

SAN JUAN RIVER SYSTEM

Eligible portions of the San Juan River and tributaries, and their classification, are as follows. Details for each segment are below.

Table D.57 - Miles Eligible

	WILD	SCENIC	REC	TOTAL
West Fork San Juan River	8.60		8.70	17.30
Wolf Creek & Falls Creek			7.75	7.75
East Fork San Juan River			13.12	13.12
San Juan TOTALS	8.60		29.58	38.17

NAME: WEST FORK SAN JUAN RIVER

Location: The stream was studied from its headwaters to its confluence with the East Fork San Juan River, where they combine to form the San Juan River. The entire stream was found eligible. The total length of river studied and found eligible was 17.29 miles. The segment was determined to be sufficiently free-flowing and to possess sufficient water quality to support the outstandingly remarkable values.

Wild and Scenic classification: This segment is split between a wild and a recreation classification. The breakdown of the number of miles in each category can be seen in the following table. The upper portion of the stream is classified as wild because it is located in the Weminuche Wilderness and can only be accessed by trail. The lower section of the stream is classified as recreation due to the presence of a road along most of this segment and a designated campground along the stream.

Table D.58 - Miles by Classification

WILD	SCENIC	REC	TOTAL
8.60	0.00	8.70	17.29

Land ownership: Land ownership is split between National Forest and private land. The following table is a breakdown of land ownership along this segment in river miles.

Table D.59 - Miles by Ownership

FS	Private	Total	% FS
10.67	6.62	17.29	61.7%

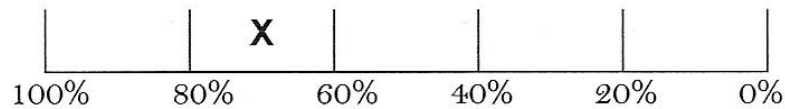
The following table is a breakdown of the ownership within the river corridor in acres.

Table D.60 - Acres by Ownership

FS	Private	Total	% FS
3,440.99	1,784.74	5,225.72	65.8%

The private lands are concentrated in the lower four miles of the corridor. In this portion, the Forest Service lands are small slivers that don't touch the stream

Amount of federally owned land within the river corridor



Outstandingly remarkable values

Geology: The West Fork San Juan River has geological significance. The river has carved through a complex of Tertiary Oligocene pyroclastics (ash flows, tuffs and lava flows) emplaced during the creation of the San Juan volcanic field, a time of possibly the most violent volcanic explosions (caldera eruptions) of the last 4 billion years. Erosion by the river has left on the valley side walls exposures of massive layers of pyroclastics and volcanoclastics that are “textbook” cross sections of the distal zones of the San Juan volcanic field in Colorado. Also in the river valley, the post-glacial failure of support in the volcanic cliff walls has generated massive ongoing landslides, classic examples of slope failure, gravity slumping and colluvial movement, hosting outstanding groves of aspen which thrive on such disturbed ground. Recreational driving and hiking benefit from the colorful exposures of volcanic ash, which rival those of Yellowstone National Park’s Little Grand Canyon.

Existing and potential land uses

The West Fork of the San Juan River is mostly within the Weminuche Wilderness. The lower portion is within a recreation management area. This is compatible with the geologic ORV.

Approximately 1.9 miles of the stream channel, accounting for 450 acres of private land, are within Archuleta County. According to the Archuleta County Community Plan (2001), the existing use on this land is agricultural and the future land use code lists the area as very low-density residential. The base density in this area is 35 acres per dwelling. This type of development would not interfere with the recreational classification of the river. The remainder of the private land is within Mineral County, which does not have a land use plan.

Potential for conflict with existing and potential land uses



Mineral potential

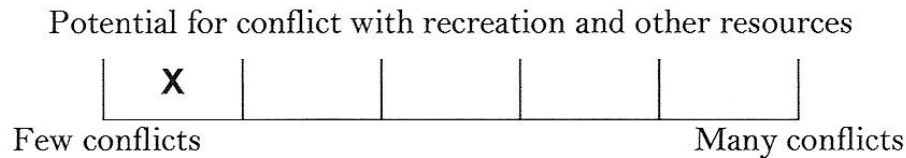
The upper portion in the wilderness is favorable for epithermal veins of locatable minerals. There has been no development and there is no current production.

The river flows through an area of “high to moderate” oil and gas potential. There is no current production in this area.

Recreation and other resource activities

There is one developed campground in the area. Hiking, camping, backpacking, horse riding/packing, skiing and use of hot springs are popular.

Other activities that may occur include agriculture, mining and livestock-grazing.



Special areas

The upper portion of the stream is within the Weminuche Wilderness.

Socioeconomic environment

The San Juan Public Lands Center did not conduct an economic study of Mineral County, so statistics comparable to those quoted for other counties are not readily available.

