



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Rocky
Mountain
Region



Wild and Scenic River Study Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement

North Fork of the South Platte and the South Platte Rivers

Summary

Administered by the
Pike and San Isabel National Forests
Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands

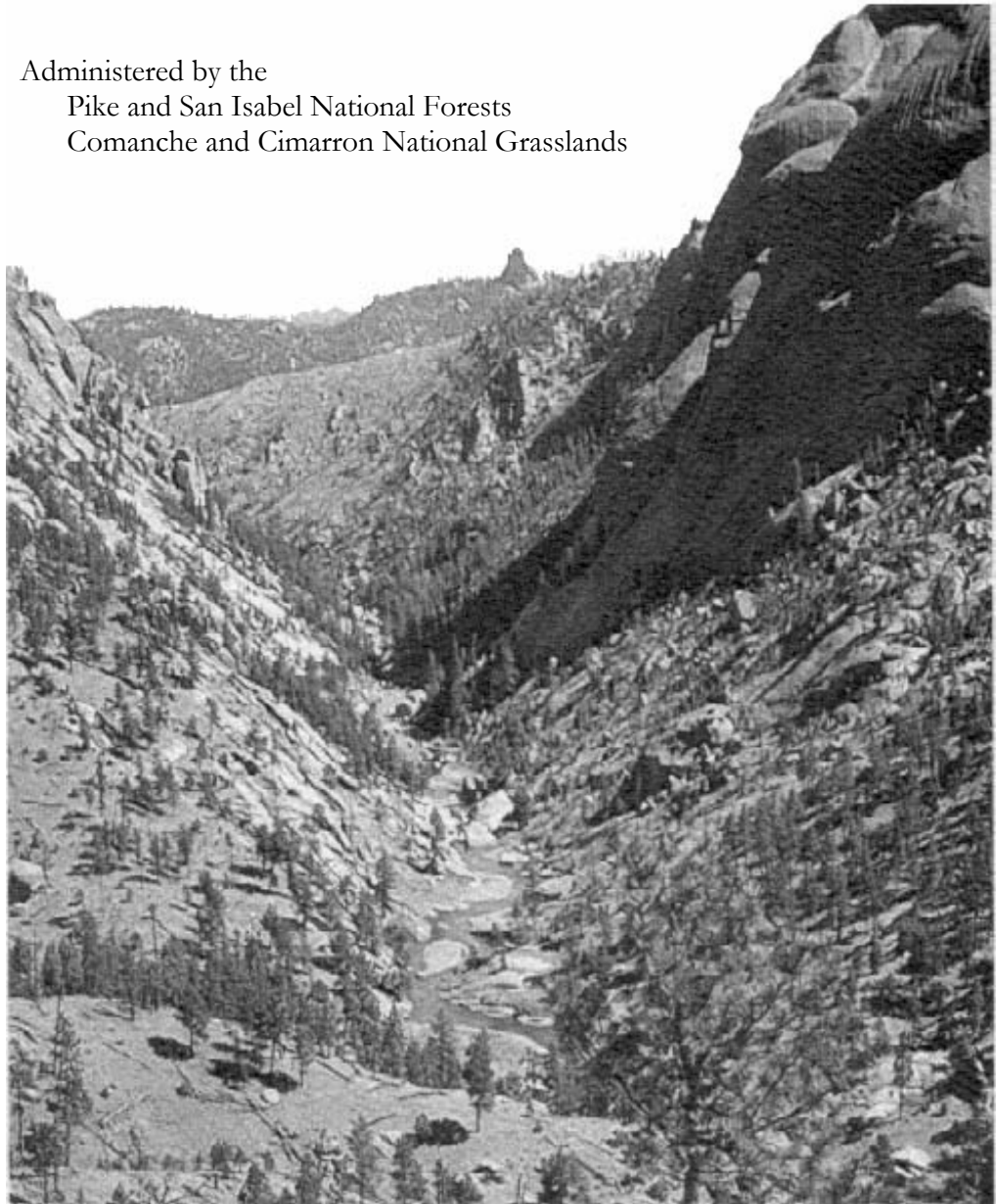


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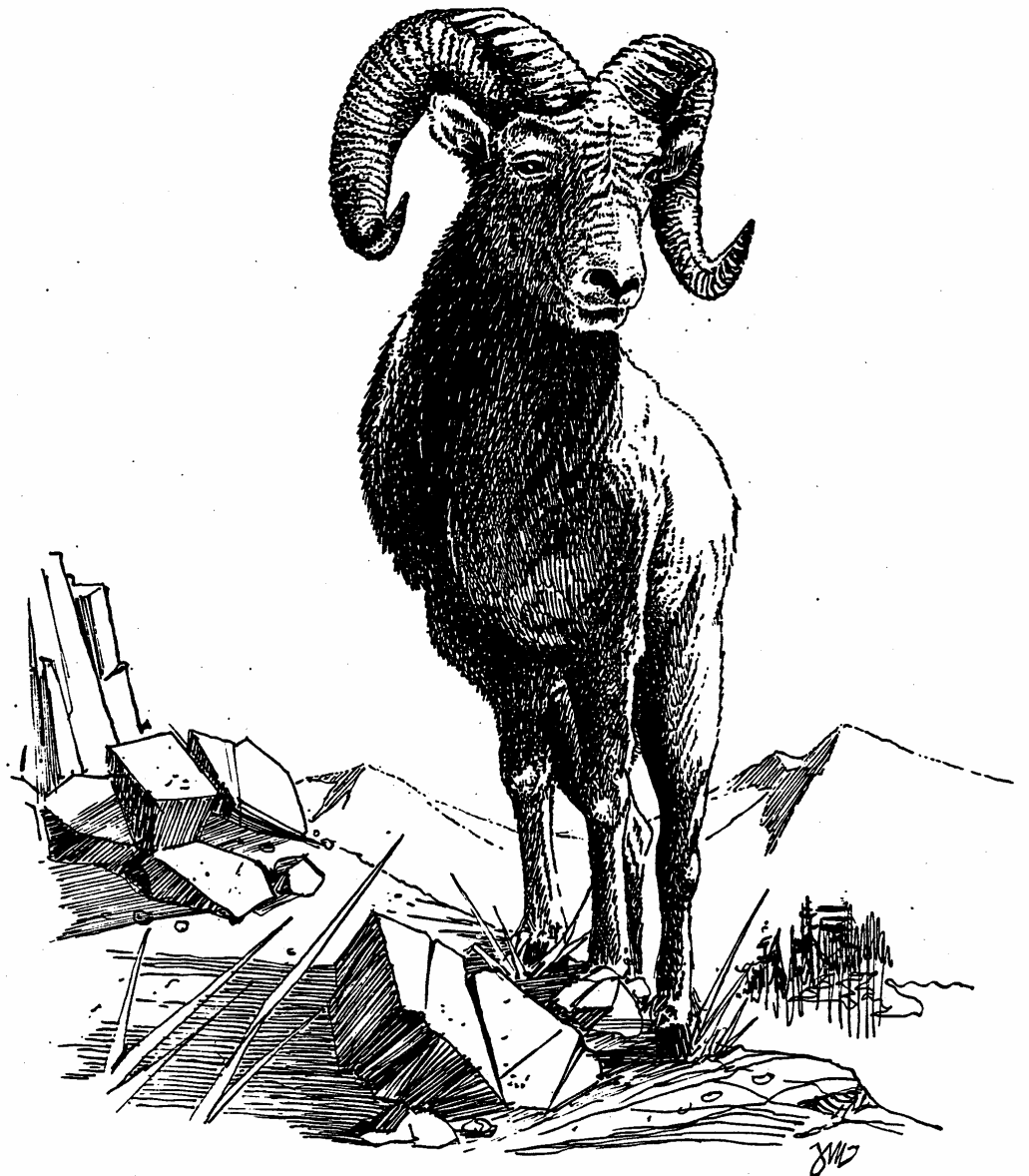
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Summary



Summary

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

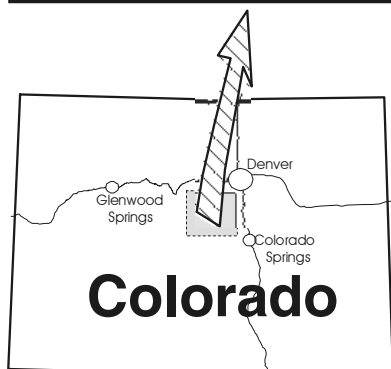
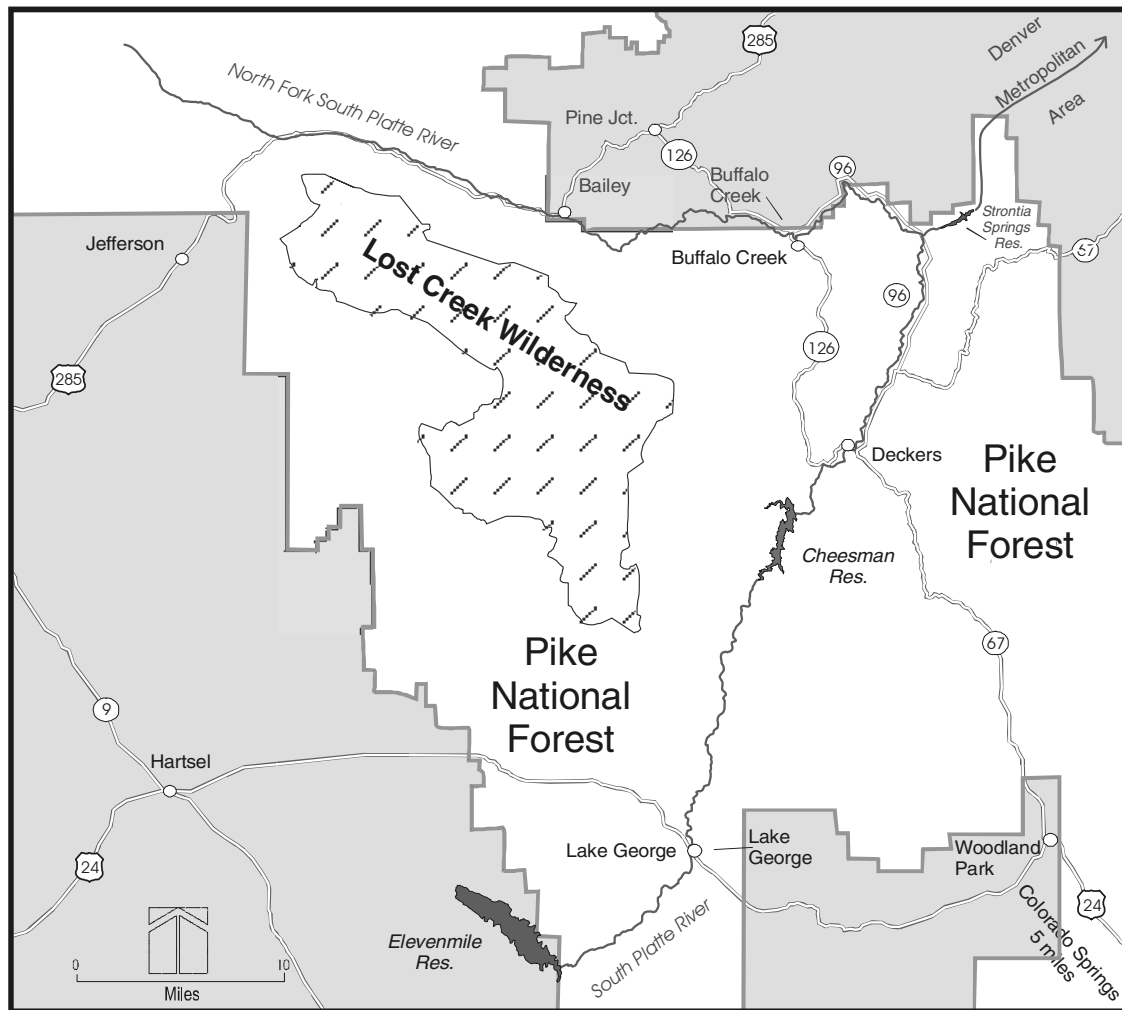
The purpose of a Wild and Scenic River study is to provide a basis for Congress to determine whether to add two rivers in Colorado into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System). The two rivers are, specifically, the North Fork of the South Platte River and the South Platte River between Elevenmile Dam and Strontia Springs Reservoir (map S-1). The decision to study them for possible inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was reached through the forest planning process under section 5(d)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA). This document includes the eligibility and suitability studies for 99.5 miles of river, including the North Fork of the South Platte River and segments of the South Platte River; it combines material presented in the *Draft Legislative Environmental Impact Statement* (DLEIS), released in April 1997, and the *Supplemental Draft Legislative Environmental Impact Statement* (SDLEIS), released in March 2000.

