact habitat for a variety of native fish species, and it is rare within the region of comparison to see such a long, continuous stretch of high-quality habitat. The designated segment's intact and mature riparian area is critical to these high-quality habitat conditions. Of note, is the habitat for several sensitive anadromous species (Pacific lamprey and winter steelhead) between the downstream wild and scenic river boundary and the Devil's Staircase. Additionally, the designated segment provides cold and clean water that is important for the coho, chinook, and steelhead habitats that are downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary. This is a critical input and ecosystem service for fish habitat, even though the habitat in question does not occur within the wild and scenic river corridor.

Regarding fish populations, the designated segment features two sensitive species, steelhead and Pacific lamprey, between the lower wild and scenic river boundary and the Devil's Staircase. The entire length of the wild and scenic river segment also supports a population of resident cutthroat trout. Of note, the cutthroat trout above the Devil's Staircase are an isolated population, and it is rare within the region of comparison to find this type of isolated population in an such a large stream and lake system.

Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

Franklin Creek provides high-quality habitat for a number of native fish species, including coho, winter steelhead, fall chinook, and Pacific lamprey. The creek contains essential fish habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and is designated as coho critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. Coho is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, while winter steelhead and Pacific lamprey are designated as sensitive species by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has also identified Pacific lamprey as a species of concern. The Lower Umpqua watershed provides habitat for a number of other native, non-anadromous fish species; many of these are also present in Franklin Creek, including cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, Western brook lamprey, and sculpin.

The lower reaches of Franklin Creek have a low gradient (less than two percent) with numerous pools and riffles. The upper reaches transition to a cascade boulder/step habitat, with higher gradients of up to five percent. The stream substrate is dominated by gravel, and several sections with subsurface flows have been identified during summer low flow conditions. However, fish would likely be able to survive in the creek's deep pools even under dry conditions.

As seen in Wasson Creek, there has been very little anthropogenic impact to Franklin Creek. A watershed assessment published in 2006 (Snyder et al. 2006) assigned Franklin Creek's lower reaches an overall habitat rating of "fair," while the upper reaches earned an overall habitat rating of "good." The overall pool rating for the creek's lower reaches was "fair," while the upper reaches' pools were considered to be

“poor.” Similarly, the overall riffle ratings ranged from “fair” to “poor.” The upper reaches also featured the creek’s highest concentrations of large woody debris jams. There are no known fish passage barriers in Franklin Creek, and salmonid spawning and rearing behavior has been documented throughout the length of the wild and scenic river segment.

Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Fish habitat and fish populations are outstandingly remarkable values for Franklin Creek. The basis for this finding is the presence of, and habitat for, coho, chinook, steelhead, cutthroat, and Pacific lamprey. Coho is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act while steelhead and Pacific lamprey are sensitive species for the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service. Franklin Creek is not the only stream in the region of comparison with habitat for and populations of these species. However, the creek is exemplary for its relatively undisturbed watershed and intact riparian habitat; these intact conditions are critical for the creek’s high-quality habitat and are also essential for supporting the creek’s fish populations.

Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations or habitat or a combination of these conditions.

- **Populations:** The river, or area within the river corridor, contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, and/or populations of Federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is also an important consideration and could lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”
- **Habitat:** The river, or area within the river corridor, provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, and may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for Federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is also an important consideration and could lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

The discussion of wildlife in Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek has been consolidated due to the substantial similarities between the two drainages, and also due to a lack of specific field data.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek provide habitat for a variety of mammals, amphibians, and birds. Neither agency has completed wildlife surveys specific to the wild and scenic river corridors, though assumed occupancy can be derived through remote sensing data and other habitat evaluations. While exact species locations are generally unknown, the agencies recognize that Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are the centerpieces of two large, undisturbed, and contiguous habitat areas. It is rare in the Central Oregon Coast Range to see such sizable undeveloped tracts of land. These undeveloped areas provide unique refugia of high-quality habitat with limited human disturbance. The size of these areas, combined with their contiguous habitat zones, provides excellent habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.

The two creeks provide excellent habitat for beaver, and signs of beaver activity (chew sticks and dams) have been observed in both drainages. Beaver is not listed under the Endangered Species Act, nor does it appear on either agency's current sensitive species list. However, high-quality beaver habitat is rare within the region of comparison due to timber harvest and development activities. Additionally, the Siuslaw National Forest and Coos Bay District consider beaver to be regionally significant due to its role in the freshwater ecosystems of the Oregon Coast Range. As an example of the beaver's larger role in the ecosystem, beaver activity at Wasson Lake has created a wetland complex that may provide habitat for the Western Pond Turtle, which is a sensitive species for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The wild and scenic rivers' potential habitat for bird species is especially notable. The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek riparian areas appear to provide suitable habitat for black swift (Fish and Wildlife Service species of conservation concern) and American dipper. Both species depend on cold-water streams with riffles and/or waterfalls, and high-quality habitat areas in the region of comparison have significantly declined due to development activities. Black swift and American dipper have been documented in the local area but have not been the subjects of surveys within the wild and scenic river corridors. Additionally, marbled murrelet (a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act) are known to use rivers and creeks as flight paths into forested areas. The old-growth forest adjacent to the creeks is also likely to provide good habitat for any marbled murrelets that have navigated up the riparian corridors.

While not river related, the drainages' upland forested areas also provide high-quality habitat for northern spotted owl (listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act) and Humboldt (or coastal) marten. Though they are not river-related, these two species are dependent on the type of old-growth forest that is present in the vicinity of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. In addition to the northern spotted owl and marten, the two creek corridors also provide good habitat for a host of other species, including deer, elk, black bear, cougar, bald eagle, pileated woodpecker, great blue heron, pacific giant salamander, and western toad. The lack of development and low human visitation also means that urban predators are likely to be uncommon in the wild and scenic river corridors; this low density of urban predator species is important for the creeks' populations of other native species.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Beaver habitat is an outstandingly remarkable value for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. Both creeks provide exceptionally high-quality beaver habitat, and beaver populations are present in both watersheds. While beaver is not considered a sensitive species, it is regionally significant due to its contributions to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. Beaver activity can provide habitat for other species, and beavers are important contributors to the ecological systems that are discussed in the following subsection. For example, research indicates that beaver dams improve rearing habitat for juvenile salmon.

Beaver habitat has also been declining throughout the Oregon Coast Range, which means that the habitat in Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek is of even greater significance. In acknowledgement of these factors, the interdisciplinary team has determined that it is important to recognize, protect, and enhance the beaver habitat values in both wild and scenic river drainages.

The interdisciplinary team has concluded that the creeks' other wildlife values are best captured as part of the ecological systems outstandingly remarkable value, rather than as standalone outstandingly remarkable values. Due to a lack of wildlife surveys, the agencies do not have enough information to make outstandingly remarkable value determinations based on wildlife population levels. At the same time, the interdisciplinary team has determined that habitat values for other wildlife species do not meet the thresholds for outstandingly remarkable value recognition. Instead, these habitats constitute an important element of the ecological systems outstandingly remarkable value. The ecological systems

outstandingly remarkable value recognizes the pristine nature of and interactions between the wild and scenic rivers' water, climate, geology, flora, and fauna. This includes the riparian association habitat dependencies for species such as northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and Humboldt marten, as well as water corridor dependent species such as black swift, western pond turtle, and American dipper.

Ecological Systems

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

The interdisciplinary team developed the ecological systems outstandingly remarkable value in recognition of the exemplary ecosystem processes that are occurring within the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek drainages. This is an interdisciplinary or holistic outstandingly remarkable value that describes the interactions between ecosystem elements (including water, climate, plant communities, wildlife, and geology) in a natural, nearly pristine setting. During the evaluation process, the interdisciplinary team determined that none of the standard outstandingly remarkable value categories could describe the significance of the creeks' entire ecosystems. At the same time, many of the individual ecosystem components did not qualify as outstandingly remarkable values on their own, but they contributed to a larger system that was outstandingly remarkable.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek showcase nearly pristine examples of the temperate rainforest ecosystems that are present in the central Oregon Coast Range. These two watersheds have been largely undisturbed by recent and historic human activities, including logging, dam and road construction, homesteading, and mining. The area's untouched condition is primarily due to the combination of its steep slopes and unstable soils, which have made access, development, and timber harvest operations exceedingly challenging.

As it has been noted in previous sections, it is rare within the region of comparison to see such large, undisturbed, and contiguous areas where natural processes function without significant human modification. This lack of development has yielded a refuge where relationships between biotic and abiotic ecosystem components can function under natural conditions. This refuge characteristic is valuable, and it also provides an outstanding opportunity for researchers, land managers, and visitors to observe the functioning of undisturbed ecological systems.

The ecosystems in Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek demonstrate how hydrologic, geologic, atmospheric, and biotic elements interact in a temperate rainforest. Both watersheds contain examples of late seral Douglas-fir and western hemlock-dominated forests that are indigenous to the Pacific Northwest. These stands provide excellent upland habitat for old growth dependent species such as the northern spotted owl and Humboldt (or coastal) marten. These late seral forests also support aquatic habitat by providing shade, large woody debris, and slope stability to protect from soil erosion. Thanks to the presence of these forests, Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek provide cool, clean water and good habitat for a variety of fish species (including several sensitive anadromous populations). Beavers are present in both creeks, and the beaver's role as an "ecological engineer" further enhances the quality of riparian habitat. These forested streams also provide good habitat for a number of avian species, including marbled murrelets, black swifts, and American dipper. Additionally, these two creeks and their surroundings host the habitats and biologic interactions of numerous other native mammal, amphibian, avian, aquatic, and plant species. At the same time, the area's geology has played a role in shaping soils and streambed conditions (which in turn affect upland, riparian, and aquatic habitat attributes). And lastly,

the area’s undisturbed forests contribute to a healthy airshed by filtering certain atmospheric pollutants, and this air quality service benefits all other components of the ecosystem.

