

Other Issues and Concerns

The intent of designation would be to preserve the identified river related wildlife and recreational values along this segment of the Snake River. NCA legislation provides protection for the raptors and their habitat. This would not change with or without designation. The major change in management would be prohibitions on new hydroelectric facilities and other diversions.

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## Grand View Segment

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River Values/Characteristics

The Grand View segment is characterized by a narrow riparian area surrounded by open, rural countryside. This area is similar to other stretches along the Snake River throughout southern Idaho.

Although the distant views of the Owyhee Mountains to the south and canyon rim to the north are nice, they are not unique or exceptional. The wildlife values (raptor habitat) associated with this segment are mainly foraging habitat and not as nesting habitat.

The Grand View segment lies in an area where the unique raptor habitat areas move away from the river and are generally outside the ¼ mile corridor. Ten miles of this 17.5 mile segment lie outside the official boundary of the NCA. The raptor nesting areas on BLM land within the river corridor are within the NCA and are currently protected by legislation.

Land Ownership and Uses

Land ownership is approximately 82 percent private land, 17 percent BLM land (public), and 1 percent state land.

Private land is associated with the town of Grand View, Idaho. Private land uses include residential houses and farms, irrigated agriculture, gravel pits, and livestock pastures.

The public land along this segment is situated at three locations – all on the north side or in (island) the river. Gold Isle (approximately 118 acres) is located at river mile 487 and was acquired for wildlife habitat in a 1996 land exchange. The Ted Trueblood Wildlife Management Area fronts 1.5 miles of Snake River shoreline. This area is also primarily a wildlife management area where waterfowl hunting is allowed. The remaining public land (approximately 600 ac.) gets a variety of recreation uses, primarily fishing and hunting.



Potential Uses of Land and Water Resources enhanced or foreclosed

The private land along this segment is a historic floodplain characterized by low, flat farmland and pastures. Private lands not currently in irrigated agriculture have potential for new pump systems for local irrigation. Designation would preclude any new hydroelectric facilities within this segment and would also preclude any new diversions or structures which would impact private landowners. Potential surface disturbing activities would not be constrained by designation. Designation would not significantly enhance any land or water resources along this segment.

Interest in Designation

Local and regional environmental and conservation organizations have expressed positive interest in including all eligible segments of the Snake River in the National W&S River System. Local communities have expressed either no interest or negative interest in designation. Landowners along this segment have not expressed interest in national designation for the river and have historically opposed any type of national designation.

Estimated Costs of Acquisition and Administration

Initial costs associated with designation would include mapping and printing documentation of the wild and scenic river process, layout, design, and publication of educational information about the new designations including brochures, website updates, and maps. Future costs would depend on the level of threats to river-related values and are foreseen to result from the need for regulatory and educational signing, patrol and enforcement, and biological or visitor use monitoring. Additional land acquisition cost would occur if any private landowners were willing to sell. Currently no parcels have been identified for acquisition.

Ability to Manage/Protect River Values

Current BLM management is very limited due to the small amount of public land. Current limitations on recreation management for wildlife/raptor viewing are from limited river access due to private ownership and would not change with designation. Future potential threats to identified river related values are minimal.

Adverse Effects on Historical/Existing Rights

No adverse effects on historic or valid existing rights are expected as a result of designation of this segment as a recreational river.



### Other Issues and Concerns

The intent of designation would be to preserve the identified river related wildlife and recreational values along this segment of the Snake River. NCA legislation provides protection for the raptors and their habitat on the limited amount of BLM administered lands along this segment. This would not change with or without designation. The major change in management would be prohibitions on new hydroelectric facilities and other diversions primarily on private lands.

## Jackass Butte Segment

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### River Values/Characteristics

The original designation of the Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area in 1971 (27,000 acres) recognized the Snake River canyon as a unique raptor habitat. This designation started at the upstream end of the Jackass Butte segment and continued downstream to the end of the Swan Falls segment.

The Jackass Butte segment begins at the downstream end of the very open environment of the Grand View segment, and includes a river section bordered by large buttes and canyon rim on the south and canyon rim on the north. The many side canyons along this stretch provide abundant nesting opportunities for a variety of raptors. Additionally, as one moves downstream, access to this remote section of the river is more difficult and provides outstanding opportunities for viewing raptors in a more natural habitat with minimal contacts with other people. This combination of high numbers of nesting raptors and opportunities for seeing raptors in a natural habitat is not currently represented in the National W&SR System.

### Land Ownership and Uses

Land ownership is approximately 35 percent private land, 63 percent BLM land (public), and 2 percent state land. The private lands are primarily associated with several large farms and ranches primarily in irrigated agriculture or pasture land. The state land is in an undeveloped, natural condition. The public land is undeveloped and is used for a variety of dispersed recreational activities.