All of the South Platte River study corridor and much of the North Fork of the South Platte River study corridor lie within the boundaries of the Pike National Forest (National Forest). Both areas, however, include many private and local government inholdings. The study corridors also contain a 6.6-mile stretch of the North Fork of the South Platte River that lies outside the National Forest boundary. This section is mostly in private ownership but includes some public lands managed by Denver Board of Water Commissioners (Denver Water) and Jefferson County Open Space.

This document serves two purposes: it is a Wild and Scenic River study report and a final environmental impact statement (FEIS), both developed by the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) in accordance with the requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Title 40 CFR, parts 1500-1508). It should be noted that the draft statements were titled *legislative* environmental impact statements (LEIS). The regulations developed by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA specify that a study be documented in a LEIS, rather than an environmental impact statement (EIS), if a recommendation to Congress goes forward, because Congress, rather than a Federal agency, would make the final decision on designation. An LEIS is a detailed statement similar to an EIS, and it accompanies and supports a recommendation sent to Congress by the President. Since this FEIS does not contain a recommendation either for or against designation, it will not be forwarded to Congress and is no longer a LEIS.

This study originated as joint effort between the Forest Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (U.S. Department of the Interior). In 2001, the BLM transferred Federal management of 29 acres on the North Fork to Jefferson County, thus relinquishing responsibility for involvement in the study.

Vicinity Map



Land Ownership

- Within National Forest Boundary
- Outside National Forest Boundary

Roads and Highways

- State Highways
- U. S. Highways

Map S-1.—South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River Wild and Scenic River Study, Vicinity Map.

OVERVIEW OF THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542 *et seq.*) was passed in 1968 to balance river development with river protection. In the WSRA, Congress declared that:

“... certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and . . . shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF THE STUDY CORRIDOR

National Forest System lands in the study corridors are managed in accordance with the *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands* (Forest Plan), approved in November 1984. Pending the outcome of the suitability analysis, Segments A, B, and C in the South Platte study corridor (map S-2) are included in a special management area under the Forest Plan. The special management area, called the “Scenic River Corridor,” provides additional protection to preserve the characteristics that made the segments eligible for potential Wild and Scenic designation. Similarly, Segments D and E on the mainstem and Segment H on the North Fork are protected under an interim management plan, which can be found in the eligibility determination (Appendix D, p. 24-25). Attributes being protected include the stream’s free-flow, its water quality, and its outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs). The special protection will continue until the study river either is added into the Wild and Scenic River System or is found *not suitable* for such designation by the Forest Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or Congress.

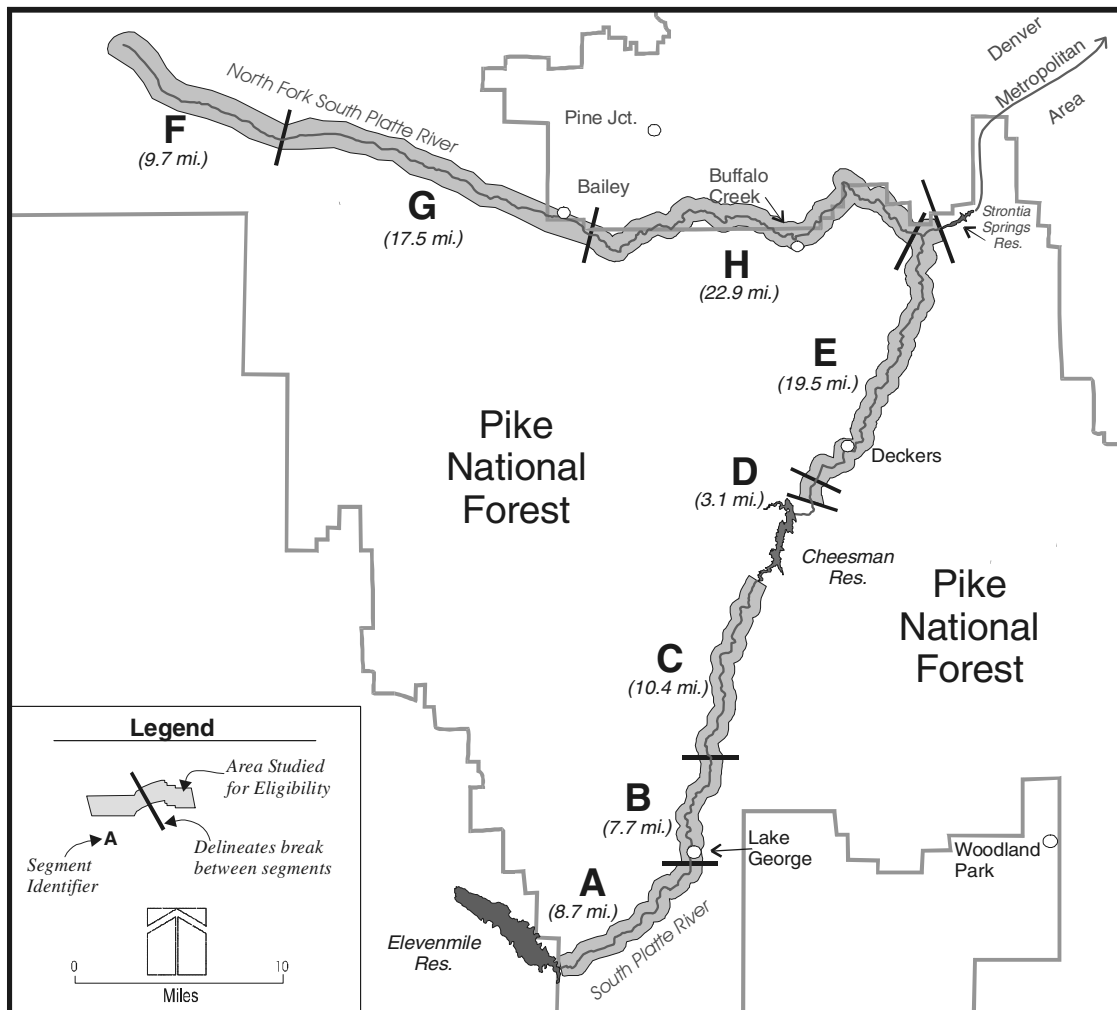
If a Wild and Scenic designation is approved, the interim direction would be replaced by a “River Management Plan”; if it isn’t approved, the management of the area would be released from special protection and would revert back to the general provisions of the Forest Plan

Management practices under the current Forest Plan vary greatly by river section, but they generally emphasize developed and semi-primitive recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat needs, forage and cover on big game winter ranges, and productive tree stand management.

Private lands consist mostly of rural residential property. There are several small towns and communities scattered within the study segments. The North Fork corridor includes 545 acres of an 884-acre open space park, Pine Valley Ranch, owned by Jefferson County. It also includes 29 acres of land formerly managed by the Bureau of Land Management under its *Northeast Resource Area Management Plan*. These acres were transferred to Jefferson County in 2001. The area is managed primarily to protect a peregrine falcon nesting site and, secondarily, for dispersed recreation. A few ranches with grazing and irrigated hay fields are present in the upper portions of the North Fork study corridor and just north of Lake George on the South Platte.

After the Forest Service, Denver Water is the next largest land manager or owner in the area. Denver Water's lands are managed for water delivery, dispersed recreation, summer-home rentals, and resource protection to ensure high water quality. Over many years, Denver Water had acquired most of the non-Federal land along the South Platte from Deckers to the North Fork confluence and along the North Fork from the confluence to Ferndale in anticipation that these lands would be inundated by its planned Two Forks Reservoir (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1988a). Plans for the Two Forks Project were abandoned indefinitely, however, after a 1989 ruling by the

River Segments Studied for Eligibility



Map S-2.—South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River Wild and Scenic River Study, River Segments Studied for Eligibility.

Environmental Protection Agency that the project would violate the Clean Water Act.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

After the stream segments were determined to be eligible for possible inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, the Forest Service undertook an extensive public involvement program to ensure that the alternatives would consider the concerns of landowners; local

residents; permittees; water resource developers; water users in the Denver metropolitan area; Douglas, Jefferson, Park, and Teller Counties; the States of Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska; and others having a stake in how the river is managed. The public involvement program consisted of open houses, meetings, newsletters, mailings to interested parties, and ongoing informal meetings with any party requesting briefings.

On November 16, 1995, a notice of intent was published in the *Federal Register* (vol. 60,

No. 221, p. 57571) to announce that an LEIS and Wild and Scenic River Study Report would be prepared and that written comments and suggestions were invited. In addition, interested parties were mailed a newsletter and invitations to public meetings.

The Forest Service conducted eight public scoping meetings between December 10, 1995, and March 14, 1996. The meetings took place in Bailey, Colorado Springs, Deckers, Denver, and Lake George, Colorado, and were attended by about 400 people. All of these meetings were advertised in local and regional media and by direct mailings. In some remote areas, perceived to be underserved by media, posters located where community members were likely to see them, such as Post Offices and general stores, also advertised the meetings. Many of these meetings were covered by local and regional mass media (newspapers and radio). In addition, upon request, the Forest Service conducted about 25 briefings for county governments, water providers, citizen groups, landowner associations, and environmental groups.

Informational materials were mailed out four times:

1. During the issue identification process, to inform people about the study and request comments on the eligibility and classification determinations.
2. At the start of the suitability determination, to let people know about open houses and to request their issues and concerns.
3. Before the second round of open houses, to solicit comments on preliminary alternatives and gather additional issues and concerns.
4. After the DLEIS was published, to announce its availability.

These mailings were designed to make sure as many people as possible were informed about the study and how to make their views

known. The mailings reached more than 2,600 people, including those owning land in or adjacent to the study river corridors; river users; grazing permittees; businesses related to the river corridor; recreationists; water providers; water users; local, State, and Federal agencies; interested parties; and others who requested to be kept informed of the study's progress.