Because their drainages are largely undeveloped, Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek can serve as reference streams for water quality, hydrology, and general watershed processes. This is an important feature, as many other watersheds in the central Oregon Coast Range have been previously impacted by logging, splash damming, and significant road construction. By using Wasson and Franklin as reference streams, scientists and land managers can better understand how natural processes occur on the landscape, how humans effect the ecosystem, and how managers can better steward public lands.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

The ecological system is an outstandingly remarkable value for both Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. The two creeks feature exemplary temperate rainforest ecosystems. All elements of the ecological system are on display and interacting in a natural setting, including hydrology, geology, air, plants, aquatic wildlife, and terrestrial wildlife. Given the history of logging and development in the Oregon Coast Range, it is rare within the region of comparison to see drainages of this size with intact, high-functioning ecosystems. This is especially true of Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River, which contains approximately 10 miles of nearly pristine ecosystem in the upland, riparian, and aquatic areas. These undisturbed ecological systems provide important habitats for many terrestrial and aquatic species. The systems also provide value as reference areas for understanding natural processes, as well as sanctuaries for primitive recreation opportunities.

The agencies’ analysis indicates that the ecological systems of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are greater than the sum of their parts. The individual elements of the creeks’ ecology may not necessarily rise to the level of outstandingly remarkable on their own (though some do), but they combine to create an outstandingly remarkable system. For example, botany does not meet the outstandingly remarkable value criteria on its own; the agencies do not have data indicating the presence of any rare plant species, and the existing plant communities are not rare, unique, or exemplary within the region of comparison. However, the watersheds’ intact late-seral plant communities are critical components of the ecosystem, especially in their contributions to habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species. Similarly, terrestrial wildlife (other than beaver habitat) did not meet the wildlife outstandingly remarkable value criteria, but the watersheds’ mammal, amphibian, and avian populations play key roles in the overall functioning of the ecosystem.

Table 3. Outstandingly remarkable values identified for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek

Wasson Creek	Franklin Creek
Scenery	Scenery
Primitive Recreation	Fish Populations and Habitat
Fish Populations and Habitat	Beaver Habitat
Beaver Habitat	Ecological Systems
Ecological Systems	---

Existing Conditions of Resources other than Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Botany

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

- **Populations:** The river, or area within the river corridor, contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique and/or populations of Federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.
- **Habitat:** The river, or area within the river corridor, provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for plant species indigenous to the region. Of particular significance is habitat for Federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity or uniqueness of habitats is an important consideration and could lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek drainages contain many plant species that are associated with late seral, temperate rainforest communities. These include Douglas fir, western red cedar, western hemlock, big leaf maple, red alder, salal, sword fern, and Oregon grape. In terms of basal area, models show that both watersheds are dominated by Douglas fir, followed by red alder. According to forest inventory data, forest ages range primarily from 35 to 130 years. Some stands are much older, with ages between 300 and approximately 415 years.

Due to the remoteness and undeveloped character of both drainages, agency staff have judged that the likelihood of invasive plant presence is low. Previous site visits to Wasson Creek have not observed any invasive plant infestations in the designated wild and scenic river corridor, though additional plant surveys are needed. Himalayan blackberry has an extensive presence along Wasson Creek downstream of the wild and scenic river corridor, but it has not been sighted along the wild and scenic river segment. No invasive species information is currently available for the Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River segment. However, site visits to the area in 2020 reported invasive plants on private land downstream of the wild and scenic river boundary.

No rare plant species have been documented in either drainage. The upper Wasson Creek area contains several lichen species that were thought to be rare in the mid-2000s, but these species have since been removed from the agencies' rare species list. These lichens are also unlikely to be "river-related" according to agency criteria. Due to the characteristics of the local ecosystem, it is unlikely that rare vascular plants are present in either wild and scenic river corridor. As with invasive species, additional surveys are needed to validate the agencies' conclusions on rare plant populations.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Botany is not an outstandingly remarkable value for Wasson Creek or Franklin Creek. To the best of the interdisciplinary team's knowledge, neither drainage contains populations of endangered, threatened, sensitive, or rare plant species. Staff acknowledge that additional plant survey work is needed, and the agencies will endeavor to include botanical surveys on their programs of work over the next several years. Additionally, the plant populations that are present in these watersheds are not rare, unique, or exemplary within the region of comparison, nor are they of exceptional scientific value or regional significance.

However, the botanical communities in the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridors are important elements of the ecological systems' outstandingly remarkable value. These late seral plant communities contribute to the drainages' ecology by supporting important habitat for aquatic and terrestrial animal species. The vegetation is also an important element of the wild and scenic rivers' undisturbed landscape. Though botany does not meet the outstandingly remarkable value criteria on its own, it is a critical contributor to an outstandingly remarkable ecological system.

Cultural Resources: Prehistory and History

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

- **Prehistory:** The river, or area within the river corridor, contains a site(s) where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must have unique or rare characteristics or exceptional human-interest value(s). Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; and/or may have been used by cultural groups for rare sacred purposes. Many such sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is administered by the National Park Service.
- **History:** The river, or area within the river corridor, contains a site(s) or feature(s) associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare or one-of-a-kind in the region. Many such sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A historic site(s) or features(s) is 50 years old or older in most cases.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

The Oregon Coast Range has been inhabited by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are located within the ancestral territory of the Quuiich (Lower Umpqua) People, and the upper portion of Wasson Creek is also part of the territory claimed by the Yoncalla Kalapuya People. The Lower Umpqua People are members of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians. The Yoncalla Kalapuya People are members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

Indigenous use and occupancy of the creek corridors was likely light and intermittent. This assumption is based on the area's topography and a modern understanding of native peoples' land use behaviors. Certain locations below the Devil's Staircase waterfall may have been appealing as fishing sites, though the area's steep terrain would have made access challenging (as it remains today). In more recent historic times, several homesteading plots were purchased near the mouth of Franklin Creek. However, information on the use of these plots is limited, and no historic trails or structures have been reported in the vicinity.

The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek drainages may contain some of the more intact archaeological records in the region, due to the lack of logging, log driving, and other management practices that disturbed the forest floor. Additionally, neither creek has ever been splash dammed (Miller, 2010; Smith River Watershed Council, n.d.), which further protected archaeological sites in the riparian zone. This lack of historic splash damming is notable, as records indicate that the practice was common throughout the Coast Range in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Splash damming would have been more likely on lower Wasson Creek (below the wild and scenic river corridor), but the lack of historic modification is nevertheless significant.

According to federal agency records and the Oregon Archaeological Records Remote Access database maintained by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, there have been limited surveys for cultural

resources within the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek watersheds. No known archaeological sites have been recorded in either watershed. Accordingly, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have very little information on cultural sites in these areas. To date, the three Federally recognized tribes with ancestral connections to the area have not shared the locations of any known cultural sites, nor have they shared any other information on the historic use or cultural significance of these areas. Additionally, there are no sites on the National Register of Historic Places in either drainage.

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Cultural resources are not an outstandingly remarkable value for Wasson Creek or Franklin Creek. It is true that survey records of the area are extremely limited. However, it is the agencies' professional judgement that the drainages are unlikely to contain historic or prehistoric sites that are rare, unique, of exceptional human-interest value, or of importance for interpreting history and/or prehistory. This finding is based on a review of the area's terrain and an understanding of indigenous peoples' land use patterns. Additionally, the agencies have not received any information from the tribes to indicate the area contains notable cultural sites or is otherwise culturally significant. The potential for an intact archaeological record is important, but that alone does not qualify the creeks for outstandingly remarkable value status. It is always possible that sites will be identified later, and these sites will be appropriately documented and protected by agency staff.

Geology

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

The river, or the area within the river corridor, contains one or more examples of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is unique or rare within the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a "textbook" example, or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, or other geologic structures).

Wasson Creek Baseline Conditions

Wasson Creek occurs within the Tyee Formation, which is a thick sedimentary sequence of marine sandstone and carbonaceous siltstone. The Tyee Formation has been dated to the Middle Eocene (47.8 to 38 million years ago). The Formation underlays an area of approximately 3,900 square miles in the central portion of the Oregon Coast Range.

The drainage's upland areas feature steep slopes and unstable soils, and these characteristics have made development activities and timber harvest extremely difficult. Prior to the wilderness and wild and scenic river designations, many of the slopes in the Bureau of Land Management's portion of the wild and scenic river corridor were withdrawn from timber harvest eligibility due to the steep topography. Wasson Lake was formed from a rotational landslide in A.D. 1819; this landslide clogged the valley floor and flooded the adjacent land, forming a lake with a "ghost forest." The landslide dam has been subsequently reinforced by beaver activity. Wasson Lake is one of dozens of such landslide-dammed lakes in the Oregon Coast Range (Struble, et al. 2020).

Wasson Creek features several waterfalls composed of sandstone. Devil's Staircase is the largest and most well-known waterfall on the creek, with sandstone rock shelves forming a distinctive stair-step pattern. Examination of the Staircases' sandstone shelves reveals signs of pitting and rock swirling. Waterfalls formed from sandstone are common within the Tyee Formation, though the Staircase's stair-step pattern is certainly not ubiquitous. Sheer bedrock cliff faces are also present in various locations along the creek;

these cliff faces contribute to the creek's scenic character and help constrain the creek within its narrow and steep channel.

Much of the streambed within the wild and scenic river segment is dominated by bedrock, with intermittent pockets of gravel. These geologic attributes combine with the creek's hydrology and water quality to create exceptional habitat conditions for salmonids and other fish species.

Wasson Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Geology is not an outstandingly remarkable value for Wasson Creek. The creek does not contain any geologic features that are rare or unique within the region of comparison. Though the Devil's Staircase waterfall is distinctive and striking, analysis indicates that it does not rise to the level of "unique" or "rare" within the region of comparison. Likewise, Wasson Lake is one of several landslide-dammed lakes in the region of comparison. The agencies have also found that Wasson Creek does not contain a unique or rare combination of geologic features.

Though geology does not stand on its own as an outstandingly remarkable value, it is an important contributor to several other outstandingly remarkable values for Wasson Creek. The area's waterfalls, sheer cliff faces, and steep slopes contribute to the scenic character, and Devil's Staircase waterfall is Wasson Creek's main recreational attraction. The composition of the streambed also contributes to Wasson Creek's outstandingly remarkable value for fish habitat and population. Lastly, geology is a component of the creek's overall ecology, and the agencies have acknowledged that relationship in the ecological systems outstandingly remarkable value.

Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

Franklin Creek occurs within the Tyee Formation, which is a thick sedimentary sequence of marine sandstone and carbonaceous siltstone. The Tyee Formation has been dated to the Middle Eocene (47.8 to 38 million years ago). The Formation underlays an area of approximately 3,900 square miles in the central portion of the Oregon Coast Range.