Current administration and funding needs

Finding this stream suitable for Wild and Scenic will not dramatically change the use or management in this area; therefore the costs associated with the management of this river segment would not greatly increase. If Congress or the Interior Secretary were to designate this as a Wild and Scenic River, the increased attention and public presence might increase management costs.

Benefits and impacts of Wild and Scenic and other methods and preliminary suitability determination

The West Fork of the San Juan is found preliminarily suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in the preferred alternative. The determination of suitability is based on the ORV of geology, which in turn lends to the scenic and recreational value of the area. The geology of the West Fork of the San Juan corridor stands out because of the way in which it displays the variety of formative influences resulting in the San Juan Mountain range.

In comparison to most of the rivers considered through this plan, the West Fork of the San Juan does involve a substantial amount of private land, all of which is located at the downstream end of the segment being found preliminarily suitable. There are also many decreed water rights situated downstream of National Forest System lands on this segment. The ORV of geology, however, is present throughout, and best represented by, the entire segment. Therefore, trimming the portion of the river preliminarily found suitable under the preferred alternative back to the boundary of National Forest System lands would not fully capture the values identified. Looking only at the portions of the West Fork of the San Juan within the forest boundary, the ORV of geology would be well-protected by existing national wilderness designation. Public comment is sought specifically on the concerns and benefits of a finding of suitability for this river segment in light of the relatively great portion of private lands involved.

NAME: EAST FORK SAN JUAN RIVER

Location: The stream and associated corridor (one-quarter mile on either side) was studied from where it became a third-order stream to its confluence with the West Fork San Juan River, where they combine to form the San Juan River. The entire stream was found eligible. The total length of river studied and found eligible was 13.12 miles. The segment was determined to be sufficiently free-flowing and to possess sufficient water quality to support the outstandingly remarkable values.

Wild and Scenic classification: The entire stream has a recreation classification. There are roads that closely follow the entire length of the stream making it readily accessible.

Land ownership: Land ownership is split between National Forest and private land. The following table is a breakdown of land ownership along this segment in river miles.

Table D.63 - Miles by Ownership

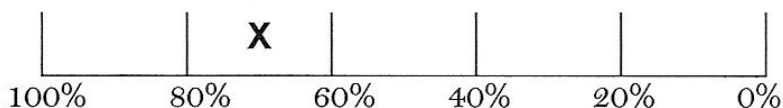
FS	Private	Total	% FS
7.28	5.84	13.12	55.5%

The following table is a breakdown of the ownership within the river corridor in acres.

Table D.64 - Acres by Ownership

FS	Private	Total	% FS
2,412.77	1,376.68	3,789.45	63.7%

Amount of federally owned land within the river corridor

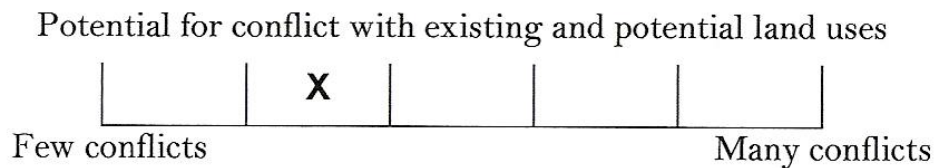
**Outstandingly remarkable values**

Geology: This stream is a “textbook” example in the San Juan Mountains of a multiple advance-and-retreat alpine glacial-fluvial system in a setting of recent volcanic geology, ranging from sculpted headwaters through glaciated valley to narrow outwash canyons. There are abundant post-glacial features, including braided stream system, terminal and lateral moraines, the dramatic “gateway” entrance to the glacial valley, hanging valleys, and waterfalls. The entire reach of the river is a document of the most recent planetary glacial age, which may not yet be over, through geologic terrain that was fresh when the glaciation began and has been little altered since it ended, a valuable “classroom” for study of a phenomenon of planetary importance that is poorly understood today. The valley’s dramatic glaciated and floodwater-carved landscapes have attracted recreational use and development proposals since the settlement of this part of the state.

Existing and potential land uses

This stream is mostly within a recreation management corridor. The upper one-third that is on Forest Service land will be managed for natural landscape with limited management. This is compatible with the geologic ORV.

Approximately 0.5 miles of the stream channel, accounting for 204 acres of private land, are within Archuleta County. According to the Archuleta County Community Plan the existing use on this land is agricultural; the future land use code lists the area as very low-density residential. The base density in this area is 35 acres per dwelling. This type of development would not interfere with the recreational classification of the river. The remainder of the private land is within Mineral County, which does not have a land use plan.



Mineral potential

Upper terminus is close to an area favorable for stockwork molybdenum and porphyry-copper molybdenum, and the upper portion is in an area favorable for epithermal veins. There had been historic exploration. There is no current production.

The river flows through an area of “high to moderate” oil and gas potential. There is no current production in this area.

