

Why are Wild and Scenic Rivers designated?

Congress created the [National Wild and Scenic River System](#) in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

There are three categories of rivers in the WSR System:

- **Wild** rivers are free of dams, generally inaccessible except by trail, and represent vestiges of primitive America.
- **Scenic** rivers are free of dams with shorelines or watersheds, still largely primitive, and shorelines are largely undeveloped but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational** rivers are readily accessible by road or railroad and may have been dammed in the past.

Congress further states that the river, with its immediate environments, must possess outstanding scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values.

Green Wild and Scenic River

The John Dingell, Jr. Act, signed into law on March 12, 2019, added 63 miles of the Green River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System under the following classifications:.

Wild River Segment - the 5.3-mile segment from the boundary of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, south to the Nefertiti boat ramp.

Recreational River Segment - the 8.5-mile segment from the Nefertiti boat ramp, south to the Swasey's boat ramp.

Scenic River Segment- the 49.2-mile segment from Bull Bottom, south to the county line between Emery and Wayne Counties.

Virgin Wild and Scenic River

Eleven river segments totaling 19 miles of the Virgin River drainage are managed by BLM Utah and all are classified as "wild". Each of the segments flows into or out of Zion National Park and a majority are within wilderness areas designated in 2009 by P.L. 116-9.

Read more about these [Virgin WSR segments](#):

- **Beartrap Canyon**
- **Deep Creek**
- **Goose Creek**
- **Kolob Creek**
- **La Verkin Creek**
- **Middle Fork - Taylor Creek**
- **North Fork - Virgin River**
- **Oak Creek**
- **Shunes Creek**
- **Smith Creek**
- **Willis Creek**

GREEN RIVER, UTAH

Managing Agency:

Bureau of Land Management

Designated Reach:

March 12, 2019. From the boundary of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, south to Swasey's Boat Ramp. From Bull Bottom south to the Emery-Wayne county line.

Classification/Mileage:

Wild — 5.3 miles; Scenic — 49.2 miles; Recreational — 8.5 miles; Total — 63.0 miles.



Photo Credit: Herm Hoops

Green River

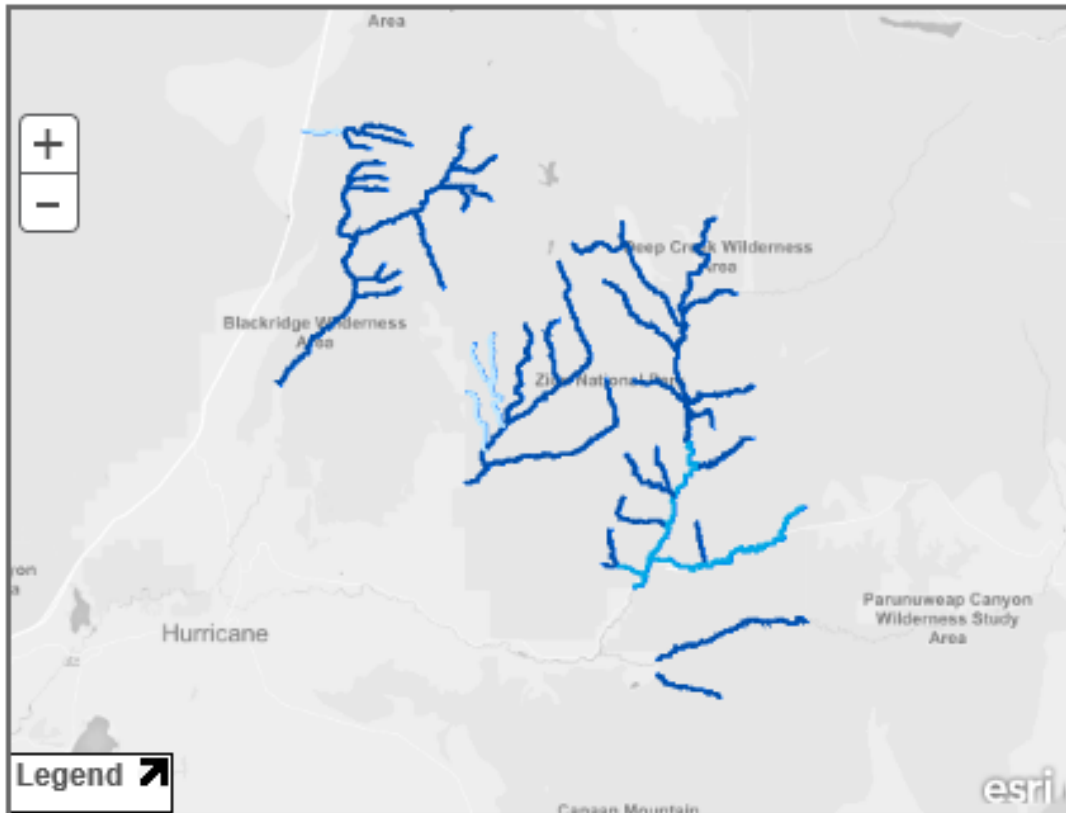
The Green River, flowing 730 miles from the Wind River Range in Wyoming to its confluence with the Colorado River in Utah, is like the crown of royalty, bespeckled with many jewels.

