



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF OUTDOOR RECREATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

January 7, 1975

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to note
RECEIVED
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JAN 8 1975
to BY
ROBERT C. BYRD
U.S. SENATOR
for file

Honorable Robert C. Byrd
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Byrd:

Progress is being realized on our study of the New River Gorge. As indicated to you earlier, we are holding public information meetings on January 14, 15 and 16, 1975.

The enclosed booklet is being distributed in advance of those meetings so that interested parties will have a basic understanding of our preliminary findings.

Thank you for your continued interest.

Sincerely yours,

James G. Watt
Director

Encl.

Identical letter sent to Senator Randolph
and Congressman Hechler and Congressman Staggers



NEW RIVER GORGE

A NATIONAL WHITE - WATER WAY

INFORMATION BROCHURE

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Sponsored by:

U. S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Co-sponsors</u>
Jan. 14, 1975 8 p.m.	Hinton (City Hall)	Reg. I Planning & Dev. Council Three River Chapter-Izaak Walton State Dept. of Natural Resources Fayette Plateau Chamber of Commerce Reg. IV Planning & Dev. Council Reg. I Planning & Dev. Council
Jan. 15, 1975 1 p.m.	Charleston (State Conf. Center)	
Jan. 15, 1975 7 p.m.	Fayetteville (County Courthouse)	
Jan. 16, 1975 7 p.m.	Beckley (Community Room)	

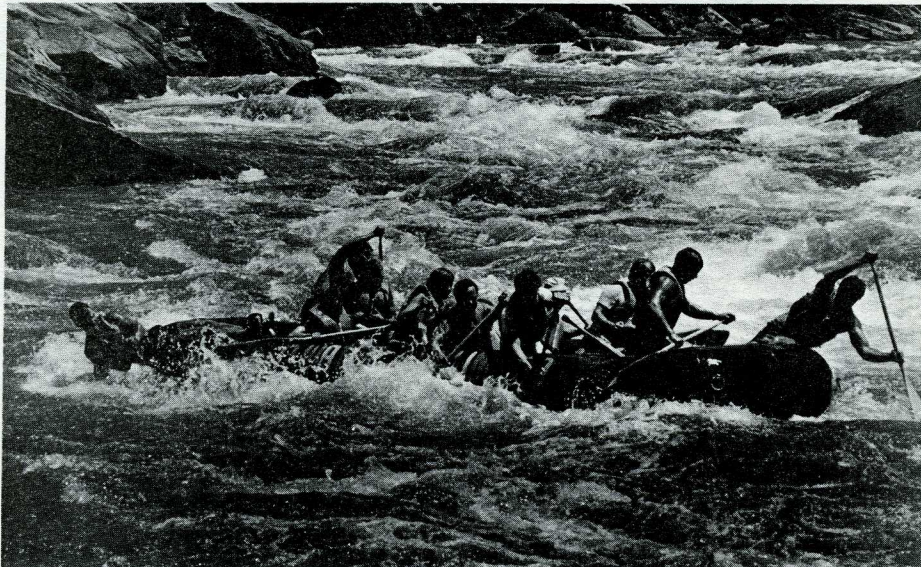
WE ARE PLEASED TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS BROCHURE FOR YOUR USE WHILE PARTICIPATING IN THE NEW RIVER GORGE PUBLIC MEETINGS. THESE MEETINGS SERVE TO INFORM YOU OF THE PRELIMINARY STUDY FINDINGS AND TO OBTAIN YOUR THOUGHTS ON HOW THIS VALUABLE SCENIC RESOURCE CAN BE USED AND MAINTAINED.



