

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office

1201 Bird Center Drive

Palm Springs, California 92262

DECISION RECORD

for Whitewater River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan

DOI-BLM-CA-D060-2024-0001-EA

May 2025

DECISION

It is my decision to approve the proposed action as described in the environment assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) number DOI-BLM-CA-D060-2024-0001-EA. Approval of the Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) for the Whitewater River sets direction for management actions, however, no on-the-ground actions are authorized at this time.

The comprehensive river management plan (CRMP) for the Whitewater River Wild and Scenic River (WSR), establishes overall management direction to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated (free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values). The outstanding and remarkable values (ORVs) established for Whitewater River WSR include scenery, wildlife, heritage (historic, prehistoric, and cultural), and recreation. Namely, this plan establishes final river corridor boundaries, management direction, visitor capacities, monitoring, and other management practices necessary to protect and enhance the river values. It is my decision to select the Proposed Action Alternative as described in the environmental assessment (EA).

COMPLIANCE AND CONFORMANCE

As described in the EA (DOI-BLM-CA-D060-2024-0001-EA), the proposed authorization is consistent with the California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980 (CDCA Plan), as amended. This and other plans are publicly available at the California BLM website for land use planning at [BLM National NEPA Register - Whitewater River WSR CRMP](#). The BLM conducted a review for conformance with the current land use plan for this area – California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980 (CDCA Plan), as amended. The CDCA, as amended contains specific sets of Conservation and Management Actions (CMAs) designed to achieve the goals and objectives for activities within the land use plan’s various land use allocations. These measures identify a specific set of avoidance, minimization, and compensation measures, and allowable and non-allowable actions on BLM-managed lands. The complete list of CMAs applicable to this project and documentation of conformance is contained in the project record. This decision is consistent with relevant laws and regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The USDA Forest Service – San Bernardino National Forest is the lead agency and BLM served as the cooperating agency under NEPA for the preparation of the EA. The project has been listed in the San Bernardino National Forest’s quarterly schedule of proposed actions since February 2022. The project was first posted to ePlanning on November 1, 2023. All public notifications were conducted via news releases. The public scoping notice for the preliminary Resource Assessment was posted on the national forest’s website and was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during the 30-day scoping period (February 15, 2022).

The administrative draft Whitewater River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan and associated Environmental Assessment was provided to the public and other agencies via the San Bernardino National Forest project website in November 2023 for a 30-day comment period and again on May 17, 2024 for a 30-day comment period. The EA was revised based on comments received during the comment periods.

Most of the public comment received were outside the scope of the CRMP and EA. Approximately 10 comments were received on the Draft EA. Comments received were utilized to clarify information regarding the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, visitor capacity, wildlife, and water resources.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The CRMP was developed through an interdisciplinary process, involving both BLM staff and Forest Service staff. I have considered the completeness of the CRMP to achieve a programmatic management standard of protecting and enhancing the river and the surrounding land in the management corridor. My decision establishes the ORVs, a final river corridor, visitor capacity, and a monitoring plan.

This decision does not authorize any ground-disturbing activities. The CRMP takes a primarily passive approach to management. The Proposed Action lays out a framework for monitoring to determine if the free-flowing condition, water quality, and ORVs within the Whitewater River WSR corridor are being protected and enhanced. If monitoring indicates a need for management action, the actions will require additional environmental review to ensure compliance with law, policy, and regulation prior to implementation. Based on the interdisciplinary team’s analysis documented in the EA and the Finding of No significant Impact (FONSI), I have determined that the actions analyzed in the EA will not significantly affect the human environment and thus an environmental impact statement is not required. In addition, the Proposed Action to adopt the CRMP fully meets the purpose and need to protect and enhance the free-flowing condition, water quality, and ORVs within the Whitewater River WSR corridor. The CRMP integrates management of multiple resources, resource designations, and activities in the river corridor. 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 related to the uses of public lands. This Decision Record provides for the long-term preservation of one of our nation’s wild and scenic rivers and satisfies the requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including Section 3(d)(1).

