

Purpose and Need for a Plan



BACKGROUND

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Public Law 90-542 (Appendix A), declared the following as the policy of the United States:

“that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other 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 future generations.”

The Act also states that these rivers would be preserved "in their free flowing condition to protect the water quality . . . and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes”.

In 1976, Public Law 94-486 (Appendix A) amended the original Act to establish the Obed Wild and Scenic River (Obed WSR) encompassing 45.2 river miles on portions of the Obed and Emory Rivers, and Clear

and Daddys Creeks in Morgan and Cumberland Counties, Tennessee. The National Park Service (NPS) has primary management responsibilities for the Obed WSR. Lands currently within Obed WSR boundaries that are part of the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area (Catoosa WMA) will continue to be owned and managed by the State of Tennessee, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) in such a way as:

“to protect the wildlife resources and the primitive character of the area and without further development of roads, campsites, or associated recreational facilities unless deemed necessary by that agency for wildlife management purposes.”

The legislation required that a development plan be prepared and include a cooperative agreement between the two agencies due to their joint management responsibilities.

A *Development Plan and Stream Classification* was prepared by the NPS in 1978. This plan identifies classifications of stream segments -- 44.25 river miles as "wild" and 0.95 river miles as "recreational" -- and presents a plan for development consistent with the classifications. The plan also contains the first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of the Interior and TWRA. The MOU has been renewed about every five years with the

most recent approved in 1992 (see Appendix B). Parts of the *1978 Development Plan* have been initiated, including improvements to two river access sites and partial development of one trail. A third river access was scheduled for improvement in Fiscal Year 1993, however, improvements have been deferred pending completion of the general management plan. Little else in the plan has been implemented primarily due to lack of funding.

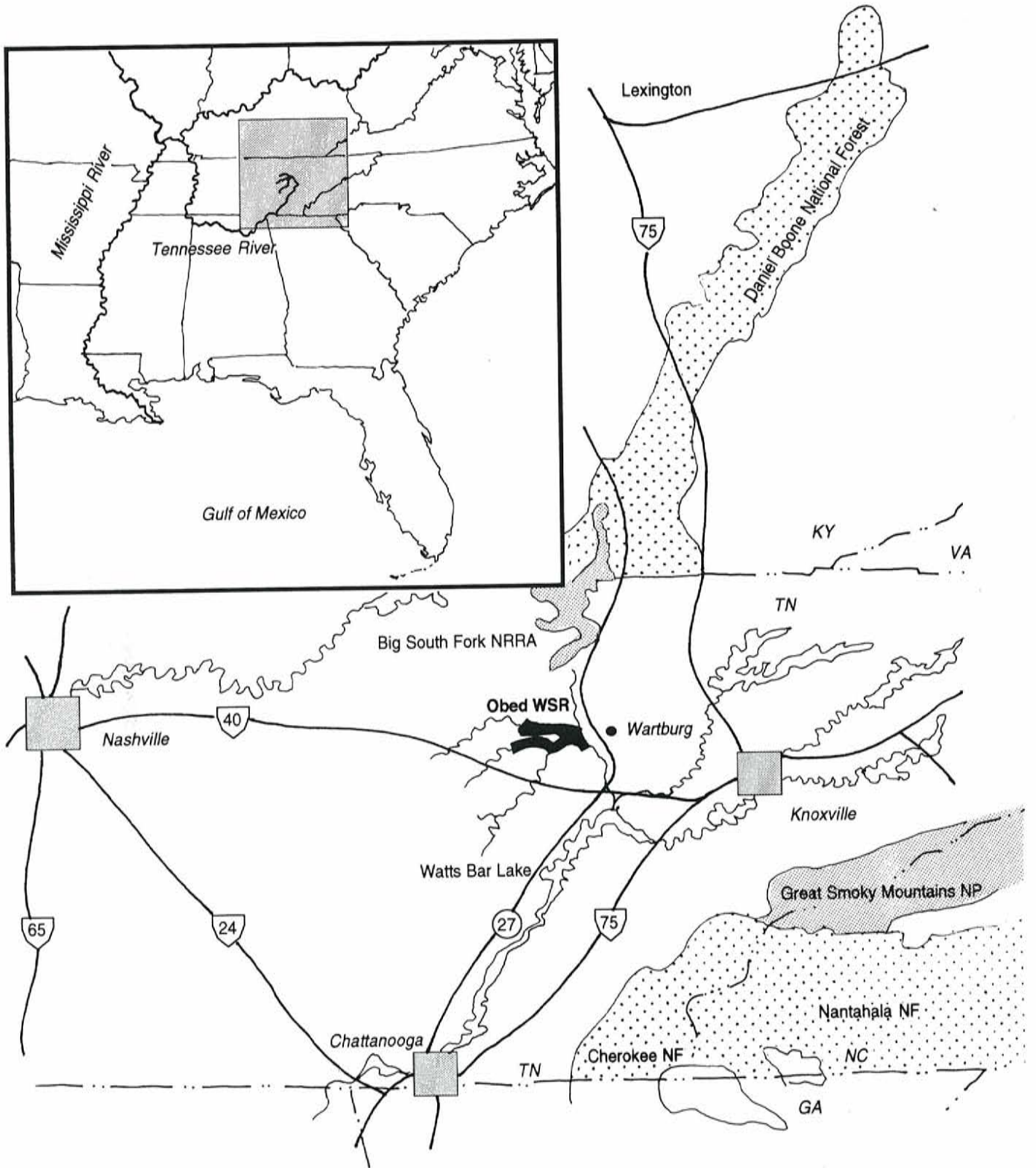
As a unit of the National Park System, Obed WSR is also subject to the legislative mandate that applies to all units of the system:

to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.
(NPS Organic Act, 16 USC 1)

This general management plan was prepared pursuant to the National Parks and Recreation Act, P.L. 95-625, to provide for the protection of the river values and address resource management and visitor use. The plan serves to guide development of the Obed WSR, as the *1978 Development Plan* did, but will also guide overall management and use in ways that will best serve visitors while preserving the values for which the Obed WSR was established.

The GMP has been prepared in cooperation with the TWRA, and with public and agency involvement, and will guide management of the Obed WSR for approximately the next 10 to 15 years. It presents two alternatives for the management of the Obed WSR one of which the NPS prefers and is identified as the Proposed Action. This document also analyzes the environmental consequences of implementing the alternatives.





DIRECTION for the PLAN

To ensure public participation in the planning process, public workshops and an "open house" were conducted. The purpose of these events was to identify the issues, alternatives, and impacts that should be considered in the general management plan. These meetings also provided a direction for the planning process.

To initiate the general management planning effort, a management objectives workshop was held in Wartburg, Tennessee on May 27 and 28, 1992. Participants included the NPS as well as representatives from the TWRA, other agencies, the local community, and special interest groups.

The purpose of this workshop was to develop a series of clear statements specific to the Obed WSR which would guide its management including development of the general management plan. The process used to develop these statements, or management objectives, along with the comments received during the other workshops and open house, have resulted in:

- a statement of the purpose of the Obed WSR,
- a description of the significance of the Obed WSR including its major attributes and distinctive position in the National Park System,
- a discussion of the issues and management concerns affecting the Obed WSR, and
- the management objectives.

Each of these is listed or discussed in the following sections. Together, these materials provide the fundamental basis and direction for the general management plan.

PURPOSE of the OBED WILD and SCENIC RIVER

To preserve and protect the Obed Wild and Scenic River System and the surrounding area in an essentially primitive condition, with unpolluted waters, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

SIGNIFICANCE of the OBED WILD and SCENIC RIVER

The Obed WSR is a unit in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System—a system containing more than 150 rivers—and is one of only seven such units that have been authorized in the southeastern United States. It is one of the last remaining wild rivers in the eastern United States, the only one managed by the NPS in the southeast, and the only designated Wild and Scenic River in Tennessee.

The Obed WSR is located within Morgan and Cumberland Counties on the Cumberland Plateau in north-central Tennessee. Existing boundaries encompass approximately 5,057 acres (2046 hectares) including portions of the waters, stream bed, and lands adjoining 45.2 miles of the Emory River, Obed River and two of the Obed River's tributaries--Clear Creek and Daddys Creek.

The quantity and quality of waters in the Obed WSR sustain and nourish a rich variety of outstandingly remarkable values. The Obed WSR contains an outstanding example of a deep sandstone gorge with high stream gradients which together direct white water flows down boulder-strewn courses intermingled with quiet, smooth-flowing stretches. The water is clear and is considered to be among the highest quality in the State.

The Obed WSR is a very scenic resource, with high bluffs, waterfalls, unique geologic features, luxuriant plant life, and many species of animal life occurring within its boundaries. Possessing great ecological diversity, the area contains 10 of 12 ecosystems unique to the Cumberland Plateau, 2 critical habitats and 16 State and federally listed endangered, threatened, and rare species (see "Affected Environments" for more specific information). About 90 percent of the corridor is forested and contains stands of mature hardwood and evergreen forests.

Rugged terrain has caused the river corridor to remain relatively uninhabited. Seasonal prehistoric Native American hunting groups used the natural rock shelters, river

terraces, and upland terrain. Logging and mining camps were established during the 19th and early 20th centuries. More recently, recreational use has dominated the river corridor.

The general inaccessibility and wild character of much of the area offer visitors a unique opportunity to experience a vestige of primitive America. A wide variety of outdoor recreational experiences are accommodated. Boating, fishing, hunting, swimming, picnicking, and camping are common activities by local residents and visitors from major portions of the eastern United States. For boaters, the varied levels of difficulty and the primitive setting contribute to a high quality white water experience.



PLANNING ISSUES and MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

The following issues and concerns were raised during the management objectives workshop and other meetings with the public and other agencies. These issues are addressed in this plan.

