WAPSIPINICON RIVER

IOWA
WAPSIPINICON RIVER, IOWA

Failed criteria, Reg. 4, (Ann Arbor)

Location - central Iowa

Length of study area - 160 miles

Quality of recreation - Excellent fishing, hunting, and nature study; good nonmotor boating, camping, hiking and sightseeing.

Ownership - Primarily in private ownership. In Iowa, the state owns the river and the waters may be utilized for recreation purposes between access points.

Summary of findings - Fails to meet criteria as it includes 11 dams, 4 of which are currently being used to produce hydroelectric power although there are excellent boatable stretches between impoundments. The quality and uniqueness are lacking to attract other than local use.
Memorandum

To: The Director, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

From: Lake Central Study Team

Subject: Wapsipinicon River, Iowa

The Wapsipinicon River in the State of Iowa does not meet the five criteria established for inclusion within the proposed nationwide system of wild rivers. Eleven dams have been erected, four of which are being used to produce hydro-electric power. The presence of the dams has drastically affected the stream's free-flowing qualities. In addition, quality and uniqueness are lacking to attract other than local use.

However, the river has many fine qualities for outdoor recreation use, and state development should be encouraged.

Lake Central Study Team
WILD RIVERS STUDY
FOR THE
WAPSIPINICON RIVER
IOWA
SEP 10 1963

Lake Central Study Team

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U.S. Forest Service

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THREE STEP

I. RIVER AREA INVENTORY FORM

II. CRITERIA

III. FINDINGS

IV. MAPS
I. RIVER AREA INVENTORY FORM

A. General Information

1. Name of river: Wapsipinicon River

2. Location of study unit(s): Reach from mouth at the Mississippi River to Mile 3, crossing west of Oelwein.

3. State(s): Iowa

4. County(ies): Clinton, Scott, Cedar, Jones, Linn, Buchanan, Blackhawk, Bremer.

5. Major drainage basin (see appendix A):
   Hudson Bay and Upper Mississippi River Basins.

6. Population within 50 miles: 1,195,000; 150 miles: 3,500,000; 250 miles: 15,000,000
   There has been a tendency for the cities to increase slightly in population, by the same token the smaller towns and rural areas have tended to decline in population.
7. Weather characteristics by seasons and inclusive dates when study unit(s) is best suited for public use and normal weather conditions during that period
   
   Winter season (December through March) cold with snow.
   Spring (April through May) cool and pleasant.
   Summer (June through August) hot, humid, with showers.
   Fall (September through November) cool and pleasant.

   Summer time is the season of maximum recreation use, fall is usually a most delightful period with the autumal coloring most spectacular.

   Source: Personal knowledge of study group, living in near vicinity.

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B. Description and characteristics of river (by study unit(s)):

1. Number of miles in study unit(s)  
   160 miles

2. Width characteristics
   
   Varies from 200' at mouth to 50' near SH 3 crossing at Salwein; at the various impoundments varies greatly from 200' to 1500'. The Upsipinicon possesses no major tributary. The basin averages 15 miles in width.
3. Depth characteristics

Portions of the river are suitable for motor boating, however, sand bars, logs and mud discourage this use except where impoundments have been constructed. All of the reach is suitable for canoes and other shallow water float equipment. The water is deep enough for swimming in many places.

4. Flow characteristics

The flow is moderate to heavy in the spring. During summer and fall the flow slacks off to an average of 4 mph. The flow is reasonably smooth and level except near the various impoundments. Drainage area 1,040 square miles. Average discharge at Independence, 513 cubic feet per second. Normal fluctuations caused by power plants along river reach. The Des-IIT gage station near mouth of reach, reports a drainage area of 2,330 square miles, and a 22 year average discharge of 1,320 C.F.S. Maximum flow 1944 of 26,000 C.F.S. Gradient of fall averages 2.5 feet per mile.

Source: Iowa Natural Resources Council, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

5. Course characteristics and stability

Meandering and stable. The altitude at the source is 1,250 feet and at the mouth 364 feet. In the course of its meanderings it falls 2,68 feet per mile.
6. Bed material

Sand and mud. Stretches between Independence and Anamosa, rocky.

Source: Personal observation of study team.

7. Water quality (kind, degree and source of pollution)

Pollution is a minor problem caused by canning factory near Tripoli. The state has taken cognizance of pollution and has made great progress in its elimination on this and other rivers.