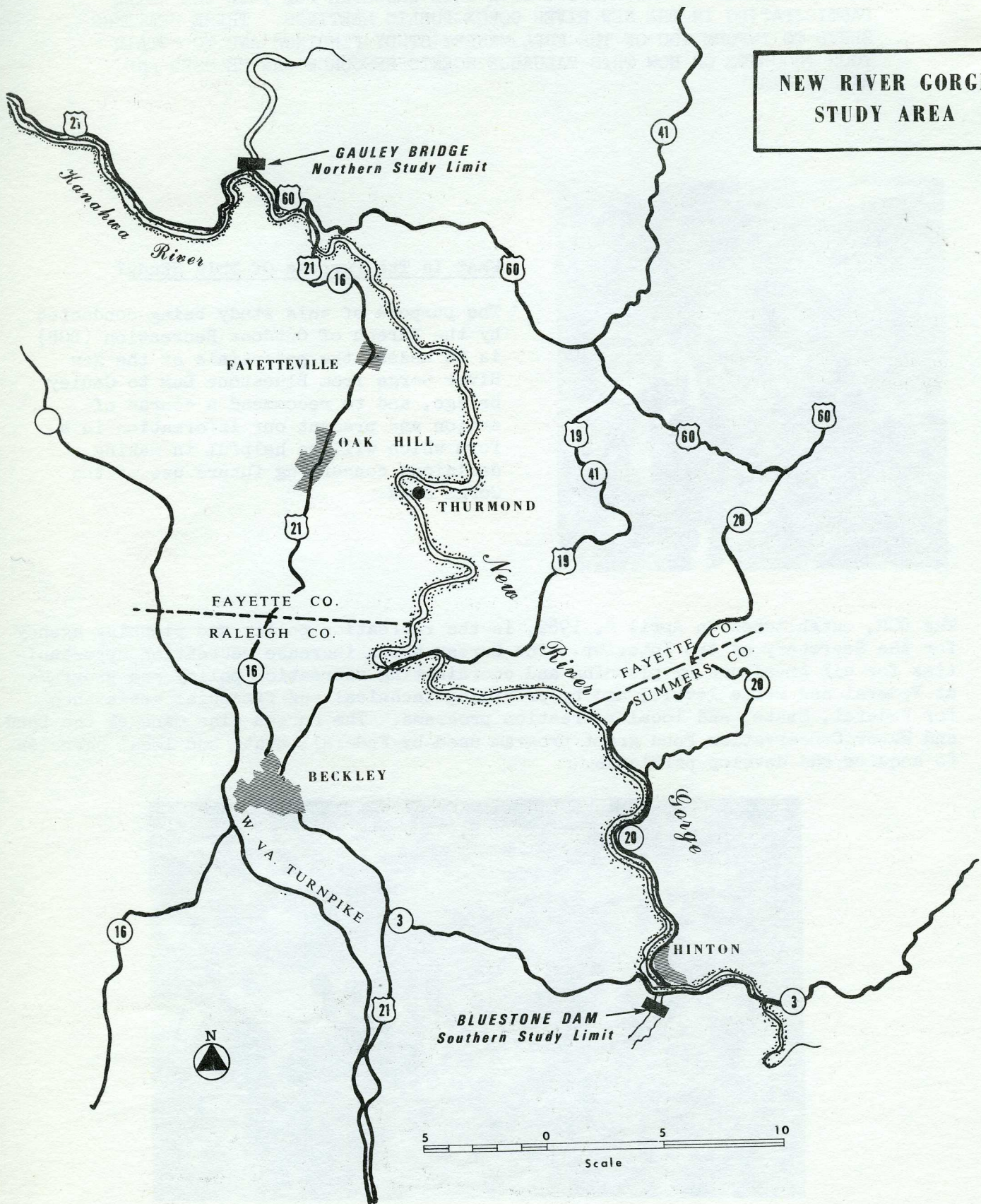
What Is The Purpose Of This Study?

The purpose of this study being conducted by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) is to assess the potentials of the New River Gorge from Bluestone Dam to Gauley Bridge, and to recommend a course of action and present our information in a form which will be helpful in making decisions concerning future use of the Gorge area.