Periodic briefings were also presented for Arapahoe, Douglas, Jefferson, Park, and Teller County officials; Denver Water; and U.S. congressional delegations beginning in November 1995. In response to requests, presentations were also made to each county commission, the Metropolitan Water Providers, the Suburban Water Suppliers' Wild and Scenic Task Force, several county planning departments, and a variety of organizations in eastern Colorado. Additional issues, concerns, and opinions were brought up at these meetings and incorporated into the scoping process.

The DLEIS was published in April 1997, and a notice of availability was published in the *Federal Register* (vol. 62, No. 70, p. 17810) at the same time. During the 90-day comment period following release of the DLEIS, the Forest Service received letters and comments from about 324 people and a petition bearing 147 signatures. At the time the document was released, local stakeholders were beginning to develop a non-designation protection plan for the river. This was included in the DLEIS as Alternative A2, although it had not been fully developed at the time.

Following release of the draft, the local stakeholder groups organized under the leadership of the Denver Water Board and the Suburban Water Providers' Wild and Scenic Task Force to develop the details of the A2 alternative. Seventy-three agencies and interest groups were invited to participate in the planning process. (See Appendix A for the full list of participants.) Four work groups were established to focus on different aspects of Alternative A2, including:

1. Flow management;
2. Water quality;
3. Recreation, scenery and wildlife; and
4. The endowment fund.

Once each work group developed a draft plan, an overall group, the Synthesis Committee, put all the pieces together into one package. About 46 meetings were conducted over an 8-month period. In addition, three large public meetings were held at the beginning, middle, and end of the process to get comments from the general public and to allow participants in individual work groups to hear what other groups were doing.

Interest group representatives participated in the planning process with the understanding that their participation did not mean they necessarily supported the plan developed. Each group maintained its right to agree or disagree with the final product, but all participated with the intent of finding the best solution to their differences. When the final alternative, entitled the "South Platte Protection Plan" (SPPP), was submitted to the Forest Service, each group was asked to submit a letter of support directly to the Forest Service. The Forest Service received 47 letters with overall mixed support for the SPPP.

The Forest Service sent out a public mailing in October 1998 to announce (1) a review of the SPPP and (2) its decision to prepare a Supplemental Draft LEIS (SDLEIS). The letter included a list of issues and concerns about the SPPP raised by the public or by Forest Service specialists. These focused on the SPPP's adequacy in protecting the streams' ORVs, water quality, and free-flow.

The Forest Service held a public meeting in February 1999 to discuss the issues and concerns about the SPPP and to present ideas for a modified SPPP alternative. Several individual meetings followed this with interested groups to clarify the issues and concerns and to discuss options for addressing the concerns in

another alternative. Concurrent with these meetings, the mailing list was updated, and all interested parties were informed of new developments.

The A2 alternative was amended by the stakeholder groups in response to concerns that the Streamflow Management Plan did not adequately address impacts from high flows.

The SDLEIS was released for a 90-day comment period in March 2000. The Forest Service received 232 individual comments during this period. In addition to the mailing list, the document was also posted on the South Platte Ranger District website. The Forest Service also held public workshops in Bailey, Deckers, Lake George, and Denver during the comment period. All of these meetings were advertised in local and regional media and by direct mailings. As had been done for the scoping meetings, posters located in places such as Post Offices and general stores, where community members were likely to see them, also advertised the workshops. A total of 61 people attended these workshops. Local and metropolitan media also covered the workshops and reported on the status of the study. Individual group meetings and periodic project briefings were also presented for various interest groups and government agencies as requested.

In response to concerns by the Forest Service and various stakeholders, the groups that participated in the development of the SPPP, the A2 alternative, developed supplemental material that addresses unanswered questions in the original document, including provisions for enforcing the tenets of the SPPP and water development under a non-designation scenario. As they had done during the development of the original SPPP, members of a Forest Service interdisciplinary team observed the A2 development process to provide expertise on technical resource information, agency procedures, and the provisions of the WSRA.

Denver Water held public hearings to address the contents of the supplemental material in

April 2001 in Denver and Deckers. The material was submitted formally to the Forest Service on June 5, 2001. The Forest Service received nine letters of support for the SPPP from local and State agencies and from organizations with an interest in management of the rivers' values. The letters specified that their support be based on the premise that the supplemental material would be included in a FEIS.

The Forest Service conducted mailings in November 2000 and December 2001 to update the constituency and update the mailing list pending distribution of this FEIS.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY PROCESS

COMPONENTS OF A WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY

The WSRA and guidelines identify three components of a Wild and Scenic River Study: the eligibility determination, the classification analysis, and the suitability determination. All three components are documented in this evaluation.

Determination of Eligibility

The purpose of determination of eligibility is to analyze if the rivers meet the minimum requirements for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. To be eligible for inclusion in this system, a river must be free-flowing and must also possess at least one "outstandingly remarkable value" (ORV). All of the South Platte Study segments (A, B, C, D, and E) and Segment H of the North Fork (map S-2) meet the minimum eligibility requirements as specified by the WSRA. They are found to be free-flowing and to have at least one ORV.

Eligible segments possess ORVs as listed below:

Segment A: Scenic, recreational, geological, fisheries. The 8.7-mile section of the South Platte River from Elevenmile Dam (downstream from the fence on Denver Water's special use area) downstream to the southern end of the private lands south of Lake George (from SW¹/₄SW¹/₄ sec. 20, T. 13 S., R. 72 W. to SW¹/₄NE¹/₄ sec. 31, T. 12 S., R. 71 W.).

Segment B: Fisheries. The 7.7-mile segment of the South Platte River from the southern end of the private lands south of Lake George to the north end of the private lands near Beaver Creek (from SW¹/₄NE¹/₄ sec. 31, T. 12 S., R. 71 W. to SW¹/₄SW¹/₄ sec. 33, T. 11 S., R. 71 W.).

Segment C: Scenic, geological, fisheries, wildlife. The 10.4-mile segment of the South Platte River from the north end of the private lands near Beaver Creek to the high water line of Cheesman Reservoir (upstream of the stream gage) (from SW¹/₄SW¹/₄ sec. 33, T. 11 S., R. 71 W. to SE¹/₄NW¹/₄ sec. 23, T. 10 S., R. 71 W.).

Segment D: Recreational, fisheries, wildlife. The 3.1-mile segment of the South Platte River from below Cheesman Dam downstream to the upstream boundary of the Wigwam Club property (from NW¹/₄NW¹/₄ sec. 6, T. 10 S., R. 70 W. to SW¹/₄NW¹/₄ sec. 29, T. 9 S., R. 70 W.).

Segment E: Recreational, fisheries, wildlife. The South Platte River from the upstream boundary of the Wigwam Club property downstream to the high water line of Strontia Springs Reservoir (19.5 miles) (from SW¹/₄NW¹/₄ sec. 29, T. 9 S., R. 70 W. to SW¹/₄NW¹/₄ sec. 29, T. 7 S., R. 69 W.).

Segment H: Recreational, wildlife, cultural. The 22.9-mile segment of the North Fork of the South Platte River from the upstream boundary of the Berger property near Insmont, downstream to within a quarter mile of its confluence with the South Platte River

(from SW¹/₄SE¹/₄ sec. 33, T. 7 S., R. 72 W. to SE¹/₄SW¹/₄ sec. 25, T. 7 S., R. 70 W.).

Segments F and G: The 27.2 miles of the North Fork of the South Platte River, from its headwaters to the upstream boundary of the Berger property near Insmont. These segments are found neither to be free-flowing nor to possess any ORVs. They are, therefore, ineligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Classification Analysis

The classification analysis studies patterns of developed and natural areas in the corridors of eligible rivers to determine whether the rivers would be classified as *wild*, *scenic*, or *recreational* if they are added to the National System. The rivers' inventoried classifications are listed in Chapter 3, table 3-4.

The Suitability Determination

The determination of suitability is designed to analyze whether eligible rivers are appropriate additions to the National System. The analysis compares alternative ways of managing the river corridors, including at least one alternative involving Federal designation of all eligible river segments and one alternative involving non-designation. Suitability considerations include the environmental consequences of designation and the manageability of the river if it is designated, including costs and the willingness of local and State governments to participate in river corridor management.

KEY STUDY ISSUES

Several key issues guided the development and evaluation of the North Fork of the South Platte and the South Platte River study alternatives. Issues were identified through the public involvement process by an interdisciplinary team of Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service resource specialists for issues identified during the scoping process prior to release of the *DLEIS*.

Additional issues were identified by a Forest Service interdisciplinary team, which observed development of the SPPP, the A2 alternative. The key study issues identified during the scoping process were wildlife, fisheries, recreation, social and economic considerations, scenery, geology, cultural resources (including archeological resources), water developments (construction of dams or diversions for water storage), and landowner rights. An additional issue identified during development of the A2 Alternative was implementation and enforcement of the SPPP. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the issues.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Note that a map for each alternative is presented in Chapter 4, "Issues and Alternatives."

ALTERNATIVE A1

This is the "no action" or "no change" alternative. It describes the existing situation and serves as a baseline to evaluate the other alternatives. Under this alternative, current management of the river corridors would continue under the Forest Plan; *none* of the eligible study segments would be found *suitable* for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System or for any other special Federal designation. Adoption of this alternative would mean that no new programs, protection measures, or designations would be implemented. There would be no further efforts to coordinate management activities in the corridors beyond what currently exists.

ALTERNATIVE A2

This is the "no action with ORVs protected" alternative. It is an outgrowth of a concept originally posed as Alternative H during scoping

(see section 4.5), and it responds to an expression of interest raised by the local community to find a local solution to the challenge of protecting the rivers' ORVs. The purpose of the South Platte Protection Plan is to protect the ORVs identified by the Forest Service and preserve water supply functions without designating the river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. These values are historical, fishery, geological, recreational, scenic, and wildlife resources. The SPPP also recognizes that Colorado's Front Range communities rely heavily upon the South Platte for drinking water supply and other municipal and industrial uses and that agriculture throughout northeastern Colorado depends heavily on South Platte flows. The ORVs must be protected in the context of preserving these functions as well. The interests of all these communities can be maintained through common dialogue toward an approach in which the many values on the river—habitat, ecosystem, and human-based—can all be addressed in coordination and balance with one another. Mutual respect for the many important uses is central to the SPPP. It creates a cooperative management structure of local, State and Federal agencies. The underlying principle is no loss of existing or future water supply.

The entire text of the SPPP is in Appendix A of this document. Its major components are summarized below.

1. **Protect canyons.** A commitment *not* to build any water works facilities in Cheesman Canyon or Elevenmile Canyon.
2. **Streamflow Management Plan.** A series of commitments and goals to alter current water facility operations to protect and enhance fisheries. The following are obligations to be met by the responsible parties:
 - a. No loss of existing or future water supply.

