

**WESTFIELD RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS
WILD AND SCENIC RIVER EVALUATION
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Findings regarding the Commonwealth of Massachusetts'
application for designation of the Westfield River
into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System
under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

as submitted to the Secretary of the Interior by:

National Park Service
North Atlantic Region
Boston, Massachusetts

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Proposal. On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Governor William Weld has proposed that the West, Middle, and East Branches of the Westfield River be designated as a wild and scenic river pursuant to Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. If designated, the river will receive the strongest protection possible under federal law. As required by Section 2(a)(ii), future river management will be accomplished through state and local mechanisms. The federal government's role will be to ensure federal consistency with state and local protection efforts. This report describes the National Park Service's evaluation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' application.

Evaluation Procedure. Section 2(a)(ii) provides for administrative designation by the Secretary of the Interior if the river in question meets certain requirements. Requirements are as follows:

- 1) the river must have been designated as a component of the state's wild, scenic, or recreational river system by or pursuant to an act of the state legislature;
- 2) the river must be administered by an agency or political subdivision of the state;
- 3) the river must meet the eligibility criteria required of all national wild and scenic rivers, i.e. it must be free-flowing and possess one or more "outstandingly remarkable" resource values;
- 4) it must be demonstrated that the river and any outstanding resources associated with the river will be protected over time.

In addition, the proposal must be evaluated for potential impacts as per the National Environmental Protection Act.

Findings. Summary findings regarding each of the above four technical requirements are as follows:

- 1) The river meets the requirement of having been designated into a state river protection system. Each of the three branches is designated as a "Local Scenic River" pursuant to the Massachusetts Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act.

2) The management strategy currently being implemented meets the requirement that the river be administered by the state or a political subdivision. Assignments for administration and management are described in an intergovernmental Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Westfield River signed in 1990. The Department of Interior's role, as described in the agreement, is limited to processing the Governor's application and, after designation, monitoring federal projects as required by Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

3) The river meets wild and scenic river eligibility requirements as each of the three segments is free-flowing and possesses one or more outstanding resource values. Indeed, an remarkably high concentration of outstanding natural, recreational, and/or cultural values were identified including the state's highest waterfall, a major scenic gorge, wild trout populations, several National Historic Register sites, and whitewater boating opportunities that rival any in southern New England.

4) The Westfield River Greenway Plan, the inter-governmental Memorandum of Agreement, local bylaws aimed at protecting the river, the presence of state and private conservation lands, and other factors combine to provide adequate assurances that the river and its outstanding natural, recreational, and cultural values will be protected into the future.

Public Attitudes. As demonstrated by both public statements and actions, there is strong, across-the-board support for designation on the part of local government, state agencies, elected officials, environmental and sportsmen organizations, and private citizens. This is due primarily to two factors: 1) a broad recognition of the value of the river on the part of local residents and state officials, and 2) the efforts of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and other local supporters in crafting a management strategy that both protects the rivers and is sensitive to the needs of landowners and river users.

Impacts of Designation. An evaluation of the potential impacts of designation concludes that, in comparison to maintaining the status quo, designation provides major public benefits with few if any negative consequences. Designation is therefore identified as the preferred alternative.

Recommendations. Based on the fact that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' application has been found to meet all technical requirements and the positive public benefits associated with the proposed designation, the National Park Service recommends that the Secretary of Interior designate the West, Middle, and East Branches of the Westfield River as a component of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Further, the National Park Service recommends that the Westfield River Greenway Plan and the intergovernmental Memorandum of Agreement be recognized as providing the foundation for future management actions.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

In 1991 Governor William Weld of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts petitioned the Secretary of the Interior to designate three branches of the Westfield River under section 2(a)(ii) of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Governor Weld's letter to the Secretary reaffirmed a similar petition made the previous year by then Governor Michael Dukakis.

This report assesses the extent to which the Westfield River meets designation requirements as defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and subsequent agency regulations and guidelines. It also describes the potential environmental impacts attributable to the designation of the Westfield River as a component of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

For a river to qualify under Section 2(a)(ii) four requirements must be met:

- 1) the river must have been designated as a component of the state's wild, scenic, or recreational river system by or pursuant to an act of the state legislature;
- 2) the river must be administered by an agency or political subdivision of the state;
- 3) the river must meet the eligibility criteria required of all national wild and scenic rivers, i.e. it must be free-flowing and possess one or more outstandingly remarkable resource values; and
- 4) it must be demonstrated that the river and any outstanding resources associated with the river will be protected over time.

In addition, for designation to occur, the proposal must be evaluated for potential impacts as per the National Environmental Protection Act and a draft findings report released for appropriate agency and public review.

The National Park Service's draft findings report was completed in September of 1992 and made available for public and agency review by means of an announcement in the February 12, 1993 Federal Register. Following the review period the draft report was reexamined in light of comments received and revised accordingly.

This report constitutes the final findings report. It incorporates comments received during the review period. Slight organizational changes have also been made in order to better clarify evaluation procedures. These modifications notwithstanding, the conclusions reached in the final report are essentially the same as those of the draft report.

STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The **Introduction** presents a summary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and designation process. It also provides a description of the segments proposed for designation. The next section, **The Westfield River Greenway Plan** provides a summary of the Westfield River Greenway Plan and the local initiative that led to the Governor's request for designation. The following section, **State Designation and Management Requirements**, evaluates the extent to which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has met state designation and management standards as required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The river's eligibility for designation into the national system, which is based on an evaluation of the river's free-flowing condition and the existence of one or more outstanding river-related resource values within the river corridor, is then assessed. This section, **Evaluation of Eligibility and Classification**, also makes recommendations regarding the classifications (wild, scenic, or recreational) which should be used if the river is designated. The following section, **Evaluation of Resource Protection and Management**, considers whether the river's outstanding resources have been given adequate protection and whether it can reasonable to expect that commitments to protect the river will be maintained in the future.

The **Support for Designation** section describes public support for national designation. In the **Environmental Assessment** section of the report, the environmental impacts of national designation are compared to the impacts of the "no action" alternative. The report concludes with the National Park Service's recommendation on whether designation is appropriate for the river.

THE WILD & SCENIC RIVERS ACT AND DESIGNATION PROCESS

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542 as amended), authorized in 1968, was intended to protect certain free-flowing rivers in their natural condition for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, and to balance the nation's water resource development policies with a river conservation and recreation policy. Designated rivers receive protection from new hydropower projects and from federally-assisted water resource projects (including projects funded, licensed, or sponsored by the federal government) which would alter the river's free-flowing condition or have a direct and adverse effect on the river's outstanding resources.

The Act established two alternative processes by which rivers can be designated as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. One is through Congressional action, whereby section 3(a) of the Act is amended to include the newly-designated river segment(s). This legislative route is usually followed on public land rivers or on rivers which have been the subject of Congressionally-authorized studies conducted by a federal agency such as the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, or the Forest Service.

Rivers can also be designated by administrative action taken by the Secretary of the Interior. Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act allows the governor of a state to make a formal application to the Secretary of the Interior for river designation through such an administrative action. Instead of conducting a full-scale study of the river proposed for designation, the National Park Service conducts a brief evaluation of the river's state-protected status, eligibility, and suitability, and advises the Secretary of its findings.

When it is determined that a river meets the Section 2(a)(ii) requirements, the Secretary publishes a notice of administrative designation in the Federal Register and notifies the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Following completion of the 90-day interagency and public comment period and after all comments have been addressed, the Secretary takes final action regarding designation.

Rivers designated under Section 2(a)(ii) receive the full protection afforded all national wild and scenic rivers. Rivers designated through administrative action must be managed by the state or its political subdivisions rather than by the federal government. The Section 2(a)(ii)

provision is therefore ideally suited to rivers that flow through private lands and where there is a strong tradition of local management of significant natural resources.

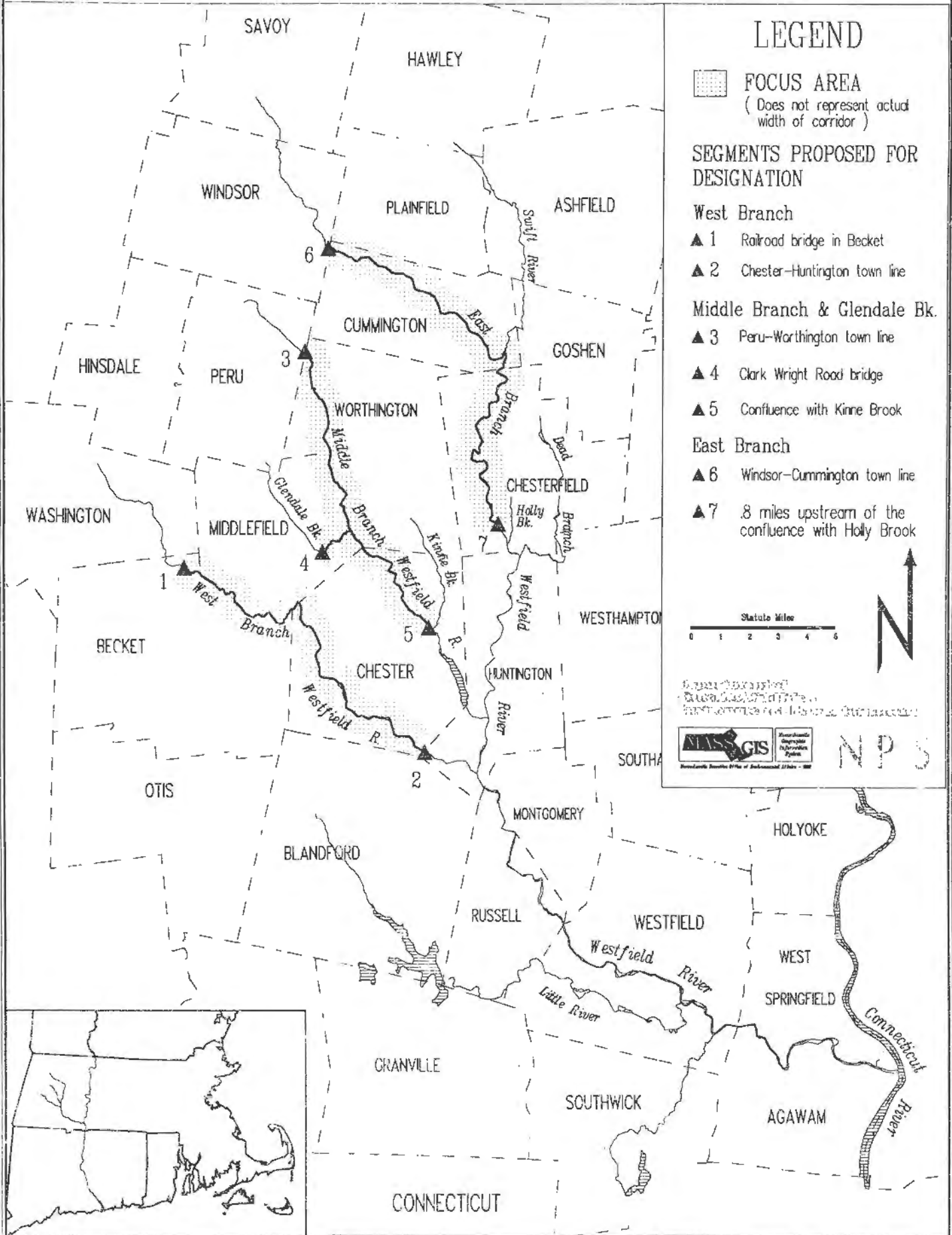
WESTFIELD RIVER SEGMENTS PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION

Forty-three miles of the Westfield River's three branches, plus Glendale Brook, have been proposed for designation. Included are the following segments:


- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| West Branch | 13.8 miles, starting in Becket at a railway bridge 2000 feet downstream of the village, and continuing downstream to the Chester/Huntington town line. |
| Middle Branch | 12.6 miles, starting at the Peru/Worthington town line and continuing downstream to the confluence with Kinne Brook in Chester; includes 0.4 mile of Glendale Brook, from the Clark Wright Road bridge to its confluence with the Middle Branch. |
| East Branch | 16.2 miles, starting at the Windsor/Cumington town line and continuing downstream to a point 0.8 miles upstream of the confluence with Holly Brook in Chesterfield. |

The segments proposed for designation are shown on the map on the following page.

WESTFIELD RIVER PROPOSED NATIONAL WILD & SCENIC RIVER SEGMENTS



LEGEND

 **FOCUS AREA**
(Does not represent actual width of corridor)

SEGMENTS PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION

West Branch

- ▲ 1 Railroad bridge in Becket
- ▲ 2 Chester-Huntington town line

Middle Branch & Glendale Bk.

- ▲ 3 Peru-Worthington town line
- ▲ 4 Clark Wright Road bridge
- ▲ 5 Confluence with Kinne Brook

East Branch

- ▲ 6 Windsor-Cummington town line
- ▲ 7 .8 miles upstream of the confluence with Holly Brook

Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5
Statute Miles



Map prepared by
Geographic Information Systems
Department, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Affairs



NPS
National Park Service
Department of the Interior

THE WESTFIELD RIVER GREENWAY PLAN

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREENWAY PLAN

The eight-year process of protecting the Westfield River was, in all respects, a classic grassroots river protection effort. The process was initiated by local groups led by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) with support from the Westfield River Watershed Association (WRWA), and was based on local interest in protecting the river's scenic qualities.

With the assistance of state and federal planning grants, the Westfield River Greenway Plan was developed and amended between 1984 and 1990. As a first step in the planning process, a Westfield River Advisory Committee was formed, consisting of local residents representing each of the communities along the river, local businesses, and hunting/fishing interests. The Committee played a key role in formulating the Greenway Plan, and in keeping town officials and others informed about the process.

During the planning process, detailed data on the Westfield River was collected and analyzed. The river's important resources and values were documented, including scenic, geologic, recreational, and historic resources; fisheries, wildlife and plant species; environmentally sensitive areas; and water quality. In addition, a comprehensive list of issues regarding the river, its use, and its conservation, was developed. High priority issues were described in detailed in the plan. These included:

- water use
- free flowing quality of the river
- water quality/pollution sources
- wilderness and wildlife areas
- growth and development impacts/land use controls
- forestry practices
- recreational use
- agricultural practices
- land preservation
- streambank stabilization and erosion
- historic resources and preservation
- floodplain management

Based on these issues and priorities, river protection options and available management strategies were

identified and analyzed. Finally, action-oriented recommendations were developed for protecting or managing each segment of the Westfield River (PVPC, 1990).

Public Involvement. Public input was an integral component of the process. Municipal officials, landowners, river enthusiasts, and the general public were each consulted regarding river problems, protection priorities, and potential actions. PVPC staff met separately with the Board of Selectmen in each of eleven river communities, held general public opinion meetings, and sent an informational flyer and survey questionnaires to all of the several hundred river landowners. As the plan was developed, an information slide show was created, a regular newsletter (the "Westfield River Current") was circulated, frequent press releases were issued, a Greenway office was opened (with donated space) in a river community, canoe trips were held, and an annual Westfield River Festival was inaugurated. All of these initiatives helped to increase public awareness of the need to protect the river, and of the ongoing greenway planning process.

Release of the Draft Plan. In 1986, the Draft Westfield River Greenway Plan was released to the public at a series of public meetings. While public reaction to the draft plan was generally favorable, there was some opposition to certain elements of the plan. Some landowners voiced legitimate concerns about the potential for increased recreational use of the river and the associated potential for increased trespassing on private lands. A small but vocal group of opponents to the plan waged a campaign against adoption of the Greenway Plan. This group contended that adoption of the plan, and in particular national Wild and Scenic River designation, would result in a wholesale federal takeover of private lands and property rights along the river.

Addressing Key Concerns. PVPC, with assistance from the WRWA and the Westfield River Advisory Committee, responded to the controversy by holding a series of information meetings in river communities. The purpose of these meetings was to listen to residents' concerns and questions, to provide factual information about the plan's recommendations and their effect on communities and landowners, and to consider possible changes to the draft plan. These meetings were often emotional and heated, but ultimately were very important in building support for the subsequent, revised version of the greenway plan. In addition to these public meetings, plan proponents met individually with a number of concerned landowners to discuss their concerns.

Amending the Plan. Following the public and landowner meetings, the Greenway Plan was modified to respond to public comments and concerns. Major changes to the Plan included: dropping plans for a hiking trail and new canoe access sites along the river; recommending increased policing and maintenance of existing river access areas; and deleting recommendations for national Wild and Scenic River designation on two river segments where landowners opposed such action.

Further Public Input. A revised Westfield River Greenway Plan was released in 1988. At this point, plan proponents coordinated a second round of meetings with the public in each river community, and with sportsmen's groups, environmental groups, legislators, and state and federal agency officials. This time, public reaction to the revised greenway plan was very positive.

CONTENTS OF THE GREENWAY PLAN

Recommendations. The revised 1988 Westfield River Greenway Plan included recommended management strategies for the entire river system. The plan's principal recommendations for management of those segments of the river's upper branches proposed for national designation were as follows:

1) Adopt an Intergovernmental River Compact. This compact or "Memorandum of Agreement" clearly defined the roles that riverine communities and involved organizations should play in managing the Westfield River. The key players recommended for inclusion in the compact were the six communities through which the segments flow, and seven non-profit, regional, state and federal organizations.

2) Seek Wild and Scenic River Designation. Forty-three miles of the Westfield River's East, Middle and West Branches were recommended for designation under both the Massachusetts Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act and the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (through the provisions of Section 2(a)(ii)). State designation gives towns priority consideration for state open space grants, and requires more stringent environmental review of state-permitted development projects. National designation benefits communities by prohibiting federally-funded or permitted water resources projects, such as dams.

3) Establish Local River Protection Bylaws. The Plan recommended that management of land use along the Westfield River remain primarily a local responsibility, administered through local zoning bylaws. It recommended that the six communities along the upper river branches adopt river protection zoning bylaws to establish a protected river corridor, including floodplain areas and a 100-foot buffer, within which the river's natural and scenic values would be preserved.

4) Promote Voluntary Conservation Restrictions. The Plan recommended that local Conservation Commissions and the WRWA work actively with private property owners to encourage the voluntary donation of conservation restrictions. Donors of conservation restrictions maintain ownership of their riverfront property while agreeing to keep these lands in an undeveloped state.

5) Increase Maintenance and Policing at River Access Sites. Increased policing and maintenance of river access areas by state agencies was recommended to minimize littering, parking problems, vandalism, and trespassing on adjacent private lands.

6) Grants for Selected Land Acquisitions or Improvements. Community officials were encouraged to apply for state or federal grants to help finance selected land acquisitions or improvements. The Plan also recommended that state agencies give priority status to grant applications for Westfield River projects.

Plan Implementation. The key local and state-administered components of the Westfield River protection plan were largely implemented prior to application for national Wild and Scenic River designation. An important mechanism for obtaining commitments from participating communities and organizations to implement the greenway plan was the development of the intergovernmental compact. By 1990, the compact had been formally approved by all participants: by votes of the Board of Selectmen in each of the six river communities; by three state agencies; by two federal agencies; and by PVPC and WRWA.

Possibly the most important river protection mechanism was the adoption of river zoning bylaws. Between 1989 and 1991, due to the efforts of PVPC and local advocates, river protection zoning bylaws were adopted in five of the communities and floodplain zoning in the sixth.

