

Draft Decision Notice / Finding of No Significant Impact
for the
**Environmental Assessment of the Comprehensive River Management Plan for
Piru Creek Wild and Scenic River**

Angeles National Forest
Los Padres National Forest
USDA Forest Service
Los Angeles County, California

Background

The Angeles and Los Padres National Forests are proposing to adopt a comprehensive river management plan for Piru Creek. This proposed comprehensive river management plan (CRMP) would cover a total of 7.25 miles of the river, which were designated in 2009 and classified in wild and recreational segments. This plan is administrative in nature; actions proposed include establishing a permanent boundary and establishing user capacity levels for the river. The river corridor has been managed as a wild and scenic river (WSR) since it was designated by Congress in 2009. The purpose of this project is to adopt a CRMP to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated (free flowing, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values) and identify and implement Forest Service (FS) management actions needed to protect these values within the Piru Creek WSR corridor. Section 3 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 USC 1274, as amended) specifies a CRMP will be developed for the designated river corridor.

Planning is needed to integrate management of multiple resources, resource designations, and activities in the planning area. Management of uses on public lands is necessary in this congressionally designated area to address private, public, and administrative access needs; protect resources; promote public safety; and minimize conflicts among uses of public lands.

By designating Piru Creek as a wild and scenic river, Congress directed the Forest Service to develop a comprehensive management plan for the river segments under their jurisdiction. As part of this action, the Forest Service needed to develop an environmental assessment (EA) to fulfill this mandate and comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Decision

I have read the EA, reviewed the analysis in the project file, and fully understand the environmental effects disclosed therein. Based on my review of the alternatives, it is my decision to select the Proposed Action described in the EA. This decision will authorize the implementation of the proposed actions and mitigation features in their entirety.

I have decided to implement the Proposed Action because it most fully addresses the purpose and need. My decision is based on careful consideration of the analysis and the acknowledgement of risk.

Alternatives Considered

The no-action alternative and Proposed Action are fully analyzed in the EA.

Public Involvement

The proposal has been listed in the Angeles National Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), with a specific project website in the Angeles National Forest's Projects page since July 2022, when a draft River Values Report was posted for public comment. A second public scoping notice, for the availability of the Draft CRMP, was then posted on the Forest Service project website and provided to the public and other agencies for comment during a scoping period from February 27, 2024 to March 31, 2024. Scoping comments on the *Draft Piru Creek CRMP* were received from 99 commenters and included concerns about expansion of ORVs, including recreation and wildlife, effects to state water project facilities in the corridor, fishing policies and species protections, and additional management actions.

At the request of several stakeholders, a public meeting at Piru Creek WSR was held by FS staff and officials in April 2024. Over a dozen individual stakeholders attended and shared valuable information that was reflected in specific comments on the CRMP. The comment period on the CRMP was extended to April 15, 2024, in order to allow for comments to reflect the discussion and information shared during the field visit.

The *Piru Creek Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan Environmental Assessment* was completed and posted on the Angeles National Forest project website on October 28, 2024. The legal notice for a 30-day comment period was sent to the interested individuals and posted in the Antelope Valley Press on October 28. The comment period was from October 28 – November 26, 2024. Comments were received from 8 commenters.

The *Piru Creek Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan Environmental Assessment* was revised based on comments received during all of the comment periods. The 36 CFR Part 218 regulations instruct the agency to provide a 45-day objection period before the decision is finalized. The legal notice to begin the objection period was e-mailed to the individuals who had previously provided comments. As a part of the pre-decisional public involvement process, those individuals were given an opportunity to file objections beginning March 7, 2025, for 45 calendar days. No objections were received during this 45-day period.

Finding of No Significant Impact

As the responsible official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR 1508.13). I have reviewed and considered the EA and documentation included in the project record, and I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. As a result, no environmental impact statement will be prepared. My rationale for this finding is as follows, organized by sub-section of the CEQ definition of significance cited above.

Context

For the Proposed Action, the context of the environmental effects is based on the environmental analysis in this EA. The Proposed Action is to adopt a plan, no direct management actions that would directly affect the environment would occur without further analysis.

Intensity

Intensity is a measure of the severity, extent, or quantity of effects, and is based on information from the effects analysis of the EA and the references in the project record. The effects of this project have been appropriately and thoroughly considered with an analysis that is responsive to concerns and issues raised by the public. The agency has taken a hard look at the environmental effects using relevant scientific information and knowledge of site-specific conditions gained from field visits.

My finding of no significant impact is based on the context of the project and intensity of effects using the ten factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b), as described below:

1. ***Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.***

The management actions proposed will protect and enhance river values for the designated river. Existing guidelines and policy were generally adequate. Analysis has shown that there will not be a significant adverse effect from the Proposed Action (See analyses under chapter 3 of the EA).

2. ***The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.***

The Proposed Action does not have disproportionately high and adverse human health effects, high or adverse environmental effects, substantial environmental hazards, or effects to differential patterns of consumption of natural resources.

3. ***Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.***

There will be no significant effects on the unique characteristics of an area as a consequence of implementation of the Proposed Action. Desired conditions and management actions proposed would be in compliance with policy and direction and would enhance and protect the river values of the Wild and Scenic River. There are no parklands or prime farmlands in or immediately within close proximity to the project area. The Sespe Wilderness covers part of the project area.

4. ***The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.***

Substantial scientific dispute does not exist as to the size, nature, or effects of this selected federal action on human environmental factors.

5. ***The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.***

The effects analysis in the EA shows that predicted effects to the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

6. ***The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.***

This action is not likely to establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or a decision in principle about a future consideration. The action is consistent with the Land Management Plan for the Southern California National Forests. Management direction for Wild and Scenic Rivers is found within the Land Management Plan and in Forest Service Manual 2354, beginning with section 2354.32.

7. ***Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.***

Cumulative impacts, as analyzed in the EA, are not significant. See the environmental consequences section (chapter 3) of the EA.

8. ***The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.***

No effects on historic or cultural resources will occur as a result of this project. The project was screened under the terms of the *2018 Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), California State Historic Preservation Officer, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, And the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*, and meets the conditions, and is in compliance with, the expedited and streamlined procedures related to Land use planning activities.

9. ***The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.***

The analyses in the EA for the Fish and Wildlife resource topics concluded that no adverse effects on endangered or threatened species or their habitat would occur from the Proposed Action.

10. ***Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.***

No laws or requirements will be violated by the Proposed Action.

Expected Implementation Process

The comprehensive river management plan will go into effect upon signature of the Decision Notice. No objections were received, and in accordance with Federal regulations five business days have passed following the end of the objection filing period.

Administrative Review or Objection Opportunities

This project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR Part 218.

May 2025
Draft Decision Notice and FONSI

Contact Information

For additional information, contact Justin Seastrand, Public Services Staff Officer at Angeles National Forest, 701 North Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia, CA 91006, or at gary.seastrand@usda.gov.

Responsible Official

Roman Torres, Forest Supervisor
Angeles National Forest

Date

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