Resource Management:

- *Resource Data.* Information gaps exist that hinder effective resource management. What additional information and protection measures are needed?

- *Water Quality.* Do waters in the Obed WSR meet current state water quality standards for the designated beneficial uses? How can the water quality in the Obed WSR be protected when the presently authorized land base makes up a small portion of the watershed? What impact do land management practices occurring on public and private lands upstream have on the Obed WSR? Some large subdivisions are being developed within the Obed River watershed and the population in the area is expected to increase. Lands within and adjacent to the boundaries have been leased for the extraction of coal, oil and gas. Timber cutting, clearing lands for development, oil and gas drilling, and agricultural and residential land activities can impact water quality by causing soil erosion, ground and surface water pollution, and drainage alteration.

- *Water Quantity.* The quantity of water in the streams is linked to its quality. What are the natural stream flows of the Obed WSR and what can be done to maintain them for plants, animals, and recreation? A number of dams and impoundments exist and more are proposed. What impact do these impoundments have on the natural stream flows?

- *Endangered and Exotic Species Management.* How should the feral hogs in the area, which cause erosion and can

damage endangered plants and their habitats, be managed? What management is needed to protect the 23 plants, 11 wildlife species, and the critical habitats for two wildlife species which are classified as rare, threatened, or endangered species, or carry other special designations?

- *Cultural Resources.* Very little is known about the number, type, and location of cultural resources in the Obed WSR. Of the 13 culturally significant sites that have been identified, most have been vandalized or are being threatened by other human activities. How many other culturally significant sites exist within the Obed WSR boundaries? What management and protection measures are needed? What resources are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? Are there significant ethnographic patterns or influences that should be protected?

Visitor Use and Interpretation:

- *Education and Interpretation.* What interpretation of the Obed WSR is needed? How and where should visitor orientation, information and interpretation be accomplished? How should the value of and need to protect the Obed WSR resources be communicated to the local community?

- *Visitor Experience.* What is the quality of experience in the WSR and what uses are appropriate to provide and preserve this experience? Since use of the Obed WSR is projected to increase, what types of uses and how many users can utilize the river environment while still protecting the resources and wild character of the area?

Development:

- *Visitor Facilities.* What type and size of visitor, administrative and maintenance facilities are required and where should they be located? While the Act creating the Obed WSR gave the Secretary authority to acquire lands along the river, no consideration was given to acquiring space for visitor orientation/information, adminis-

trative or maintenance functions. Development within the boundaries is restricted by the WSR legislation. Currently the NPS leases a former bank in downtown Wartburg from the City to serve as both administrative offices and visitor contact station. A maintenance building, two blocks away, is also leased.

-Access areas, Trails and Overlooks. How should access to the river be provided and where? The river environment offers hazards to the unprepared visitor and a lack of access roads and trails make rescue options difficult. How much and what type of development is appropriate at the access areas? What impact does the potential for flooding have on development of the accesses? Littering, vandalism and theft are serious problems at the Obed WSR and unattended vehicles at river access points are favorite targets. There is a lack of facilities for the collection of trash and human waste at the various access points which can lead to increased insect, odor, sanitation, and water quality problems during the summer months when these areas are highly used. What type of scenic

overlooks or vistas would be appropriate to the area without impacting the wild character?

Operations:

-NPS/TWRA Interface. The NPS and Catoosa WMA share management responsibilities along portions of the Obed WSR. Each agency has its own unique management purpose and is required by the enabling legislation to work cooperatively to protect the values of the Obed WSR. What impact do the differing management policies have on resource management and visitor use? What opportunities exist for enhanced cooperation?

Land Protection:

-Land Base. Since land acquisition ceilings restrict the size of the Obed WSR, is the land base adequate to implement the intent of the WSR legislation, provide a quality visitor experience, and carry out the operational needs of the Obed WSR? Do the existing easements provide for the necessary protection?



MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The Management Objectives that follow are referred to throughout the general management plan. They are presented in three categories.

Resources

To achieve and maintain high water quality -- using current State water quality standards as a minimum -- and natural stream flows that are beneficial to aquatic life and suitable for swimming.

To protect the natural systems, cultural resources, landscape character, and biodiversity of the Wild and Scenic River area.

To maintain the natural abundance and diversity of native wildlife populations.

Visitor Experience

To provide the opportunity and means to learn about, experience, and enjoy the special values of the Obed WSR (essentially primitive, unpolluted, and generally inaccessible) while assuring the protection of those values.

For the "Wild" river areas (44.25 river miles): To provide the user the opportunity to experience the primitive nature of the resource between existing public bridge crossings.

For the "Recreational" river areas (0.95 river miles): To provide the user the opportunity for outdoor recreation experiences in a natural setting.

Development

To provide the following types of access and development with minimal resource degradation in concert with the river classification.

--Provide vehicular access and minimal public use facilities along the river, only at existing bridge crossings;

--Provide hiking trails;

--Provide scenic overlook experience(s); and

--Allow for and manage primitive camping.