- b. Minimum outflows from Spinney Mountain, Elevenmile, and Cheesman Reservoirs. The minimum streamflow will be measured at the streamflow gage directly below the reservoirs. Aurora's and Denver's operating streamflow records will be the official record of the reservoir and tunnel releases for the Streamflow Plan. These records will be available upon request. Denver's releases for minimum streamflows will be calculated by averaging the 24 "top-of-the-hour" readings 8:00 a.m. one day through 7:00 a.m. the next day. All top-of-the-hour gage readings must be no less than 80 percent of the minimum streamflow. Any daily or hourly violation will result in a penalty of \$10,000 per violation to be paid to the Endowment Fund (see No. 5 below). This is the maximum penalty per daily period. The penalty will be indexed to the Consumer Price Index and adjusted each year at the annual operating meeting. Any known failure to meet the minimum streamflow commitment will be reported to the Forest Service and the Colorado Division of Wildlife within 1 week of occurrence. Exemptions to this are:

- Minimum streamflows that are due to emergencies where public safety or dam safety are concerned and will be reported to the Forest Service.
- Severe drought conditions when Aurora's or Denver Water's customers are on mandatory water use restrictions and the combined contents of Aurora's or Denver Water's major storage reservoirs are less than 40 percent full; the minimum outflow requirement at Spinney Mountain, Elevenmile,

- and Cheesman reservoirs (as appropriate) will be 20 cubic feet per second.
- The hourly minimum will not apply when reservoirs are spilling (the daily minimum still applies). Reservoir outflows may be reduced below the hourly minimum for up to 2 hours to rate, clean, and maintain the streamflow gaging stations below the reservoirs.
- c. Ramping (changing gradually) outflow changes from Elevenmile and Cheesman Reservoirs and the Roberts Tunnel.
 - d. New valves, monitors, gages.
 - e. Channel work on North Fork to be coordinated with Colorado Division of Wildlife.
 - f. Public input to annual operating plans.
 - g. Stream channel maintenance and improvement: the Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, water users, and other interested parties work together to identify degraded stream channel areas and sedimentation sources and to develop instream channel improvement projects. Develop a stream habitat improvement plan.
 - h. The following represent desirable outcomes and goals for water suppliers to use as guidance in their operating decisions.
 - Operate Spinney Mountain, Elevenmile, and Cheesman Reservoirs to release stored water to maintain minimum outflow when inflow is low.
 - Operate Spinney Mountain, Elevenmile, and Cheesman Reservoirs for outflows in an optimum range the remainder of the year.
 - Operate Elevenmile and Cheesman Reservoirs outflow for optimal temperatures and ramping of daily temperature fluctuations to benefit fisheries below the dams.
 - Consideration of whitewater and fisheries in Roberts Tunnel discharges, within the limitations described in the Streamflow Management Plan.
 - Revise annual operating plans to limit fluctuations when the potential exists to harm vulnerable life stages of brown or rainbow trout.
- Future water projects, especially those that would significantly extend bank-full stream conditions, would require an analysis by the project proponent of channel capacity related to adequate protection of fisheries habitat and populations, channel stability, and maintenance of the ecosystem. The new project proponent is responsible for any necessary analysis and channel reconstruction. Changes to channel capacity should be accomplished by physically reconstructing the channel where necessary. These alterations should be achieved by means other than flow manipulation to maintain the ORVs in the river corridor. Proposals for flow and channel modification for new projects would be reviewed by the annual operations meeting participants.
3. **Partnership for Recreation, Wildlife, Scenery, and Other Values.** A management partnership between a qualified recreation management agency and the Forest Service is proposed for the mainstem of the river, from Elevenmile Reservoir to Chatfield

Reservoir. Until the partnership is in place, the Forest Service, Denver Water, Jefferson County, and Douglas County would cooperatively manage portions of the area. The SPPP proposes recreation management by Jefferson County Open Space along portions of the North Fork, where the river flows through the park, and a special recreation area at Bailey Canyon to be managed by the Forest Service. (NOTE: The qualified recreation management agency in the SDLEIS was identified as Colorado State Parks. However, given the current economy and the budget shortfall of the State of Colorado, the involvement of State Parks in the foreseeable future appears unlikely.)

4. **Cooperative water quality initiatives** would be implemented through the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), which is composed of interested local governments, agencies, and parties in the basin. This coalition (originally the Upper South Platte Watershed Protection Association) was triggered by this proposal but is expected to continue independent of the SPPP.
5. **Endowment.** Front Range local governments and water suppliers would contribute at least \$1 million to be spent on the values identified by the Forest Service. A board would be convened within 90 days following a decision by the Forest Service to adopt the SPPP in lieu of designation.
6. **Enhancement Board.** A coordinating forum, the Friends of the South Platte River, Inc., would provide comments and responses on activities such as land use or land management planning decisions, as well as deciding expenditures from the endowment.
7. **Withdrawal of 1986 applications for conditional storage rights.** Both Denver Water and the

Metropolitan Denver Water Authority would withdraw Water Court applications for 780,000 acre-feet of additional storage at the Two Forks reservoir site.

8. **Alternative to development of Denver's right-of-way.** Denver Water and environmental groups have proposed a working relationship that could lead to alternative projects and allow Denver Water later to relinquish its 1931 right-of-way on the South Platte at the Two Forks site. As a demonstration of good faith in pursuing alternative projects, Denver Water would voluntarily impose a moratorium on applications for development of the right-of-way for a period of 20 years from formal acceptance of the SPPP.
9. **Provision for limited development.** In addition, Denver Water and other present and future water suppliers would continue to have access to the river for operational and maintenance purposes, such as channel repair and stabilization, construction of sedimentation ponds and removal of sediment, and construction of diversion dams for off-channel reservoirs. It is expected that such projects, if any, would be accomplished in a manner compatible with the natural setting and would have no significant adverse effect on the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values of the river corridor as a whole (Attachment F).

Enforcement of the SPPP would be provided by a written agreement between the Forest Service and those entities making commitments within the SPPP. The agreement shall be written in a manner to provide for enforcement through the Administrative Procedures Act by citizens or groups with standing, using remedies similar to those that would be available if a river were designated under the WSRA. The agreement should provide for public participation in the event of:

1. Significant changes to the written agreement,
2. Leases to Colorado State Parks or other major concessionaires,
3. Adoption of a recreation management plan, or
4. Changes to any existing recreation management plan.

In all such cases, the public should have the opportunity to ascertain and comment on consistency of the proposed changes with the SPPP. Further enforcement would be provided through an amendment to the Forest Plan, which would provide protection for the ORVs and related resources on National Forest System lands within the river corridor. For National Forest lands, this could include providing special management area status in the study corridor similar to what exists for the Elevenmile Canyon area.

This alternative is silent on a finding of suitability. By remaining silent, the Forest Service would continue to protect the ORVs, water quality, and free-flow on eligible segments.

Additional measures that might be employed under this alternative to further protect the ORVs would include:

- Purchase of scenic easements, exchange agreements, water rights, or rights-of-way from willing sellers, where needed, to better protect the area.
- Acquisition of properties in the study corridor from willing sellers, through purchase or exchange, to ensure better resource protection.
- County or other local government acquisition of additional properties for park or open space from willing sellers in the study corridor.

ALTERNATIVE A3: MODIFIED SOUTH PLATTE PROTECTION PLAN

As described above, both the public and the Forest Service raised issues and concerns about the South Platte Protection Plan. The Modified South Platte Protection Plan, Alternative A3, was developed to respond to those issues and concerns. Similar to alternatives A1 and A2, this alternative is silent on the issue of suitability. Alternative A3 builds on A2 Alternative by adding provisions directly related to the issues listed above. It recognizes water supply as a use of the river corridor to be continued while protecting the ORVs, water quality, and free-flow. The basic principle of no effect on water yield or supply and the multi-agency management framework are maintained. Alternative A3 is designed to more closely emulate the protection measures that would apply under a Wild and Scenic River designation utilizing existing Forest Service legal authorities. The protection measures would be effective only on National Forest lands. Non-National Forest lands would continue to be managed under the existing legal authorities implemented by other Federal, State, and local government agencies.

Major components of Alternative A3 are listed below.

1. All new dams or impoundments in the river corridor on Federal land are prohibited.
2. Any proposals for limited water development projects in the river corridor would be evaluated for potential effects to ORVs, free-flow, and water quality. The standard of review and resultant degree to which eligibility is protected would depend on which variation of A3 is assumed for analysis. See the following section on "Variations."
3. The Forest Service would work with Denver Water and the Colorado Division of Wildlife on stream reconstruction and

habitat improvement projects on the North Fork and mainstem of the South Platte River.

4. The Forest Service would work with Denver Water, the CUSP (formerly the Upper South Platte Protection Association) and other interest groups to conduct water quality restoration projects for sediment reduction and control, addressing problems caused by road maintenance, travel management, stream crossings, and degraded areas (e.g., Buffalo Creek and Hayman Fires).
5. The alternative would be implemented through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Forest Service and other concerned agencies, listing the commitments of all involved parties. Citizen groups shall be involved with development of the MOU.
6. The potential interim cooperative recreation management agreement to include Forest Service, Denver Water, Jefferson County, and Douglas County would be addressed in the implementation of this decision, as part of the MOU development process.
7. All parties to the MOU, with extensive public involvement, shall coordinate management planning activities to address all river resources in an ecosystem management framework. The *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands* (Forest Plan) shall be used for management guidance on Forest System Lands. Private landowner concerns about impacts from recreation users would be addressed in this planning effort.
8. The North Fork would be managed consistently with the Forest Plan, emphasizing big game species' winter range. Summer season dispersed recreation activities, with no road or facility development, are compatible with this management scheme.
9. The special emphasis on managing Forest lands for the benefit of the Pawnee montane skipper would continue even if the skipper's "endangered" status is downgraded to "sensitive."
10. The Forest Service would work with interest groups to develop a management plan for Wildcat Canyon (Segment C) that addresses recreation use, wildlife corridors, ORVs, and water quality protection needs.
11. For any individual projects implementing the cooperative management plan, the Forest Service shall develop an agreement with the project proponent, whether the project is conducted by the project proponent alone or cooperatively with the Forest Service.
12. Any project funded by the Friends of the South Platte River, Inc., to take place on Forest Service lands, must first be analyzed and approved by the Forest Service.
13. Third party access to enforce the finding of eligibility will be through the Forest Plan.
14. The MOU shall include provisions for citizen group involvement in periodic management reviews of the decision implementation.
15. The Record of Decision shall include indicators to be used to measure changes to free-flow, ORVs, and water quality. Indications that these values are being threatened shall be sufficient cause for the Forest Service to initiate a suitability determination.
16. The Forest Service would apply to the Bureau of Land Management to withdraw the eligible river segments from

mineral entry and development. This action, once approved, would prevent the filing of any new mining claims or location notices in this area. Existing claims would remain valid.

17. The Forest Plan would be amended as appropriate to reflect plan level aspects of Alternative A3.

Variations

The A2 process did not clearly identify whether the eligible segments were *suitable* for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Suitability is a controversial topic because of its implications regarding long-term protection of ORVs and the rigidity of protection standards to be applied. In its review of the SPPP, the Forest Service found that it could not analyze the SPPP's long-term protective merits adequately without introducing the matter of suitability into the analysis. Accordingly, two variations of A3 were developed to represent a full range of suitability-related concepts for managing the South Platte and North Fork river corridors.

A3-Suitable – Under this variation, eligible river segments are found *suitable* for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System, but they are not recommended for designation at this time. The river corridor ORVs, free-flow, and water quality would be managed under a Federal/State/local government partnership using existing legal authorities to protect eligibility. River corridor management would be monitored and periodically reviewed to ensure continued protection. If partnership management is found to have failed—i.e., if the rivers' ORVs, free-flow, or water quality become threatened—the Forest Service would forward a designation recommendation for protection of the river corridor under the WSRA by an act of Congress. A new dam proposal in the river corridor would trigger a designation recommendation, since

the dam would be an imminent threat to the riverine character, ORVs, and free-flow.