In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management formally designated the Westfield River under the state scenic rivers act in 1990. Later that year, then-Governor Michael Dukakis, at the request of PVPC, petitioned Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan to designate the Westfield as a state-administered component of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The application was endorsed by the late Massachusetts Congressman Silvio Conte and by national and regional environmental and sportsmen's groups such as American Rivers, the Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and the Appalachian Mountain Club. In 1991, the Commonwealth's support was reaffirmed by newly-elected Governor William Weld. Congressman John Olver, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives after the death of Congressman Conte, also gave his support for designation of the Westfield River.

STATE DESIGNATION AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

As described in the Introduction, there are several requirements which must be evaluated before the Secretary of the Interior can take action to designate a river under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Two of these relate to actions at the state level. These are:

- 1) the river is a designated component of a state wild, scenic, or recreational river system by or pursuant to an act of the state legislature;
- 2) the river is administered by an agency or political subdivision of the state;

The purpose of this section is to determine whether the application by Governor William Weld meets the above two requirements. Evaluations of the other requirements, i.e., eligibility and protection, are found in the fourth and fifth sections of the report.

STATE SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION

In 1990, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, on behalf of the six Westfield River communities of

Cummington, Chester, Chesterfield, Middlefield, Worthington and Becket, formally requested that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management designate the Westfield River as a "Local Scenic River" under the Massachusetts Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act, M.G.L. Chapter 21 s.17 B. This Act, adopted by the Massachusetts Great and General Court in 1973, enables two distinct types of scenic river designations to be made:

- a) "State Scenic River" designation, in which the river corridor is protected through a state protective order and a state-appointed river commission;
- b) "Local Scenic River" designation, whereby the river corridor is managed through local zoning bylaws and other local actions. This latter option closely approximates the river management approach commonly used in Section 2(a)(ii) national wild and scenic river designations.

On September 19, 1990, the Board of Environmental Management voted to approve the designation of 43 miles of the Westfield River's West, Middle, and East Branches and Glendale Brook as a "Local Scenic River" under the Massachusetts Act. This designation requires local management while providing a measure of state protection. Westfield River communities will receive priority in applications for state open space acquisition funding, and development projects in the river corridor will receive a higher level of review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act.

Based on the state's designation of the Westfield River as a "Local Scenic River," pursuant to Chapter 21 of the Massachusetts General Laws, we find that the first Section 2(a)(ii) administrative designation criterion has been satisfied.

STATE AND LOCAL RIVER MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

In 1990, an intergovernmental Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) prepared for the project by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission was approved by the six Westfield River towns; the National Park Service; the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs; the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management; the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement; the Pioneer Valley

Planning Commission; and the Westfield River Watershed Association. The MOA describes the roles and responsibilities of each participating party in managing and protecting the Westfield River. In addition, this compact authorizes the establishment of a Westfield River Advisory Committee to monitor compliance with these management goals.

The MOA establishes a management framework for the river which relies on local governmental land use controls complemented by state consistency review, rather than on federal management. Since executing this agreement several actions described therein have been initiated, most notably, the adoption of exemplary shorelands protection districts by the towns abutting the river.

Based on the execution of the Westfield River MOA, and the signatories' demonstrated commitment to implementing the agreement, as well as the fact that significant actions have already been taken, we find that the second designation criterion has been fulfilled.

EVALUATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND CLASSIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act states that, to be eligible for designation into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, a river or river segment must be free-flowing, and, with its immediate environment, must possess one or more outstandingly remarkable resource values.

The requirement that a river must be "free flowing" in order to be eligible for wild and scenic designation is found in sections 1(b) and 2(b) of the Act. Section 16(b) defines "free-flowing" as:

". . . existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway. The existence, however, of low dams, diversion works, and other minor structures at the time any river is proposed for inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system shall not automatically bar its consideration for such inclusion: Provided, That this shall not be construed to authorize, intend, or encourage future construction of such structures

within components of the national wild and scenic rivers system."

The second eligibility criterion, found in Section 1(b) of the Act, is the possession of "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values."¹ Because the term "outstandingly remarkable" is not precisely defined, the determination of whether a river possesses outstanding resources is based on the professional judgement of resource specialists. In accordance with agency guidelines, these resources, which must be river dependent, are considered outstanding if they are unique or exemplary in a regional or national context.

For the purposes of the Westfield River evaluation, the regional context is defined as the Berkshire Mountains and associated uplands. This region encompasses portions of northwestern Connecticut, western Massachusetts, extreme southern Vermont, and extreme eastern New York. Resources in this region are highly accessible, located within a half day's drive of major population centers in the New York City and Boston metropolitan areas.

Once found eligible for designation, river segments receive one of three possible classifications according to criteria found in Section 2(b) of the Act. Classification is based on the degree of accessibility and development within the river corridor and ranges from "Wild" for the most primitive and inaccessible segments, through "Scenic," to "Recreational" for those segments which are readily accessible and which may have undergone past diversion or impoundment. While a river's proposed classification provides guidance in the preparation of management plans for rivers which are to be administered by a federal agency, it is inconsequential for rivers which are to be designated pursuant to Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act. Thus the proposed segment classifications included in this report are provided merely to ensure compliance with Section 2(b) of the Act.

¹ For the purposes of this report, the term "outstanding resources" will be substituted for the phrase "outstandingly remarkable . . . values" found in the Act.

ELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

Eligibility findings will be presented separately for each of the branches to the Westfield. First, the free-flowing condition will be determined. Following this will be a determination and documentation of the presence of outstanding resources.

West Branch (14.5 miles, from the railway bridge which crosses the river 2000' downstream of the town center in Becket, downstream to the Huntington/Chester town line)

FREE-FLOWING CONDITION

The West Branch is without dams or impoundments. Channel alterations are minimal. Thus it meets the free-flowing eligibility criterion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

OUTSTANDING RESOURCES

The West Branch possesses outstanding scenic, biological, recreational and historical resources. It therefore meets the outstanding resource eligibility criterion.

Scenic Resources. The Westfield River's scenery is exemplary in the region. A systematic assessment of the West Branch's scenic values was not conducted for the purposes of this study. However, the 1981 Massachusetts Landscape Inventory, which assessed landscapes on a regional basis, classified as "distinctive" (a term used for areas of highest visual quality, comprising 4% of the state) such regional features as deep valleys, gorges, rivers with no visible pollution, and outstanding vistas of valley scenery. These features are abundant along the West Branch.

In common with the Middle and East branches, the West Branch possesses the following scenic characteristics: views with high relief and topographic diversity; marked physical features such as steep slopes, rock outcrops and gorges; and diverse vegetation types including hemlock slopes, mature beech groves, red maple stands, and emergent wetlands. Vistas are particularly striking from the stone arch railroad bridges which stand abandoned 80 to 150 feet above the river.

Biological Resources. The West Branch contains naturally reproducing, or wild, populations of Brown and Brook

trout (Salmo trutta and Salvelinus fontinalis). Because wild trout require exceptionally clear, cold water in which to reproduce, they are rare in industrialized states such as Massachusetts where development has significantly degraded water quality. Thus the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife classifies such naturally reproducing trout populations as a "critical resource."

There is also an ongoing program to restore Atlantic salmon in the Westfield Basin. When fully implemented this program will include transport of adult Atlantic salmon above mainstem dams for spawning purposes. The West Branch has been identified as providing high quality salmon habitat. If the program is successful the presence of Atlantic salmon will enhance the overall significance of the river as a biological resource.

Additional biological resources found along this segment include the largest population in New England of the state threatened Large-leaved Sandwort (Moehringia macrophylla). While this species is not directly river dependent, it adds to the biological significance of the area.

Recreational Resources. In 1977, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental management conducted a statewide inventory of scenic and recreational rivers. Through a nomination and evaluation process, which included an assessment of the rivers' scenic values using a photographic scenic preference technique, the inventory identified rivers to be given preference for state designation. Rivers so selected were then categorized into one of five possible classifications. The inventory resulted in the classification of the upper portion of the West Branch as a "Recreational Natural Landscape," denoting its relative accessibility and "exceptional river recreation opportunities."

The West Branch provides Class III and IV whitewater boating opportunities which are regionally rare. Apart from the Westfield River system, there are only two other high turbulence whitewater boating rivers in the state, and the Westfield is the only one not dam-controlled. Such unregulated whitewater boating opportunities are uncommon in the New England region.

Historical Resources. A National Historic Register District composed of ten keystone arch railroad bridges is located on this segment. All sites on the National Historic Register are, by definition, nationally significant.

Middle Branch and Glendale Brook (12.6 miles, starting at the Peru/Worthington town line and continuing downstream to the confluence with Kinne Brook in Chester; plus a 0.4 mile segment along Glendale Brook, from the Clark Wright Road bridge to the Middle Branch.)

FREE-FLOWING CONDITION

This segment is without dams and impoundments. The downstream terminus, at the confluence with Kinne Brook, is at the upstream extent of Littleville Lake, the impoundment created by Littleville Reservoir. Alterations to the channel are minimal. Thus the segment meets the free-flowing eligibility criterion.

OUTSTANDING RESOURCES

This segment meets the outstanding resource eligibility criterion because it possesses outstanding scenic, biological, geological, hydrological and recreational resources.

Scenic Resources. As was the case with the West Branch, the Massachusetts Landscape Inventory concluded that the Middle Branch possesses "distinctive" scenic features. This distinction is evidence that the segment's scenic resources are exemplary in the region.

Biological Resources. The Middle Branch provides excellent habitat for naturally reproducing populations of brown and brook trout (Salmo trutta and Salvelinus fontinalis). As described above, such reproducing trout populations are unusual and highly valued because they require pristine conditions no longer common in Massachusetts streams. As with the West Branch, the ongoing program to restore Atlantic salmon in the Westfield Basin will, if successful, enhance the overall significance of the river as a biological resource.