The BOR, established on April 2, 1962, is the recreation policy and planning agency for the Secretary of the Interior. The Bureau helps increase recreation opportunities for all Americans by planning and coordinating recreation policy and programs at Federal and State levels, and by providing technical and financial assistance for Federal, State, and local recreation programs. The Bureau also manages the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program used by Federal, State and local agencies to acquire and develop parklands.



**NEW RIVER GORGE
STUDY AREA**



Study Approach

This study, requested by U. S. Senators Robert Byrd and Jennings Randolph, has three main thrusts; a) to assess the physical capabilities of the Gorge area, b) to compare the area to National Criteria and determine if any National designation is appropriate, and finally, c) to recommend a plan that recognizes the recreational, environmental, historical, cultural, and economic values of the New River Gorge area.

Information has been gathered from Federal, state and local agencies and individuals. This data has been supplemented with several field inspections. Applying this information to the physical resource, a number of plan options and management alternatives appear feasible.

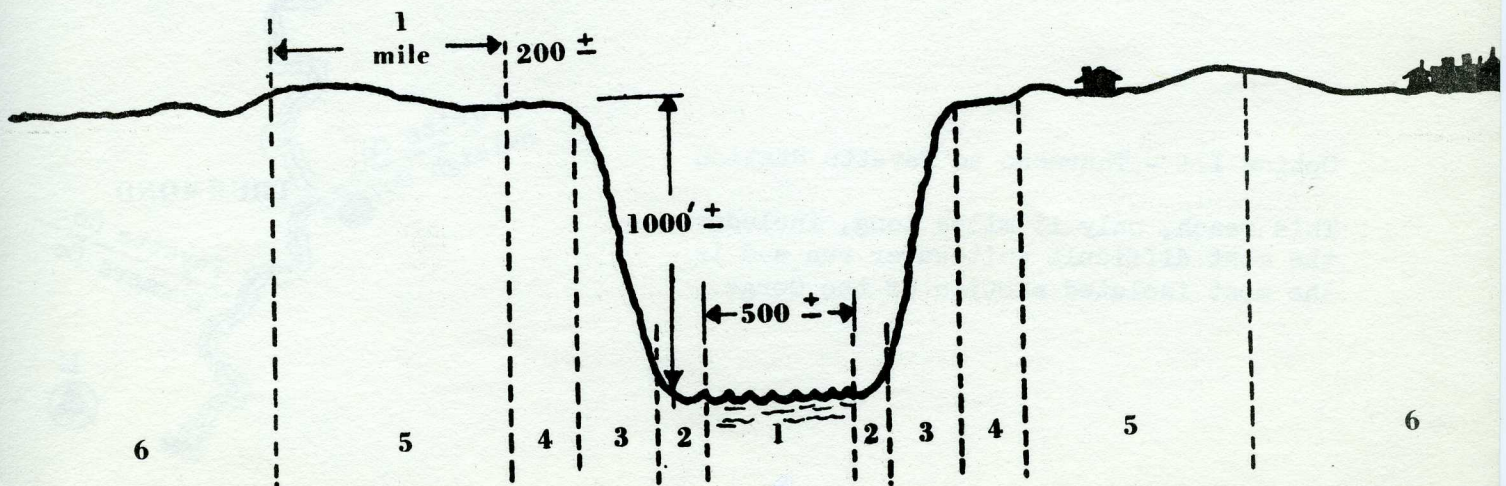
Evaluation of the Resource

The New River Gorge Area contains six types of physical resources which, by their very nature, can provide for certain types of use.

Physical Feature (Zones) --- Recommended Use Policy

- 1) River...Provide rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.
- 2) River Banks...Provide nodes of access for river and shoreline uses, and to control these uses through access limitations. Accommodate scenic railroad and trail uses.
- 3) Gorge Wall...Limit recreation use to hiking, nature study, historical and geological interpretation.
- 4) Rim...Preserve the scenic values of this area; and limit development to scenic overlooks and trails.
- 5) Near Plateau...Encourage nodes of park land, and private recreation enterprise, and allow compatible agriculture, timber, and mining developments.
- 6) Far Plateau...Encourage recreation support development and to provide for economic enhancement, tourism, commerce, industry, agriculture, mining, timber, and residences.

