

## Wild and Scenic River

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 USC 1271-1287) Public Law 90-542, approved October 1968 established a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The reason for this act is noted in Section 1(b) of the Act, “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstanding remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

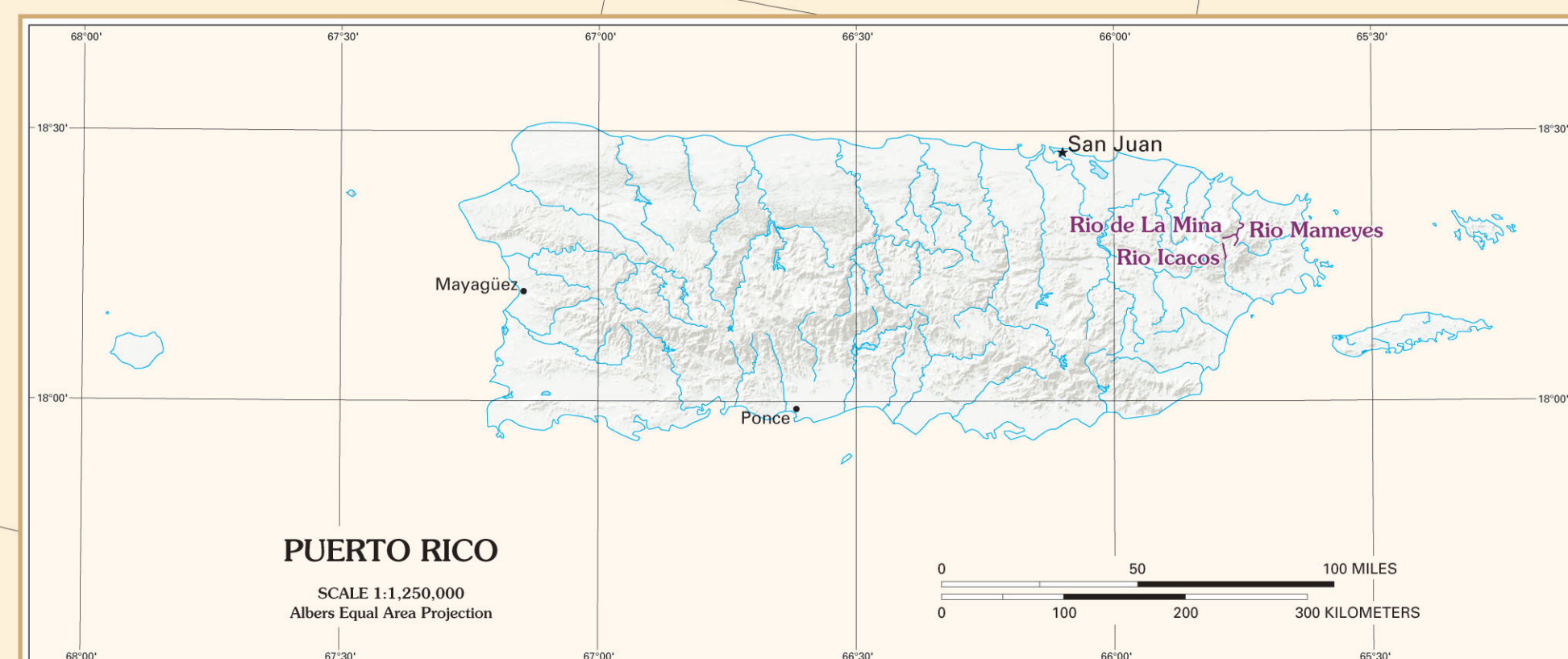
It is extremely unlikely that any USDA Rural Development Project will ever impact the section of the Rio Grande River that is designated a Wild and Scenic River. The location of this area within Brewster and Terrell Counties in the Big Bend Area of Texas is too remote and inaccessible for development. Other States like Oregon and Idaho have several designated rivers and have to be more attentive to this in their environmental reviews.

A project that is near the Rio Grande River and has a water discharge into a watershed that is upstream from the designated Wild and Scenic area could have an environmental impact and would require a detail review.

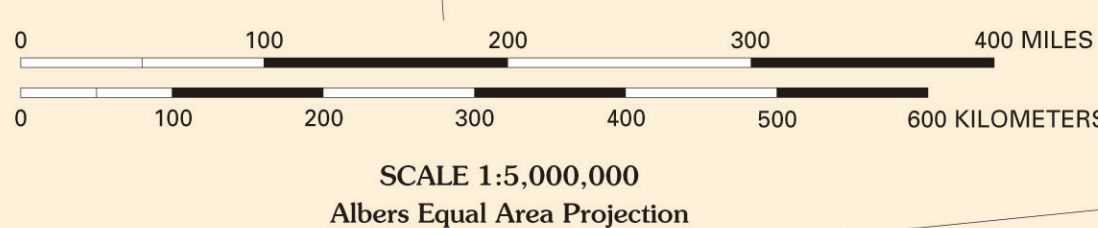
To find information about the “Wild and Scenic Rivers Act”, simply input the words into a web search engine such as “Google”. There is generally more information than you will ever need for an environmental report. One good source for information for Wild and Scenic Rivers can be found here: <http://www.rivers.gov> . The option buttons along the top of the page will access a wealth of information on the topics available.