### Potential Uses of Land and Water Resources enhanced or foreclosed

This river segment has a very low gradient and no rapids or other river obstacles. This creates opportunities for beginner and novice river floaters to experience the river canyon and its unique wildlife/raptor viewing opportunities. These opportunities could be further enhanced



with the additional recognition of designation. This segment ends at the backwaters of Swan Falls Reservoir which combined with the low gradient, makes the potential for new hydroelectric facilities not very feasible. However, the private lands have potential for new pump systems for local irrigation. Designation would preclude any new hydroelectric facilities within this segment and would also preclude any new diversions or structures which would impact private landowners. Potential surface disturbing activities would not be constrained by designation.

#### Interest in Designation

Local and regional environmental and conservation organizations have expressed positive interest in including all eligible segments of the Snake River in the National W&S River System. Local communities have expressed both positive and negative interest in designation.

#### Estimated Costs of Acquisition and Administration

Initial costs associated with designation would include mapping and printing documentation of the wild and scenic river process, layout, design, and publication of educational information about the new designation including brochures, website updates, and maps. Future costs would depend on the level of threats to river-related values and are foreseen to result from the need for regulatory and educational signing, patrol and enforcement, and biological or visitor use monitoring. Additional land acquisition cost would occur if any private landowners were willing to sell. Currently no parcels have been identified for acquisition.

#### Ability to Manage/Protect River Values

Current BLM management of the area as a NCA protects a majority of the shoreline miles, especially those cliff areas with raptor nest sites. Current recreation management for wildlife/raptor viewing is not limited by public access. Future potential threats to identified river related values are minimal.

#### Adverse Effects on Historical/Existing Rights

No adverse effects on historic or valid existing rights are expected as a result of designation of this segment as a recreational river.

#### Other Issues and Concerns

The intent of designation would be to preserve the identified river related wildlife and recreational values along this segment of the Snake River. NCA legislation provides protection for the raptors and their habitat. This would not change with or without designation. The major





change in management would be prohibitions on new hydroelectric facilities and other diversions which would detract from the users' river experience.

## Swan Falls Segment

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### River Values/Characteristics

The Swan Falls segment is visually similar to several other sections of the Snake River in southern Idaho. The river flows within a basalt canyon with cliffs rising between 400 – 600 feet above the river with a width varying from ¼ to ½ mile.

The original designation of the Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area in 1971 (27,000 acres) recognized the Snake River canyon as a unique raptor habitat. This designation started at the upstream end of the Jackass Butte segment and continued downstream to the end of the Swan Falls segment. While the NCA as a whole contains the highest concentration of nesting birds of prey in North America, the Swan Falls segment has the densest concentration of nesting raptors within the NCA. For example, prairie falcons, which normally maintain a nesting territory measured in miles, are known to nest within 200 yards of each other.

The Swan Falls segment also is the most accessible portion of the Snake River canyon to the general public. The Western Heritage National Scenic Byway terminates in the Snake River canyon at the upstream end of the Swan Falls segment. The combination of consistently high numbers of nesting raptors and the high probability of seeing raptors for a large number of visitors creates a unique wildlife and recreational opportunity which is not currently represented in the National W&SR System.

### Land Ownership and Uses

Land ownership is approximately 22 percent private land, 74 percent BLM land (public), and 5 percent state land.

Private land at the upstream portion of the segment is owned by Idaho Power Company (IPC) and is associated with the Swan Falls Dam project. The majority of the IPC land is undeveloped and is managed in conjunction with the BLM for raptors and raptor habitat protection. These lands are often mistaken for public land. Another private land section contains Celebration Park, which is a county park dedicated to interpreting the archeological and cultural history of the river and canyon. Other private lands are located at the downstream end of the segment and include residences and open pastures.

The state land along this segment is undeveloped.



The public land along this segment is important nesting habitat in the cliffs but also provides recreational opportunities in the canyon along the river. Recreational uses are typically dispersed in nature and include activities such as fishing, camping, and bird watching.

#### Potential Uses of Land and Water Resources enhanced or foreclosed

The Western Heritage National Scenic Byway terminates in the Snake River canyon at the upstream end of the Swan Falls segment. Designation of this segment could enhance the attention given to and the attractiveness for visiting this Scenic Byway. This additional attention could also enhance the economic development of the gateway community of Kuna by the increased visitation.

This river segment begins below Swan Falls Dam and continues to the western NCA boundary. The river gradient is very low along this segment. The potential for new hydroelectric facilities does not exist. One irrigation pump system exists along this segment which supplies water to a farm approximately one mile from the river. The potential for new pump systems for local irrigation do exist along the segments of private land. Designation would preclude any new hydroelectric facilities within this segment and would also preclude any new diversions or structures which would impact private landowners. Potential surface disturbing activities would not be constrained by designation.