As with Wasson Creek, the Franklin Creek watershed features steep slopes and unstable soils that have contributed to the area's undeveloped character. LiDAR mapping indicates that a handful of historic landslides have occurred in the upper drainage. Most of these landslides have occurred within the last two hundred years. Landslides of this nature are common in the Tyee Formation due to the high rainfall and the relatively weak rock.

Franklin Creek's streambed contains deep alluvium deposits and large boulders, with portions of the creek flowing below the surface. Sheer cliff faces rise about the streambed in several locations. These geologic attributes combine with the creek's hydrology and water quality to create exceptional habitat conditions for salmonids and other fish species. The agencies are not presently aware of any waterfalls along Franklin Creek.

Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Geology is not an outstandingly remarkable value for Franklin Creek. The creek does not contain any geologic features that are rare or unique within the region of comparison. Additionally, the agencies have determined that Franklin Creek does not contain a unique or rare combination of geologic features.

Though geology does not stand on its own as an outstandingly remarkable value, it is an important contributor to several other outstandingly remarkable values for Franklin Creek. For example, the creek's alluvium beds, large boulders, and sheer cliff faces contribute to the scenic character. The composition of the streambed also contributes to the creek's outstandingly remarkable value for fish habitat and

population. Lastly, geology is a component of the creek's ecology, and the agencies have acknowledged that relationship in the ecological systems outstandingly remarkable value.

Recreation

Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria

Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison, or are unique rare, or exemplary within the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. Additionally:

- Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from outside the region of comparison.
- The river may provide, or have the potential to provide, settings for national or regional usage or competitive events.

Franklin Creek Baseline Conditions

The Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor offers opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in a rugged wilderness setting, though it receives very limited visitor use. No roads, developed trails, or developed facilities exist within the corridor. On the ridge to the south of the corridor, Franklin Ridge Road (now closed to motor vehicles due to the wilderness designation) offers a jumping off point for visitors trekking down into the drainage. The road itself may experience light dispersed use, especially during hunting season.

The agencies are not aware of any recreational attractions within the Franklin Creek watershed. Activities such as hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, fishing, dispersed camping, and photography may occur near Franklin Creek, but there is currently no indication of public use or significant public recreational interest. The agencies have not conducted formal visitor use monitoring of this area; instead, the preceding determination is based on professional judgement, observation, and input from externals. However, regardless of the low use, it is noteworthy that Franklin Creek provides a rugged wilderness setting with opportunities for primitive recreation, solitude, viewing dark skies, and experiencing natural soundscapes.

Franklin Creek Outstandingly Remarkable Value Determination

Recreation is not an outstandingly remarkable value for Franklin Creek. It is true that Franklin Creek provides an exemplary opportunity for primitive recreation in a rugged, remote, and wild setting. And it is also true that the area provides an outstanding opportunity for solitude. However, there is currently no indication that any primitive recreation is occurring in this area. There is also no indication that visitors attach particular value to Franklin Creek as an exemplary setting for wilderness recreation. Due to the lack of public use and public interest, the agencies have determined that it is not appropriate to identify a recreation outstandingly remarkable value for Franklin Creek. Despite the lack of an outstandingly remarkable value, staff have determined that the overlapping management direction for the Devil's Staircase Wilderness and the Wild and Scenic River (with a wild classification) will still maintain Franklin Creek's rugged and primitive recreation setting.

Chapter 3: Land Uses and Infrastructure

This section presents information known about the current uses along each river.

Land Ownership within River Corridor

Both rivers are located in Douglas County, Oregon. The land within and immediately adjacent to the corridors for Wasson and Franklin Creeks is all under Federal ownership. Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River is 10.1 miles long: The Bureau of Land Management Coos Bay District administers the upper 4.2 miles of the segment, and the Siuslaw National Forest administers the lower 5.9 miles. Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River is 4.5 miles long and is administered entirely by the Siuslaw National Forest.

The Siuslaw National Forest is in the process of acquiring a 2,598-acre parcel that is downstream of the Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River and just outside of the Devil's Staircase Wilderness. This parcel is known as the "Wasson Forest" property and is located in T21S, R10W Sections 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, and 22, Willamette Meridian. The acquisition is being implemented through the Land and Water Conservation Fund; the third and final phase of funding was approved in March 2021. The Wasson Forest acquisition has been selected for Land and Water Conservation Funding due to its recreation and public access opportunities, watershed and habitat values, and proximity to the wilderness and the wild and scenic river corridor. After the parcel transfers to federal ownership, it will be managed as part of the late successional reserve land use allocation. Additional planning for the Wasson Forest parcel will occur once the land acquisition is complete.

Access and Infrastructure

Transportation Facilities

No system trails, parking lots, developed recreation sites, or other developed amenities are present in the project area. Franklin Ridge Road passes close to the Franklin Creek river corridor. Access from the bottom of Franklin Creek typically requires a boat ride across the Umpqua River. This route also requires access across private land downstream of the wild and scenic river corridor boundary.

BLM Road 21-9-10.0 crosses through the Wasson Creek corridor for 2/3 mile. This paved road is the primary motorized access route through the wild and scenic river corridor. Additionally, current GIS data depicts a total of nine road segments adjacent to the BLM-administered segment of Wasson Creek, eight of which enter the corridor. Two of these segments are designated as closed, Maintenance Level 1 roads. On National Forest System lands, GIS data depicts two roads adjacent to and entering the designated Wasson River corridor.

Pullouts and road shoulders serve as unofficial parking areas at Wasson Lake and at user-created trailheads. These unofficial parking areas typically have room for 2-4 vehicles. No signs or other markers are installed at any of these unofficial parking areas.

Several user-created hiking trails (social trails) are present in the project area, with the majority located on the north and southeast sides of Wasson Creek. Hikers use these social trails to access recreation attractions such as the Devil's Staircase waterfall, Wasson Lake, and The Dark Grove. Many of these trails begin on decommissioned roadbeds before descending toward the creek. The social trails receive varying levels of use; the more heavily used trails are well-defined but rugged (with tread conditions aligning with Trail Class 2 under the Forest Service's Trail Condition Class framework). Lower-use trails are intermittent and difficult to follow (Trail Class 1). The agencies do not maintain, patrol, or monitor

resource conditions along these social trails. Additionally, these routes are not identified on agency maps or other publications.

Wilderness portal signs are present at key road intersections just outside the project area. These portal signs contain a basic area map, a list of wilderness regulations, environmental stewardship messaging (such as Leave No Trace), and agency contact information. No other agency signage is installed in the project area. The agencies do not monitor for or manage user-installed signs and flagging along social trails.

The appropriate level of development within designated wild and scenic river corridors is determined by the classification of the river or river segments and the recreation opportunity spectrum category (FSM 2354.42f, FSM 2354.41, and Bureau of Land Management - Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan (2016)). For wild rivers with a recreation opportunity spectrum of primitive, facilities should only exist within the river corridor where absolutely necessary for health, safety and resource protection. Where they are provided, facilities should be primitive in nature.

Chapter 4: Management Direction

The following chapter contains management objectives, desired conditions, recreation visitor capacity, standards, and guidelines for protecting and enhancing the river values of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. This management direction for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek is applicable to the entire project area and does not apply to any other lands managed by either agency. The Forest Service will incorporate this direction into the Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan via a plan amendment. No amendment to the Bureau of Land Management Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan is required to adopt the comprehensive river management plan.

Additionally, this chapter contains management direction for a new *Wild and Scenic River Management Area* that only applies to lands managed by the Forest Service. The Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan does not currently have a management area for designated wild and scenic rivers. Therefore, it was necessary to create a new management area for this project and the accompanying plan amendment. This new Wild and Scenic River Management Area will be incorporated into the amended Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan and will apply to the Forest Service portions of Wasson Creek, Franklin Creek, and any additional wild and scenic rivers designated on the Siuslaw National Forest in the future. Because rivers designated in the future may be classified as wild, scenic, or recreational, the management area-wide direction includes components for all three classifications.

Additional management direction for the project area is also found in the existing Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan of 1990 and the Bureau of Land Management's Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan of 2016.

All lands in the Franklin Creek corridor and most of the land in the Wasson Creek corridor are within Congressionally-designated Wilderness Areas. The majority of Forest Service lands within the wild and scenic river corridors are also within the Northwest Forest Plan riparian reserve land allocation, which is designed to protect the health of the aquatic system and its dependent species. Bureau of Land Management-managed lands within the Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor are under a riparian reserve allocation defined in the Bureau of Land Management's Northwestern and Coastal Resource Management Plan. As such, these lands would be managed under both the riparian reserve and wilderness standards and guidelines given the extensive overlap. These two sets of management direction

are generally complimentary and provide for the protection of river values consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In the case of a conflict the most restrictive management direction applies.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Management Area (Forest Service only)

Management Area-wide Objectives

Protect and enhance the free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of designated Wild and Scenic River corridors for present and future generations.

Management Area-wide Desired Conditions for Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wild and scenic river corridors continue to provide pleasure, enjoyment, and a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities and experiences to forest visitors. Generally, ecosystems remain intact and a diversity of animal and plant life is present. Water quality and quantity is maintained or enhanced to provide clean water and healthy aquatic ecosystems. The values that characterize the history and culture of the area are understood and protected. The free-flowing conditions, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of river areas are protected from overuse, instream developments, and other impacts that do not enhance these values.

Management Area-wide Standards and Guidelines for Wild and Scenic Rivers

General

Standards

WSR-01-S – Each river corridor shall be managed to protect and enhance their outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing characteristics.

Recreation

Standards

WSR-02-S - Accessibility, recreation opportunities, and facilities must be compatible with the river classification of the designated segment:

- **Wild** – recreation opportunity spectrum category: Primitive. Access is by water or trails. No roads, railroads, or other provisions for vehicular travel occur within the river area. Some existing roads leading to the boundary of the area are acceptable. Facilities are not provided except where absolutely necessary for health, safety, and resource protection, and are very primitive where provided.
- **Scenic** – recreation opportunity spectrum category: Semi-primitive Non-motorized and Semi-primitive Motorized. Access is by water and trail. Roads may occasionally reach or bridge the river. The existence of conspicuous or longer stretches of inconspicuous roads or railroads is acceptable. Roads may or may not be open to motorized use depending on the recreation opportunity spectrum category of the designated segment. Facilities are primitive with an emphasis on health, safety, and resource protection and some degree of convenience.

