

ANN plans public presentation on Wild and Scenic River nominations

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

Recently Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley called for an expansion of the Wild and Scenic River (WSR) network in Oregon and asked the public to nominate eligible rivers and streams. Grateful for the opportunity, Applegate Neighborhood Network (ANN) quickly went to work identifying potential WSR nominations in the Applegate River watershed. We scoured the maps, identified eligible streams, and hiked off-trail through numerous wild watersheds to document their important biological, recreational, historic, and scenic values.

Our analysis of the Applegate River watershed led us to four major nominations. In total, we identified 197 eligible stream miles, including the most gorgeous and ecologically functional streams on federal lands in our region. If designated as WSRs, the "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" of each stream would be protected on public lands.

We nominated the Upper Applegate WSR, the Little Applegate WSR, the Pipe Fork WSR, and the Slate Creek WSR. Throughout these proposals we documented "Outstandingly Remarkable Values," including recreation, fisheries, scenic resources, botanical values, geologic values, wildlife, historical values, and ecological/biological diversity. The protection of these important values will benefit our rivers and streams, fisheries, water quality, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation opportunities, historic resources,

local communities, and the scenic beauty of the Applegate River watershed.

Upper Applegate WSR

The proposed Upper Applegate WSR includes 168 stream miles both above and below the Applegate Dam, including Star Gulch, Palmer Creek, Kinney Creek, and Mule Creek, in the foothills of the upper Applegate Valley. These streams are unique in Oregon for their diverse, low-elevation forest, woodland, chaparral, and grassland habitats.

The proposal also includes the most impressive tributaries of the Applegate River, including portions of Elliott Creek, Carberry Creek, Butte Fork, and Middle Fork. Together these streams contain the wildest, most remote and intact portions of the Applegate River, with vast tracts of old-growth forest, rugged mountain canyons, bedrock gorges, waterfalls, unique geology, and incredible wildlife habitat.

The WSR designation would protect the streams pouring out of the Red Buttes Wilderness and the surrounding roadless areas on the Siskiyou Crest. These watersheds contain an incredible array of plant communities, innumerable rare plant populations, eight designated botanical

areas, and a large Late Successional Reserve to protect old-growth habitat.

Little Applegate WSR

Located deep in the Little Applegate River canyon, the proposed Little Applegate WSR contains six miles of the Little Applegate River and 10 miles of tributary stream, including parts of Bear Gulch, Muddy Gulch, Owl Gulch, Blacksmith Gulch, Skunk Gulch, and lower Glade Creek.



The proposed Wild and Scenic Middle Fork of the Applegate River flows through rocky outcroppings. Photo: Luke Ruediger.

The Little Applegate River canyon contains important wildlife habitat for species such as the northern spotted owl, Siskiyou Mountains salamander, and Pacific fisher, as well as large herds of overwintering black-tailed deer. Known for its biodiversity and rare plant species, the area is the driest major watershed in western Oregon and contains a unique habitat mixture from eastern Oregon, western Oregon, and the foothills of California. The canyon contains important historical resources associated with the Sterling Mine Ditch, as well as incredible scenic and recreational values.

Pipe Fork WSR

The Pipe Fork is located at the headwaters of Williams Creek. The area is important for its old-growth forests and has the easternmost stand of Port Orford cedar in Oregon. Williams Creek is the most productive coho salmon stream in the Applegate River watershed, and as the last wild tributary of Williams Creek, the Pipe Fork contains the watershed's coldest, cleanest water.

Slate Creek WSR

Slate Creek is the first tributary of the Applegate River and an important watershed for anadromous fisheries. ANN has proposed the headwaters of Slate Creek for WSR protection. This portion of the watershed contains important cold-water refugia for fisheries, beautiful stands of Port Orford cedar, unusual serpentine soils, and rare plant populations, including the only populations of the carnivorous cobra lily (*Darlingtonia californica*) in the Applegate River watershed.

