Bad River (Mashkiiziibii) National Wild & Scenic River Study Initiative

What is a National Wild and Scenic River?

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, enacted by Congress in 1968, a river that possesses outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values can be designated into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve the river and its special values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. Nationwide there are 226 Wild & Scenic rivers, totaling 13,413 miles. In Wisconsin, there are two nationally designated rivers, the St. Croix/Namekagon and the Wolf Rivers.

What are the benefits of Wild and Scenic River designation?

- Provides national recognition for the river and its' special values
- Helps protect the river and its rural character for current and future generations
- Provides an added economic driver for tourism
- Assures that the local communities are an essential part of river management
- Provides National Park Service (NPS) funding and expertise to implement the Stewardship Plan
- Provides the capacity to work across geographical and political boundaries for the good of the river

What a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation does <u>not</u> do?

- Does not put land under federal control
- Does not require public access to private or tribal land
- Does not force any changes in local land use decision-making or local ordinances
- Does not create new federal permits or regulations
- Does not change any existing land uses
- Does not prevent access to or use of the river or watershed lands
- Does not affect hunting and fishing laws

Will the Bad River designation be the same as St. Croix/Namekagon and Wolf River Wild and Scenic Rivers?

No. A subset of the National Wild and Scenic River System are <u>Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers</u>. These are rivers, like the Bad River, which flow mostly through private, municipal, state, or tribal lands, with little or no federal land ownership. Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers are administered by the NPS in partnership with local state, county, town, and tribal governments and non-governmental organizations. Communities protect their Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers and related resources through a local, collaborative approach. There have been 16 such designations across the country as of January 2020.

What are the features of a Partnership Wild and Scenic River?

- No NPS land ownership or land management is associated with the designation
- Land adjacent to the river continues to be governed by existing local, state, and tribal laws and regulations, the same as prior to designation
- An advisory river stewardship plan, which is locally developed through a participatory process and approved by watershed communities, guides river conservation actions
- Administration is through a local advisory committee consisting of members from the watershed communities, local partner organizations, and state, federal, and tribal agencies
- Nationally-designated river status, anchored by NPS funding, leverages additional federal, state, local, tribal, and private funding to implement the local stewardship plan

💧 NPS reviews federally-assisted water resource projects to protect the river's outstanding resources

How are Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers designated?
The first step toward designation is for Congress to authorize funding for a three-year study to determine if the river is eligible (e.g., does it possess outstanding values?) and suitable (e.g., is there local support?) for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The process is entirely voluntary and in the hands of local communities who are members of a Study Committee; it may or may not lead to designation. One of the products of a study will be a locally developed Stewardship Plan to guide river conservation that communities can voluntarily implement. The study is funded by the NPS.

What will the Stewardship Plan include?
The Stewardship Plan is prepared by local stakeholders collaborating with regional experts and drawing from extensive community input; it will include the entire Bad River. The plan will document watershed resources (natural, cultural, historic, recreational and scenic) and water quality. It will also identify voluntary locally-determined actions and strategies to protect or enhance resources that are valued by the watershed communities. The Stewardship Plan will identify threats and potential impacts to resources. It will include recommendations to preserve resources for the future.

Will Wild & Scenic designation affect treaty rights?
Treaty rights are not affected. Tribes will participate on the Study Committee and in the development of the Stewardship Plan.

How would designation affect my property if I own land on the river or in the watershed?
Local land use and property ownership is unaffected; existing state, local, or tribal regulations that affect land use and development remain in effect. Regular community processes for adopting, implementing, and enforcing land use ordinances are followed, regardless of river designation and watershed stewardship plan adoption.

What financial or other obligations are required by supporting river designation?
None. No financial commitment is required from communities to support river designation or to adopt a Stewardship Plan. If a river is designated, each community/agency supporting designation would appoint members to serve on a local advisory committee (similar in structure to a Study Committee) that would coordinate future stewardship plan implementation projects and provide a forum to address river issues and help protect river values.

What happens when the Study and Stewardship Plan are complete?
Each watershed community will be asked to pass a resolution supporting the Wild & Scenic River designation for the Bad River watershed. The NPS will prepare and submit a Study Report to Congress with findings about the river's qualities making it eligible for Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Our congressional delegation will introduce legislation to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to include the Bad River. Regardless of river designation decisions by communities or Congress, the stewardship plan has value as a coordinated plan of action to protect watershed resources.

How do I find out more information?
More information is available at:
https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1912/partnership-wild-and-scenic-rivers.htm.
Questions and comments can be emailed to:
wildandscenic@superiorrivers.org

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