- **Recreational** – recreation opportunity spectrum category: Roaded Natural and Rural. Readily accessible by water, road, and railroad. Facilities have a natural, rustic appearance and are cost efficient. May include permitted and existing facilities such as campgrounds and boat launches.

Wildlife and Fish

Standards

WSR-03-S - Manage wildlife and fish in a manner consistent with the other recognized river attributes.

Range

Standards

WSR-04-S - Horses or other domestic pack animals shall remain on system roads or trails.

Water

Standards

WSR-05-S – Designated river segments shall be preserved in their free-flowing condition:

- **Wild and Scenic:** Rivers are free of impoundment.
- **Recreational:** Some existing impoundments or diversions are acceptable provided the waterway remains generally natural and riverine in appearance.

WSR-06-S – The water quality of designated river segments shall be maintained or enhanced.

- **Wild:** Water quality shall meet or exceed criteria, or federally approved State standards, for aesthetics, for propagation of fish and wildlife normally adapted to the habitat of the river, and for primary contact recreation (swimming) except as exceeded by natural conditions.
- **Scenic and Recreational:** Water quality shall meet the national goal that waters are fishable and swimmable.

Vegetation and Forest Cover

Standards

WSR-07-S - Forest cover shall be managed to maintain or enhance those values for which a particular river segment is designated.

- **Wild:** Do not cut trees except under emergency conditions, such as for insect or disease control, fire, natural catastrophe, disaster, public safety, or under specified conditions on valid mining claims.
- **Scenic:** Timber harvest or manipulation of vegetation must be done in a manner that satisfies river management objectives. On-going timber harvest is acceptable provided the forest appears natural from the riverbank.
- **Recreational:** Timber harvest or manipulation of vegetation must be done in a manner that satisfies river management objectives. Evidence of on-going timber harvest is acceptable.

Visual Quality

Standards

WSR-08-S – Visual management objectives shall reflect the classification of the river:

- **Wild:** Preservation. Human activities do not change the natural appearance.
- **Scenic:** Retention. Human activities are not evident to the casual forest visitor.
- **Recreation:** Partial Retention – Human activities are evident but must remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Protection

Guidelines

WSR-01-G – Wildfire suppression activities that cause the least impact on the river and river corridor should be utilized. Prescribed fire may be utilized to maintain environmental conditions or to meet objectives specified in the river management plan.

Suitability of Lands

Suitability of lands is a determination that specific lands within a plan area may be used, or not, for various multiple uses or activities, based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands.

Timber:

- Wild river corridors are not suitable for timber production or timber harvest.
- Scenic and recreational river corridors are not suitable for scheduled timber production.
- Timber harvests, salvage, and fuelwood cutting may be utilized in classified scenic or recreation rivers to achieve desired riparian conditions consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, including wildlife habitat connectivity.

Non-Timber Forest Products:

- Wild river corridors are not suitable for commercial use or non-commercial use (gathering and removal for personal utilization) of non-timber forest products.
- Scenic river corridors are suitable for non-commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- Recreational river corridors are suitable for commercial and non-commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- River corridors of all classifications are suitable for incidental use (on-site collection and utilization) of non-timber forest products.
- River corridors of all classifications are suitable for tribal traditional and cultural uses.

Mining:

- Rivers that are classified as wild are not suitable for mineral exploration and development, subject to valid existing rights.
- Rivers that are classified as scenic or recreational are suitable for mineral exploration and development activities.

Management Direction for Wasson and Franklin Creeks (Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management)

River Corridor-Specific Desired Conditions for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek

The free-flowing conditions of Wasson and Franklin Creeks are preserved. Water quality, quantity, and the outstandingly remarkable values for which the creeks were designated are maintained. The quantity and timing of water flows in streams, seeps, springs, and wetlands are sustained at a level that retains or enhances essential ecological functions in Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. Stream channels and associated flood plains occur within their natural flow regimes and the river moves freely across its floodplain. Soil and vegetation functions in upland and riparian settings are retained or enhanced to facilitate precipitation infiltration and groundwater recharge. Large wood complexes form pools and store sediment, resulting in a variety of instream flow conditions.

Water quality is sustained at a level that retains the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of the aquatic system and benefits survival, growth, reproduction, and migration of desired aquatic and riparian species. Water quality meets State of Oregon water quality standards and supports designated beneficial uses and desired aquatic species. Short-term exceedance of water quality standards (such as temporary periods of declining water quality) due to management activities occur only when they result in a long-term improvement in watershed health. The creeks also serve as references for water quality conditions in watersheds in the Oregon Coast Range that have not been significantly impacted by human activities.

Natural ecological processes and disturbance are the primary forces affecting biotic communities and the area's scenic character. Contiguous late seral forest plant communities are present. Non-native invasive species are nonexistent or in low abundance and do not disrupt natural ecological functions. Moss and lichen surfaces on large rocks and cliff walls are not visibly scarred or scraped away by visitor foot traffic, especially near Devil's Staircase and other large boulder fields.

Aquatic habitat components, including large woody debris, pools, riffles, beaver dams, and free-flowing conditions, remain undisturbed and are not detrimentally affected by public and administrative uses. The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek drainages provide refugia from human-caused disturbances, and these refugia are accessible to native wildlife, fish, aquatic species, and plants, including beaver and threatened, endangered and sensitive species. Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek provide high-quality spawning and rearing habitat for native resident and anadromous fish. Additionally, the creeks provide a source of cold and clean water to support habitats that are downstream of the wild and scenic corridor boundary.

A primitive recreation setting is maintained: The area is characterized by an essentially unmodified, natural environment. Concentrations of visitors are low, and evidence of human use is minimal. The area provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, exploration, personal challenge, self-reliance, viewing wildlife in their native habitat, and immersion in a natural setting. Wasson Lake provides an opportunity for a more social and primitive camping experience. The sights and sounds of modern human civilization are not apparent, except limited or infrequent encounters with other visitors. Visitors also have opportunities to experience dark skies, and these dark skies contribute to the overall sense of remoteness and ruggedness. The Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek watersheds meet agency visual quality objective (VQO) standards. Key scenery elements, including the old-growth forest, pools, riffles, cliff faces, and boulders, combine to create a scenic setting that is exemplary within the Central Oregon Coast Range.

River Corridor-Specific Standards and Guidelines for Wasson and Franklin Creeks

Recreation

Standards

R-01-S – In general, signs will be located at access points and will only be provided where essential for resource protection.

R-02-S – Designated trails shall be constructed only if monitoring indicates a river value is being adversely impacted and is at risk of being degraded.

R-03-S - Social trails and campsites resulting in adverse impacts to river values (based on monitoring findings) shall be actively rehabilitated or blocked and disguised to allow for recovery.

Guidelines

R-04-G - Social trails within the wild & scenic river corridor, that degrade visual quality within the corridor, should be rehabilitated.

R-05-G - Retired roads within the wild and scenic river corridors should be blocked and road surfaces stabilized and narrowed to minimize negative impacts to scenery and water quality.

R-06-G – Dispersed campsites and campfires should not be located within 100 feet of the Wasson Lake shoreline or Devil’s Staircase Waterfall to minimize visual intrusions when viewed from those sites.

R-07-G - Except for unique circumstances, management actions to protect river values should minimize impacts to visitor access and choice of activity. In general, if river value degradation is detected, managers should initially implement interventions with few to no visitor restrictions. If these initial actions do not achieve the desired results, more restrictive and intensive actions should be implemented

Scenery

Guidelines

Dark skies should be preserved to provide opportunities for visitor immersion in natural lightscapes.

Wildlife

Guidelines

WL-01-G - Dark skies and dark nights should be preserved to support the movement of wildlife.

Sanitation

Standards

S-01-S - Trash (including food waste) must be packed out in keeping with Pack- It In /Pack It Out and Leave No Trace principles.

Guidelines

S-02-G - Trash (including food waste) must be packed out in keeping with Pack- It In /Pack It Out and Leave No Trace principles.

Public Health and Safety

Guidelines

PHS-01-G – Information on current river flows, equipment and experience minimums, and hazards should be made available to river recreation users.

Water

Guidelines

W-01-G - Human activities that degrade water quality should be minimized. Conditions that result in bank erosion and sedimentation should be mitigated or prevented to protect water clarity.

Vegetation and Forest Cover

Guidelines

V-01-G - Trampling of understory vegetation should be prevented to mitigate the exposure of soil in the river corridors.

V-02-G - Invasive species infestations should be minimized or eradicated through early detection and rapid response.

Mining

Guidelines

M-01-G - Reasonable access to mining claims and mineral leases will be permitted for valid existing claims and leases that existed prior to the designation.

Recreation User Capacity

The capacity analysis was conducted by recreation staff from the Siuslaw National Forest and Coos Bay District, with input from the project interdisciplinary team. The analysis was finalized in June 2021 and documented in the Capacity Report for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers (included on the [project website](#)). To determine visitor capacities for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek, the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service followed the nine-step process outlined by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council. This process appears in a 2018 Council white paper entitled, [Steps to Address User Capacities for Wild and Scenic Rivers](#). The discussion that follows summarizes the more detailed information provided in the full report.

Geographic River Management Areas

For this capacity analysis, the agencies divided Wasson Creek into three sub-units known as geographic river management areas (GRMAs). The wild and scenic river was divided into geographic river management areas based on differences in recreation access, recreation use, infrastructure, and desired conditions. Each geographic river management area has its own numerical visitor capacity. Capacities for each geographic river management area were independently calculated using similar indicators and metrics, with consideration of the desired conditions for the entire wild and scenic river. The interdisciplinary team used a visitor capacity worksheet to organize information and complete the capacity analysis; these worksheets are included in the project record and are viewable on the project website. The geographic river management areas for Wasson Creek are as follows:

1. **Wasson Lake and Access Road** – 1.1 river miles, 337 acres: Includes Wasson Lake, BLM Road 21-9-10.0, the dispersed site on the east side of the lake, the roadside parking area, and the wild and scenic river corridor between the upstream boundary and a tributary 0.5 miles downstream of the lake. There are no system trails or developed facilities in this area.
2. **Devil’s Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, Access Routes, and Vicinity** – 5.8 river miles, 1,376 acres: Includes the Devil’s Staircase waterfall, the Dark Grove old-growth stand, the known user-created hiker access points for these features, and the wild and scenic river corridor between the Forest Service-Bureau of Land Management boundary and the downstream wild and scenic river boundary. There are no roads, system trails, or developed facilities in this area.
3. **Middle Wasson Creek** – 3.2 river miles, 1,008 acres: Includes the designated segment and wild and scenic river corridor between the Forest Service-Bureau of Land Management boundary and the downstream boundary of the Wasson Lake and Access Road geographic river management area. There are no roads, system trails, or developed facilities in this area.