CROSS SECTION

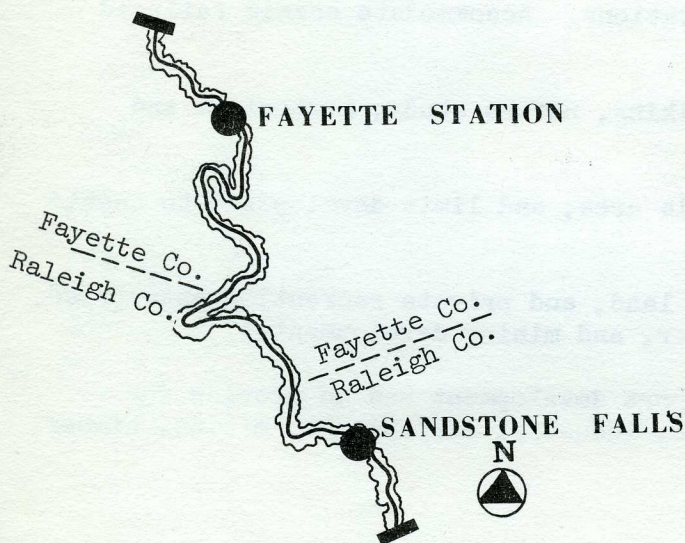
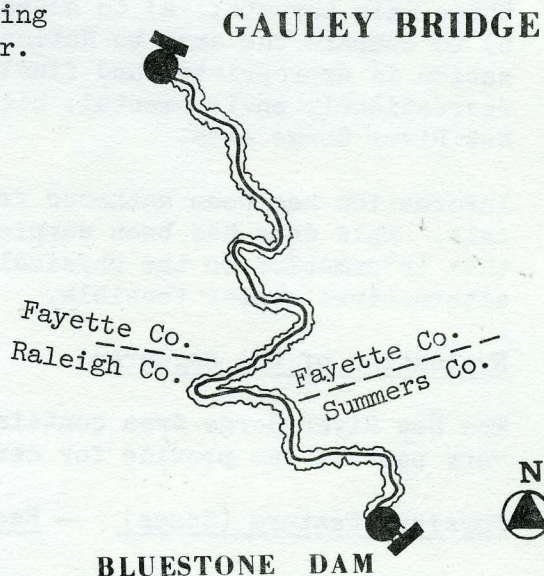


Planning for the resource must be done in a number of different perspectives. Conservation and recreation needs and opportunities change when weighing various lengths and widths of the river corridor. Suitable length and width (spatial) options are briefly described on the following two pages.

Linear Options

Option I - Bluestone Dam to Gauley Bridge

This is the entire study length of 66 miles. It provides the greatest variety of recreation opportunities, including all the scenic Gorge, all of the white-water areas, popular fishing areas and some calm water suitable for boating.

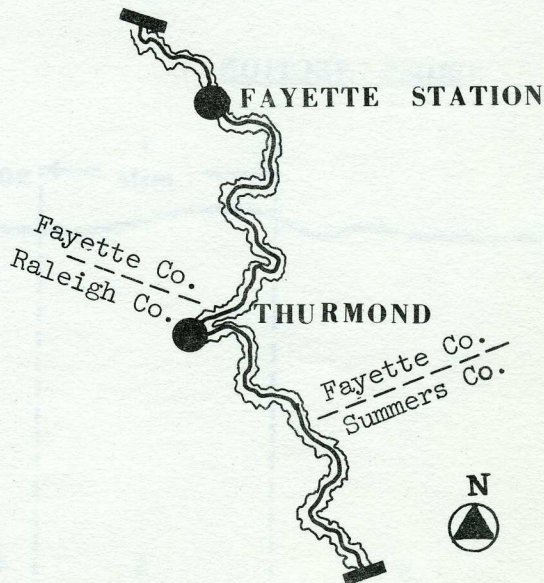


Option II - Sandstone Falls to Fayette Station

This reach is about 46 miles long. It includes all the major whitewater rafting areas and the majority of the most scenic areas.