The minor pollution present in the study reach apparently dissipates enough to support a high amount of quality of aquatic and fish life.

Source: Iowa State Conservation Commission, Iowa Natural Resources Council

8. Type of fishery (warm or cold water) and dominant species of fish (commercial and sport)

Angling pressure is primarily for catfish, crappie, Northern pike, and large mouth bass. Smallmouth are common in some reaches. Recent fishery collections made by Robert E. Cleary showed 61 species of fish in this river.

Source: Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Iowa Conservation Commission.
C. Description and characteristics of setting (by study unit(s)):

1. Nature of topography

The upper basin is gently undulating. The central and lower portions of this narrow valley is more sharply rolling. This central portion has been greatly modified by erosion and weathering, possessing well defined terraces and narrow valleys. Rocky cliffs predominate near Wapsipinicon State Park at Anamosa. The area has a history of damaging floods. The river is subject to sudden and frequent rises.

Source: William J. Peterson, State Historian

2. Ecological type (deciduous, coniferous, prairie, desert, shrub, or other) and brief description

Prairie and deciduous. Oak, hickory, basswood, elm, walnut and butternut are common.

Narrow screen of mixed deciduous forest and prairie. There are many places where cleared land borders the river. Over 90% of the land is in agricultural use.

3. Important species of wildlife and status

Deer, many species of ducks, pheasant, squirrel, and raccoons.

This valley provides the major deer cover in east and central Iowa. Reported to be best wildlife area in the State.

Source: Iowa State Conservation Commission
D. **River access**

1. **Types and locations of public access (spot on map)**

   There are numerous points of public access from both sides of the river. The State has acquired access points and manages game production areas.

   **Source:** Iowa State Conservation Commission

2. **Factors limiting public access (physical, legal)**

   Cost of land acquisition is the major limiting factor. This region is a highly developed agricultural community.

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E. **Special scientific, educational and aesthetic values**

1. **Geologic**

   Typical prairie and pot hole drainage. Stone quarries have been developed among the Anamosa Limestone near Buffalo Creek.
2. Biotic

Major cover area for game in eastern Iowa. Important waterfowl resting area. The area is significant because of the habitat provided for the protection of the native fauna and flora.

Source: Iowa State Conservation Commission

3. Historic

Saw and grist mills were constructed along the river in the 1860's. The Amish Mennonites settled in the reach area. The now extinct sodtown was built near Coggon. Anamosa was noted in early days as an excellent hideout for horse thieves and desperadoes. The community organized the wapisi Rangers and eliminated the criminal element. Stone quarries were developed near Anamosa. The entire area is rich in traditions of pioneer life.

Source: William J. Peterson, State Historian

4. Archeologic

Primarily used as a hunting and fishing area by prehistoric tribes.


5. Other
F. Present quality of recreation and environmental factors limiting quality:

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G. **Classification of study unit(s) (according to six ORRRC classes)**

Class II  General Outdoor Recreation Areas

Class III  Natural Environment Areas

H. **Status of economic development**

1. **Characterize the economy of the general river area**

   The economy in the area is predominately agricultural with a few small industrial sites. The agricultural development consists of corn, soy bean growing, with minor amounts of cattle grazing. There are a few limestone quarries in the area. There is a State Prison at Anamosa. A food processing plant near Tripoli. Small dairy processing plants are located in the area. An electronic production plant is located in Independence.

   **Source:** Personal observation, Iowa Natural Resources Council.
2. Is the economy growing, declining, stagnant? What economic activities are there that are growing, declining?

The economy is stagnant. Economic development is 50 miles west of the study reach in the Cedar Rapids-Waterloo area.

3. Describe the transportation routes to and through the general river area (rail, air, boat, auto) and facilities (such as landing strips, etc.)

The area has a well developed transportation system. The local road system is predominantly hard surfaced. Nearly every mile has a well graded county road.

US Routes 30, 20 and 18 pass through the area east and west.
US Routes 61, 151 and 63 pass north and south. State Routes 30, 13, 282, 150, 3, 93, 334 and 346 cross the river at numerous points as do unlisted county roads. Airports are located at Celwein, Independence, Anamosa and Davenport.

Interstate 80 passes 15 miles south of the lower reach near Davenport. There is no commercial navigation on the Wapsipicoon.

