



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Nehalem River passes near the Nehalem Falls Campground southeast of Manzanita.

Part of Nehalem River could become 'scenic'

Decision may come by November

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon parks officials believe a portion of the Nehalem River qualifies as "scenic," but potential restrictions have met with consternation from agriculture and local government representatives.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has completed a study concluding that 17.5 miles of the river meets the criteria for scenic designation, such as free-flowing water, outstanding views and recreational opportunities.

The report was submitted in June to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission, which oversees the agency and plans to vote on a "scenic" recommendation as early as November.

Restrictions meant to protect the natural features of scenic waterways can be problematic for landowners, particularly the requirement they notify state parks at least one year before making certain changes to their property within a quarter-mile of the river.

During that time, the landowner can negotiate with the agency over possible alternative plans or a sale of the property.

In the forested areas surrounding the Nehalem River, the primary concern would be delayed timber harvesting, which is already regulated under the Oregon Forest Practices Act, said Mary Anne Cooper, public policy counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

"It's a complicated structure

that's on top of anything else," she said.

Changes to roads or farm buildings may also be hindered by the requirement, Cooper said.

Though the rules for scenic rivers do make allowances for agriculture, the construction or modification of a structure — such as a pumphouse — must be compatible with the surrounding aesthetics, she said.

Whether a design is visually obtrusive is a highly subjective question that could prove problematic for landowners, she said.

The scenic designation is also meant to protect river flows, potentially interfering with the development or transfer of new water rights, Cooper said. The protections may have implications for water quality, which is already regulated under other laws for agriculture and forestry.

The Farm Bureau is also skeptical whether the 17.5 mile stretch actually meets the criteria for a scenic designation, since the landscape has long been managed, she said.

"There are homes and roads throughout the area, so it's not really undisturbed," she said.

Tillamook County's Board of Commissioners has also come out against the scenic designation, arguing that restrictions on logging will violate the state government's duty to generate revenues from property donated by the county.

"Although we support public uses on the Nehalem River ... we cannot support the proposed designation as it fails to take into account the primacy of timber production on properties which the county decided to the state decades ago," according to a letter sent by the board.

Man visiting all Oregon rivers for law's 50th anniversary

Federal act protects rivers

By MARK FREEMAN
The Mail Tribune

MEDFORD — When Zach Collier paddled down the cool and clear upper Chetco River in June, he couldn't help but think back to events five decades ago that helped put him there.

Men in suits on the East Coast who were worried about the river-damming era of their time pushed for a law that would protect wild streams and their banks for future generations.

"Future generations," says Collier, a 44-year-old rafting and kayaking guide and outfitter. "I get goosebumps every time I read that. That's us."

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act turns 50 this year, and Collier is helping pay homage to the law by systematically researching and personally experiencing each of Oregon's 58 river reaches protected by that act.

The Wild and Scenic section of the Rogue downstream of Rainie Falls is one of the eight original rivers protected under the act that now covers 203 river designations, including a second one on the far upper Rogue in the Union Creek region.

Oregon has the most streams protected under the 1968 act, thanks largely to 40 designations championed in 1988 by former U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield, who earlier helped shepherd funding to complete Lost Creek and Applegate dams in the Rogue River Basin and attempted to complete Elk Creek Dam, which was later abandoned and demolished a decade ago.

The designation means the rivers must be protected as free-flowing and managed to preserve natural, cultural and recreational values. The protections extend a quarter-mile from each bank, but not the river's source or other aspects of it outside the designated boundaries.

Southern Oregon contains the largest concentration of



Kayakers paddle through the Magic Canyon of the Chetco River in June.

Wild and Scenic rivers in the lower 48 states, and the Rogue Basin is well represented in the three designations of the act — Wild, Scenic and Recreation.

Wild rivers are generally primitive and generally inaccessible other than by water or trail, while Scenic rivers are similar but accessible in places by roads. Recreation rivers are readily accessible, have some shoreline development and may have housed dams in the past.

On the Rogue, those three designations cover 84.5 miles of water from the mouth of the Applegate River to Lobster Creek about 16 river miles upstream of the Pacific. That includes the Rogue's famed Wild section from Whisky Creek near Rainie Falls to Wascom Creek near Foster Bar.

The far upper Rogue from the Crater Lake National Park boundary to the end of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest boundary near Prospect is also designated, as is part of the Illinois River.

The designation has brought certain protections to the Rogue, including caps on commercial guides and public launches during popular spring and summer rafting and fishing seasons, and it helps squelch any possibility for the once-proposed Copper Canyon Dam on the lower Rogue downstream from the mouth of the Illinois.

The proposed hydroelec-

'I'm really partial to the Chetco. To me, it's the epitome of a Wild and Scenic river.'

Zach Collier

tric dam detailed in a 1931 report was to stand 200 feet tall and back up the Rogue far upstream, says Tim Palmer, a Port Orford author of several books, including "Wild and Scenic Rivers: An American Legacy."

When talk of the dam resurfaced in the 1960s, fishing guides and others coalesced their opposition and turned toward support of the Rogue being added to the original list of eight Wild and Scenic rivers, Palmer says.