The agencies did not divide Franklin Creek into smaller geographic river management areas; the interdisciplinary team determined that there were no significant differences in current or desired conditions that warranted subdivisions for the purposes of capacity.

Human Uses

A wide array of human uses are compatible with the wild and scenic river designation, depending on a segment’s classification and river values. Compatible river uses for each classification are listed in Forest Service Manual 2350 and BLM Manual 6400. Additional compatible activities for the project area are described in the Siuslaw Land and Resource Management Plan and the Bureau of Land Management Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan (including the management framework for the Wasson Extensive Recreation Management Area). The agencies are not aware of any incompatible uses occurring within the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridors. The following subsections outline current human uses and projected future uses in each geographic river management area.

Wasson Lake and Access Road: Almost all visitor use in this area occurs at the dispersed site near the lake’s eastern shoreline. The dispersed site is 0.2 miles from Road 21-9-10.0; there is room to park three vehicles on the side of the road, and the parking area is connected to the dispersed site by a social trail. Visitor activities at this location include camping, fishing, viewing natural scenery, mushroom hunting, floating in non-motorized watercraft, and picnicking. Based on road counter data, approximately 25 vehicles pass by Wasson Lake in an average week, and it is assumed that a majority of these vehicle trips make at least a brief day use stop at the lake. A small amount of use may occur along an old roadbed north of the lake, but this area is not considered to be a significant source of visitation.

Devil’s Staircase, Dark Grove, and Vicinity: Visitation in this area is light and dispersed, with potential for more concentrated use at the Devil’s Staircase waterfall and Dark Grove old-growth stand. Activities in this area include hiking, backcountry camping, nature viewing, fishing, and mushroom hunting. Visitors enter this area from several access points along roads on the ridges above the creek drainage. Visitors can then follow social trails down toward the creek; some trails are well defined while others require more route finding. It is estimated that several hundred visitors enter this area each year, based on professional judgement and best available information. Most visitors who enter this area are seeking a rugged, isolated, and challenging wilderness adventure.

Middle Wasson: There are no distinct recreation attractions in this area, and very little visitor use occurs here. Potential activities include hiking, backcountry camping, viewing natural scenery, fishing, and mushroom hunting. There are several logical access points for visitors seeking to enter the area, but these locations do not appear to receive very much use. With no recreation attractions to concentrate use, the agencies assume that visitation in this area is diffuse and low intensity.

Franklin Creek: There are no distinct recreation attractions in this area, and almost no visitor use occurs within the wild and scenic river corridor. Franklin Ridge Road is a potential access route, and limited visitor use appears to occur along this road, but the agencies assume that very few individuals descend from the road to the creek. Potential activities in this area (if they occur at all) include hiking, backcountry camping, viewing natural scenery, fishing, mushroom collecting, and hunting. The lower end of the creek outside the wild and scenic river corridor is on private land and is not a viable access route for visitor use. Livestock grazing occurs on this private ownership outside of the wild and scenic river corridor. No grazing or pasture permits are located within either of the river corridors.

Future use: The agencies predict that current trends in activity choice and location preference will continue into the future. Additionally, the agencies do not anticipate a significant increase to the frequency or intensity of visitor use. While many public land managers have reported trends of increasing recreation visitation, the agencies do not expect these trends to occur in Wasson Creek or Franklin Creek. This is due to the project area's ruggedness, remoteness, limited road access, and lack of system trails; these attributes mean that Wasson and Franklin do not offer equivalent opportunities to most of the front country, backcountry, and wilderness destinations that are experiencing increases in visitor use. Advanced backcountry hikers will continue to visit the project area in small numbers, but most visitors who are displaced from other areas will choose to go elsewhere.

Capacity Determinations

Capacity identifies the kinds and maximum amounts of use that are most likely sustainable without creating undesirable impacts. Since the early 1980s, visitor capacity has been increasingly recognized as one of several tools to effectively manage visitor use. As described in the visitor capacity literature, capacity estimates must be derived from decisions about desired conditions, including desired visitor experiences, management setting, resource conditions, and infrastructure development. Capacity estimates must also consider thresholds of acceptable impacts, conditions that would trigger management intervention, appropriate management actions, and monitoring protocols. For wild and scenic rivers, all elements of the capacity determination relate back to the desired conditions for the segment's river values: water quality, free flowing condition, and outstandingly remarkable values. Visitor capacity determinations do not constitute an administrative use limit, but are used as a basis for monitoring and adaptive management actions to protect river values.

The full report, Capacity Report for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers (June 2021), is located in the project record and on the project website.

Wasson Lake and Access Road Geographic River Management Area

Due to the proximity of the dispersed camping/day use site to the Wasson Lake shoreline, and due to the intensity of use that occurs there, the agencies have determined that water quality and the fish outstandingly remarkable value are the river values that are most sensitive to visitor use. Visitor use at the dispersed site has the potential to cause erosion and sedimentation, and these processes can degrade water quality and fish habitat. Additionally, there is potential for human waste and trash to be left behind in the riparian area, and these occurrences can further degrade river values. Capacity for this geographic river

management area focuses on preventing expansion of the bare soil footprints for the dispersed campsite, social trails, and shoreline access areas.

Table 4. Summary of capacity determinations for Wasson Lake and access road

Use Type	Units of Use	Capacity	Key Rationale and Assumptions
Overnight use	People per day	6	Size of dispersed site; estimate of maximum group size
Day use	People per day	30	Layout of dispersed site and social trails; average group size, length of stay, and length of use day

Devil’s Staircase, Dark Grove, and Vicinity Geographic River Management Area

Visitation in this geographic river management area is low and dispersed, but there is potential for use to concentrate at the Devil’s Staircase waterfall and the Dark Grove (especially at the waterfall). Visitors place a high value on the opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within this geographic river management area. Most of these visitors are traveling to one of the two aforementioned recreation attractions. Based on these factors, the agencies have concluded that primitive recreation, especially the solitude component, is the most sensitive river value in this area.

Capacity for this geographic river management areas is focused on visitors at one time at the Devil’s Staircase and Dark Grove. There is the possibility of crowding at these recreation attractions, leading to a degradation of the primitive recreation experience. Additionally, crowding may compel visitors to distance themselves from others, potentially leading to trampled vegetation or the creation of additional bare ground areas. These occurrences can degrade other river values, including water quality, fish habitat, and scenery.

Table 5. Summary of capacity determinations for Devil’s Staircase and Dark Grove

Use Type	Units of Use	Capacity	Key Rationale and Assumptions
Overnight use	People per day	7	Visitor sensitivity to crowding; maximum occupancy of recreation attractions; average group size
Day use	People per day	30	Visitor sensitivity to crowding; maximum occupancy of recreation attractions; average group size, length of stay, and length of use day

Middle Wasson Creek Geographic River Management Area

Visitor use in this geographic river management area is very low and diffuse, with no known recreation attractions drawing use or concentrating it in any particular location. Those few visitors who enter this area place a high value on opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The importance of solitude and primitive recreation is also reflected in the desired conditions for this GRMA (and for Wasson Creek as a whole). Access to the area is possible via several closed road corridors to the north and south of Wasson Creek.

Based on these factors, the agencies have concluded that primitive recreation, especially the solitude component, is the most sensitive river value in this area. Capacity for this geographic river management area is based on a visitor trail encounter level that maintains the area’s outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

Table 6. Summary of capacity determination for Middle Wasson Creek

Use Type	Units of Use	Capacity	Key Rationale and Assumptions
Combined day and overnight use	People per day	28	Desired condition for recreation access corridors; desired maximum encounter rate; terrain constraints; average group size

Franklin Creek Geographic River Management Area

Based on available data, the agencies have concluded that Franklin Creek currently receives little to no recreation use. There are no known social trails or recreation attractions within the Franklin Creek drainage, and there is no recreation outstandingly remarkable value. Instead, the agencies seek to manage Franklin Creek primarily for ecological benefits, including the creek’s identified river values. Desired conditions for Franklin Creek’s river values emphasize a pristine and untrammled setting, including excellent aquatic and upland habitat, natural water quality conditions, and undisturbed riparian areas.

With such a low level of baseline use, the agencies have determined that water quality, the fish outstandingly remarkable value, and the ecological systems outstandingly remarkable value are the river values most sensitive to visitor use. The capacity for Franklin Creek focuses on preserving this nearly pristine baseline condition and minimizing visitor impacts to river values.

Table 7. Summary of capacity determination for Franklin Creek

Use Type	Units of Use	Capacity	Key Rationale and Assumptions
Combined Day and overnight use	People per day	1	Desired conditions for river values, especially water quality, fish habitat, and ecological systems; current condition of extremely low recreation use

Table 8. Summary of capacity determinations for all geographic river management areas

GRMA	Use Type	Units of Use	Capacity	Key Rationale and Assumptions
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Overnight use	People per day	6	Size of dispersed site; estimate of maximum group size
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Day use	People per day	30	Layout of dispersed site and social trails; average group size, length of stay, and length of use day
Devil’s Staircase and Dark Grove	Overnight use	People per day	7	Visitor sensitivity to crowding; maximum occupancy of recreation attractions; average group size
Devil’s Staircase and Dark Grove	Day use	People per day	30	Visitor sensitivity to crowding; maximum occupancy of recreation attractions; average group size, length of stay, and length of use day
Middle Wasson Creek	Combined day and overnight use	People per day	28	Desired condition for recreation access corridors; desired maximum encounter rate; terrain constraints; average group size
Franklin Creek	Combined day and overnight use	People per day	1	Desired conditions for river values, especially water quality, fish habitat, and ecological systems; current condition of extremely low recreation use

Chapter 5: Monitoring Plan and Implementation

Monitoring Plan

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and agency manual direction instructs the river-administering agencies to develop a monitoring strategy which will ensure that desired conditions are maintained or that management activities are adapted accordingly. (Section 3(d)(1), FSM 2300, BLM 6400). Monitoring is essential to protecting river-related values. The objective of this monitoring plan is to protect Wasson and Franklin Creek's free-flowing condition, water quality and quantity, outstandingly remarkable values, and to address visitor use.