Forest Service management standards for maintaining eligibility are in *Forest Service Handbook* 1909.12, Chapter 8, section 8.12 (See Appendix G):

1. To the extent the Forest Service is authorized under law (existing authorities only, not WSRA) to control stream impoundments and diversions, the free-flowing characteristics of the identified river cannot be modified.
2. Outstandingly remarkable values of the identified river area must be protected and, to the extent practicable, enhanced.
3. Management and development of the identified river and its corridor cannot be modified to the degree that eligibility or classification would be affected (i.e., classification cannot be changed from *wild* to *scenic* or from *scenic* to *recreational*).

A3-Not Suitable – Under this variation, eligible river segments are found *not suitable* at this time due to the need for flexibility to accommodate reasonably foreseeable future uses of the land and water which would be foreclosed or curtailed if the area were included, or found *suitable* for inclusion, in the Wild and Scenic River System. The river corridor ORVs, free-flow, and water quality would be managed under a Federal, State, and local government partnership using existing legal authorities to a standard that might be lower than one intended to maintain eligibility. River corridor resources would be monitored to ensure continued protection. If partnership management is found to have failed—i.e., if the rivers' ORVs, free-flow, or water quality become threatened unreasonably—the Forest Service could initiate a new suitability determination at that time and reconsider a designation recommendation for protection of the river

corridor under the WSRA. A new dam proposal in the river corridor would trigger a new suitability determination since the dam would be an imminent threat to the riverine character, ORVs, and free-flow.

The management standards for maintaining river corridor ORVs, free-flow, and water quality would be used as goals rather than requirements. This variation would allow flexibility for limited project development that was deemed critical enough to allow limited effects to the ORVs or free-flow. Forest Service concerns for project proposals would be the same as under the A3-*Suitable* alternative, but there would be greater flexibility and range of considerations possible under A3-*Not Suitable*. Water quality would continue to be protected and enhanced to the standards provided in the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Any proposals for limited developments would be evaluated using the procedures in *Forest Service Manual* 2354 to analyze and document potential effects to ORVs, free-flow, or water quality. The full text of *Forest Service Manual* 2354 is in Appendix G of this FEIS. Project design and mitigation measures would be identified so that the project would meet the management standards above to the extent possible.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B finds all eligible river segments *suitable* and recommends them for designation at their most protective classifications. The goal of this alternative is to add all eligible river segments to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System; maximize protection and enhancement of ORVs, free-flow, and water quality; and maintain system integrity. This alternative was developed as a result of concerns about how to ensure the best protection of the rivers' natural environment and ORVs. In this alternative, all of the eligible segments of the two study rivers, totaling 72.3 miles, would be recommended for

addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Classification would be in accordance with the potential classifications as listed in table 4-2 and would total 10.5 miles *wild*, 7.9 miles *scenic*, and 53.9 miles *recreational*.

The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

ALTERNATIVE C

Like Alternative B, Alternative C finds all eligible river segments *suitable* and recommends them for designation. All segments are recommended at their most protective classification, except that the classification of the 10.4-mile segment of the South Platte River from Cheesman Reservoir to Beaver Creek would be *scenic* for its entire length. The goal of this alternative is to add all eligible river segments to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, provide protection and enhancement of the ORVs, maintain system integrity, and follow the current Forest Plan direction. This alternative was developed as a result of concerns expressed by some stakeholders who wished to ensure protection of the river's natural environment and ORVs while allowing a wider range of natural resource management, including continued off-highway-vehicle use between Beaver Creek and Cheesman Reservoir. In this alternative, all of the eligible segments of the two study rivers, totaling 72.3 miles, would be recommended for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Classification would be in accordance with potential classifications as listed in table 4-3 and would total 3.1 miles *wild*, 15.3 miles *scenic*, and 53.9 miles *recreational*.

The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D finds all eligible South Platte River segments *suitable* and recommends them for designation at their most protective classification, but finds the North Fork *not suitable* for designation. The goal of this alternative is to add all eligible South Platte River segments to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, maximizing protection and enhancement of the ORVs and maintaining system integrity. This alternative was developed as a result of concerns to ensure the best protection of the South Platte River's natural environment and ORVs. The chief assumptions underlying this alternative are that:

1. The current operations of the Roberts Tunnel might be affected by designation on the North Fork; and
2. The influence of transbasin diversions is greater on the North Fork than on the South Platte.

In this alternative, all eligible segments on the South Platte River, totaling 49.4 miles, would be recommended for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Classification would be in accordance with potential classifications as listed in table 4-4 and would total 10.5 miles *wild*, 3.0 miles *scenic*, and 35.9 miles *recreational*.

The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

ALTERNATIVE F

Alternative F recommends the designation of one small segment on the North Fork and four small segments on the South Platte that are entirely on National Forest System land and have no encumbrances. The goal of this alternative is to protect the ORVs while minimizing the potential and/or perceived effects of designation on private property rights

and on Denver Water's ability to exercise its 1931 right-of-way for a reservoir from the confluence of the North Fork and the South Platte to Deckers.

In this alternative, five segments of the two rivers, totaling 26.2 miles, would be recommended for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Only National Forest System lands within the following segments would be recommended for the classifications shown below:

- North Fork, Estabrook to Crossons — *Scenic*
- South Platte, Elevenmile Dam to Lake George — *Recreational*
- South Platte, Tappan Gulch to Vermillion Creek — *Recreational*
- South Platte, Beaver Creek and Cheesman Reservoir — *Wild*
- South Platte, Cheesman Dam to the Wigwam property — *Wild*

Classification would be in accordance with potential classifications as listed in table 4-5 and would total 10.5 miles *wild*, 5.6 miles *scenic*, and 10.1 miles *recreational*.

The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

ALTERNATIVE G

Alternative G finds all eligible segments of the South Platte upstream from the gaging station above Cheesman Reservoir (26.8 miles) *suitable* and recommends them for designation at their most protective classification. This alternative finds the North Fork and Segments D and E of the South Platte River *not suitable* for designation. The goal of this alternative is to provide protection for some of the ORVs while

lessening the potential and/or perceived effects of designation on private property rights and on Denver Water's ability to exercise its 1931 right-of-way for a reservoir from the confluence of the North Fork and the South Platte to Deckers. It also allows for continued off-highway vehicle use between Beaver Creek and Cheesman Reservoir.

The chief assumptions underlying this alternative are that:

1. The current operations of the Roberts Tunnel might be affected by designation either on the North Fork or on the mainstem between the confluence and Strontia Springs Reservoir;
2. The influence of transbasin diversions is greater on the North Fork than on the South Platte; and
3. Potential storage sites downstream from Cheesman Reservoir would be foreclosed by designation.

Classification would be in accordance with potential classifications as listed in table 4-6 and would total 7.4 miles *wild*, 3.0 miles *scenic*, and 16.4 miles *recreational*.

The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

ALTERNATIVE I

Alternative I recommends a *scenic* designation for the 6.0-mile stretch of the South Platte River from Corral Creek to Beaver Creek and a *recreational* designation for the 16.4-mile stretch of the South Platte from Beaver Creek to Elevenmile Dam. This alternative finds the North Fork, and Segments C3, D, and E of the South Platte River *not suitable* for designation. The goal of this alternative is similar to that of Alternative G—to protect and enhance ORVs upstream from Corral Creek while lessening the potential and/or perceived effects of

designation on private property rights and on Denver Water's ability to exercise its 1931 right-of-way for a reservoir from the confluence of the North Fork and South Platte to Deckers. This alternative also provides for the protection and enhancement of ORVs upstream from Corral Creek while allowing for the possibility of additional water storage (especially from a potential Cheesman expansion) and facilitates continued water delivery, current water operations, and channel maintenance. It also would allow the continued use of off-highway vehicles between Beaver Creek and Corral Creek.

The goal of this alternative is to designate only those South Platte River segments for which Wild and Scenic River designation would have the least potential adverse effect on water delivery and potential storage. The chief assumptions of this alternative are that:

1. The current operations of the Roberts Tunnel might be affected by designation either on the North Fork or on the mainstem between the confluence and Strontia Springs Reservoir;
2. The influence of transbasin diversions is greater on the North Fork than on the South Platte; and
3. Potential storage sites downstream from Corral Creek would be foreclosed by designation.

Classification would be in accordance with potential classifications as listed in table 4-7 and would total 6.0 miles *scenic* and 16.4 miles *recreational*.

The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

ALTERNATIVE J

Alternative J finds the North Fork and 1.3 miles of the mainstem of the South Platte River from

the confluence to Strontia Springs Reservoir *not suitable* for designation but finds portions of the South Platte River from the confluence of the North Fork to Elevenmile Dam *suitable* and recommends them for designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Recommended classifications are:

- ' From North Fork confluence to the Wigwam Club property — *Recreational*
- ' From Wigwam Club property to Cheesman Dam — *Wild*
- ' From Cheesman Reservoir to one-quarter mile downstream of Corral Creek — *Wild*
- ' From one-quarter mile downstream of Corral Creek to one-quarter mile upstream of Hackett Gulch — *Scenic*
- ' From one-quarter mile upstream of Hackett Gulch to Beaver Creek confluence — *Wild*
- ' From Beaver Creek confluence to Elevenmile Dam — *Recreational*

The goal of this alternative is to provide protection and enhancement of the ORVs and maintain the integrity of the water delivery system. This alternative was developed to balance the concerns for maintaining water delivery and storage capability with the protection of the area's natural environment and ORVs while still meeting present uses. The chief assumptions underlying this alternative are that:

1. The current operations of the Roberts Tunnel might be affected by designation either on the North Fork or on the mainstem between the confluence and Strontia Springs Reservoir;
2. The influence of transbasin diversions is greater on the North Fork than on the South Platte; and

3. The ORVs identified in Segment E are not as prevalent in the section between the confluence with the North Fork and Strontia Springs Reservoir.

In this alternative, all eligible segments on the South Platte River, except from the confluence to Strontia Springs Reservoir, would be recommended for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Classification would be in accordance with potential classifications as listed in table 4-8 and would total 10.5 miles *wild*, 3.0 miles *scenic*, and 34.6 miles *recreational*.