#### Interest in Designation

Local and regional environmental and conservation organizations have expressed positive interest in including all eligible segments of the Snake River in the National W&S River System. Local communities have expressed positive interest in designation. Negative comments for designation have been minimal.

#### Estimated Costs of Acquisition and Administration

Initial costs associated with designation would include mapping and printing documentation of the wild and scenic river process, layout, design, and publication of educational information about the new designations including brochures, website updates, and maps. Future costs would depend on the level of threats to river-related values and are foreseen to result from the need for regulatory and educational signing, patrol and enforcement, and biological or social monitoring. Additional land acquisition cost would occur if any private landowners were willing to sell. Currently no parcels have been identified for acquisition.



#### Ability to Manage/Protect River Values

Current BLM management of the area as an NCA protects a majority of the shoreline miles, especially those cliff areas with raptor nest sites. Current recreation management focuses on opportunities for wildlife/raptor viewing and dispersed activities along the river. Future potential threats to identified river related values are minimal.

#### Adverse Effects on Historical/Existing Rights

No adverse effects on historic or valid existing rights are expected as a result of designation of this segment as a recreational river.

#### Other Issues and Concerns

The intent of designation would be to preserve the identified river related wildlife and recreational values along this segment of the Snake River. NCA legislation provides protection for the raptors and their habitat. This would not change with or without designation. The major change in management would be prohibitions on new hydroelectric facilities and other diversions.

### **Suitability Summary**

The uniqueness of the NCA lies in its raptor habitat and the educational opportunities therein. As one moves both upstream and downstream from the area, certain elements of the habitat change just enough that the unusual concentration of nesting raptors, and the opportunities to see them diminishes.

These characteristics are best exemplified along the Jackass Butte and Swan Falls segments of the Snake River which make up what was the original designation of the Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area in 1971. These two river segments provide unique raptor habitat in addition to the unique recreational opportunity of easily viewing large numbers of raptors. When the general public is asked about the "Bird of Prey Area" it is these river segments that typically come to mind. The community of Kuna and many community organizations have expressed positive interest in national designations that could potentially assist in the economic development of their community.

Although the Jackass Butte and Swan Falls segments currently are protected through the congressional designation as a national conservation area, these two segments would be worthy additions to the National W&SR System due to the unique raptor habitat along the Snake River and raptor viewing opportunities not currently represented.





Although much of the land along the Grand View segment is used as foraging habitat by raptors, most of this segment lies outside the NCA boundary and is in private ownership. Local communities and landowners have not expressed interest in designation and historically oppose all federal designations. This would make management of this segment as a Wild and Scenic river very difficult.

While a majority of the Indian Cove segment is in public ownership, public access to the river is limited by topography in many areas and by private land in others. The unique raptor nesting habitat along this stretch has permanent protection under the NCA legislation. Management of this stretch of river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act would be similar to the Grand View segment. Local interest in designation is minimal and opposition to limitations due to designation is a major concern.

It is the determination of the ID Team that the Jackass Butte and Swan Falls segments of the Snake River be recommended suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Both segments are tentatively classified as recreational. Until Congress decides whether to add these river sections to the system, the BLM will manage them to preserve the river-related values identified in this report.

The ID Team has also determined that the Grand View and Indian Cove segments of the Snake River be recommended as not suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The public lands along these two river segments will continue to be managed to protect the unique raptor populations and adjacent raptor habitat under the NCA legislation.

## VII. Protective Management for Suitable River Segments

When a river segment is determined to be eligible and given a tentative classification, its identified outstandingly remarkable values shall be afforded adequate protection, subject to valid existing rights, and until the eligibility determination is superseded, management activities and authorized uses shall not be allowed to adversely affect either eligibility or the tentative classification from a wild area to a scenic area or a scenic area to a recreational river area.

Specific management prescriptions for all eligible river segments will provide protection in the following ways:

1. Free-flowing values: The free-flowing characteristics of the eligible river segments cannot be modified to allow stream impoundments, diversions, and/or channelization to the extent the BLM is authorized under law.
2. River Related Values: Each segment shall be managed to protect identified outstandingly remarkable values and, to the extent practicable, such values shall be enhanced.





3. Classification Impacts: Management and development of an eligible river segment and its corridor cannot be modified, subject to valid existing rights, to the degree that its eligibility or tentative classification would be affected. Should a non-suitable determination be made in the RMP process, then the river shall be managed in accordance with management objectives as outlined in the resource management plan.

**VIII. List of Preparers**

| <b>Name</b>     | <b>Title</b>               | <b>Responsibility</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Larry Ridenhour | Outdoor Recreation Planner | Recreation, Scenic    |
| John Doremus    | Wildlife Biologist         | Wildlife, Fish        |
| Dean Shaw       | Archaeologist              | Cultural History      |
| Bob Harrison    | Geologist                  | Geology               |