Option III - Thurmond to Fayette Station

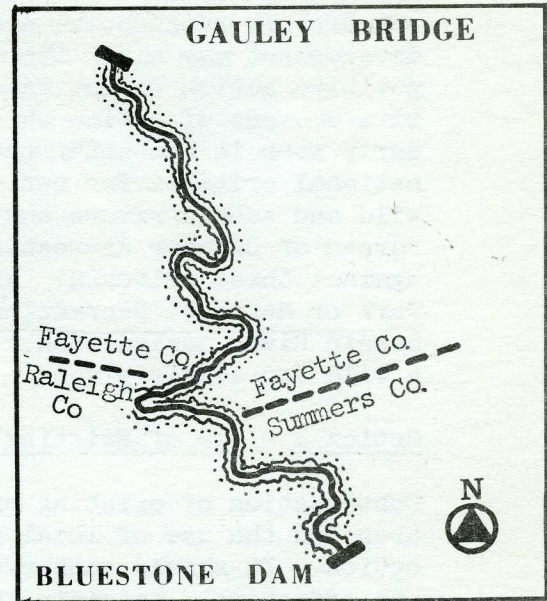
This reach, only 15 miles long, includes the most difficult whitewater run and is the most isolated section of the Gorge.



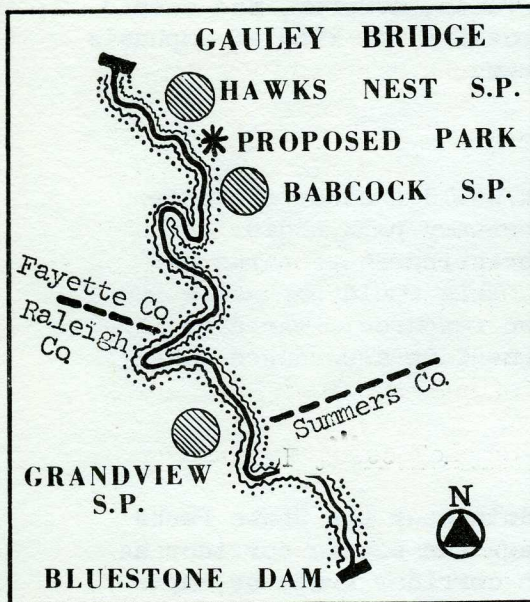
Spatial Plans Considered

The purpose of such an option would be to maintain the natural, scenic and recreational values of the Gorge. It would include a 45,000 acre area including the Gorge Walls and a 200' buffer zone along each rim. (Zones 1,2,3,4). The entire area would be controlled by local zoning authority.

Option A - Scenic Corridor

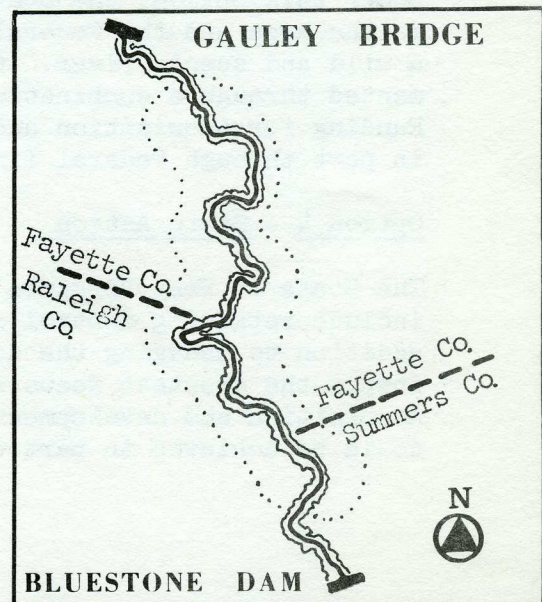


Option B - Scenic Corridor Plus Park Nodes



This option would be to maintain the natural scenic values of the Gorge, provide and accommodate increased recreation and tourism development. It would include a 50,000 acre area including the Gorge Walls, a 200' buffer zone along each rim and several nodes of parkland using existing and proposed parks overlooking the Gorge (Zones 1 to 5). 45,000 acres would be controlled by local zoning authority. 5,000 acres would be controlled by fee simple acquisition at a cost of 4-6 million.