The following framework outlines the recommended monitoring strategy specifically related to protecting the free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values associated with Wasson and Franklin Creeks Wild and Scenic Rivers. Monitoring items are directly related to enhancement or protection of a specific river value.

Table 9 is intended to provide implementation-level information for staff carrying out the monitoring plan. This table displays selected indicators, potential monitoring methods, geographic river management areas, and frequency of monitoring for each specific recommended monitoring item. Staff have identified *focus* geographic river management areas for each monitoring item based on variations in current conditions, desired conditions, and river value vulnerabilities. Monitoring items in these focus areas should receive priority consideration when allocating resources.

Table 10 is intended to provide background for staff who are interpreting monitoring data and deciding if adaptive management actions are needed. This table displays the trigger, threshold, and adaptive management action for each monitoring item. In some cases, triggers and thresholds vary between geographic river management areas. Additional information, including the selection of indicators, thresholds, triggers, limiting attributes, assumptions, and rationale can be found in the full report, Capacity Report for Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers (2021), located in the project record and on the project website.

Monitoring items in table 9 are given reference numbers, and these reference numbers appear next to the corresponding indicators in table 10. The reference numbers are provided to improve the reader's ability to navigate the two monitoring tables.

Many of the management actions specified in this monitoring plan will require analysis and public disclosure under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, and other laws or policies. These actions may also require review under agency wilderness regulations. This planning and compliance is not included in this comprehensive plan or the associated environmental analysis; these determinations will occur at a later date if the relevant management actions are ever needed.

Monitoring requirements established in the Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and in the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan will continue to apply to Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek.

Table 9. Monitoring plan – indicators, methods, and frequency

Recommended Monitoring Item	Reference Number	Focus GRMA(s)*	Associated Indicator(s)	Recommended Frequency	Comments
Footprint of bare soil areas at dispersed site and shoreline	1	Wasson Lake and Access Road	Measurement of the bare soil area at the dispersed campsite Bare soil areas along shoreline	Twice per year during spring, summer, or fall	Use area measurements and photo point monitoring to track changes in trampled vegetation and bare soil areas
Social trail formation and condition class	2	Wasson Lake and Access Road	Establishment of social trails	Twice per year during spring, summer, or fall	Conduct trail condition surveys supplemented by photo point monitoring
Vehicles parked at known or potential hiker access points	3	Devil’s Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity Middle Wasson Creek Franklin Creek	Vehicles at hiker access points for Devil’s Staircase, Waterfall and Dark Grove Vehicles at potential hiker access points Vehicles at Franklin Ridge road barrier	Four times per year, per GRMA	Multiple access points and multiple GRMAs can be visited in one monitoring day
Visitor encounters on social trails and at recreation attractions	4	Devil’s Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity Middle Wasson Creek Franklin Creek	Encounters at Devil’s Staircase, Waterfall Encounters at Dark Grove Encounters in WSR corridor	Three times per year, per GRMA	Encounter monitoring will only occur if triggers are reached for vehicle parking indicators
Bare soil, trampled vegetation, and/or erosional areas at recreation attractions	5	Devil’s Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity Franklin Creek	Bare soil areas at Devil’s Staircase, Waterfall and Dark Grove Bare soil areas, trampled vegetation, and/or erosional areas at monitoring locations	Three times per year, per GRMA	Can occur at same time as encounter monitoring. Will only occur if triggers are reached for vehicle parking indicators. For Franklin Creek: Monitoring locations to be established based on observed patterns of visitor use
Human waste deposited in river corridor	6	Wasson Lake and Access Road	Observation of unburied human waste	Four times per year	Can occur at same time as monitoring for dispersed site footprint and social trails

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Recommended Monitoring Item	Reference Number	Focus GRMA(s)*	Associated Indicator(s)	Recommended Frequency	Comments
Introduction and spread of non-native invasive plant species	7	Wasson Lake and Access Road Franklin Creek Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Presence of non-native invasive species	Baseline transects established in FY21; monitoring cycle will be developed according to baseline results	Baseline transects established at known visitor access points; repeat monitoring will occur in subsequent years, and additional transects may be established if invasives are sighted within the river corridor.
Improper disposal of trash	8	Wasson Lake and Access Road	Sightings of trash at recreation attractions, social trails, and dispersed sites	Four times per year	Can occur at same time as monitoring for dispersed site footprint and social trails.
Abandoned fire rings	9	Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Sightings of fire rings at recreation attractions	Three times per year	Can occur at the same time as encounter monitoring. Will only occur if triggers are reached for vehicle parking indicators.
Excessive signs or installation of signs that do not conform to the natural setting	10	Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Frequency of agency-installed signs Occurrences of unauthorized signs placed by visitors or third parties	As needed when reported	Agencies will keep records of authorized sign installations. Staff will report sightings of unauthorized signs during field visits.
Construction of additional recreation or non-recreation facilities	11	Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Presence of new facilities, roads, or system trails above FY21 baseline	Agencies will keep records of constructed facilities within project area.	Will require a Section 7 assessment prior to construction.
Road, culvert, and cross-drain condition along segments of BLM Ferntop Road (21-9-10.0)	12	Wasson Lake and Access Road	Signs of failure or deterioration.	Annually	Geomorphic Roads Analysis and Inventory Package surveys to be conducted in 2021 and 2022 providing a detailed inventory of the road condition. This intensive survey will not be repeated annually.
Water quality	13	Franklin Creek	Water temperature	Annually during summer	Deploy continuous water temperature loggers according to protocol.

*GRMA - geographic river management area

Table 10. Monitoring plan – triggers, thresholds, and management actions

Focus GRMA	Indicator	Reference Number	Trigger	Threshold	Management Actions*
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Measurements of the bare soil area at dispersed campsite	1	New vegetation trampling or new patchy bare soil areas along perimeter of dispersed site, or within 50 feet outside of perimeter	New fully bare soil areas along perimeter of existing dispersed site, or within 50 feet outside of perimeter	Enhanced messaging to visitors: Please stay on existing trails and camp within existing dispersed sites Close and rehabilitate new disturbed areas
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Establishment of social trails	2	Vegetation trampling or patchy bare soil areas that suggest initial formation of new social trails (not yet meeting Class 1 trail condition) leading out from dispersed site or extending out from existing trails	Detection of new social trails (Class 1 condition or higher) leading out from dispersed site or extending out from existing trails	Designate system trails or "designated dispersed" campsites and close/rehab all non-system disturbed areas Consider limited entry system
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Bare soil areas along shoreline	1	New vegetation trampling, patchy bare soil areas, or erosional areas along lakeshore	Detection of new fully bare soil areas along lakeshore	
Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Vehicles parked at hiker access points for Devil's Staircase, Waterfall and Dark Grove	3	Three or more vehicles reported at a single known hiker access point, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Four or more vehicles reported at a single hiker access point, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Implement encounter monitoring at Devil's Staircase waterfall and Dark Grove Consider limited entry system
Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Encounters at Devil's Staircase ⁺	4	Three or more groups reaching the waterfall in one day, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Five or more groups reaching the waterfall in one day, OR two or more groups occupying the waterfall at the same time, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Enhanced messaging to visitors: Leave No Trace (LNT), courtesy to others, consider visiting at non-peak times Consider limited entry system
Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Encounters at Dark Grove ⁺	4	Six or more groups reaching the Dark Grove in one day, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Nine or more groups reaching the Dark Grove in one day, OR four or more groups occupying the Dark Grove at the same time, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	

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Focus GRMA	Indicator	Reference Number	Trigger	Threshold	Management Actions*
Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Bare soil areas at Devil's Staircase waterfall and Dark Grove	5	Evidence of trampled vegetation or new patchy bare soil areas at monitoring locations at the Devil's Staircase and the Dark Grove	Detection of new fully defined bare soil areas or erosional areas at monitoring locations at the Devil's Staircase and the Dark Grove	Enhanced messaging to visitors: Please stay on existing trails and camp within existing disturbed areas Close and rehabilitate new disturbed areas Consider limited entry system
Middle Wasson	Vehicles at potential hiker access points	3	Three or more vehicles reported at a single known hiker access point, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Seven or more vehicles reported at a single hiker access point, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Implement encounter monitoring along hiker access routes Consider limited entry system
Middle Wasson	Encounters in WSR corridor ⁺	4	Three or more groups (or individuals traveling alone) encountered at monitoring points in WSR corridor, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Seven or more groups (or individuals traveling alone) encountered at monitoring points in WSR corridor, on two or more monitoring days in a year	Enhanced messaging to visitors: LNT, courtesy to other, consider visiting at non-peak times Consider limited entry system
Franklin	Vehicles at Franklin Ridge road barrier	3	Two or more vehicles reported at road barrier turnaround, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Four or more vehicles reported at road barrier turnaround, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Implement encounter monitoring Consider limited entry system
Franklin	Encounters in WSR corridor ⁺	4	Two or more groups (or individuals traveling alone) encountered at monitoring points in WSR corridor, on two or more monitoring days in a single year	Three or more groups (or individuals traveling alone) encountered at monitoring points in WSR corridor, on two or more monitoring days in a year	Enhanced messaging to visitors: Leave No Trace, please stay on existing trails, please camp in existing disturbed areas Close and rehabilitate new disturbed areas
Franklin	Bare soil areas, trampled vegetation, and/or erosional areas	5	Evidence of trampled vegetation or new patchy denuded areas at monitoring locations	Detection of new fully defined bare soil areas or erosional areas at monitoring locations	Designate system trails or "designated dispersed" campsites and close/rehab all non-system disturbed areas Consider limited entry system

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Focus GRMA	Indicator	Reference Number	Trigger	Threshold	Management Actions*
Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Unburied human waste	6	One occurrence of human waste in a single GRMA	Two or more occurrences of human waste in a single GRMA	Enhanced messaging to visitors: LNT, pack out waste, protect river values Require Waste Alleviation and Gelling (WAG.) bags
Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Presence of non-native invasive species	7	New State Listed Invasive species introductions Increased footprint of infestations	1 new species introduction 20% percent increase in invasive plant presence at Wasson Lake, Devil's Staircase, and backcountry access points	Increase public education regarding prevention Treat invasive species (would require additional environmental analysis)
Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Trash at recreation attractions, social trails, and dispersed sites	8	Observations of trash during one monitoring day at recreation attractions, social trails, and dispersed sites	Two or more observations of trash in a single year at a single location	Public education, including LNT, pack out waste, protect river values
Devil's Staircase, Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Abandoned Fire Rings	9	Observations of abandoned fire rings, other than the existing fire ring at the Wasson Lake dispersed site	Repeated observations of abandoned fire rings within WSR corridor	Fire rings dismantled Visitor education: Please do not abandon fire rings

