Designated Wild & Scenic Rivers

Boundaries don't protect rivers, people do.

(Brad Arrowsmith, landowner along the Niobrara National Scenic River, Nebraska)

Virgin River in Zion

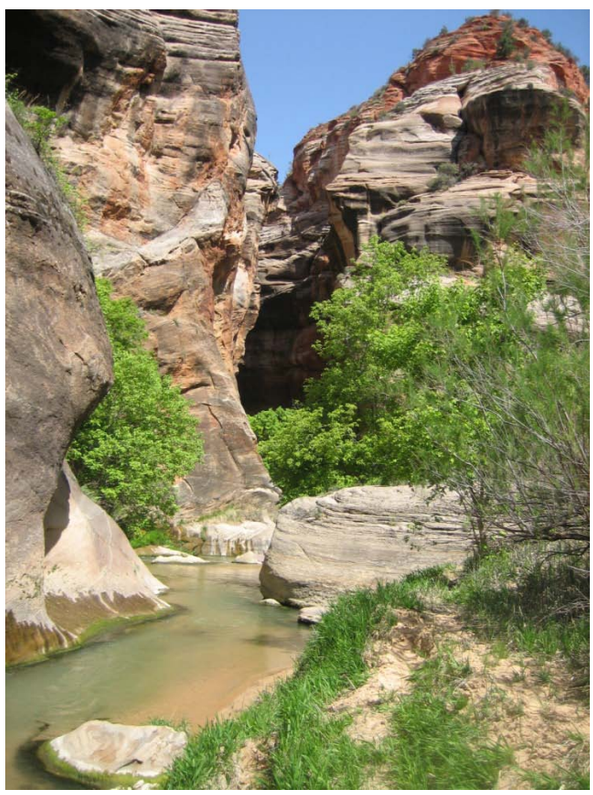
In 1968, Congress established a national policy to protect undeveloped rivers and streams, through the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the creation of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. To be included in this system, a river must be free-flowing and the stream corridor must contain at least one “outstandingly remarkable” resource value, such as scenic and habitat qualities or recreational potential. Eligible rivers are further categorized as either “wild,” “scenic,” or “recreational” rivers, based on their naturalness and accessibility for recreational uses.

Are there Wild and Scenic Rivers in Washington County?

Through the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Congress designated approximately 165 miles of the Virgin River and its tributaries across federal land within and adjacent to Zion National Park to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Eleven river segments, totaling approximately 19 miles, are managed by the BLM St. George Field Office. Each of the segments flows into, or out of, Zion National Park and a majority are within new wilderness areas that were also designated in the 2009 legislation.

How does the Wild and Scenic Rivers designation affect the public’s use of the rivers?

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act protects the natural, undeveloped qualities of designated rivers, through restrictions on land uses and activities that could impair or destroy these values. Because all but two of the BLM-managed segments flow through newly-designated wilderness areas, motorized and mechanized vehicle travel and equipment use are prohibited in these river corridors. Primitive recreational activities such as hiking, backpacking, camping, and fishing continue to be authorized public uses of the designated rivers and adjacent BLM-managed public lands.



East Fork Virgin River in Zion