The Middle Branch is also home to the state-endangered lake chub (Couesius plumbeus).

Geological Resources. Glendale Falls, on Glendale Brook, is the highest waterfall in the state. This distinction qualifies it as an outstanding resource for the purposes of this evaluation. Worthington Falls, on the Middle Branch in West Worthington, is an exemplary geological feature, with low cascades and undeveloped, hemlock-lined banks.

Hydrological Resources. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has designated the water quality of this segment as Class A. Class A is reserved for streams in near pristine condition. The Middle Branch's Class A designation is particularly noteworthy as the only other Class A waters in the region are small tributaries or reservoirs in headwater areas. This distinction makes the Middle Branch a regionally significant hydrological resource.

Recreational Resources. Like the West Branch, the Middle Branch was classified as a "Recreational Natural Landscape" river by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, due to its outstanding recreational values. This segment provides high quality, naturally occurring Class III whitewater opportunities. As mentioned above, this is rare as most high turbulence whitewater in southern New England is dam controlled.

East Branch (16.2 miles, starting at the Windsor/Cummington town line, downstream to a point 0.8 miles upstream of the confluence with Holly Brook in Chesterfield.)

FREE-FLOWING CONDITION

The upper reaches of this segment are without dams or impoundments. The downstream terminus of the segment is at the upstream boundary of a flood control easement associated with Knightville Dam dry reservoir, a point chosen after consultation with the Army Corps of Engineers. Because the reservoir is only filled during floods, the dam has not altered the riverine nature of the upper end of the reservoir. Channel alteration is minimal. Thus the segment of the East Branch which has been proposed for designation meets the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act free-flowing eligibility criterion.

OUTSTANDING RESOURCES

This segment meets the outstanding resource eligibility criterion because it possesses outstanding scenic, biological, geological, and recreational resources.

Scenic Resources. The East Branch was classified as a "Natural" and "Scenic Natural Landscape" river by the Massachusetts Scenic Rivers Program, based, at least in part, on its outstanding scenic values. In addition, the

Massachusetts Landscape Inventory found many of its scenic features to be "distinctive," a term reserved for a mere 4% of the state's landscapes. Chesterfield Gorge, in particular, was noted for its "dramatic visual environment." The Cummington landscape unit, of which the gorge is a part, was recognized as one of "the finest, most intact regions of scenic quality" in the state.

Biological Resources. Along with the West and Middle branches, the East Branch is one of the few river segments in the region to harbor naturally reproducing trout populations. As with the West and Middle Branches, there is an ongoing program to restore Atlantic salmon in the Basin which, if successful, will enhance the overall significance of the river as a biological resource.

In addition, the East Branch possesses two state-endangered species: the Lake Chub (Couseis plumbeus), a species whose range is otherwise located far to the north of Massachusetts in northern New England and Canada; and the Spurred Gentian (Halenia deflexa), which occurs in wetlands along river banks and has lost much of its habitat due to filling for development purposes. For purposes of this evaluation both of these endangered species qualify as being regionally significant. Of note for management consideration is the occurrence in this section of two state threatened but non-river related species, the Pale Green Orchis (Planathera flava var. herbiola) and the Muskflower (Mimulus moschatus).

The East Branch's outstanding biological resources have been recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management through designation of the four-mile "Pork Barrel" section as a "Backcountry Area." According to DEM, such areas are exemplary within the state in providing pristine, wilderness conditions. They provide opportunities for "research to enhance understanding of . . . natural process[es]," and are to be managed in a manner that will ensure that they remain in their natural state.

Geological Resources. This segment contains Chesterfield Gorge, an outstanding, regionally significant geological feature which stretches over four miles and is composed of sheer granite cliffs. While no systematic region-wide gorge inventory has been undertaken, the Chesterfield Gorge is widely recognized as one of the finest in the state and indeed in southern New England. The undeveloped nature of the gorge and the virgin forest that adorns the steep canyon walls add to its significance as a natural and scenic resource.

Recreational Resources. This segment provides high quality opportunities for Class III and IV whitewater boating, including the longest whitewater stretch in Massachusetts. As mentioned above, recreational resources of this type are limited in the New England region, making them outstanding regional resources.

CLASSIFICATION FINDINGS

Each segments of the Westfield River was evaluated to determine the proposed classification which best fit the existing conditions. As noted above, such classifications are inconsequential for rivers which are not located on federal lands and not managed directly by a federal agency. For these rivers classification status has no bearing on either the non-federal management framework or federal project review under Section 7 of the Act. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act none-the-less requires that classifications be determined. According to Section 2(b) of the Act classification is determined using the following criteria:

1. **Wild river areas** - Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.
2. **Scenic river areas** - Those rivers or sections of river that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
3. **Recreational river areas** - Those rivers or sections of river that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

West Branch

Proposed Classifications: Scenic and Recreational

Scenic Section: From upstream end of nominated segment downstream to village of Chester (10 miles). This segment is undeveloped except for the small village of Bancroft, where the only road access

occurs. Elsewhere its banks are heavily forested, and it is largely inaccessible except by railroad.

Recreational Section: From village of Chester downstream to segment terminus at Huntington/Chester town line (3.8 miles). Route 20 runs parallel to the river along this segment, making it readily accessible. Houses and small businesses along the highway are occasionally visible from the river, through gaps in the vegetation of the largely forested shoreline.

Middle Branch and Glendale Brook

Proposed Classifications: Scenic and Recreational

Scenic Section: Glendale Brook (0.4 miles). This tributary is inaccessible except by hiking trail at Glendale Falls, a major scenic attraction; its shorelands are heavily forested.

Recreational Section: Main stem of the Middle Branch (12.6 miles). This segment is readily accessible from a road which parallels the river. Farms and houses scattered along its shoreline are sometimes visible from the river, which in general has well-screened, forested banks.

East Branch

Proposed Classifications: Recreational and Scenic

Recreational Section: From start of nominated segment downstream to the point near the Cummington/Chesterfield town line where Route 9 diverges from the river (8 miles). While the river's banks are heavily forested along this section, they are readily accessible by road. Developed areas along the river include three small villages (Swift River, Cummington, and West Cummington), and farmlands.

Scenic Section: From end of recreational section downstream to terminus of nominated segment at Knightville Reservoir (8.5 miles). This section is undeveloped except for the small town of West Chesterfield, and is inaccessible by road except at West Chesterfield and Indian Hollow. Otherwise, its shores are lined by forests.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we find that the nominated segments of the East, Middle, and West branches of the Westfield River, along with Glendale Brook, meet the eligibility requirements as described in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The river segments are all free-flowing. Outstanding scenic, recreational and biological resources are found on all three branches, along with outstanding historic resources on the West Branch, outstanding geological resources on the Middle and East branches, and outstanding hydrological resources on the Middle Branch. In combination, this high concentration of outstanding values on all three branches constitutes a natural, cultural, and recreational resource of exceedingly high significance.

While not the subject of this report, there are also significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources on free-flowing reaches elsewhere in the Westfield Basin. Portions of the Dead Branch, in particular, likely would be found eligible should it be nominated in the future. Also, for river management purposes it is important to note that many of the outstanding resources described above -- especially biological resources -- are dependent on careful stewardship of the entire Westfield watershed.

EVALUATION OF RESOURCE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This section describes a set of criteria used by the National Park Service to determine whether a river is adequately protected through private, local, and/or state level actions to warrant designation as a state-administered Wild and Scenic River under Section 2(a)(ii) of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It also contains an evaluation of the extent to which the application for designation of the Westfield River meets each criterion. The positive impacts on conservation of the river's natural resources resulting from state and local actions taken since the onset of the Greenway Planning process are described here as part of the suitability evaluation, rather than in the Environmental Assessment section.

METHODOLOGY

In order for a river to be appropriate for designation as a national Wild and Scenic River under Section 2(a)(ii), two essential elements must be established including 1) long-term **protection** for the river's outstanding resources; and 2) a workable **management framework** that does not rely on active federal management.

First, the river's outstanding resources -- the resources which make it eligible for designation -- must be assured of long-term protection. Since the federal government's role on Section 2(a)(ii) rivers is limited to protecting only those resources which would be affected by federally-assisted "water resources projects," the protection of outstanding resources located on or associated with riparian lands must be provided through state, local, and private land-use mechanisms. Section 5.2 assesses the adequacy of such existing mechanisms in protecting the resources described above in Section 4 for each affected Westfield River community.

Second, a non-federal management framework for the long-term stewardship of river resources must be in place prior to designation. This requirement is based on Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act, which states that rivers so designated "shall be administered by the State or political subdivision thereof without expense to the United States." Section 5.3 evaluates the existing "Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Westfield River" in meeting this requirement.

Third, there needs to be evidence of broad-based support for designation within the affected communities. Rivers designated under Section 2(a)(ii) must be managed by entities other than the federal government, giving local and state governments a lead role to play. Support for designation is evidence that local and state governments acknowledge this important role. In addition, it would be fruitless for the federal government to commit to the conservation of river-related resources through federal project consistency review if this commitment is not shared by local interests. A partnership approach to river protection, involving landowners, local governments, state governments, and federal agencies is essential to ensure effective river conservation. Section 5.4 contains an evaluation of support shown by Westfield River communities and the state.

PROTECTION MECHANISMS

This section analyzes the extent to which the Westfield River's outstanding resources will be protected under the Westfield River Greenway Plan. Three primary protection mechanisms are considered:

- 1) laws and regulations;
- 2) public and private land ownership for conservation purposes; and
- 3) physical limitations to additional shorelands development.