Section 3 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 USC 1274, as amended) states that a CRMP will be developed for the designated river corridor. The Proposed Action (Comprehensive River

Management Plan) alternative fulfills this mandate and was selected over the No Action Alternative. No additional action alternatives were identified during the development of the EA.

RIGHT OF PROTEST AND/OR APPEAL:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of CFR, Part 4, and the information provided in Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the 1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, California, 92262, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, pursuant to Title 43 of CFR, Part 4, Subpart E, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) the likelihood of the appellant’s success on the merits,
- (3) the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

APPROVAL

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management, California

Date

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A:

Proposed Whitewater River Wild and Scenic River Final Boundary Map

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Proposed Whitewater River Wild and Scenic River Final Boundary Map

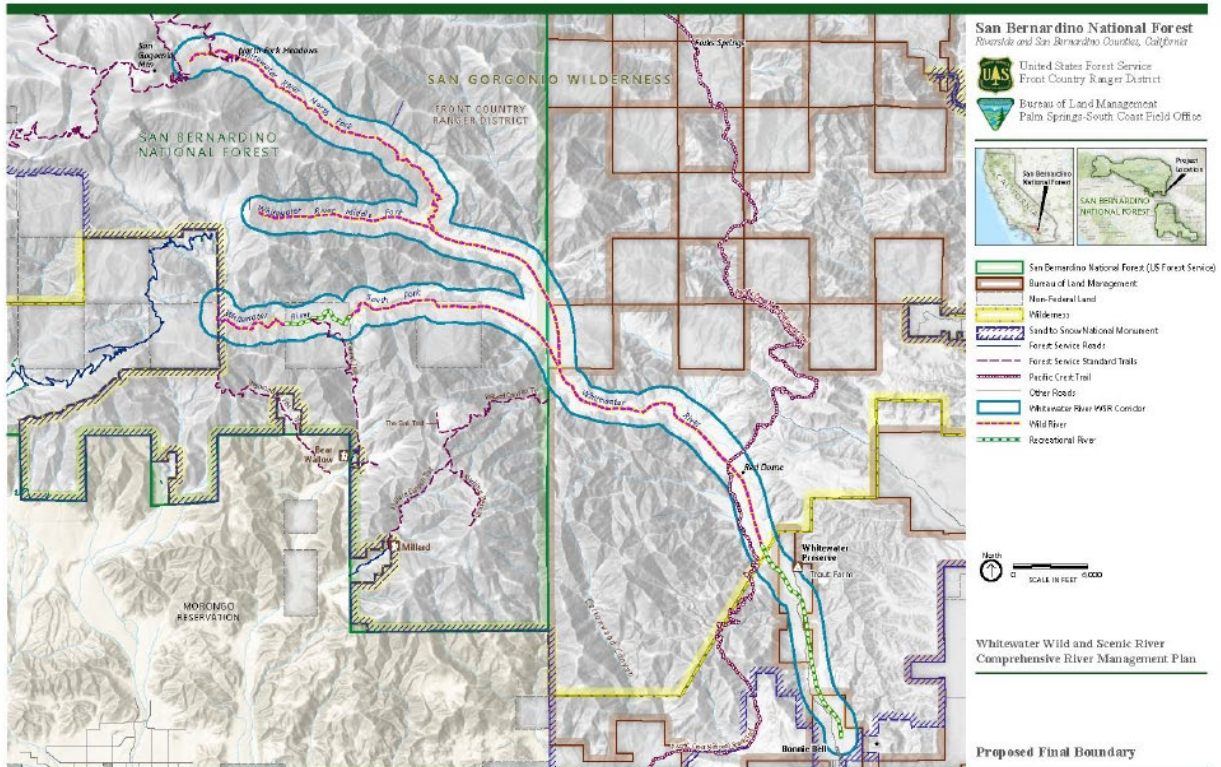


Figure 1. Proposed Final Boundary

Whitewater River
Comprehensive River Management Plan