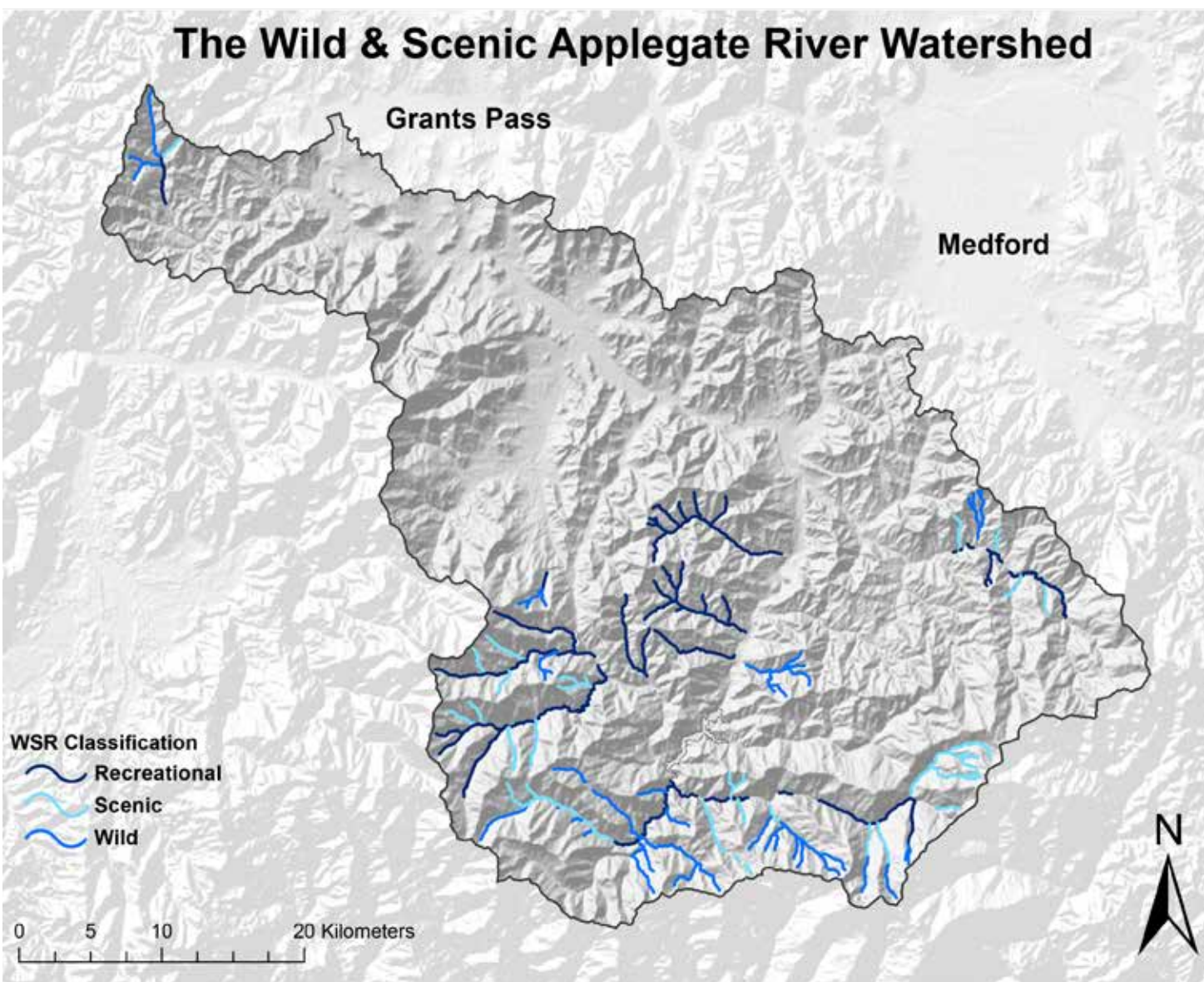
ANN presentation

ANN will host a public presentation about these proposals at the Applegate Valley Fire District Community Building from 4 - 6 pm on Sunday, March 15. As ANN's executive director, I will discuss these exciting proposals and take you on a photographic journey along the Wild and Scenic Applegate River. Please join us and learn how you can get involved!

Luke Ruediger

siskiyoucrest@gmail.com

A map created by Applegate Neighborhood Network (ANN) shows tributary streams in the Applegate River watershed proposed for Wild and Scenic River designation. According to ANN, the main stem of the Applegate River is not eligible for designation and is not included on the map.



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