Laws and Regulations

Local Ordinances. The Westfield River Greenway Plan defined the "basic river protection area or corridor" for the Westfield River as "a buffer of a minimum width of 100 feet from the river, plus the delineated 100-year floodplain where it is wider than 100 feet." Protection of this area was the minimum goal for each Greenway community, although the towns were encouraged to expand the protected corridor to include important natural features. The degree of restrictiveness of zoning within the protected corridor was also tailored to meet resource protection needs. Chesterfield, for example, imposed tighter restrictions on new roads and vehicular access to protect the wilderness qualities of the section of the East Branch known locally as the "Pork Barrel."

Table 1 depicts the relationship between local land use controls and shorelands protection along the three nominated Westfield River segments. Five communities -- Chesterfield, Worthington, Cummington, Middlefield, and Chester -- approved essentially identical floodplain and river protection overlay districts. Land use changes, including construction or alteration of buildings, are tightly regulated within the new districts, which extend a minimum of 100 feet from the river's banks, or to the landward edge of the Zone A floodplain where it is wider than 100 feet. Within these districts, the following land use controls apply:

- no altering, dumping, filling, or removal of riverine materials is allowed.
- no cutting of vegetation within 50 feet of the river; only 50% of the remaining area may be cut.

TOWN-BY-TOWN COMPARISON OF EXISTING PROTECTION FOR THE WESTFIELD RIVER

	Zoning Regulations						Limits to Development		Conservation Lands ***					
	River Protect. Overlay	Flood-plain Overlay	Shore Buffer Area	Septic Set-back	Special Permit for Structures	Min. Lot Size	Lack of Existing Road Access to Riverfront	Significant Physical Constraints to Development	(in acres)			(in miles)		
								State Ownership	Federal Ownership	Town and Nonprofit Lands	Total River Frontage Protected	Public River Frontage Protected	Private River Frontage Protected	
Becket	No	Yes	None	n.a.	**	2 Acres	Yes (West Branch)	Yes (steep slopes, West Branch)	88			5.2 WB	.6	4.6
Chester	Yes	Yes*	100' + flood-plain	150'	Yes	2 acres, 1/4 acre in town center	Yes (parts of West and Middle Branches)	Yes (steep slopes, part of West Branch)	6720	1567	151	8.2 MB 16.8 WB	0.0 2.5	8.2 14.3
Chesterfield	Yes	Yes*	100' + flood-plain	Far as feasible	Yes	2 acres	Yes (East Branch)	Yes (steep slopes, East Branch)	2438	2589	205	14.2 EB	7.5	6.7
Cummington	Yes	Yes*	100' + flood-plain	150'	Yes	2 acres, 1/2 acre in town center	Yes (parts of East Branch)		608		76	18.2 EB	3.8	14.4
Middlefield	Yes	Yes*	100' + flood-plain	150'	Yes	2 acres, 1 acre in Banc-roft	Yes (West Branch)	Yes (steep slopes, West Branch)			559	5.6 WB 4.6 MB	1.3 .7	4.3 3.9
Worthington	Yes	Yes*	100' + flood-plain	Far as feasible	Yes	2 acres	Yes (Middle Branch)	Yes (steep slopes, Middle Branch)	5428			12.4 MB	2.9	9.5
												27.6 WB	4.4	23.2
												25.2 MB	3.6	21.6
												32.4 EB	11.3	21.1
											totals			

* Included in River Protection Zoning Overlay

** New construction or substantial improvements must not increase flood levels.

*** Acreage breakdowns per community are estimates as some conservation land parcels cross municipal boundaries.

TABLE 1

- no buildings or other structures may be erected or enlarged within a 100 foot buffer strip, except in the case of pre-existing building lots less than 100 feet deep, in which case the buffer strip can be reduced to 50% of the lot's depth (measured from the river). Buildings and "residential accessory uses" proposed for areas outside this diminished buffer strip but still within the 100' overlay district are subject to a special permitting procedure.

- on-site septic systems must be located as far from the river as is possible.

- in addition to the above controls, the permitting authority (Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals) is charged with the responsibility to ensure that proposed uses are sited in areas "most likely [to] conserve shoreline vegetation and the integrity of the buffer strip."

The Town of Chesterfield provided additional protection to the "Pork Barrel" section of the East Branch by prohibiting paved roads, public vehicular access, and public recreation facilities within the overlay district along this section of the river.

By conserving the natural integrity of the river's banks through the preservation of natural vegetation and elimination of most forms of new development, the floodplain and river protection overlay districts provide effective protection for the scenic, recreational, and biological resources of the Westfield River.

While it did not choose to implement a river protection overlay district, the Town of Becket did establish a floodplain district generally encompassing the 100-year floodplain within the town. Proposed developments (including fill, excavation, paving, new construction and substantial improvements to existing structures) within the district are subject to the requirement that they, in combination with other existing and proposed developments, cause no increase in the base flood elevation. Furthermore, slopes in excess of 25% and a lack of road access characterize most of that portion of the West Branch in Becket under review for Wild and Scenic designation. Areas where slopes and access are not limiting are already fully developed. In combination with these features, Becket's floodplain district is adequate to protect the Westfield River's scenic, recreational and biological resources in that town.

State Laws, Regulations, and Programs. There are several state laws, regulations, and programs that offer some form of protection for the Westfield River. These programs and the manner in which they protect the river corridor have been described in detail in the Greenway Plan. The more significant state level controls include:

- the Wetlands Protection Act, which serves to minimize activities within wetland resource areas and an adjacent 100' wide buffer strip. Enforcement of this statute's requirements is dependent on local Conservation Commissions, which sometimes results in uneven application on a regional basis.

- the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), which subjects certain land use activities requiring state assistance or permits to environmental impact review. Projects below certain size and expense thresholds are not subject to this review.

- the Massachusetts Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act, and the state's policy for implementing this act, which provides increased MEPA scrutiny for state-assisted projects on designated local scenic rivers such as the Westfield.

- the Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices Act, and the state's policy for implementing this act, which minimizes forest cutting impacts on riparian areas for commercial harvests over 25,000 board feet by limiting cuts along waterways to 50% or less of the timber within 100' of the shoreline.

- the Massachusetts Clean Water Act, which sets water quality standards and anti-degradation policies. The three branches of the Westfield which are under study for Wild and Scenic designation have been classified as either Class A, Outstanding Resource Waters (the highest classification) or Class B, Cold Water/High Quality Water. These designations effectively protect the river from major new point source discharges.

- the state Environmental Code (Title V) which regulates the placement of individual septic systems and "package" systems to protect wetlands and surface water quality. Municipalities can increase Title V minimum setbacks -- currently 100' for surface waters -- where local conditions warrant such increased protection.

- the Chapter 91 Waterways licensing program, which protects the river from projects which could impede navigation or public access.

- the Water Management Act and Interbasin Transfer Act, which protect instream flows and minimize out-of-basin diversions. The regulatory programs under these acts rely on river basins plans to set recommended flow thresholds. The Westfield Basin Plan is currently scheduled to be completed in 1993.

Taken as a whole, these statutes provide considerable protection for the Westfield's water resources; they offer much less protection for river-related scenic areas, steep slopes and the general natural integrity of the river valley. These areas are instead protected through local land use controls, conservation ownership, and physical constraints to additional development.

It should be noted that a bill to create a Massachusetts River Protection Act is currently before the State Legislature. If adopted, this act would create minimum local shorelands zoning standards including building setbacks on rivers and streams throughout the Commonwealth. Urban areas would have narrower setbacks and existing structures would be grandfathered. The provisions of this bill are consistent with the intent and structure of existing bylaws of the towns abutting the three branches of the Westfield River. Passage of this bill would not greatly change management of lands along these three branches. It would, however, provide a measure of consistency throughout the Westfield Basin as well as provide state backup for local actions.

Federal Laws, Regulations, and Programs. Federal statutes provide substantial protection for the Westfield River's water quality, but less protection for instream flows and for resources associated with adjacent lands. The most significant federal statutes and programs with respect to river protection needs are summarized as follows:

- the federal Clean Water Act, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Clean Water Act, serves to restrict new or increased point-source discharges which would degrade water quality in the Westfield. The federal Act also protects wetland resources under the § 404 permit program, which requires that impacts on aquatic resources be evaluated before a permit is issued.

- the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which allows landowners to qualify for federally-subsidized flood insurance in municipalities which have restricted development in the 100-year floodplain. However, this program cannot provide full protection for the floodplain because its primary goal is to reduce property damage rather than to restrict development. In addition, in areas along the Westfield River where the floodplain is narrow or non-existent, floodplain development restrictions can do little to protect riparian resources.

- the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), like its state counterpart, helps facilitate informed decision-making about federally-assisted projects which have environmental impacts.

Public and Private Conservation Land

The 100-foot wide "basic river protection corridor" is supplemented by the "expanded river protection area" described in the Greenway Plan, which includes over 20,000 acres of conservation lands (see Table 5.1). Most of this acreage is in municipal, state and federal ownership, and was acquired for recreation, conservation, and flood-control purposes. An additional 300 acres are owned by a private non-profit organization, The Trustees of Reservations, for conservation and historic preservation purposes.

Conservation land comprises a significant percentage of the Westfield River's frontage on those segments under consideration for designation, especially along the East Branch. In particular, it serves to protect the outstanding scenic, biological, and recreational resources of the river.

In addition to the 20,000 acres of conservation land described above, many more acres are preserved by private landowners under tax incentives provided by the Massachusetts Farmland, Forestry and Recreation Lands Preferential Tax Acts (M.G.L. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B). These current use taxation programs allow landowners to maintain farm lands, forests, and recreational lands in an open and undeveloped state while continuing productive agricultural or forestry uses, or recreational access. Although long-term open space protection is not assured for lands under these programs, these programs do provide considerable incentive to conserve river-related lands

and thus provides an important means to support other conservation efforts within the Westfield River corridor.