In 1972, Frank Buono and Herm Hoops, proposed to the Department of Interior that the river segment from Ouray to Green River, Utah, become the Green River Wilderness National Monument, including a wild river designation. Now, in the 51st year of the Wild and Scenic River Act, from the work of many people, two jewels are added to the Green River's crown. The designation prohibits activities that would harm the river's character, bans new dams and protects about a quarter-mile of public land along the river banks, allowing one to feel the land much like John Wesley Powell and his crew experienced in 1869.

With additional protection from the newly designated Green Wilderness to the west, the 5.3-mile segment of the river from Rattlesnake Canyon to the Nefertiti Boat Ramp has been designated as wild and 8.5 miles from Nefertiti to the Swaseys boat ramp as a recreational river. In addition, a 49.2-mile segment below the town of Green River, from Bull Bottom to the Wayne County line, designated as a scenic river, is also protected by the Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness on the West. Combined with the recent addition of a boat passage at Tuscher Wash, it is possible to boat over 350 miles from Flaming Gorge Dam to the confluence with the Colorado River.

Now, these segments of the river protect secretive places where the Anasazi and Fremont Indians left signs of the earliest habitation. The crisp light of a billion stars pierce the night sky, and overwhelming silence clasps one like a blanket as the river winds through the sparsely inhabited land. Here, the call of a wren, howl of coyotes, or splash of a beaver are the only sounds that echo above the flowing water's whisper. Four endangered fishes recover within the waters, while black bears and mountain lions prowl the banks and mule deer hide in the willows. Early cowboy, rustler and homestead history await discovery to share their tales.

VIRGIN RIVER, UTAH



[+ View larger map](#)

Managing Agency:

Bureau of Land Management, St. George Field Office
National Park Service, Zion National Park

Designated Reach:

March 30, 2009. The Virgin River and tributaries, including:

▶ [Virgin River Tributaries](#)

Classification/Mileage:

Wild — 145.4 miles; Scenic — 11.3 miles; Recreational — 12.6 miles; Total — 169.3 miles.

Virgin River

Through the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), Congress designated approximately 165.5 miles of the Virgin River and its tributaries across federal land within Zion National Park (28 segments) and adjacent Bureau of Land Management Wilderness (11 segments), as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Over the course of 13 million years, the Virgin River has carved through the red sandstones of Zion National Park to create some of the most unforgettable scenery in the National Park System. In fact, this very act of natural erosion is responsible for "The Narrows," which is one of the premiere hiking adventures in the United States, possibly the world. In addition, there are several easy trails along the river.

Despite the obvious evidence of the erosive force of the river, the river itself winds peacefully through the canyon. Natural river processes proceed unimpeded, allowing for seasonal flooding and meander migration, vegetative recruitment and plant succession.

The corridor includes populations of desert bighorn sheep, Mexican spotted owl and the endemic Zion snail and exemplary riparian corridors and rare plant communities. Cottonwoods and willows along the banks provide shade of hikers and hiding spots for mule deer and numerous bird species. Other wildlife, such as ringtail cats, bobcats, foxes, rock squirrels and cottontail rabbits rest in the rocky hiding places carved in the sandstone. As the heat of the day yields to the cool of the desert night, look for the many animals drawn to the river to emerge to get on with their lives.

The Virgin River system contains some of the best examples in the region of prehistoric American Indian sites that provide a tangible connection between culturally associated tribes and their ancestors.

The Bureau of Land Management has identified the outstandingly remarkable values on its lands that make the Virgin River and its tributaries so special and unique. If you don't see a description of the ORVs for a particular segment, they either have not yet been defined, or the agency hasn't yet sent them to us.