"I think the Rogue was probably a shoe-in from the beginning," Palmer says. "The Forest Service knew it was a pretty amazing river. Ever since Zane Grey people knew that."

In all, Oregon's Wild and Scenic rivers stretch more than 1,916 miles, or 2 percent of Oregon's nearly 111,000 miles of river, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Some, like the lower Rogue

Canyon stretch and the upper Chetco, Collier runs regularly either for pleasure or for his Hood River-based Northwest Rafting Co. But the quest to visit all of Oregon's Wild and Scenic stretches began last year with Collier "not really knowing how hard that would be," he says.

Some, like the North Fork of the John Day River or the Minam River in the Wallowa Mountains, take more planning and preparation for what amounts to multiple-day floats through technical water.

"We could just go visit them and check them off the list," Collier says. "But they deserve to be done the right way."

Some are not floatable, such as the River Styx that flows underground in Oregon Caves near Cave Junction.

So far he's hit 41 of them, and he hopes to get through 50 by the end of the year.

Collier and others on these expeditions are chronicling their journeys and experiences at www.oregonwildandscenic.com, "like a portfolio of what we've visited," he says.

Among all the truly remote Wild and Scenic rivers in Oregon, however, one continues to stand out to Collier.

"I'm really partial to the Chetco," Collier says. "To me, it's the epitome of a Wild and Scenic river. It's wild, clear and untouched. It's mentally and physically exhausting. It's the Chetco."

Oregon family waits for remains of Korean War soldier

Nearly 7,700 Americans are still missing

By KATE DAVIDSON and CRYSTAL LIGORI
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The other day, the U.S. military moved 100 empty coffins to the border of North Korea.

That's because during the June summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump, North Korea agreed to repatriate the remains of soldiers lost in the Korean War.

They've been missing for almost 70 years.

There are almost 7,700 Americans still unaccounted for, according to the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.



Crystal Ligori/OPB

Corinne Steiger holds a photo of her younger brother, Cpl. Wayne Barton Gill Jr.

One of them is Cpl. Wayne Barton Gill Jr.

Born in 1930, Gill grew up in Woodburn, the youngest of three children. At 19, he enlisted in the military, first serving in Okinawa, Japan. On July 16, 1950, he wrote to his family in Salem saying he was packing his stuff to move out to "you know where."

Eleven days later, he was reported missing in action in South Korea.

At 95, Corinne Steiger, Gill's sister, is still waiting for her brother's remains.

"I think that's the only reason I am still alive," she said, "to get the whole family back together. Then I can go."

Gill's niece, Pam Brekas, was only 2 years old when Gill left to serve, but she was able to connect with him through his letters home.

"Every letter he wrote home asked about me," she said. "'How's Pammie?'"

Brekas knew her uncle had fought in the Korean War and never came home. Beyond that, her family didn't know

much more. About 10 years ago, Brekas started looking more seriously into what happened to her uncle; she worked with the Coalition of Families of Korean & Cold War POW/MIAs for answers.

They learned his name appeared on a chalkboard in a former schoolhouse in Seoul where North Korea kept prisoners of war. Brekas said some of those POWs were taken north; others were killed en route.

"His name does not appear on any list of any group that was living or that was found dead," Brekas said. "So it's as if he just kind of vanished."

The family submitted DNA samples to a laboratory

in Hawaii that's been working to identify some remains. They sent in letters Gill had licked, leaving his own DNA on the envelopes. They found samples of his baby hair and some of his baby teeth.

Twice before, the family thought they had identified remains that might be his. They're still waiting for one set to be identified. Brekas said another identification ended in disappointment when it turned out not to be her uncle.

"Somebody else got an

answer which is really good," said Brekas. "We don't know whether we ever will or not."

The family is hopeful but cautious about the new agreement between North Korea and the U.S. to repatriate remains.

"I would like to hope that through this dialogue that the leaders are having, that the remains could be recovered," Brekas said. "I'm hopeful that would happen, but I'm really skeptically optimistic because they've had agreements in the past only to fall apart."

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With Gratitude
Words cannot describe the actions of so many, caring individuals, who helped me and my family, during the recent loss of my husband, and very best friend, **Chris Summerer**. From the endless messages, visits, concerns and love, we had an army with us the entire way! I just cannot express how much we appreciated it all, as well as giving us the strength we needed to get from one moment to the next. We would also like to say "Thank You" to the businesses (and subsequent individuals) who brought the abundance of food for Chris' memorial. The food, like the friendship, was literally overflowing. And please know that we will take each, and every one of you, up on your offer of "being there."
We have experienced the worst day, minute and second of our lives and because of you all, we will be able to pick ourselves up and move forward. I was so honored to reference the coast as our "home", and the wonderful people who live here as "family." From me, and my entire family, Thank You for all you have done.
Lastly, I want to call out **Renee Caldwell, of Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary** in Astoria for the care, and professional sensitivity, in every step of the farewell process. I had very high expectations in every detail, yet Renee (and her staff) exceeded Them all. For all of this, you have our gratitude.
Russell Maize & Family