Physical Limitations to Development

Physical limitations to additional development which could degrade the Westfield River's outstanding resources include steep slopes, unsuitable soils, and barriers such as railroads.

Along the upper portions of the West Branch, steep slopes combined with lack of road access serve to severely limit development along the river. Even in the absence of strict local land use controls or conservation ownership, these limitations effectively preserve many of the West Branch's outstanding resource values. Additional protection for the West Branch's scenic and biological resources is provided by the Conrail railroad, which creates a physical barrier between the river and adjacent uplands. This barrier helps to preserve a buffer of natural vegetation, precluding forestry activities.

In areas along the Middle and East Branches where roads parallel the river, steep slopes and, in some cases, the roads themselves also serve to limit additional development. The roads tend to follow the narrow floodplain along the river, with steep valley walls rising on the far side of the river and on the landward side of the road. Thus, although road access exists, little level land remains available for development between the river and the road or the road and the steep hillsides. Conversely, the lack of any direct road access, and the likelihood that none will be provided in the future, provides considerable protection to the "Pork Barrel" portion of the East Branch.

In areas beyond the 100-foot wide overlay district, potential development densities are also limited where soils are unsuitable for on-site septic systems. Massachusetts law sets minimum percolation rates and minimum soil depths over bedrock for septic system approval. These requirements serve to prevent new development in areas of the valley floor where mucky soils dominate, or along steep hillsides where bedrock outcroppings occur.

Summary

In summary, we find that, through the combined effect of current local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and programs, public and private protection of conservation land, and physical limitations to additional development, there is adequate long-term protection for the Westfield River's outstanding resources.

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

As described earlier, designation as a wild and scenic river under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act places limits on the activities of the federal government with regards to resource management. Prior to approving designation the Secretary of Interior must therefore be confident that others have both the commitment and capability to manage the river in a manner consistent with the high standards of rivers in the Wild and Scenic River System. Central to this is the creation of a "management framework" for guiding actions.

As described earlier, an intergovernmental compact known as the "Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Westfield River" (MOA) has been executed by the six communities, state environmental agencies, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Westfield River Watershed Association, and the National Park Service. This agreement spells out the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties in support of the long-term management of the Westfield River segments under consideration for designation. In accordance with Section 2(a)(ii) requirements, the federal government's responsibility under the MOA is to review the Governor of Massachusetts' application for designation, and, if the rivers are designated, to perform reviews of federally-assisted water resources projects as required under Section 7 of the Act; no federal land acquisition or management are contemplated or required. The MOA also establishes a Westfield River Advisory Committee, made up of representatives from each party to the MOA.

The MOA provides an adequate and appropriate framework for the future management of the Westfield River and its outstanding resources. In combination, the Memorandum of Agreement, the Westfield River Greenway Plan, the local shorelands protection bylaws, and the variety of other actions that have already been taken in support of river protection indicate that there is a high likelihood that the river will be protected now and in the future.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we find the nominated segments of the Westfield River to meet the protection and management requirements for designation under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Adequate long-term protection has been afforded to its outstanding river-related resources through local land use controls affecting the river corridor, through the preservation of conservation lands by governmental and private entities, and through physical constraints to additional development.

The Westfield River Greenway planning process provide an excellent example of how grassroots advocacy efforts, coordinated by dedicated professional planning staff, can achieve lasting protection for a regional resource through voluntary local, state, and private actions. This process, and the results of the process in terms of river protection, fully meets all requirements of Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It is therefore appropriate for the federal government to add to the protection of this valued resource by designating it as a national Wild and Scenic River.

SUPPORT FOR DESIGNATION

For a river surrounded predominantly by privately owned lands and where protection and management of the river corridor are to be achieved through a partnership among public and private interests rather than through federal ownership, broad-based support for wild and scenic river designation is essential.

The Westfield River application has strong, across-the-board support demonstrated by letters and resolutions from local residents, non-profit organizations, towns, legislators, and agencies. This section of the report describes the support that has been shown for conservation of the Westfield River and for wild and scenic river designation.

Local Government

Local and regional support for river protection in general, and Wild and Scenic designation in particular, has been clearly demonstrated during the eight-year Greenway planning process. Early concerns about the implications of national designation have been erased due to the efforts of a broad coalition of supporters through a public education campaign. A discussion of significant local and regional actions that demonstrate support for designation follows.

Westfield River Greenway Plan. The development of Greenway Plan is described elsewhere in this report. Essentially, the plan was a locally initiated effort with staff support from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. The plan specifically calls for designation of the West, Middle, and East Branches of the Westfield River into the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Adoption of Memorandum of Agreement. As described elsewhere in this report, an intergovernmental compact known as the "Memorandum of Agreement for the Protection of the Westfield River" has been adopted by interests which include all six of the affected towns and the regional planning agency. This MOA specifically calls for federal designation.

Adoption of River Protection Zoning. Five of the six river communities have voted at Town Meetings to adopt river protection bylaws, a step which requires affirmative votes by two-thirds of those present rather than a simple majority. The sixth community, Becket, has not adopted a river protection zoning bylaw. Instead,

the town has adopted a floodplain zoning overlay district which serves to protect the river. The adoption of these bylaws provides strong evidence that the towns are willing not only to endorse the MOA but to take proactive steps to ensure protection of the Westfield River.

State Government

Agency Support. Preparation of the Westfield River Greenway Plan was partially funded by two grants from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management's Scenic Rivers Program, and one grant from the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement. State-level implementation of protective measures identified in this plan culminated in September, 1990 when the Board of Environmental Management designated 44.5 miles of the Westfield River's East, Middle and West Branches and Glendale Brook as "Local Scenic Rivers" under the state act. The segments under consideration for national designation are included in this state-designated area.

As noted previously, the Westfield River MOA was approved by interests including the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement, and Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Each agency has made a commitment to carry out the specific river management responsibilities assigned to it in the MOA.

Governor's Support. Massachusetts' application for national Wild and Scenic designation for the Westfield River was initially submitted on October 16, 1990 by then-Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. Subsequently, Governor William Weld affirmed the previous administration's support for the national designation in his September 25, 1991 letter to the Secretary of Interior.

Federal Agencies

National Park Service. Over the past few years, the National Park Service has demonstrated its support for protection of the Westfield by providing both technical and financial support to the Westfield River initiative. In February 1988, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office of the National Park Service entered into a cooperative agreement with PVPC, providing assistance to the planning council in revising the initial draft of the Greenway

Plan to meet NPS guidelines for wild and scenic rivers. Through this agreement, National Park Service staff attended public meetings, provided technical assistance, and prepared an Eligibility Assessment of the river study area. In 1991, the NPS North Atlantic Regional Office entered into a second cooperative agreement with PVPC to assist in revising the Westfield River Greenway Plan and implementing specific provisions of that plan.

Army Corps of Engineers. As a major landowner in the area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was consulted by planning staff at various points in the Greenway planning process. Preliminary boundaries of the segments proposed for national Wild and Scenic designation were among the issues discussed. At the Corps' request, the proposed downstream boundary on the East Branch was moved northward to coincide with the boundary of the Corps' flood control easement for the Knightville Dam. The Corps indicated its concurrence with this change and with national designation in its letter of August 27, 1990. The Corps reaffirmed this support in its formal response to the draft wild and scenic evaluation report.

Private Organizations

The Westfield River Watershed Association has played a key role in supporting the development and implementation of the Westfield River Greenway Plan. The proposed national Wild and Scenic River designation has received the formal support of the Watershed Association, as well as regional and national environmental groups, including American Rivers, Inc., the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Nature Conservancy, and the Pioneer Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Inc.

State and Federal Legislators

The entire Westfield River watershed lies within the 1st Massachusetts Congressional District. The late U.S. Representative Silvio Conte was an early and active advocate for the Westfield River's protection and, with Governor Michael Dukakis, a co-sponsor of the original application for state-administered designation of the Westfield River. After Congressman Conte's death John Olver was elected to Congress from the 1st Congressional District. Congressman Olver formally endorsed national designation for the river in his letter to the Secretary of the Interior of August 12, 1991.

United States Senators Kennedy and Kerry have not been asked to formally endorse the proposal. Staff from both offices have been apprised of the application and have indicated that Senators Kennedy and Kerry have no objection to the proposal.

State Senator Jane Swift, whose district covers the majority of the area in question, stated her support for federal designation in a letter to the Secretary of Interior dated May 15, 1992.

Conclusion

The Westfield River application has strong, across-the-board support demonstrated by municipalities, legislators, state and federal agencies, and local and state environmental and sportsman organizations. Perhaps the strongest indication of support is the fact that local interests took it upon themselves to prepare the Westfield River Greenway Plan and to implement several of its action items prior to the application for national designation.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970 requires federal agencies to review their proposed actions to determine whether the actions could cause significant environmental impacts. The required review includes an analysis of alternatives, including measures that would reduce or mitigate adverse impacts. For actions which appear likely to cause significant impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, is usually prepared by the administering agency. In those instances where significant impacts are less likely, a more concise Environmental Assessment or EA is prepared. If the EA discloses major impacts an EIS will follow. In almost all cases, the NEPA evaluation of the potential impacts of federal Wild and Scenic River designation under Section 2(a)(ii) is conducted through an EA rather than an EIS.

This section of the report evaluates the likely impacts of federal Wild and Scenic designation under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act on the Westfield River and its environs. It serves as an Environmental Assessment as prescribed by NEPA. Included in the assessment is an analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed designation and other viable alternatives on natural resources, cultural resources, and the local economy.