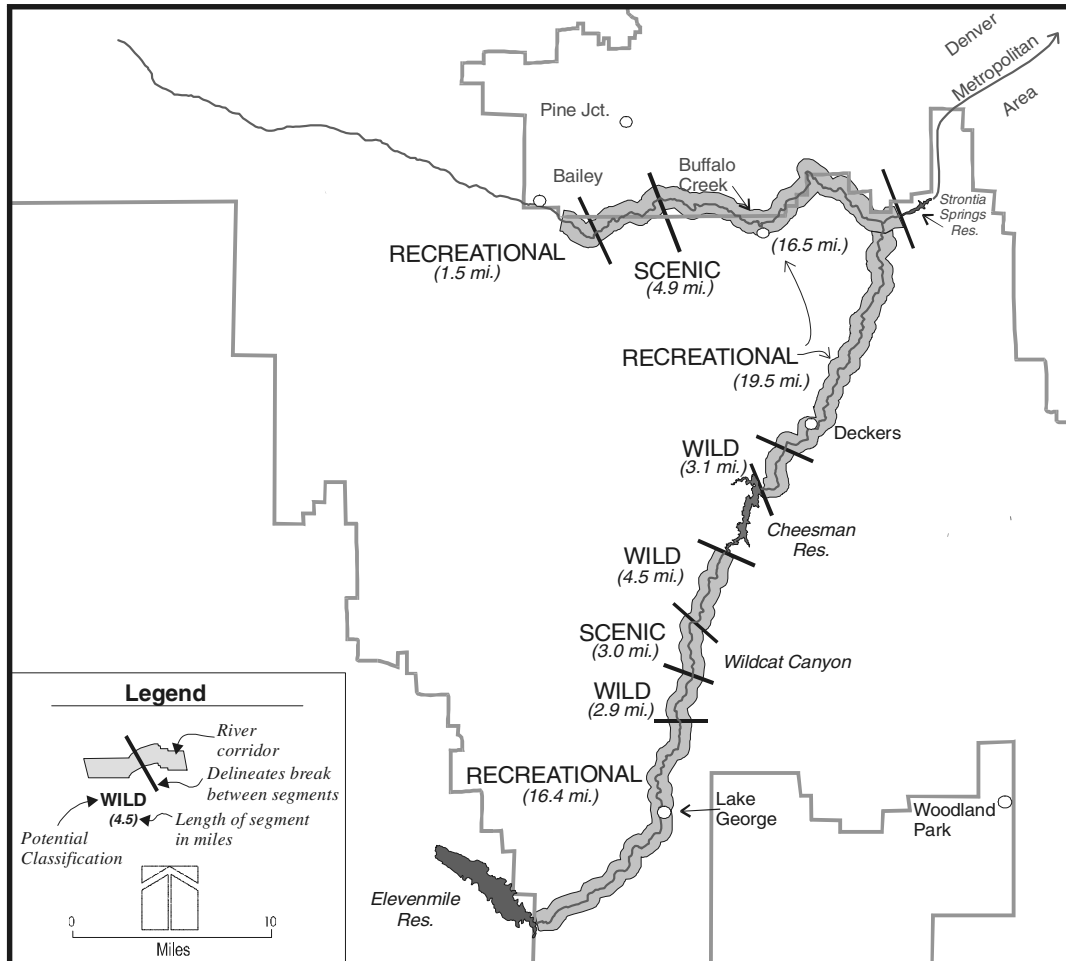
The corridor boundaries would average one-quarter mile from each riverbank; the exact boundary location would be determined as part of the management planning process after the river was designated.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Forest Service intends to protect the outstandingly remarkable values, free-flow and water quality of eligible segments of the South Platte River through the cooperative process described in Alternative A2 with Forest Service legal authorities added as described in Alternative A3. The river corridor's ORVs, free-flow, and water quality are to be managed under a Federal/State/local government partnership as outlined in the South Platte Protection Plan (Appendix A). See map 4-9.

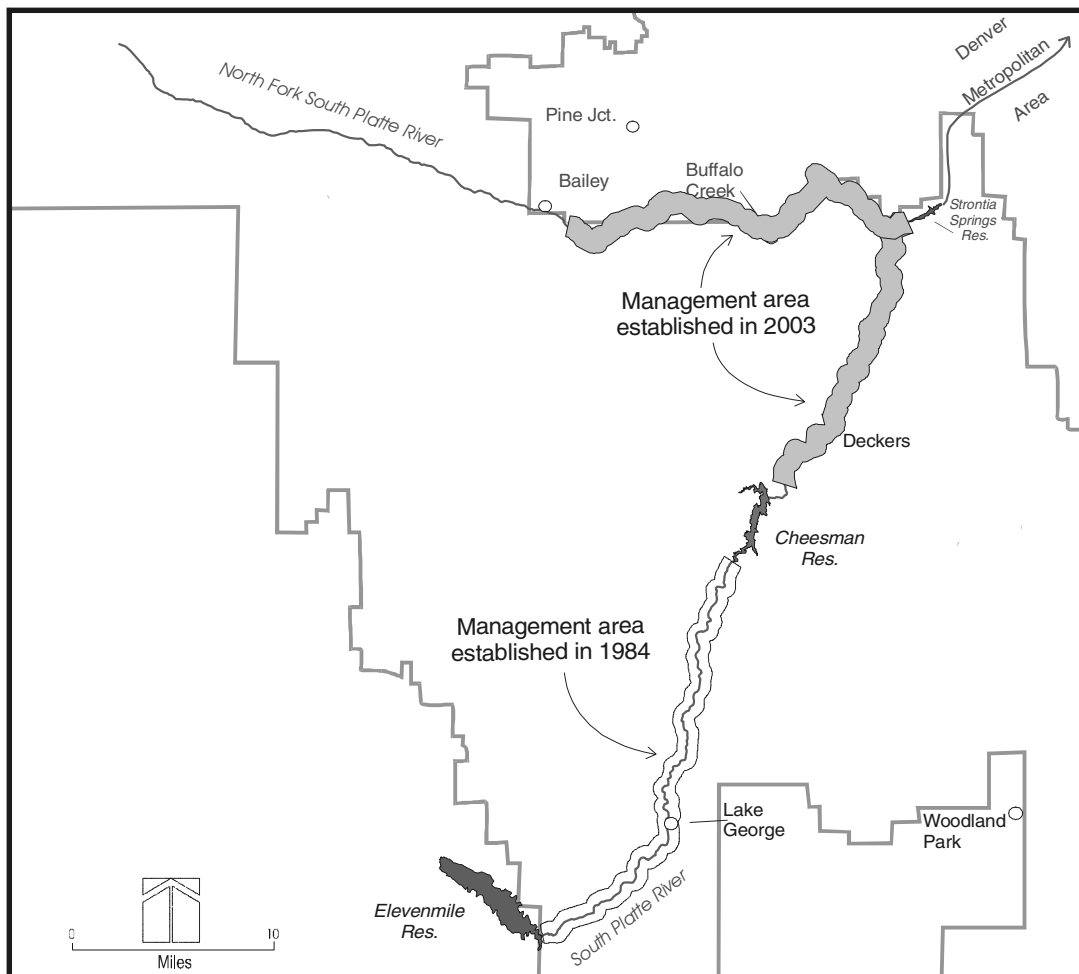
The agency is not completing the Wild and Scenic River suitability study at this time to allow for a period of review of the adequacy of the SPPP. The Forest Service will, however, amend the Forest Plan (see below) to maintain the findings of eligibility and classification to the maximum extent possible under its existing authorities. Guidance for protection of an eligible river is found in *Forest Manual 1924.03* and *Forest Service Handbook 1909.12-92-1*, section 8.12 (see Appendix G of this document). River corridor management will be

Eligible Segments with Potential Classification



Map S-3.—South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River Wild and Scenic River Study, Eligible Segments with Potential Classification.

Preferred Alternative - Forest Plan Amendment



Map S-4.—South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River Wild and Scenic River Study, Preferred Alternative – Forest Plan Amendment.

Amends the Forest Plan to establish a new Management Area designed to protect river values in eligible segments identified by this study. The amendment's direction applies to both the new management area and the one established in 1984.

monitored and periodically reviewed to ensure continued protection of free-flow, ORVs, and water quality. The monitoring program will rely on current indicators and the standards and guidelines from the *Forest Plan*.

Both Alternatives A2 and A3 envision the development of agreements among participating interests as part of implementing the SPPP. However, under the Preferred Alternative such agreements are not considered mandatory, for these reasons: (1) As a matter of enforcement, the Forest Service is accountable to adhere to agency policy regarding protection of eligibility whether it enters into other agreements or not. (2) Such agreements are voluntary undertakings and signatories are able to withdraw if needed. (3) While the Forest Service needs early confirmation from entities contributing to the Endowment Fund that they intend to contribute to the Fund and support the SPPP, confirmation can be made in more ways than by entering into an agreement, such as passing corporate resolutions to that effect.

The Preferred Alternative also considers criteria for determining whether the SPPP is actually being implemented and working properly. At a minimum these criteria are:

- Within 6 months of the Forest Service decision, potential contributors certify to the Forest Service that they intend to contribute to the Fund and support the SPPP.
- The various periodic coordination meetings identified in the SPPP are being held. An example is the meetings under the Streamflow Management Plan.
- Within 3½ years of the Forest Service decision, the Endowment Fund is fully funded, as outlined in the SPPP. (This is the period prescribed by the SPPP for reaching full financing.)

If these criteria are met, the Forest Service could conclude that the SPPP has been implemented. If not, it may have to conclude

that the SPPP has too little local support to be a viable alternative, in which case, the agency will consider reopening the river study process and making a determination regarding suitability. Further, if monitoring over time indicates that the ORV's, free-flow or water quality are being threatened, the Forest Service may similarly find it necessary to reopen the river study and suitability determination process.

BASIS FOR THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In the SDLEIS, the Forest Service analyzed the SPPP as a part of a Wild and Scenic River suitability determination. However, comments on the SDLEIS indicated it is not timely to conclude the Wild and Scenic River study, pending implementation and evaluation of the SPPP. Given that the South Platte Wild and Scenic River study was initiated by the Forest Service, there is no required timeframe for completing the study. A decision on suitability is not being made at this time so that the SPPP can be given a chance to demonstrate whether it is a reasonable substitute to designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

At this time, no activities are being proposed that might threaten ORVs, free-flow, or water quality (recognizing that unknowns exist as a result of the Hayman Fire). However, such a proposal remains a possibility; if or when one is submitted, it will provide a meaningful test of the SPPP's effectiveness. Following review of the proposal under the SPPP's auspices, a conclusion will emerge whether the proposal is consistent with the SPPP's goals. The Forest Service will then also need to review the proposal to determine whether it is consistent with the agency's policy (see above) of maintaining eligibility. If not, a decision regarding suitability may become necessary. In essence, that decision would establish the agency's position whether the merits of the proposal outweigh the values threatened by it or

visa versa. If by that time this EIS has become stale, a new NEPA document may need to be developed and released. Until that time comes, a decision on suitability does not need to be made.

This approach was selected over the other alternatives because:

- It has the best prospect of success for protecting river values by striking a reasonable balance between strong proponents for finding all segments suitable and worthy of designation, and strong opponents of any designation at all. In this manner it maintains a broad base of support for cooperative management of the river corridor.
- To the extent of Forest Service authorities and cooperator participation, it ensures protection of the ORVs, free-flow, and water quality for which these segments were found eligible.
- The Forest Service can protect ORVs, free-flow and water quality under the auspices of the National Forest Management Act.
- It has very few conflicts with existing uses.
- Except as affected by the Hayman Fire, it ensures the protection of the South Platte's current fisheries population and habitat, and the current mix of dispersed and developed recreation use in the river corridor.
- By maintaining the finding of eligibility without making a finding on suitability at this time, all river interests are ensured involvement in the cooperative management and protection of the river corridor. Implementation of the Streamflow Protection Plan will further enhance fisheries habitat and the whitewater recreational experience. The additional costs of developing a

comprehensive river management plan under designation would be avoided.

DRAFT FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENT: WILD AND SCENIC RIVER MANAGEMENT

The following replaces the direction in the current Forest Plan found on pp. III-16 and III-17.