Source: Map analysis and personal observations.
I. Describe present development and give the status of plans for water resource developments in the general area by Federal agencies and others that would drastically and permanently affect the study unit(s)

The study reach at present contains eleven dams. Four of which are still being used for hydro-electric power production. The dams are spaced approximately 20 miles apart. The dams range in size from 3 to 20 feet.

The Corps of Engineers has a flood control project authorized at Central City. This project has been authorized for 20 years. Flood control has been minimized and it is felt that this project will not be undertaken.

J. What impact (detrimental or beneficial) will the following uses (present or planned) have on the qualities of the study unit(s):

1. Agriculture

Iowans are running short of land for crop production and professional conservationists feel that timbered bottomland may be used in the near future for agricultural purposes.

S.C.S. is developing a watershed protection program for siltation control.

Future pollution load may increase due to heavy fertilizing of croplands.

Source: S.C.S., Iowa Natural Resources Council

2. Forestry

Most of the area was cut over during World War II. Some commercial stands of walnut exist. Timber sales are being made at wheatland.

Source: State Forester, Iowa Conservation Commission.

3. Mining

Several limestone quarries exist near Anamosa. Sand and gravel operations are producing near Clinton.

4. Transportation

The lower reach is located 15 miles north of Interstate 80. Accessibility is excellent. U.S. State and county roads cross the reach in profusion.
5. Industry

There was no evidence of industrial development directly on the river. Agricultural-dairy production and by-products are manufactured along the river reach in small towns.

Source: Iowa Natural Resources Council

6. Recreation

Study reach offers a last retreat in the State for development of State and county parks.

Source: Iowa State Conservation Commission

7. Residential - Community

Towns and cities in Scott, Linn, Bremer and Buchanan Counties have expanded along the river shores. Many homes, permanent and summer, dot the shore line. This trend is increasing by leaps and bounds and would pose a serious acquisition problem.

Source: County maps, personal observation, Iowa Natural Resources Council

8. Other
K. Condition of headwater lands and trends in management

Headwater lands are farmed extensively. Watershed improvement programs are in effect under the auspices of the Iowa Natural Resources Council, Iowa Conservation Commission and 3.C.3. Only 5% of the land in the counties along the study reach are forest covered, most of which borders the river area.

There has been relatively little change in the ratio between forest and croplands during the last several decades.

Source: Iowa Natural Resources Council

L. Land ownership (general pattern of Federal, State and private ownerships) (show on map)

With few exceptions, as noted on maps, all land is in private ownership. In Iowa, the State owns the river and land under the river so that when access is available, the waters may be utilized for recreation purposes between access points.

Source: Personal observation, Iowa State Conservation Commission and Iowa Natural Resources Council
M. Actions that have been taken or are planned to protect the natural qualities of the river and its environment (such as special State legislation, zoning, easements, etc.)

County Conservation Boards have authority to zone river development.

The Iowa Attorney General has given the State Conservation Commission a ruling wherein the State may expend State funds to acquire private land to develop access points along the rivers of Iowa. Following this ruling the State Conservation Commission has activated an aggressive acquisition program utilizing State, D-J and P-R funds.

M. Other
0. **Sources of reference and information** (maps, reports, agencies, persons, etc.)

- Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife
- Corps of Engineers
- National Park Service
- U. S. Forest Service
- USGS Topographic Maps
- County, Highway Maps
- Iowa Highway Commission Maps
- Field Observation by Study Team, including airplane flights over the area and on the ground inspection.
- Iowa Natural Resources Council
- Soil Conservation Service
- Iowa Conservation Commission
- William J. Peterson, State Historian
- U. S. Geological Survey
- Flow Characteristic of Iowa stream Bulletin #9
  Iowa Natural Resources Council (1958)
- Inventory of Water Resources and Water Problems Bulletin #7
  Iowa Natural Resources Council
- Checklist of Fishes of the Wapsipinicon by R. S. Cleary

Continued --
Meeting August 12, 1963

Eldred Rich
Jim Cooper
Don Spalding
Louie Neuhring
Joe Will
K. M. Madden
Lee Fleming
Roger Schumacher
Sylvan T. Nunkel
Bill Tate
Mans Zillerhoff

Iowa Natural Resources Council
Iowa Natural Resources Council
National Park Service
Iowa State Conservation Commission
Iowa State Conservation Commission
Iowa State Conservation Commission
Iowa State Conservation Commission
Iowa State Conservation Commission
U.S. Soil Conservation Service-D.M.
Iowa State Conservation Commission
Iowa State Conservation Commission

Meeting August 23, 1963

Bill Tate
Louie Neuhring

Iowa State Conservation Commission
Iowa State Conservation Commission
P. Photographs (color and black and white) (label and spot on map)
P-1  Confluence of Wapsipinicon and Mississippi Rivers 20 miles north of Davenport, Iowa showing heavy forested mesh and delta land.