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

Two principal alternatives -- No Federal Action (Alternative A) and Wild and Scenic Designation (Alternative B) -- were evaluated. It is important to note, however, that the baseline environmental conditions assumed to be present for the purposes of Alternative A, the "No Federal Action" alternative, are the result of significant state and local actions which currently protect the river. Many of these actions, including adoption of local ordinances, were taken in conjunction with preparation of the Westfield River Greenway Plan. These actions and associated positive impacts are described in detail in Section 5 of this report. These actions were taken in part in the expectation that the river would be designated into the federal system. Therefore, if the river is not federally designated, it is possible that some of these protective actions could be rescinded, resulting in adverse impacts on the river's

water quality, ecological integrity, and scenic values. Only two alternatives were evaluated in full. Alternatives that would involve a strong federal management presence were not evaluated as these would not be in keeping with either the expressed intent of the Governor of Massachusetts or the requirements of Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Similarly, alternatives that would involve a management scheme other than that proposed in the Westfield River Greenway Plan were not considered because, as referenced above, many of the actions described in the plan have already been taken. A description of the two alternatives considered in this assessment follows.

Alternative A: No Federal Action

Under this alternative, no action would be taken by the Department of the Interior to designate the Westfield River as a National Wild and Scenic River. It is assumed that the river would continue to be a state-designated Local Scenic River, and that all current state and local water pollution and land use regulations which protect the river and its adjacent lands would also continue to be in effect.

Alternative B: Federal Designation

Under this alternative, all three proposed segments of the Westfield River would be designated as a state-administered component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Federal Energy Regulation Commission would not grant a license for any new dam within any of the designated segments. In addition, other Federally sponsored, licensed, or funded water resource projects that would result in an adverse impact to one or more of the outstanding resources described earlier in this report would be precluded.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

This section includes an evaluation of the impacts of the two alternatives on natural, scenic and recreational, cultural, and socioeconomic resources. Note that, under both alternatives, existing protection mechanisms and management agreements would persist. These mechanisms were described earlier in the section on Evaluation of Resource Protection and Management.

Impacts of Alternatives on Natural Resources

Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation

Alternative A would provide no protection from federally-assisted water resource projects having a direct and adverse effect on the Westfield River's outstanding biological resources, and no protection from the negative impacts of FERC-licensed hydropower facilities. While there is currently no expressed interest in development of hydropower facilities on any of the segments proposed for designation, such development is theoretically possibly at several locations including Glendale Falls, Worthington Falls, and Chesterfield Gorge. Increases in the cost of energy, changes in economic incentives for energy production, and/or technological advances that decreased the cost of dam development could result in renewed interest in development at these and other sites.

Because the Commonwealth's listed rare river-related species, as described in the Eligibility section of this report, would not be protected from the potential negative impacts of such federally-assisted projects, these species could be eliminated from the Westfield River under this alternative. Native Brook and Brown Trout, which are dependent on cold, clear water conditions for reproduction, could suffer adverse impacts from water resources projects involving fill, channelization, streambank armoring, or impoundments. The development of hydropower projects on the river, in particular, could have a major impact on reproductive success due to increased temperature and turbidity, and the isolation of breeding populations.

Alternative B would mandate protection from federally-assisted water resources projects for the outstanding biological resources described above. Protection would also be provided for outstanding natural areas such as the "Pork Barrel" on the upper East Branch, which, while currently protected from many forms of state and privately-sponsored development due to state ownership, would not be protected from federally-sponsored developments, including hydropower developments, unless the river is designated.

Under NEPA, the Westfield River's biological resources would also receive enhanced protection from adverse impacts associated with federally-assisted non-water resources projects. While the Act's Section 7 review provisions do not apply to such projects, the status of the three branches as components of the national Wild and

Scenic system would serve to increase the scrutiny of all federal actions which could impair the river's resources. Thus the fish, wildlife, and vegetation resources of the river and its adjacent lands would be less likely to suffer adverse impacts from projects such as interstate utility lines, federally-funded road construction, etc. under this alternative.

Water Quality, Hydrology, and Free-Flowing Character

Alternative A would offer no additional protection for the Middle Branch's Class A water quality beyond existing federal Clean Water Act requirements. For example, although this reach is subject to anti-degradation standards, discharges requiring National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits could still be allowed under variance provisions. Adverse impacts on water quality in all three branches could also result from federally-permitted dredge and fill projects. Most importantly, the no action alternative would not assure that the Westfield River's free-flowing character would be protected from potential hydropower developments. Dams, diversions and other structures associated with such hydropower developments could permanently alter the river's free-flowing condition.

Alternative B would increase the protection currently afforded to the Westfield River's water quality under state and federal regulations. Point source discharges to the Middle Branch in particular would be subject to higher standards than exist now. Federally-assisted non-point source projects requiring Section 401 water quality certification would also be conditioned or prohibited to protect the river's outstanding hydrologic resources. Hydropower developments would be permanently banned from the designated segments, and from upstream areas if this would cause unacceptable downstream impacts.

Flood control dams have been constructed on the Middle Branch and East Branch, downstream from the segments proposed for designation. At present, the West Branch of the Westfield River remains free-flowing along its entire length. Interest has been expressed in the construction of a flood control dam on this branch. In addition, a series of dams which would create recreational reservoirs in the West Branch watershed was proposed by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service in the 1970's.

Such flood control or recreational reservoirs would not be permitted on designated segments of the Westfield

River or on upstream reaches if they would affect outstanding resources downstream. However, any resulting negative impacts from this prohibition are slight. The Town of Becket's newly-enacted floodplain zoning, for example, has helped reduce the risk of property damage from floods on the West Branch, and additional non-structural flood protection measures, such as the computerized warning system implemented with the assistance of PVPC, will do much to eliminate remaining risks. Thus no significant negative impacts would result from the prohibition on new flood control dams under this alternative, and substantial positive impacts relating to the preservation of the river's free-flowing character would be realized.

The minor impacts (loss of potential recreation in a lake-like setting) associated with the prohibition of reservoirs for recreational purposes, likewise, are outweighed by the benefits associated with the preservation of free-flowing character, including protection of the river's outstanding whitewater recreation as discussed below.

Increased NEPA scrutiny of impacts on water quality caused by non-water resources projects receiving federal assistance would also occur under this alternative, due to the river's designated Wild and Scenic River status.

Geologic Features

Alternative A would provide no special protection for areas such as Glendale Falls, Chesterfield Gorge, or West Worthington Falls. Federally-assisted projects on the Westfield would continue to be subject to the National Park Service's advisory comments due to the river's NRI status, but this input would fall short of mandating project redesign, relocation, or outright prohibition. Potential hydropower projects, in particular, could be built even if they would obliterate the river's outstanding geological features. For instance, under existing federal law the construction of a hydro project on Glendale Falls would actually be facilitated by provisions which would allow this privately-owned conservation area to be taken by eminent domain. Chesterfield Gorge could suffer the same fate and be inundated, transforming this outstanding geologic feature into a stillwater reservoir. This would, however, be a worst case scenario; there are no current development plans that would affect any of these significant geological features.

Alternative B would provide prevention from direct and adverse impacts on the river's outstanding geologic features for any federally-assisted water resources project. FERC-licensed projects would be prohibited outright.

Impact of Alternatives on Scenic and Recreational Resources

Scenic Resources

Alternative A would provide no protection from the negative impacts on the Westfield River's scenic values associated with federally-assisted water resources projects. As described above under Geologic Resources, significant scenic areas such as Chesterfield Gorge would not be off-limits to hydropower projects under this alternative. Federally-assisted projects such as streambank armoring would not be scrutinized to ensure that scenic values were maintained. Thus, there is the potential for long-term degradation of the Westfield River's outstanding scenery from water development activities under this alternative.

Impacts associated with inappropriate shorelands development would be minimal due to existing local shorelands protection ordinances. The likelihood that these ordinances would endure into the future is not, however, assured.

Alternative B would require that all federally-sponsored water resources projects be reviewed to ensure that no adverse impacts on the river's outstanding scenic values would result. Non-water resource projects receiving federal assistance would also receive increased scrutiny for impacts on scenic values during NEPA reviews under this alternative. The likelihood that local shorelands ordinances would retain their viability would be significantly enhanced as compared to alternative A, thus providing added protection to scenic qualities associated with shorelands.

Recreational Resources

Alternative A would provide no protection for the Westfield River's unique whitewater boating opportunities. New dams for flood control, hydropower, or other purposes could be built, eliminating the Westfield's special status as one of the few remaining unregulated whitewater rivers in the northeast. Such

development would constitute a major negative impact on recreational opportunities in the Westfield Basin and, indeed, the entire southern New England region.

Alternative B would provide the strongest possible protection for the Westfield River's outstanding recreational boating and fishing resources. The direct positive impact of designation in preventing the construction of new dams, combined with less direct positive impacts associated with the increased protection of scenic and natural values as a result of NEPA reviews would serve to enhance and maintain the river's regional recreational significance.

Impacts of Alternatives on Cultural Resources

Archaeological and Historic Resources

Alternative A would fail to protect archaeological resources and historic resources which are not listed on the National Register of Historic Places from the adverse impacts of federally-assisted water resources projects. Listed structures such as the keystone arch bridges on the West Branch would be protected from all federal actions under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act regardless of whether the river is designated.

Alternative B would serve to increase the protection afforded to non-listed historic structures and sites through the increased NEPA scrutiny of all federal actions which would result from the river's wild and scenic status.

Impacts of Alternatives on Socioeconomic Values

Water Supply

Alternative A could have a negative impact on the Middle Branch's value as an emergency water supply source. As described in section 6.3.1 above, new point source discharges could be allowed upstream of Littleville Reservoir, the City of Springfield's backup reservoir, under existing variance procedures. Gradual degradation resulting from federally-assisted activities resulting in non-point source pollution is also a possible negative impact under this alternative.

