PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO ELIGIBILITY STUDIES

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BACKGROUND

- Forest Service Intermountain Region contracted with EMPSi in 2016

- Objectives:
  - Comply with 2012 Planning Rule
  - Develop a regional eligibility process to encourage consistency in evaluation and determinations across the region
  - Regional process should be modified to the minimum extent necessary to account for varying conditions across forests while maintaining maximum consistency
  - Include robust analytical process

WSR STUDY PROCESS

Three-step process:

- Eligibility

- Assign preliminary classification

- Suitability (requires NEPA)

2012 PLANNING RULE

Inventory all named rivers on the USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle map

- Challenges:
  - NHD does not match (spatial data gap) quad maps
  - NHD is a flowline model; updates do not always match existing data
  - No spatial record of previous inventories

- Solutions:
  - Forest Service manually updating NHD to match quad maps
  - Assume rivers previously inventoried were inventoried in their entirety
  - EMPSi creating spatial data for previous inventories based on paper documentation

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

- Definitions and Parameters

- Eleven step evaluation process

- Methods for identifying ORVs, including data sets

- Templates

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS: ELEVEN-STEP PROCESS

1. Define methods for identifying ORVs
    - Approach to identifying regions of comparison
    - Components of measuring ORVs
    - Data to be used to evaluate the significance of ORVs
    - Degree to which a component might be rare, unique, or exemplary
    - Assumptions and application

Component	Component Definition	Data Sets to be Evaluated	Assumptions and Application
Uniqueness of opportunities and experiences	Accounting for the underlying ROS classification, the uniqueness of potential opportunities and experiences are taken into consideration. Rivers that support or contribute to opportunities or experiences that cannot be found elsewhere in the region of comparison are of a higher value than those where visitors can engage in the same opportunity or have the same experience somewhere else in the region of comparison.	• Forest Service recreation amenities data • ROS classifications • Forest plans • Aerial imagery • Public input	This component compares the uniqueness of opportunities in areas with similar ROS classifications. In general, rivers and streams with similar flow, access, and range of opportunities offer users similar recreation experiences. **To be considered a unique recreation opportunity, it must be influenced by some element or elements of the physical, biological, or cultural landscape that produce an experience that cannot be found elsewhere in the region of comparison.** Because the opportunity is unique, it enhances visitors' recreation experiences. Features that might create a unique opportunity and enhance the recreation experience include unique geologic features, such as rock formations that are in or visible from the corridor; stream channel features, such as waterfalls, Class V rapids, or an oxbow with a sandy beach and deep pool; or a dramatic

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS: ELEVEN-STEP PROCESS *(CONTINUED)*

2. Develop a list of rivers to be studied
   - Based on review of previous inventories
   - Only inventory rivers not previously studied
      - Must have a systematic study with documentation

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS: ELEVEN-STEP PROCESS *(CONTINUED)*

3. Public engagement for Forest-specific process and list of rivers to be studied

4. Divide rivers into reaches of essentially the same character

5. Determine if segments are free-flowing

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS: ELEVEN-STEP PROCESS *(CONTINUED)*

6. Evaluate each resource value and feature, based on the criteria developed in the Forest-specific process (Step 1, as modified by Step 3)

   - Gathered data sets identified in Step 1
   - Used Google Earth to display spatial data for each ORV; easy to communicate with anyone without ArcGIS

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS: ELEVEN-STEP PROCESS *(CONTINUED)*

EMPSi

7. Document the eligibility results

Free-flowing River in 2017 Study	Study Result	Notes/Rationale
Big Trough Creek	N	Not in SMS Class A. Therefore, no Scenic ORV.
Clover Creek	C	Lower half of segment in SMS Class A. Variations in topography. Diverse vegetation species, heights, patterns, colors, and textures. Multiple soil and rock colors (tan, brown, dark yellow, gray, rust, dark white). Moderate to high sinuosity in valley and through canyon, creating various banks and channels. Rock outcrops/slides, hillsides, ridgelines, lakes, meadows, and logs in channel are visible. Almost no visible human disturbances, except for highway at lower end of the segment. Diverse landscape due to length of segment. Considering these features collectively, along with available photo imagery, the visual setting along this segment is not rare, unique, or exemplary in the region of comparison. Therefore, no Scenic ORV.

Study Results Key:

Y = ORV Present

C = ORV considered but determined not outstandingly remarkable

N = No Data/ Information

REGIONAL ELIGIBILITY PROCESS: ELEVEN-STEP PROCESS *(CONTINUED)*

8. Assign a preliminary classification for each eligible river

9. Document all findings in an eligibility report

10. Provide for public review and comment

11. Complete documentation of findings and provide feedback

STATUS

Completed:

- Manti-La Sal National Forest

In Process:

- Ashley National Forest: Draft results to be released to the public in February 2019
- Salmon-Challis National Forest: Receiving public comments on the draft results

Initiating

- Bridger-Teton National Forest
- Caribou-Targhee National Forest

NEXT STEPS

- Developing a regional suitability process
- Goal is for Intermountain Region forests to complete suitability concurrent with forest plan revisions

QUESTIONS?

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