P-2  Home and cabin development adjacent to river 3 miles south of DeWitt at US 61, crossing river 150' wide at this juncture.
P-3 Typical cover in lower reaches. Area near Drummons Camp utilized for scout group camping 40 miles from mouth.

P-4 Typical thin screen cover between river and cultivated field. 3 miles east of Wheatland on US 30. River shallow 100' wide.
P-5 Rocky shore typical of bluff and ridge area down stream from Anamosa

P-6 Bridge and dam structure at Wapsipinicon State Park.
P-7 Dam structure partially eroded away. Near Central City. Dam is 4' high, 80' across.

P-8 Troy Mills Dam. This is a typical low head dam as utilized on this river, 10' high, 95' across.
P-9 Impoundment at Independence, Iowa. This is the largest dam on the river and is being utilized for hydro electric power generation. 24' high, 140' long.

P-10 Aerial view of causeway and impoundment at Independence.
P-11 Sand bars and typical cover in upper reaches of study unit from SH3, 10 miles west of Oelwein.

P-12 River in tight sweep near Tripoli from US 63. This is the extreme northern terminus of the study reach, River 35', shallow, rocky bottom.


4. Method of study

Investigation was made by car along segments of roads leading to and along the river. Airplane flights were made over the river area. Information was gleaned from secondary sources such as maps, reports, interviews and personal knowledge of the river reach by task force members.

5. Period of study

A field study was made during a two-day period of August 19 and 20 by William Byers, U.S. Forest Service and Donald Spalding, National Park Service.
Based on the information and impressions gained during the study, evaluate the river area against the following five criteria. To qualify for further consideration for status in a national system of wild rivers, a river area should meet all of these criteria:

1. The river is still relatively undeveloped, unpolluted, and free-flowing and the scene as viewed from the river is pleasing whether primitive or rural-pastoral, or these conditions must be capable of restoration as far as practicable and within foreseeable legislative, financial and technical capabilities.

Yes__________

No___________

Explain

Eleven dams have been erected. Four dams are currently being used to produce hydro-electric power.

2. The river area possesses recreation, scientific, historic, or aesthetic values of outstanding quality.

Yes________

No__________

Explain

This is an outstanding recreation resource in the state of Iowa. Excellent fishing, canoeing and floating is possible.
3. The river area is large enough to sustain existing public recreation use or accumulate more without resulting in appreciable reduction of the quality of the experience or damage to the resource (rule of thumb: 50 miles long and 50 feet wide).

   Yes ___ I___
   No ___ ______
   Explain
   
   The free flowing resource has been impaired by dam construction, however, this reach is large enough to provide expanded public recreation use. The expanse of water and usable resource can accommodate 75% more use without impairing the existing quality.


4. The quality, size, and uniqueness of the river and its setting is of sufficient importance to attract use from beyond the boundaries of the locality and state(s) and would appear to outweigh other uses of the river.

   Yes ______
   No ____
   Explain

   The river contains excellent size, however, the quality and uniqueness are lacking to attract other than local use. There are excellent stretches between impoundments that would be boatable and provide much needed recreation development. The biological developments by State agencies should be encouraged, but here again the quality of National significance is lacking.
5. Plans for other uses of the river or its setting that would permanently and drastically impair the natural conditions have not progressed to the point that construction has commenced.

Yes ______

No ________

Explain

The flood control project of the Corps of Engineers has been held in abeyance so long that it is not felt that it will be developed in the foreseeable future.

There are no plans for other uses of this river that the Task Force were able to identify.
III. FINDINGS

If the river area meets the five criteria and thereby qualifies for further consideration for status in a national system of wild rivers as an alternative to other uses that may be proposed:

1. Summarize briefly the basis for your conclusion.

2. Identify the river unit(s) that are worthy of wild river status and delineate on a map the lands that should be included in order to effectively protect the river and its setting.
3. Identify problems that may be encountered should efforts be made to protect the river area and its watershed, and suggest possible solutions.

4. Other
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