Alternative B would prohibit the construction of new water supply reservoirs or diversions if they would create an adverse impact on the river's free-flowing character or other outstanding resources. However, Littleville Reservoir is located below the segment of the Middle Branch which has been proposed for designation and could thus be utilized for water supply under this alternative. Thus the only short-term impact on water supply which would arise under the designation alternative is the positive impact on water quality described in section 6.3.1. In the long-term, there is the possibility that increased regional population pressures could lead to the need for additional water supplies. In this case it is possible that designation would require additional scrutiny of proposed withdrawals in or upstream of the designated segments. The designation would have no affect on withdrawals required to resolve short-term public safety emergencies.

Hydropower

Alternative A would allow the continuation of existing federal regulatory policies regarding hydropower development. State policy in opposition to hydropower development on designated state scenic rivers notwithstanding, projects could be developed anywhere in the Westfield basin. The Federal Energy Regulation Commission would set environmental conditions for these projects.

Alternative B would preclude the construction of hydropower facilities along the designated segments of the Westfield River and in upstream areas if these would adversely affect the river's outstanding resources. No FERC-licensed facilities, including dams, water conduits, reservoirs, powerhouses, or transmission lines would be permitted to be built. However, it must be noted that, while there is theoretically a potential for hydropower development, there is no current interest in this, nor has interest been displayed in the past several years.

Mineral Resources

Alternative A would restrict but not necessarily prohibit potential future development of mineral resources. Available information from the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Mines suggests that emery, talc, silica, mica, lithium, and iron have been mined and prospected, primarily from pegmatites, along and within

one mile of the West, Middle, and East Branch of the Westfield River. These minerals , along with kyanite, manganese, lead, tin, sand, and clay also have been mined and prospected within five miles of these rivers. Future mining will be subject to the restrictions imposed by existing local land use regulations. As described elsewhere in this report and summarized in Table 1, these regulations are aimed at retaining the natural character of the river area. Mineral extraction outside of the immediate shoreline area will not be affected.

Alternative B will have impacts on extraction of mineral resources similar to those of Alternative A. This is because local land use regulations are the same under each alternative. The one area where the alternatives differ concerns federal permits. If a mineral extraction activity is subject to a Corps of Engineers 404 permit the level of scrutiny required prior to issuance will be increased in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directive that no federal agency take any action (including issuance of a permit) that will adversely affect the natural values of the designated river.

Property Values

Alternative A would have no impact on property values.

Alternative B would have either no impact or possibly a positive impact on property values. This conclusion is based on the findings of actual studies on this topic regarding wild and scenic rivers and similar resource designations and on anecdotal evidence from other wild and scenic rivers. The most comprehensive study considered change in values along the designated Upper Delaware River in New York as compared to trends outside the wild and scenic corridor. That study found a rise in land values following designation. This was because the majority of people seeking to purchase property in rural areas such as the Delaware Valley consider scenic quality and open space as major quality of life factors and are therefore willing to spend more for property where they can be guaranteed that scenic and open space values will not erode over time. Studies elsewhere have found either a positive or neutral affect.

Local Economy

Alternative A would have no impact on the local economy unless the river's free-flowing condition were to be

altered. In this case, a minor decrease in income in the food, lodging and automotive service sectors could result due to the decrease in recreational spending.

Alternative B could have a modest positive impact on the local economy if tourism promotional materials included the designation as part of the local attractions. If area governments choose not to promote the river's recreational attractions, no impact on the local economy would result.

Cost to Local, State, and Federal Governments

Alternative A would have little or no impact on costs to local, state, or federal governments. Possible short-term increases in costs associated with monitoring of local land use ordinances can be anticipated due to the adoption of new shorelands ordinances.

Alternative B would have impacts on costs to the local, state, and federal governments similar to those under alternative A. Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act states that state-administered components of the system must be administered "at no cost to the federal government." Thus, no increased federal expenditures are anticipated. The Westfield River Greenway Plan calls for increased maintenance and policing on lands owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There would be a corresponding increase in costs to the Commonwealth though this increase would likely be slight. There is also the possibility of a slight increase in property tax revenues due to increases in property values and corresponding increases in property valuations.

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A could cause gradual, long-term negative impacts on the river's natural, recreational, and cultural values.

Alternative B would reduce or halt the gradual degradation of the Westfield River's natural and cultural resources. Increased attention to the river by local, state, and Federal governments could lead to actual enhancements of the natural environment. This alternative would have a major positive impact on the preservation of the river's free-flowing character and associated recreational opportunities. It would have a

negative impact on the development of hydropower within and upstream of the designated corridor if such development were to be proposed in the future.

Because Alternative B would provide significant benefits to the environment and to the public with few if any known significant socioeconomic effects, **Alternative B is the preferred alternative.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

DESIGNATION

Based on the foregoing findings that the nominated segments of the Westfield River are 1) eligible and 2) adequately protected for designation as components of the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and that designation would create significant positive environmental impacts, the National Park Service recommends that the Secretary of Interior designate the nominated segments into the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System pursuant to Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act.

CLASSIFICATION

The National Park Service recommends the following segment classifications:

West Branch

Scenic Section: From the upstream end of the designated segment at a railway bridge 2000 feet downstream of the Becket town center downstream to the town of Chester (10.0 miles).

Recreational Section: From the town of Chester downstream to the Huntington/Chester town line (3.8 miles).

Middle Branch and Glendale Brook

Scenic Section: Glendale Brook (0.4 miles).

Recreational Section: Entire designated segment of the Middle Branch (12.6 miles).

East Branch

Recreational Section: From the upstream end of the designated segment at the Windsor/Cummington town line, eight miles downstream to the point near the Cummington/Chesterfield town line where Route 9 diverges from the river (8.0 miles).

Scenic Section: From the downstream end of the recreational section to the end of the designated segment at Knightville Reservoir (8.5 miles).

FUTURE RIVER MANAGEMENT

In accordance with both Section 2(a)(ii) designation requirements and the stated wishes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the towns along the river, the National Park Service recommends that the designated segments be administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and local governments under the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement, as described elsewhere in this report. Further, the state and local governments should rely on the Westfield River Greenway Plan as revised in 1993 for guidance in implementing the Memorandum of Agreement. Parties to the Agreement should review the Greenway Plan periodically and make such modifications as might be necessary to respond to changing circumstances. Continued protection of the outstanding resources identified earlier in this report should be the standard for evaluating future proposed changes to the Plan.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, federal involvement in the administration of the designated segments should be limited to consultation by the National Park Service and other federal agencies regarding permissible activities under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Federal activities that are not directly related to the river's status as a wild and scenic river and that do not cause an adverse impact on the aforementioned outstanding resources should not be affected by this designation. As examples, designation should not preclude the Soil Conservation Service from providing technical assistance to landowners, nor the Fish and Wildlife Service from pursuing endangered species recovery planning, funding fisheries restoration projects, or initiating other activities aimed at conservation of wildlife resources.

REFERENCES

The following documents and individuals were consulted for this report:

Documents

Anadromous Fish Management Plan for the Westfield River: 1991-2000, Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement, 1990.

A Determination of the Eligibility and Classification of the Westfield River for Potential Inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, National Park Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, 1988.

Massachusetts Landscape Inventory, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, 1981.

Massachusetts Scenic and Recreational Rivers, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Scenic Rivers Program, 1982.

Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Pollution Control, 1990.

Massachusetts Wildlands, A Guidebook to the Commonwealth's Natural Areas, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, 1989.

Westfield River Greenway Plan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, June 1990.

Westfield River Greenway Plan (revised), Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, June 1993.

Correspondence from Elected Officials

Correspondence from Towns, State Agencies and Federal Agencies

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DISTRIBUTION LIST

The draft findings report was distributed to the following Federal agencies along with a letter from the Director of the National Park Service inviting comment.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

USDA Soil Conservation Service

United States Department of the Army, Corps of
Engineers

United States Department of Energy

United State Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines

United State Department of Interior, Fish and
Wildlife Service

United States Department of Transportation

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Copies of the draft report were also forwarded to the State agencies involved in the MOA including the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and two departments within that Office, the Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement. Copies of the draft report were also distributed to libraries in the vicinity of the Westfield River. The availability of the draft report was also announced in the Federal Register.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

Three Federal agencies forwarded substantive comments: the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Mines, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Army Corps of Engineers stated that the proposed designation would not affect the operation of its Knightville Dam and that it supported designation. The Corps letter also suggested that the proposed state river protection act and ongoing effort to introduce anadromous fish to the Westfield River be mentioned in the final report. Both of these suggestions have been incorporated.

The U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Mines noted that the Environmental Assessment section of the draft report did not describe the mineral resources of the Westfield River valley or evaluate the impacts of designation on their extraction. The Final Report has been revised accordingly.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture commented in support of the proposed designation, noting concerns about the limitation on federal expenditures imposed with designation via Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act. The letter notes that implementation of the Greenway Plan assumes funding from federal sources. In fact, the management recommendations in Chapter Six of the Greenway Plan involve actions solely by local and state governments or non-profit organizations, not by the federal government. These local and state management strategies have already been substantially implemented, prior to the pending Wild and Scenic designation. Nowhere in the Plan is there envisioned an active river management or administration role for any federal agency, including the Soil Conservation Service or the National Weather Service. The Plan does envision cooperation from the National Park Service in ensuring that federally-funded or permitted actions do not impair the river's outstanding resources, and cooperation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in managing its Westfield River lands in a manner consistent with the Plan. In monitoring impacts associated with federal permits and projects, the National Park Service would be acting under delegated authority from the Secretary of the Interior, who is required under Section 7(a) the Act to determine whether such impacts would be "direct and adverse." The Corps' continuing responsibility for managing Corps-owned lands within the designated segments is consistent with Section 2(a)(ii). Such cooperation is also provided for in Section 11(b)(1) of the Act.

Comments were also received from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Westfield River Watershed Association. Both letters endorsed wild and scenic designation.

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