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Focus GRMA	Indicator	Reference Number	Trigger	Threshold	Management Actions*
Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase, Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Unauthorized signage	10	One observation of unauthorized sign(s) placed by visitors or third parties	Three observations of unauthorized signs placed by visitors or third parties	Remove unauthorized signs Increase agency presence in area where signs were found Contact and educate originator of sign If applicable, consider addressing visitor or third-party concerns through officially sanctioned signs or online material
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Agency installed signage	10	Proliferation of addition signs beyond Wasson Lake pull-off and social trail access points	Proliferation of addition signs beyond Wasson Lake pull-off and social trail access points	Agencies will not install additional signs outside of Wasson Lake pull-off and social trail access points unless determined to be necessary to protect river values
Wasson Lake and Access Road	Road, culvert, and cross-drain condition along segments of Ferntop Road (21-9-10.0)	12	Signs of road erosion or indicators of potential landslide along segments of Ferntop Road (21-9-10.0)	Signs of failure or deterioration	Requires Section 7 assessment and NEPA prior to construction
Wasson Lake and Access Road Devil's Staircase, Waterfall, Dark Grove, and Vicinity	Construction of additional recreation or non-recreation facilities	11	Presence of new facilities, roads, or system trails above FY21 baseline	No occurrences without Section 7 assessment and NEPA	Requires Section 7 assessment and NEPA prior to construction
Franklin	Water quality	13	Water temperature	No 7-day average maximum temperatures exceed the applicable criterion	Request delisting and removal from the 303d list

GRMA - geographic river management area, WSR – Wild and Scenic River

* Management actions are listed in the approximate order in which they will be implemented. Less intense and restrictive actions will be implemented first; if these initial actions do not successfully halt degradation of river values, then the agency response will escalate towards more intensive interventions.

+ Monitoring for this indicator will only occur if the trigger for the preceding “vehicles parked at hiker access points” indicator is reached.

Implementation

Agency Responsibilities and Authorities

The following summarizes responsibilities and authorities of various agencies relative to activities within the wild and scenic river corridors.

Tribal Governments

As described previously, Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek are located within the ancestral territory of the Quiiich People, and Wasson Creek is also part of the territory claimed by the Yoncalla Kalapuya People. The areas within the designated wild and scenic river corridors are considered ceded lands. Ceded lands are those lands where the tribes ceded, relinquished, and conveyed to the United States all their right, title, and interest in the lands and country occupied by them at treaty signing or when reservations were established. Reserved rights to natural resources and lands extend far beyond the boundaries of the reservations. Provisions of the treaty ensured tribes could continue to fish at all usual and accustomed places, and to hunt and gather on all open and unclaimed lands. Federal lands such as the Siuslaw National Forest and the Coos Bay District of the Bureau of Land Management are ‘open and unclaimed’ lands on which the tribes reserved treaty rights to hunt and gather.

Treaty rights encompass more than an ability to gather, hunt, or fish. The role of tribes in stewardship of public land is crucial to restoring, sustaining, and protecting the integrity of lands and resources, which are vital to the indigenous peoples’ lifeways. In partnership with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, tribes contribute traditional knowledge, technical expertise, and funding to restore and manage indigenous biomes for the long-term ecological health and resilience of these public lands.

Federal agencies have a legal obligation to honor treaty rights. The trust responsibility applies to federal agency decision-making, including actions under the National Environmental Policy Act. Management of these two wild and scenic rivers will protect and recover tribal treaty resources and honor treaty rights. The agencies will work with the treaty tribes as co-managers of the treaty resources. Project-specific consultation with three Federally recognized tribes with ancestral connections to the project area was invited during the development of this plan: The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.

Federal Agencies

River Administering Agencies

The Siuslaw National Forest manages all the National Forest System lands within these two wild and scenic river corridors. The Forest Service is the agency charged with administering the Wasson and Franklin Wild and Scenic Rivers. As such, the Forest Service provides the determination of effects to free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values for any water resources projects as described in Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act where the designated segments cross National Forest System lands.

The Coos Bay District manages all the Bureau of Land Management lands within the Wasson Creek wild and scenic river corridor. As such, the Bureau of Land Management provides the determination of effects to free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values for any water resources projects as described in Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act where the designated segments cross Bureau of

Land Management lands. The Bureau of Land Management manages the locatable mineral claims on all federal lands within the two wild and scenic river corridors.

Other Federal Agencies

The Environmental Protection Agency develops and enforces regulations that implement environmental laws enacted by Congress, including those associated with the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, commonly called the Clean Water Act. The Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to implement pollution control programs. The Clean Water Act governs the discharge of dredged or fill material into “waters of the United States.” The Environmental Protection Agency has the lead for establishing the environmental guidelines and criteria that must be met to receive a permit under Clean Water Act.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates, through permits, the discharge of dredged or fill material into rivers and wetlands of the United States. The Corps also regulates structures and work in navigable waters. All U.S. Army Corps permit applications for activities in wild and scenic rivers are subject to the provisions of Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

As previously discussed in the Free-flowing Condition section, one water right is on file for Franklin Creek, with a point of diversion on private land just outside the wild and scenic river corridor boundary. The water right is for domestic and irrigation uses, with a maximum withdrawal rate of 0.005 cubic feet per second (OWRD, 2019). Irrigation structures are located outside of the bed or banks of Franklin Creek. The water right permittee is responsible for managing the water right and is responsible for any necessary Section 7 reviews.

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management share management responsibilities with the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for protecting Endangered Species Act-listed species and their associated habitat. Fisheries is an outstandingly remarkable value in both Wasson and Franklin Creeks due to the presence of high-quality aquatic habitat in Wasson Creek and documented salmonid spawning and rearing behavior throughout the length of Franklin Creek.

State Agencies

The Oregon Water Resources Department serves the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management. The Water Resources Department is the state agency charged with administration of the laws governing the allocation of surface water and groundwater resources. The existing water rights on file for Franklin Creek are regulated by the Water Resources Department.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality oversees the federal Clean Water Act for the state and is responsible for water quality standards, assessment, and regulation. As such, the Department of Environmental Quality is responsible for identifying 303(d) streams (water quality limited) and developing total maximum daily loads for these streams. Franklin Creek is a 303(d) listed stream. The water quality section describes why the stream is listed. In order to continue to protect and improve water quality, there is a memorandum of understanding between the State of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region (Forest Service 2015).

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality also determines beneficial uses for a given basin. Fish and aquatic life are one of the designated beneficial uses in the Umpqua basin and the designated beneficial use of concern. The designated fish use of Franklin and Wasson is described as salmon and trout rearing and migration.

The State Historic Preservation Office is a state agency with a federal mandate. Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations at 36CFR 800, federal agencies are required to consult with State Historic Preservation Office regarding the eligibility of historic and cultural properties for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, and on findings of effect from federal undertakings and management decisions.

External Partnership Opportunities

The Forest Service and BLM have identified a number of potential partnership opportunities for the purposes of protecting and enhancing the river values of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. Potential partner entities include tribes, state agencies, and non-governmental organizations. One partner-involved project is already underway, and the agencies will explore the other opportunities during the implementation of this plan.

- **Road Surveys:** The BLM has partnered with the Coos Watershed Association to conduct Geomorphic Road Analysis and Inventory Package (GRAIP) surveys of the project area. Funding has been obtained. Coos Watershed Association will start the road surveys during winter and spring of 2021-2022, with the bulk of the surveys occurring in summer 2022. The data analysis and report would be completed by the end of calendar year 2022.
- **Implementation of monitoring plan:**
 - Explore opportunities to partner with the advocacy groups and individuals who have championed the protection of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek. This may include opportunities for citizen-science initiatives.
 - Work with Adventure Scientists (which has a national partnership agreement with the Forest Service) on volunteer-based water quality data collection at Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek.
 - Partner with the Oregon Department of State Lands and other entities on a coordinated monitoring initiative for Devil's Staircase Wilderness (including the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek project area) and the Elliot State Forest. The two designated areas are near each other and feature similar terrain, ecosystems, and human uses.
 - Explore opportunities to partner with the University of Oregon and Oregon State University regarding academic research or instructional opportunities that overlap with the agencies' monitoring goals.
- **Public information and interpretive services:**
 - Partner with local tribes on the development of interpretive materials (web-based and on-site signage) that provide information on the tribes' ancestral use and present-day stewardship of the project area.
 - Work with advocacy groups, watershed councils, or other entities to develop messaging materials related to stewardship, Leave No Trace, and visitor safety.

Additionally, the Coos Bay District and Siuslaw National Forest will continue coordinating projects and sharing resources (including funding and staff time), when possible, to support the implementation of this comprehensive river management plan.

Management Actions to Protect and Enhance

Section 10(a) of the Act requires that river-administering agencies protect and enhance the river values for which a segment was designated. Currently, the agencies are unaware of any conditions within the

Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek river corridors that are adversely impacting outstandingly remarkable values. However, to ensure that the agencies meet this requirement, the comprehensive river management plan includes proposed non-ground disturbing inventory actions (table 11) to validate the accuracy of the baseline conditions. The comprehensive river management plan also includes potential management actions to ensure that river values are protected and enhanced into the future (table 12). The potential management actions would require additional site-specific review prior to implementation.

Table 11. Proposed non-ground disturbing inventory actions

River Value Enhanced or Protected	Proposed Management Actions
Scenery, Recreation, Ecological systems	Conduct surveys for non-native invasive plant and animal species along trails, at access points, and at destination points.
Fish	Collect e-DNA samples from Wasson Lake for evidence of lamprey presence.
Water quality, Fish, Ecological systems	Conduct road inventories and GRAIP surveys to identify potential slope failures and drainage concerns.
Fish, Water quality, Ecological systems	Gather FLOWPER (flow permanence) points that describes surface flows and other attributes of a 10-meter stream reach to upload to a USGS database.