Option C - Large Park



This option would provide for increased recreational development within the Gorge area. It would include areas up to one mile from the Gorge rim. The entire area would be controlled through fee simple acquisition, amounting to about 80,000 acres at a cost of 30-50 million dollars.

Management Options

There are a variety of development pressures being exerted on the New River Gorge area. These include recreational, mineral, industrial, commercial, residential and transportation growth. Resulting intensive development may alter the natural beauty and character of the Gorge if positive action is not taken. This study is designed to identify positive courses of action which will serve to maintain this character. An early step in the study process is to determine whether the area meets national criteria for national parks, national recreation areas, national wild and scenic rivers and others. The National Park Service and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation assessed the potentials of the Gorge area against these criteria. While the area did not qualify for a National Park or National Recreation Area, it does qualify for National Wild and Scenic River designation. The following are options for management of a wild and scenic river.

Option 1 - Use of Existing Authorities

Continuation of existing programs to develop new State parks in the Gorge area and the use of local zoning authority are emphasized under this option. It should conserve environmentally fragile portions of the Gorge and effectively maintain the area in its natural state. Under this option there would be minimal expenditure of government funds, however, the scenic and recreation values of the Gorge area may not receive the kind of emphasis that would occur under a unified management program.

Option 2 - Federal Action

Federal administration of a wild and scenic river would include the protection of the scenic corridor as well as complimentary park nodes. It would require the Federal government to acquire existing State parks in the area in the interest of unity of management. This would emphasize the Gorge area as a single recreation and conservation resource. The area would be funded and managed by the Federal government in accordance with National policies and priorities.

Option 3 - Joint Federal-State Action

Under this option, the State would continue to administer the State Parks in the area and the Federal government would manage the scenic corridor as a wild and scenic river. Control over the scenic corridor would be implemented through a combination of local zoning and Federal acquisition. Funding for acquisition and development of State Parks could be provided in part through Federal financial assistance.

Option 4 - State Action

The State of West Virginia's management of the wild and scenic river would include retaining control over its existing and proposed State parks in addition to managing the scenic corridor noted above. This approach would insure the greatest focus on State needs and desires in the management area. Acquisition and development within the scenic corridor and State Park areas could be achieved in part through Federal financial assistance.

Preliminary Recommendation

It is recommended that plan option I-B from the previous pages (Scenic corridor for the entire study length plus park nodes) be implemented and that the New River Gorge National White Waterway be designated as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. It can be administered by either the State of West Virginia (Option 4 above), by the Federal government (Option 2), or by joint Federal-State action (Option 3). In either case, emphasis should be placed on the use of local zoning authority to maintain much of the area in its natural setting.

Currently proposed State Parks would be developed to provide greater recreation opportunities and to accommodate increased use pressures under Options 3 and 4. Existing Federal grant programs could provide up to 80% of the acquisition and development costs of proposed State parkland and other lands within the Gorge corridor.

It is further recommended that a moratorium be placed on new mining within the Gorge until its impacts can be studied and controls proposed that would minimize or prevent conflicts with the scenic and recreational uses of the Gorge.

Implementation of the recommendation would provide a major new park system in West Virginia, protecting one of the State's greatest scenic resources. At the same time it would enhance the State and local economies through the provision of a major new tourist attraction.

NOTE: From your Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

Please take this opportunity to give us your views in the space below. Remove this page from our brochure and give it to a member of the study team before leaving or fold it in half and mail later.

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