

This section was selected by Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson for a vacation trip by inflated rubber rafts in 1966. The canyons below the Park have been scheduled for a national Sierra Club river trip in November 1968 which will do much to publicize this spectacular but little known section.

The most exciting scenery in the Big Bend country is the canyons of the Rio Grande, and these are best seen from the river. It is a happy coincidence that this section is one of the finest canoeing streams in the United States. It is only recently that knowledge of this recreational resource is spreading. Articles on boating in the Big Bend appeared in the Spring 1966, Winter 1966, and Summer 1967 issues of *American White Water*. Now, boaters other than the regulars from Texas and New Mexico are eager to try these runs. In fact, one couple came from Germany to boat the Big Bend this year.

The Big Bend section of the Rio Grande is more than wild and scenic. It is unique in this country. It certainly deserves serious consideration as a National Scenic and Wild River.

LANDOWNERSHIP

In the Northern New Mexico section of the Rio Grande, the river has cut a deep canyon through the rock, frequently with steep walls well over 1,000 feet, which reach to the water's edge. These steep cliffs have prevented roads and even trails in many places within these canyons. This fact has preserved the wilderness aspect, by acting as a natural barrier to the intrusion of man. Since there is no room for roads or trails, there is no room for fields to grow crops, or the need for water to irrigate them. For this reason, the vast majority of all land along this section of the Rio Grande has never been homesteaded and is already in federal or state land ownership. This makes the transfer of land an administrative matter, rather than one of payment to private ownership. For this section of the Rio Grande there would be no loss of taxes to the local county because of federal land being transferred to Wild River status.

CLASSIFICATION

The Northern section of the Rio Grande from the Colorado border to the town of Pilar, New Mexico, fits well into the several classes of wild rivers proposed by Mr. Dingell in HR-493 and Mr. Saylor in HR-90.

Class I—would apply to that section of the Rio Grande between the Colorado border and Taos Junction Bridge (State Road 96). This area is "free of impoundments and inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shore lines essentially primitive" since there are no roads in the canyon which parallel the river.

Class II—would apply to that section of the Rio Grande between Taos Junction Bridge and Pilar, New Mexico. This section is "still largely primitive and (has) shore lines largely undeveloped but accessible at places by roads". Here, there are no buildings or private holdings, but an unpaved road parallels the river for nine miles. This is an ideal site to be developed into a park for automobile camping, fishing, and boating, with easy access to the river.

Mr. Aspinall in HR-8416 excludes this Class II section of the Rio Grande, which is best suited for high-density use. This area should be included as the public already makes the greatest use of this undeveloped area. Yet without garbage pits or cans and toilets, the wilderness aspect is already becoming spoiled by the vast amount of trash already piling up. We solicit that Mr. Aspinall include this section in his bill, or that HR-90 be adopted which includes this section.

CONCLUSION

The Rio Grande at 1885 miles is the fifth longest river in North America, and provides much of the boundary between the United States and Mexico. At present approximately 70 miles in New Mexico are proposed for immediate inclusion within the National Scenic River System. In Texas, a larger portion should be studied for future designation as a "Wild River". The least we can do for future Explorer Scouts, fishermen, picnickers, and boatmen is to let them discover for themselves a stretch of the river as our forefathers have.

Mr. TAYLOR. Are you familiar with the Aspinall bill, H.R. 8416 and its provisions concerning the Rio Grande?

Mr. FRETWELL. Yes, I am familiar with the Aspinall bill. I have read that, prepared a map on part of it—