

Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt Rivers

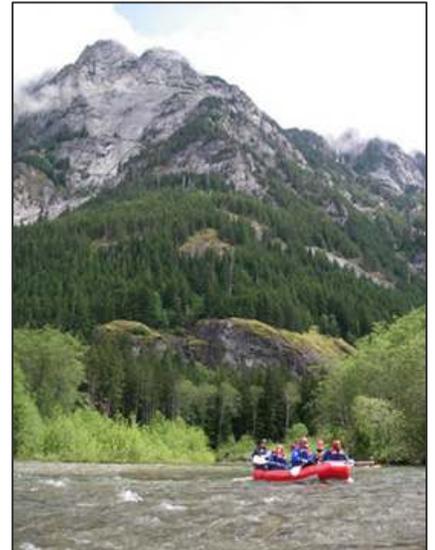
The Case for Wild & Scenic River Designation

Alpine Lakes Wilderness Additions and Pratt and Middle Fork Snoqualmie Rivers Protection Act (H.R. 361; S. 112)

Few rivers anywhere in the country can match the quality of recreational, scenic, and ecological resources that the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and its major tributary the Pratt provide.

Whether it's a quiet fishing trip after work, a day out with friends on some of the most outstanding whitewater the region has to offer, or a weekend with the family in one of the most scenic river valleys in the country, these rivers are tremendous resources for our community. They are also an important source for clean water that sustains the culturally and biologically significant fishery resources of the Snohomish River system.

The designation will ensure that the 27.5-mile reach of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and the entire 9.5-mile Pratt River are protected for future generations securing this important habitat, protecting the quality of the recreational experience, and recognizing the community-based stewardship efforts that maintain the river corridor as one of our community's greatest natural assets.



*Whitewater rafting on the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River
(c/o Tom O'Keefe)*

Recommended for Protection

- In 1990, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) recommended the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt Rivers to Congress for Wild and Scenic designation, noting their outstanding, regionally-significant recreation, fisheries, wildlife, geological and ecological values and "very high public support" for designation.
- The recommendations were based on the following outstanding resource values¹:
 1. Recreation: The Middle Fork Snoqualmie offers a high quality front country recreation experience for day hikes, whitewater boating, and fishing while the Pratt offers outstanding backcountry recreation.
 2. Fisheries: The rivers are home to healthy populations of native cutthroat trout.
 3. Wildlife: The rivers contain high quality winter range for deer and elk and excellent riparian habitat for furbearers
 4. Geological: Past glaciation has carved out the classic U-shaped valleys through which these rivers flow and nearly vertical bluffs of granite, grandodiorite, and gneiss dominate the scenic vistas
 5. Ecological values: These rivers flow across dynamic floodplains where natural processes dominate

"As someone who has explored hundreds of river miles across the country and around the world, I can confidently say that we have some of the most spectacular river resources of any place in the world. Protecting the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt Rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is an important step toward preserving recreational opportunities for hikers, fishermen and paddlers desiring rare opportunities for solitude and exploration close to downtown Seattle."

-- Thomas O'Keefe, Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director for American Whitewater

¹ In recommending a river for Wild and Scenic designation the Forest Service determines outstanding resource values of regional or national significance. The Pratt was determined to have all five of these values. For the Middle Fork Snoqualmie the outstanding values were recreation, fisheries and wildlife.

Benefits of Wild & Scenic Designation

- Protects the river's free-flowing character, water quality and outstanding values
- Promotes river-friendly land use practices
- Protects important fish and wildlife habitat
- Protects existing, compatible uses of the river corridor including the quality of the recreational experience
- Enhances the local community's civic awareness and pride by having a nationally-recognized wild river in their backyard



View looking down the Pratt River Valley toward Bessemer Mountain (c/o Harry Romberg)

What Designation Will Do

- Prohibit dams and other water projects that impair the free-flow of a river or its outstanding values. In the past, there have been hydropower proposals for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and its tributaries, including the Pratt River.
- Establish a protected corridor extending $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the high-water mark on both sides of the river.
- Require the managing federal agency to work with other stakeholders to ensure that the river's 'outstandingly remarkable values' are protected, including ensuring enough in-stream flow to protect those values.
- Develop a cooperative river management plan within three years of designation.

What designation Will Not Do

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act carries no authority to affect the zoning of private lands. At one time much of the Middle Fork and Pratt river valleys were privately owned but today only a few small in holdings remain with all of the Pratt River in public ownership.

"The Northwest Fly Anglers serve as stewards of the river bar at the confluence between the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and the Pratt Rivers. This is one of our most popular fishing spots, and a place where we share our passion for the outdoors with our families. We are excited about the Congressman's efforts to preserve the Pratt River through Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations."

-- Rob Switalski, Conservation Chair, Northwest Fly Anglers