

Wild and Scenic Rivers (continued)

Comment	Responses
<p>There should be a maximum effort without delay to designate wilderness and wild and scenic rivers in the northern Black Hills and Bear Lodge Mountains which are relatively unprotected compared to the southern Black Hills.</p>	<p>Thank you for expressing your concern. In total, 5 segments (Little Elk Creek, Little Spearfish Creek, Spearfish Creek, Sand Creek, and Beaver Creek) within the Northern Hills and Bear Lodge Districts were found to meet eligibility criteria for National Wild and Scenic Rivers.</p>
<p>We look forward to designation of all 16 rivers discussed in this assessment.</p>	<p>To update information, prior eligibility assessment found that 16 rivers were eligible. The current 2022 assessment found 21 streams or stream segments totaling 144.7 miles eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS.</p>
<p>The Forest Service identifies an "Eligible river for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in the Bear Lodge District." We are unclear which segment this list is directed toward as and it is recommended that either a map or GPS coordinates are included to define the appropriate segment.</p> <p>The assessment should list the river and stream segments that are eligible by scenic, wild and recreation river groups. This is a major omission that makes it impossible for the public and stakeholders to properly comment on this topic. A map of these streams and rivers would be helpful.</p>	<p>Appendix A; Stream Evaluations Reports includes locations, area maps, segment lengths, corridor acres, segment breakdowns, descriptions of outstandingly remarkable values, and rationales for classification. Maps identifying river and stream segments have also been posted online in association to the assessment document.</p>
<p>The Forest Service should outline in more detail the process that has been done to date regarding potential Wild and Scenic River Designations specifically the eligibility and suitability evaluation information as required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 and more specifically the Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 81 that describes the three-step process, consisting of a) determining eligibility, b) assigning potential classification (wild, scenic, recreational) and c) determining suitability.</p>	<p>Additional language has been added to the "Current Eligibility Evaluation" section of the assessment addressing timeframe of recent evaluations and the location within the assessment for detailed information used during eligibility evaluation process (Appendix A).</p>
<p>The Wild and Scenic River designations as noticed in their Crook County Natural Resource Management Plan and the Forest Service should be as consistent with their management prescriptions as allowed by law.</p>	<p>Thank you for providing this additional reference for consideration. In these assessments the Forest identified and evaluated existing information relevant to the Black Hills National Forest and surrounding area for existing designated areas including wild and scenic rivers and potential need and opportunity for additional designations. Guidance directs the Forest to identify and consider relevant existing information in governmental or non-governmental assessments, plans, monitoring reports, studies, and other sources of relevant information.</p>
<p>We do not support future designations of Wild and Scenic Rivers and any proposed designation shall be coordinated with the County and analyze the impact to Crook County's economy.</p>	<p>The County Natural Resource Management Plan is a consideration to identify multiple uses and their contributions to local, regional, and national economies prior to an additional Wild and Scenic River designation.</p>
<p>Consideration for Box Elder Creek between the town of Nemo, SD and the bridge crossing near Doty Springs on Nemo Road for review of eligibility. This segment of Box Elder Creek and the Bogus Jim Creek tributary are strongholds for Lake Chub and the only location within</p>	<p>The Forest recognizes the justification to add this segment of Box Elder Creek to the evaluation. This proposed segment may be considered and reviewed for eligibility as the Forest moves through additional evaluation. Additional data from this current study of the Lake Chub will be helpful in completing future evaluations for eligibility for this segment.</p>

<p>South Dakota and the Black Hills with a positive Lake Chub identification in the past 50 years.</p>	
<p>We suggest the following designations: 1. Rapid Creek between Pactola and Dark Canyon: Should be at least Scenic 2. Black Elk Wilderness sections: We support the "Wild" designations. 3. Little Spearfish Creek: Should be at least Scenic. 4. Spearfish Creek: Should be Scenic. 5. Iron Creek in the Northern Hills District – not considered in assessment: Should be designated. This Creek is a tributary of Spearfish Creek. At least parts of it should be considered for designation.</p>	<p>Thank you for your recommendations. The Forest recognizes the justification to review the preliminary classification for proposed stream lengths. Review of classifications for these preliminary eligible segments include different criteria such as the multiple aspects of human use and activity (degree of access and amount of development along the river area), along with public input, when considering preliminary classifications.</p>
<p>Our review of the assessment finds a key FSH guidance detail missing from the assessment. From the FSH: "To be identified as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant when compared with similar values from other rivers at a regional or national scale. Unique, rare, or exemplary features are those that are conspicuous examples of these values, among the best representatives of these features, within a region or the nation." For the Wild and Scenic River assessment, we recommend reviewing which segments truly meet the definition and guidance for "outstandingly remarkable" features and to present the very best representatives from the BHNF as eligible segments. We also recommend the BHNF consider objectives and guidelines which can help protect the quality of these features, instead of a Wild and Scenic designation, during the alternative development phase of the revision process.</p>	<p>Thank you for your recommendations and reference to guidance and language for the determination of eligibility. The Forest recognizes the justification to reconsider the river segments that fully meet the intent, definition, and guidance for "outstandingly remarkable values." Consideration of objectives and guidelines will occur later during the plan revision process.</p>
<p>There is no discussion about what characteristics make a river or stream reach eligible or suitable. This should be defined and described.</p>	<p>Additional language has been added to the "Current Eligibility Evaluation" section of the assessment addressing timeframe of recent evaluations and the location within the assessment for detailed information used during eligibility evaluation process (Appendix A).</p>
<p>Is the intent to recommend designation of smaller Black Hills streams as wild and scenic rivers? This is not the original intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. While streams can be designated, it would be a big stretch to use the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the smaller black hills streams as a Wild and Scenic Rivers.</p>	<p>The Forest uses the guidance outlined in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12; Chapter 80 – Wild and Scenic River Evaluation to best determine what rivers (a flowing body of water or estuary, or a section, portion, or tributary thereof, including rivers, streams, creeks, runs, kills, rills, and small lakes) to fully evaluate.</p>
<p>Public comment suggested to change the classification of Spearfish Creek.</p>	<p>Spearfish Creek will likely remain classified as a "recreational" segment given its existing impoundments, substantial evidence of human activity, and existence of roads in the corridor that prevent the segment from achieving "scenic" classification. However, this segment will be further evaluated during the eligibility evaluation process.</p>