By clicking on the “National System”, a list of designated rivers by state will display. Scroll down and locate Texas. You can click on the provided links to obtain additional information about the Rio Grande River.

To access a map of all the designed rivers in the lower 48 States, move the screen arrow over the “Publications” button on the Home Page. Then click on the, “Maps & GIS” button in the drop-down menu. Scroll down and click on the link to the, “Download the US Map” in either 72 dpi, 150 dpi, or 200 dpi. An option box will ask you if you want to open, save or cancel the page. Recommend to save the map to your computer for later access or editing.



**NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM**  
**SEPTEMBER 2009**  
 CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES



**THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM**  
[www.rivers.gov](http://www.rivers.gov)

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-642; 18 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.

Rivers may be designated by Congress or, if certain requirements are met, the Secretary of the Interior. Each river is administered by either a federal or state agency. Designated segments need not include the entire river and may include tributaries. For federally administered rivers, the designated boundaries generally average one-quarter mile on either bank in the lower 48 states and one-half mile on rivers outside national parks in Alaska in order to protect river-related values. Rivers are classified as wild, scenic, or recreational.

(1) **Wild river areas** — These rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.

(2) **Scenic river areas** — These rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by road.

(3) **Recreational river areas** — These rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in parts.

Regardless of classification, each river in the National System is administered with the goal of protecting and enhancing the values that caused it to be designated. Designation neither prohibits development nor gives the federal government control over private property. Recreation, agricultural practices, residential development, and other uses may continue. Protection of the river is provided through voluntary stewardship by landowners and river users and through regulation and programs of federal, state, local, or tribal governments. In most cases not all lands within boundaries or will be publicly owned, and the Act limits how much land the federal government is allowed to acquire from willing sellers. Visitors to these rivers are cautioned to be aware of and respect private property rights.

The Act purposefully strives to balance dam and other construction at appropriate sections of rivers with preservation protection for some of the country's most outstanding free-flowing rivers. To accomplish this, it prohibits federal support for actions, such as the construction of dams or other instream activities, that would harm the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, or outstanding resource values. However, designation does not affect existing water rights or the existing jurisdiction of states and the federal government over waters as determined by established principles of law.

With the passage of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, the National System projects more than 12,500 miles of 201 rivers in 20 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; this is a little more than one-third of one percent of the nation's rivers. By comparison, more than 78,000 large dams across the country have modified or lost 600,000 miles, or about 47%, of American rivers.

For general questions concerning the wild and scenic rivers program, refer to the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council website at [www.rivers.gov](http://www.rivers.gov) or contact one of the following:

<b>USDA Forest Service</b> U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildland and Trail Systems Section 201 - 14th Street, SW Washington, DC 20250	<b>USDA Forest Service</b> U.S. Department of the Interior National Wilderness System Division of Nature Resources 4401 North Fairfax Drive, 6th Floor Arlington, VA 22204
<b>Bureau of Land Management</b> U.S. Department of the Interior National Landscape Conservation System 1621 Street, NW Washington, DC 20008	<b>National Park Service</b> U.S. Department of the Interior Conservation and Visitor Relations 1849 C Street, NW Orla Cook, 2240 Washington, DC 20040



Produced by the USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service in cooperation with the National Atlas of the United States®. Alaska Wild and Scenic Rivers System map is available through [www.rivers.gov](http://www.rivers.gov). There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers in Hawaii.



## Rio Grande

### Texas

Big Bend National Park  
 Post Office Box 129  
 Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834  
 Telephone: (915) 477-2251

**Designated Reach:** November 10, 1978. The segment on the United States side of the river from river mile 842.3 above Mariscal Canyon downstream to river mile 651.1 at the Terrell-Val Verde County line.

**Classification/Mileage:** Wild — 95.2 miles; Scenic — 96.0 miles; Total — 191.2 miles.

This 191-mile stretch of the United States side of the Rio Grande along the Mexican border begins in Big Bend National Park. The river cuts through isolated, rugged canyons and the Chihuahuan Desert as it flows through some of the most critical wildlife habitat in the country.

Related Sites: [Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River \(National Park Service\)](#)  
[Rio Grande in Big Bend National Park](#)



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Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, Texas

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