Table 12. Potential management actions

River Value Enhanced or Protected	Potential Management Actions
Water quality, Scenery, Recreation	Revegetate areas where bare soil is exposed.
Ecological systems, Wildlife	Snag creation, thinning, and prescribed burning for wildlife habitat creation.
Ecological, Scenery	Minimize or eradicate invasive species infestations through early detection and rapid response using an integrated pest management approach to reduce or prevent spread within the river corridors.
All	Provide educational information on non-native invasive species, Leave No Trace, etc. at access points.

In addition to the items listed above, the Smith River Watershed Assessment (which includes Wasson Creek) provides management recommendations for late successional reserves and riparian reserves in the Smith River Watershed Assessment Unit. The Tier 1 watershed is identified as providing high quality habitat and as a refugia for maintaining and recovering habitat for at-risk stocks of anadromous salmonids and resident fish species (BLM 1997, pg. 2). Additional recommendations are provided in the Smith River Watershed Assessment (Bureau of Land Management 1997) for hydrologic and fisheries management (pgs. 61-63).

The Lower Umpqua River Watershed Assessment Final Report (Snyder et al. 2006) lists recommendations for riparian zones (pgs. 3-30 to 3-31) and water quality (pgs. 3-56 to 3-57). Recommendations include monitoring, improving in-stream conditions, increasing shade and canopy cover, and developing riparian buffers. Implementation of the recommendations provided in these assessments would require additional site-specific analysis and public participation.

Evaluation of Water Resource Projects

Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs federal agencies to evaluate federally assisted or permitted water resource projects to ensure that existing conditions of designated river values (for example, free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values) are not diminished. No Section 7 water resource projects have been identified at this time. If water resource projects are identified later, they will meet the requirements of Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Environmental Policy Act prior to implementation.

Final Wild and Scenic River Corridor Boundaries

The Act requires that each federally administered river in the National System have a legally established boundary. Section 3(b) of the Act provides specific direction to the river-administering agencies.

The agency charged with the administration of each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system designated by subsection (a) of this section shall ...establish detailed boundaries...which boundaries shall include an average of not more than 320 acres of land per mile...measured from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of the river.

Establishing a wild and scenic river boundary that includes identified river-related values is essential as a basis from which to provide necessary protection. Section 10(a) of the Act describes factors which must be considered in wild and scenic river management and, therefore, provides direction on features which must be included within boundaries.

Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. In such administration, primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features.

The designating legislation established interim river corridor boundaries for Franklin and Wasson Creeks of 0.25 mile on each side of the creeks as measured from the high-water marks. Refinement of the interim boundaries for Wasson and Franklin Creeks utilized an interdisciplinary team and applied a multiple step process. Proposed final boundary refinement ideas were first brainstormed by staff in February 2020. Initially, river administering agencies considered a proposed final boundary that included several streams tributary to Wasson and Franklin Creeks. Members of the public also proposed several boundary adjustments during the scoping period in early 2021.

For Wasson Creek, in one location within the wilderness, the river administering agencies are proposing to expand the final wild and scenic river boundary to the wilderness boundary to provide for management of a visitor-created access point (an approximately 13-acre increase). Management of this access point will provide further protection of the recreation outstandingly remarkable value. This is the only proposed modification to the interim Wasson Creek boundary. The proposed final Franklin Creek corridor is delineated by the original interim boundary; the agencies did not identify a need for any boundary expansions.

The number of acres within the Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek proposed river corridors is 2,721.8 and 1408.6, respectively. Maps of the proposed boundaries are displayed in figure 3 and figure 4, appendix A, and are available on the project website and shown on the [story map](#) for this project. The environmental assessment provides more information about boundary adjustments that were considered and rationale for why they were not analyzed in detail.

Chapter 6: References

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Appendix A: Maps

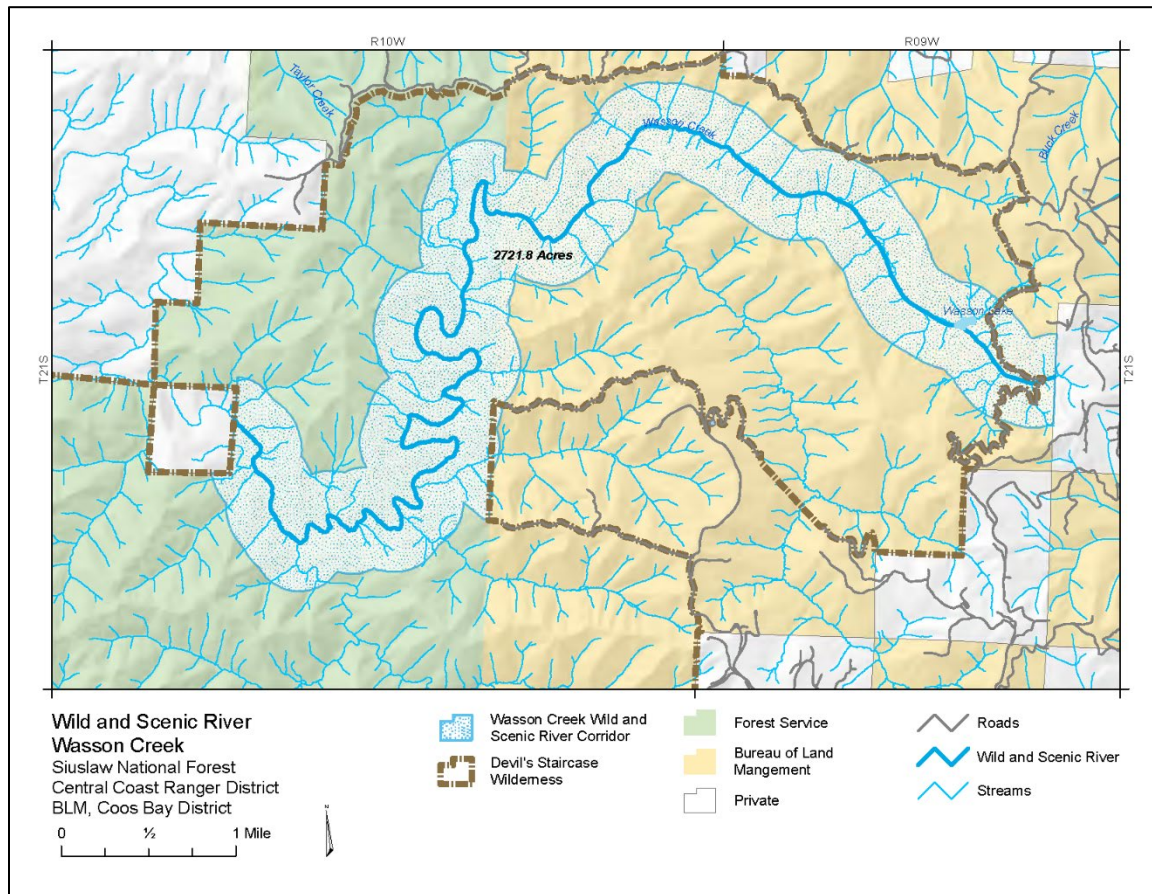


Figure 3. Wasson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor boundary

Wasson and Franklin Creeks Comprehensive River Management Plan

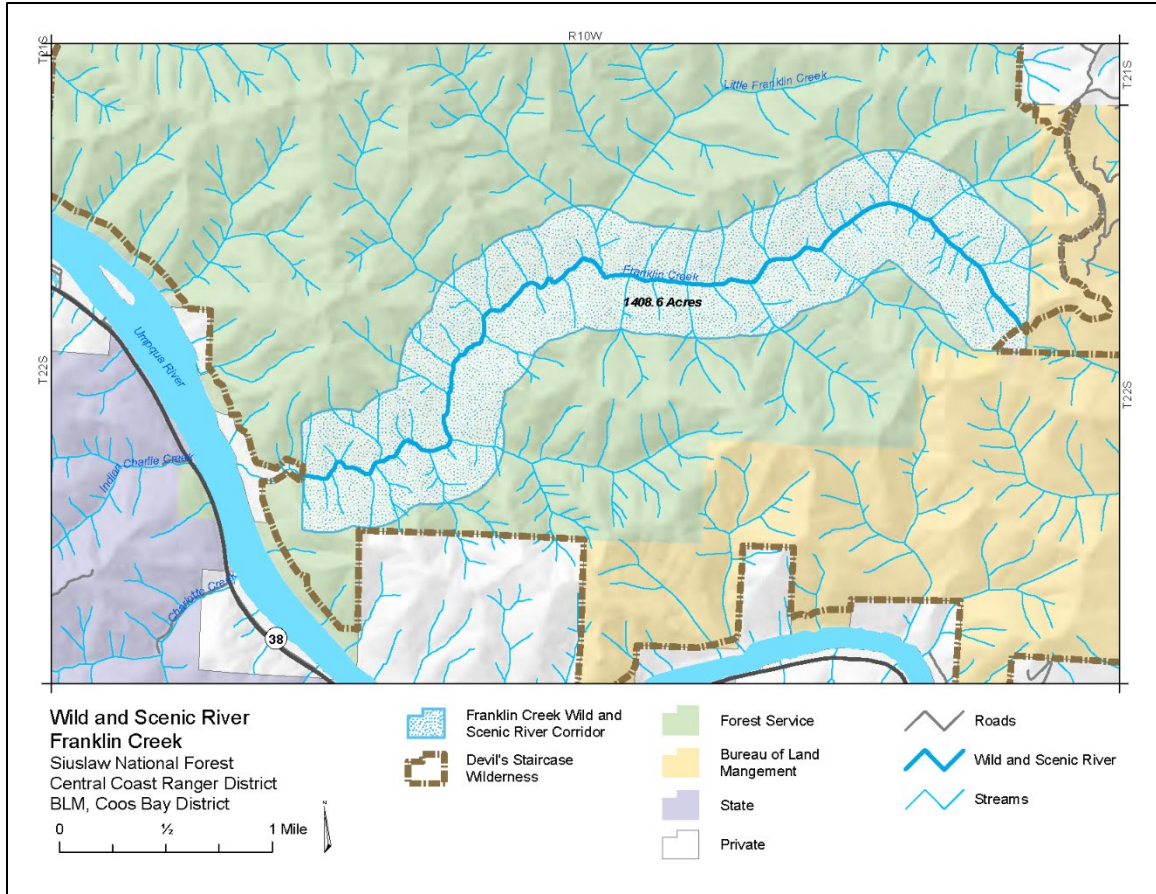


Figure 4. Franklin Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor boundary