The following river segments have been determined eligible for a suitability evaluation for designation as a Wild and Scenic River:

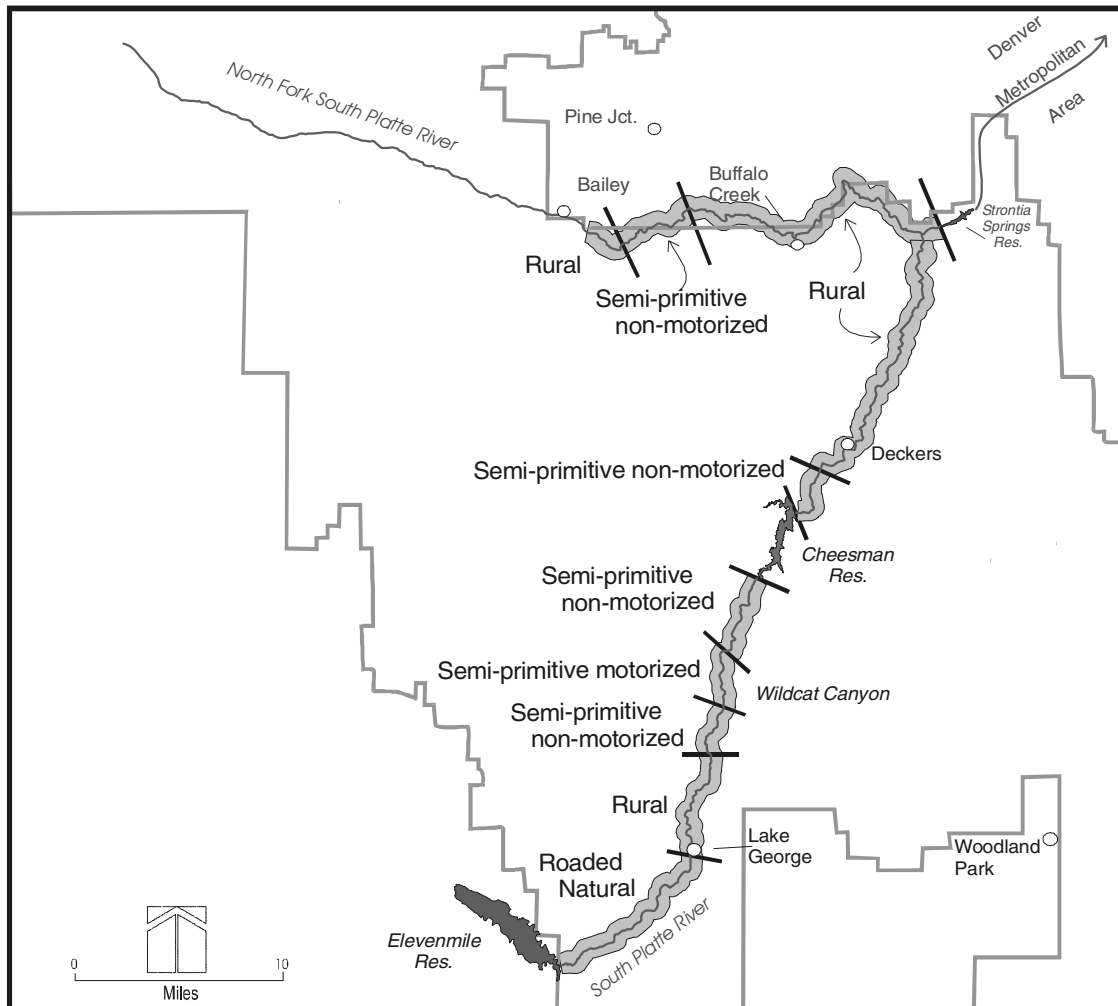
- South Platte River from below Elevenmile Dam to the high water line of Cheesman Reservoir and below Cheesman Dam to the high water line of Strontia Springs Reservoir (49.4 total miles) and
- North Fork of the South Platte River from Insmont (upstream end of Berger property) to the confluence with the mainstem of the South Platte River (22.9 miles).

The boundaries extend one-quarter mile on each side of the river segments. Pending the suitability study and recommendation, the study area will be protected to preserve its characteristics, which make it eligible.

1. Protect river segments that have been determined eligible for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System from activities which could diminish or change the free-flowing character, water quality, or the scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, and other values which make the river eligible for designation.

- a. Request that Federal lands which constitute the bed or bank, or which are within one-quarter mile of either bank, be temporarily withdrawn from appropriation and entry under the mining laws. Withdrawal should continue until the river segment is a) found to be ineligible; b) not recommended for inclusion in the National System; or c) added to the system by act of Congress.
 - b. Safeguard the values of the river area by appropriate conditions and stipulations in leases, permits, and licenses, including prospecting, issued under terms of the mineral leasing laws.
 - c. Extraction of salable, common-variety minerals from the river or the study area shall not be authorized until the study is complete and recommended actions are enacted.
 - d. Prohibit construction of roads within the river study area if it would have direct and adverse effects on the values which make the river eligible for potential inclusion into the National System.
 - e. Maintain current motorized access character and avoid any changes to the potential Wild and Scenic River classification.
 - f. Maintain free-flowing characteristics and water quality during the study and congressional review period.
 - g. Manage tree stands within the study area to maintain or enhance potential Wild and Scenic River values. Protect scenic values by sizing and shaping timber harvest units to achieve a natural appearance and to harmonize with the surrounding landscape.
 - h. Prohibit special uses or permitted land uses which degrade or have directly adverse effects on values which make the river segment eligible.
 - i. None of this direction shall abrogate any existing privileges or contracts affecting National Forest System lands held by any private party without consent of said party. Activities affecting the applicability of the U.S. mining and mineral leasing laws are subject to valid existing rights.
2. Activities and facilities will be consistent with the adopted Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and with potential river classification in eligible segments. See map S-5.
 3. In high-use semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive nonmotorized areas, consider designating backcountry camping sites and restricting use to those sites.
 4. Activities and facilities will meet designated visual quality objectives. See map S-6.
 5. Integrate trail systems with other government entities, partners and private landowners adjacent to the National Forest.
 6. Preserve and protect significant historic, archaeological, and paleontological resources for their association with events or persons, their distinctive architectural and engineering characteristics, or their intrinsic scientific data.
 7. Fire lines should not be constructed with heavy equipment unless necessary to save lives or property or to prevent resource damage.
 8. If the free-flowing character, water quality, or the *scenic, recreational*, fisheries, wildlife, and geological outstandingly remarkable values which make the river eligible for designation are found to

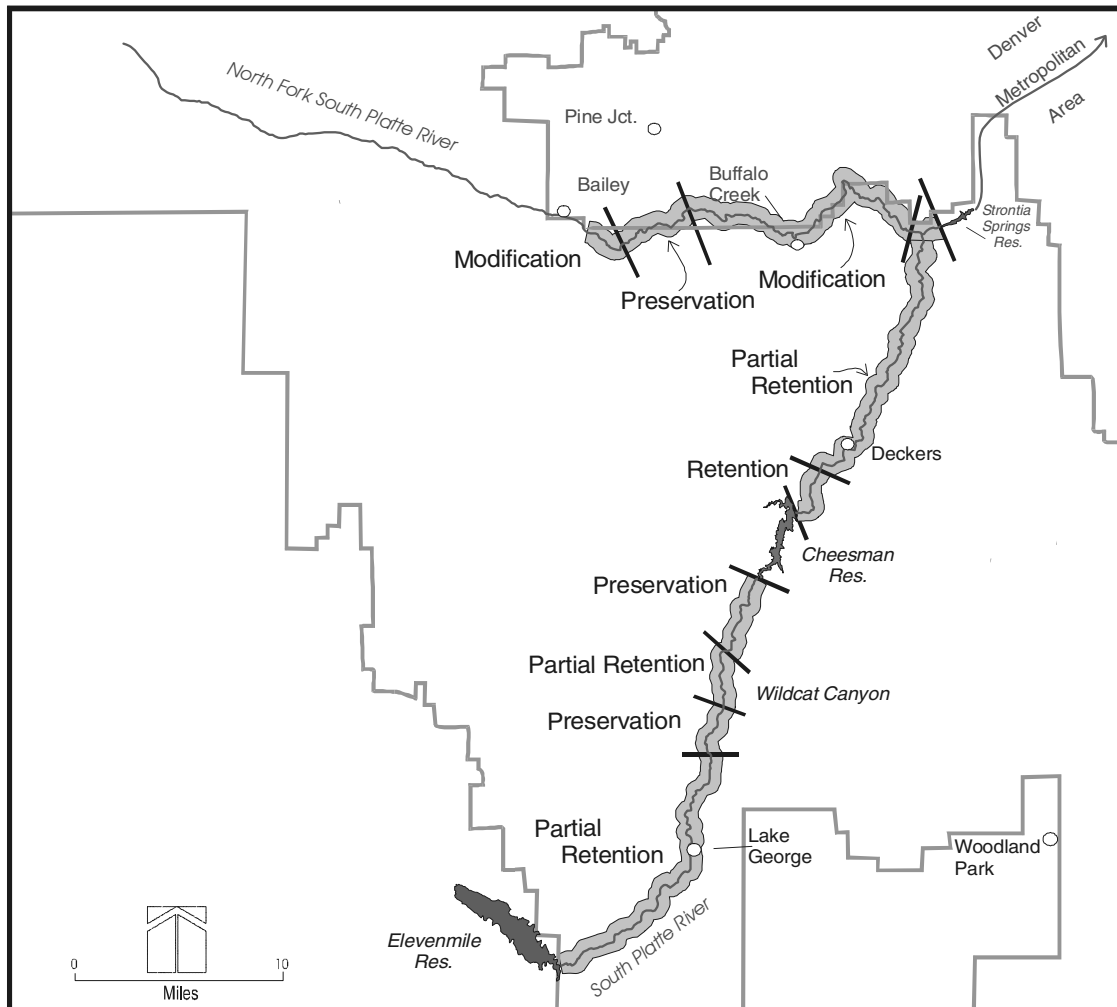
ROS Objectives



Map S-5.—South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River Wild and Scenic River Study, ROS Objectives.

Shows Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Objectives for various segment of the study area.

Visual Quality Objectives



Map S-6.—South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River Wild and Scenic River Study, Visual Quality Objectives.

Shows visual quality objectives (VQO's) for various segments of the study area.

decline or when significant action may impact eligibility or potential classification in any of the eligible segments, the Forest Service with participating parties should cooperate to address the threat to the values.

MONITORING

If any of the study corridor is designated as a Wild and Scenic River, the Forest Service, as the administering agency, would be required to identify what monitoring is already taking place, coordinate with other entities, and develop and implement a monitoring plan to ensure that the ORVs, free-flowing character, and water quality are protected and enhanced. The method of review and corrective action would be incorporated in the comprehensive River Management Plan.

Until a decision is made as to the future use of the river and adjacent lands (discussed under “Purpose and Need for Action” above), and if the South Platte Protection Plan is in effect, the Forest Service will coordinate with the SPPP to ensure that the river values, free-flowing character, and water quality are protected and perhaps enhanced and that potential classifications are maintained. Key monitoring features include:

- ❖ Reviewing proposed activities, and
- ❖ Monitoring ongoing activities and resource conditions.

The method of review and corrective action will be discussed in the Record of Decision

PROCESS AND PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE FEIS

After the public comment period for the SDLEIS, further analysis was incorporated into the document.

