

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D.C., August 14, 1967.

Hon. WAYNE N. ASPINALL,
Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. ASPINALL: This responds to the request of your Committee for a report on H.R. 90 and H.R. 493, identical bills relating to the establishment of a national scenic rivers system, and on similar bills, H.R. 3996, H.R. 6166 (which we understand supersedes H.R. 3996), H.R. 6588, and H.R. 8416.

We recommend the enactment of H.R. 8416 with the clarifying and perfecting amendments indicated below. The urgent need for legislation to establish a national scenic rivers system has been set forth in our previous executive communications to the Congress on this subject.

We are sympathetic with the objectives of all of the Scenic or Wild Rivers bills which have been introduced in the 90th Congress. Basically, four different proposals are pending before the Congress, illustrated by H.R. 6166 (which is identical to the bill the Department submitted to the Congress by an executive communication of February 18, 1967), H.R. 90 which was introduced by Congressman Saylor, H.R. 8416 which you introduced, and S. 119 which was introduced by Senator Church. We have considered these bills very carefully.

We believe it would be appropriate to start the system either with the four rivers mentioned in H.R. 8416, as a minimum, or any combination of the additional rivers designated as the initial units of the system in H.R. 6166 or S. 119. Attached to this report is a summary of the principal differences between the pending bills.

H.R. 8416 declares a policy of the United States to preserve in a free-flowing condition certain selected rivers which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, and to protect such rivers and their immediate environments for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. To carry out this policy the bill establishes a national scenic rivers system composed of rivers authorized for inclusion in the system by Act of Congress, and rivers designated as scenic rivers by or pursuant to an act of the legislatures of the States through which they flow. In order for the rivers so designated by State legislatures to be included in the system, however, they must be (1) permanently administered as scenic rivers by an agency or political subdivision of the States involved without expense to the Federal Government; (2) found by the Secretary of the Interior to meet the criteria established in the bill and such criteria supplementary thereto as he may prescribe; and (3) approved by the Secretary of the Interior for inclusion in the system.

The bill recognizes four types of rivers as eligible for inclusion in the national scenic rivers system: (1) wild rivers—free-flowing rivers located within designated units of the national wilderness preservation system or *de facto* wilderness areas; (2) natural environment rivers—free flowing rivers the valleys of which have been little changed by man but to which public access is facilitated and along which compatible resource uses may be permitted; (3) pastoral rivers—free-flowing rivers the valleys of which are predominantly used for agriculture and other dispersed human activities which do not substantially interfere with public use of the rivers and enjoyment of their surroundings; and (4) historic and cultural rivers—rivers, including reservoirs, canals, and other man-made structures, which have great historic or cultural significance. In addition, the bill recognizes two types of areas as eligible for inclusion in the national scenic rivers system ordinarily, but not necessarily, as supplements to the above river types. Such areas are (1) unique natural and historic river areas—specific sites along rivers which should be preserved intact because of their scientific, natural beauty, archeological or historic value; and (2) high-density use areas—sites along or not far removed from rivers which, in order to serve outdoor recreation needs, may involve substantial alteration of the environment.

As the initial components of the national scenic rivers system authorized by the Congress, the bill designates segments or tributaries of four rivers and adjacent lands—the Rio Grande (New Mexico), the Rogue (Oregon), the Salmon