The finding by the Forest Supervisor for the Pike, San Isabel National Forests to protect the outstandingly remarkable values through a cooperative process will require a change in management planning for the river, so proposed language for an amendment to the Forest Plan is being included with this FEIS. The current language in the Forest Plan includes the finding of eligibility for the river segments above Cheesman Reservoir. The amendment will incorporate the finding of eligibility for the sections of the river:

- 22.7 miles of the South Platte from below Cheesman Dam to the high line of Strontia Springs Reservoir; and
- 29 miles of the North Fork from Insmont to the confluence with the South Platte.

The amendment will also incorporate a change in classification for a section of river above Cheesman Reservoir.

Following a comment period on this FEIS and Draft Plan Amendment, the Forest Service intends to review the comments and then issue a Record of Decision that amends the Forest Plan to ensure protection of free-flow, ORVs, and water quality. If at a later date the Forest Service receives a proposal for some activity that is inconsistent with the protection of free-flow, ORVs, and water quality, it may become necessary to make a decision on the suitability of the river for designation as a Wild and Scenic River. At that time, it will be determined whether the current EIS is sufficient to support that decision or whether circumstances have changed so much that a new National Environmental Policy Act document will need to be prepared.

After publication of the Record of Decision associated with the current study, the SPPP will provide a management umbrella for dealing with activities affecting free-flow, ORVs, and water quality in the river corridor. If the SPPP is not implemented in a timely manner, then it may become necessary for the Forest Service to proceed with making a decision on suitability. Similarly, if over time it becomes apparent that the SPPP is not protecting free-flow, ORVs, and water quality in the river corridor sufficient to comply with agency policy regarding eligible rivers, it may also become necessary for the Forest Service to proceed with making a decision on suitability. Criteria associated with evaluating the SPPP's effectiveness are discussed in Chapter 4 under Preferred Alternative.

CHANGES BETWEEN THE DRAFT AND FINAL EIS

Although the draft and final versions of the EIS are similar in many respects, the content of the FEIS differs in several ways from that of the DLEIS and SDLEIS.

1. The Purpose and Need of this FEIS has been modified from the DLEIS and the SDLEIS. The FEIS documents the Wild and Scenic River study and amends the Forest Plan to ensure protection of river values pending final resolution of suitability. Since this document does not make a finding on suitability, it will not be sent as a recommendation to Congress to make a final decision on designation and is now a FEIS rather than a LEIS.
2. The FEIS contains a Preferred Alternative that was developed after reviewing public comments received on the SDLEIS. The Preferred Alternative contains all of the elements of

Alternative A3 without a finding of suitability. Pending the results of periodic evaluations of the ability of the SPPP to sufficiently protect ORVs, free-flow, and water quality, this FEIS does not preclude the Forest Service to later make an appropriate finding regarding suitability. Alternative A3 was described in detail in the SDLEIS.

3. In the SDLEIS, a major component of Alternative A3 was the development of a river management plan. This reflected thinking at the time that A3-*suitable*, in particular, was similar to designation; and a river management plan appeared appropriate to parallel a designation track. The Preferred Alternative is silent on the issue of suitability, and a river management plan is not required.

Therefore, the Forest Service has removed this as a component of the A3 alternative and will use the Forest Plan and the South Platte Protection Plan to coordinate management of the river.

4. Appendix J is a summary and analysis of comments received on the DLEIS and SDLEIS. It contains a summary of the written comments received, responses to substantive issues raised in the comments, the minutes from the public meetings held during the public comment period for the SDLEIS, and copies of all letters received from local, county, State, and Federal governments. Representative public comments also have been incorporated into section 4.2, "Key Study Issues."
5. Technical changes in the text were made in response to specific comments made to the DLEIS and SDLEIS. Updates were also made by the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team to reflect changes on the National Forest since release of the original DLEIS. These changes

provide new information or clarify information provided in the two draft documents.

6. In response to the analysis of unresolved issues in the South Platte Protection Plan (Alternatives A2 and A3), the constituent group that developed the SPPP submitted supplemental material to the Forest Supervisor June 5, 2001. That new material is included as part of Appendix A and is included in this final analysis of that plan.
7. An amendment to the Forest Plan has been included for comment. In light of comments made on the SDLEIS, a plan amendment is needed to comply with Forest Service Policy and establish that the ORVs will be protected in the river segments that have been identified as eligible (Segments D, E, and H).
8. The classification for Segment C, Wildcat Canyon, has been changed to reflect ongoing motorized travel from Hackett Gulch downstream to Corral Creek. The segment has been split into three sections:
 - a. C1, Beaver Creek downstream to one-quarter mile upstream of Hackett Gulch, retains its *wild* classification,
 - b. C2, one-quarter mile upstream of Hackett Gulch downstream to one-quarter mile downstream of Corral Creek, is reclassified as *scenic*, and
 - c. C3, one-quarter mile downstream of Corral Creek to high water line of Cheesman Reservoir, retains its *wild* classification.
9. The Hayman Fire burned 137,500 acres in June of 2002—3,393 acres of it in the river study corridor. Sedimentation input has increased as a result of severe burn areas above the river corridor. References to the fire have been added throughout the text. It will be several

years before the impact on the river corridor can be assessed fully. The Forest Service does not anticipate significant changes to this analysis in determining suitability of the river corridor for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System since fire has been, and always will be, a natural and dynamic force in the surrounding area.

10. In the DLEIS and SDLEIS, the Bureau of Land Management was listed as a cooperating agency. Cooperation was required because BLM was responsible for 29 acres in the North Fork river corridor that was being leased to Jefferson County. This land was formally transferred to Jefferson County in 2001, thus releasing BLM from all responsibilities as a cooperating partner. The Forest Service is now the sole agency responsible for the study.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EIS

Chapter 1 provides background on the purpose of the EIS, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the public involvement process used to produce and review the DLEIS and SDLEIS, and changes since release of the DLEIS and SDLEIS.

Chapter 2 describes the affected environment, the physical, biological, social, and economic characteristics of the South Platte and North Fork of the South Platte River corridors.

Chapter 3 contains the methods and findings of the resource assessment process used to determine eligibility and the methods and findings of the classification analyses.

Chapter 4 discusses the key study issues, review alternatives not considered in detail, and describes the management alternatives in narrative form (Appendix B contains a matrix

with more detailed information about each alternative). The Draft Plan Amendment is included in this chapter.

Chapter 5 assesses the impacts of each alternative on the resources described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 contains a list of people who prepared this EIS.

Chapter 7 contains the individuals, agencies, groups, and Tribes to whom a copy of the LEIS was mailed.

Chapter 8 contains a glossary of words related to this project.

Chapter 9 includes the references cited and other sources used to prepare this document are provided.

Appendix A contains the South Platte Protection Plan including the supplemental material submitted after release of the SDLEIS.

Appendix B contains a table comparing the alternatives and summarizing the impacts of the alternatives on each of the key. Appendices C and D contain the 1984 and 1996 eligibility studies and classification determinations.

Appendix E contains the Biological Evaluation for the study. Appendix F is a copy of the Wild

and Scenic Rivers Act in its entirety.

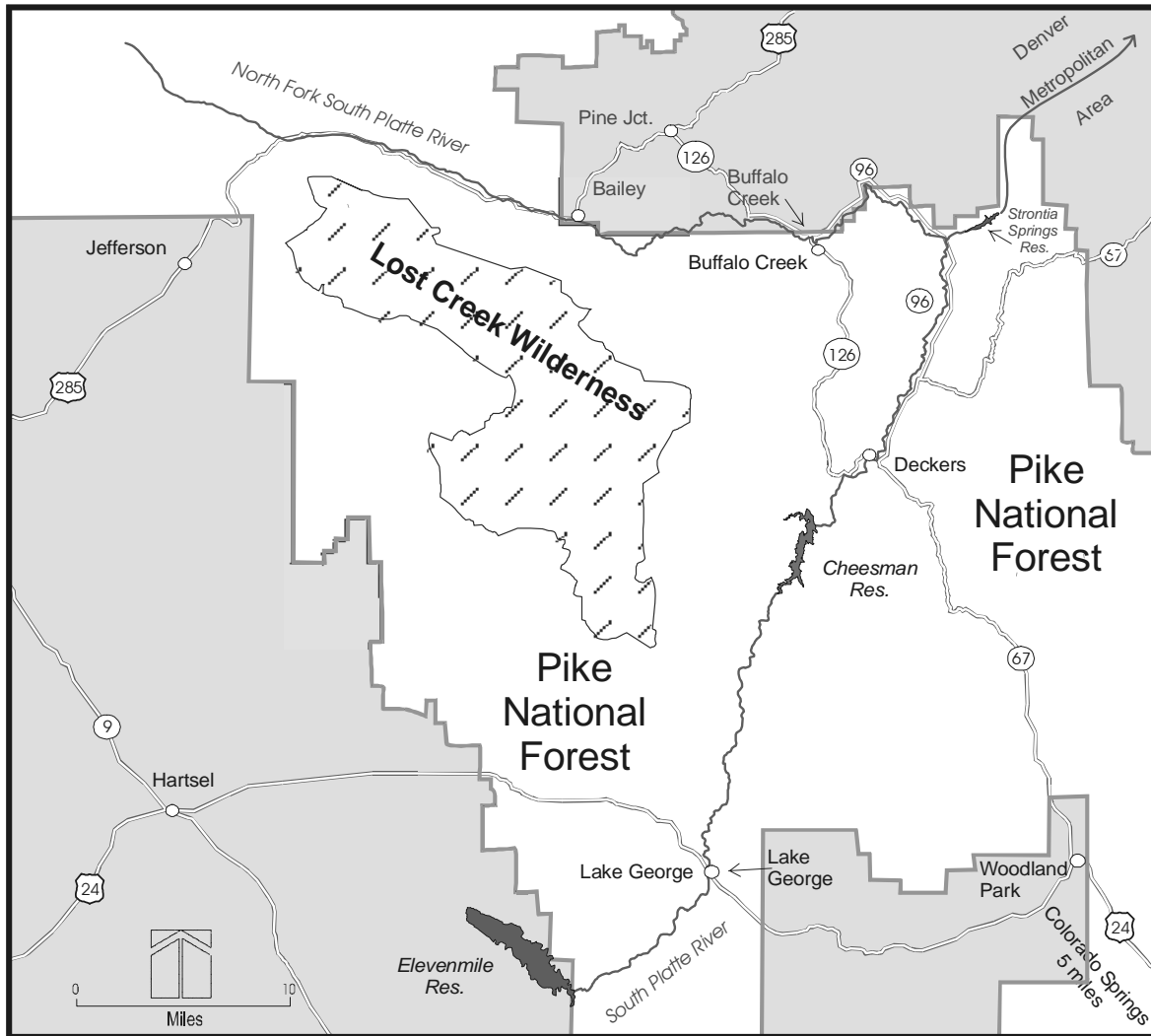
Appendix G contains *Forest Service Manual* sections 1924 and 2354 and *Forest Service Handbook* section 1909.12, Chapter 8.

Appendix H contains an analysis of section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—a water resource development analysis. Appendix I contains a description of water quality status and classification explanation. Appendix J is a summary and analysis of comments received on the DLEIS and SDLEIS.

Note: Because this summary is intended to be a stand-alone document, it repeats some of the information included in the text.

South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River
Wild and Scenic River Study

Vicinity Map



Land Ownership

- Within National Forest Boundary
- Outside National Forest Boundary

Roads and Highways

- State Highways
- U. S. Highways