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THE BLACK RIVER
NORTH CAROLINA AND SOUTH CAROLINA

State Dist

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A Recommendation for Study As a Section 5(d) River
Under Public Law 90-542

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta, Georgia
August 1971

Drawer 35

BLACK RIVER, NORTH CAROLINA

Region Surrounding the River

Location--The Black River is located in the southeastern part of North Carolina. The river is formed by the confluence of Big Coharrie Creek and South River in southeastern Sampson County. It flows southeastward through Sampson County along the boundary between Pender and Bladen Counties and through Pender County where it flows into the Cape Fear River north of Wilmington.

Topography and Soils--Typically, the meandering streams in the Black River area have eroded through the unconsolidated surficial sands and clays into the older well-bedded sand and clay layers forming deep valleys. Often these valleys have sheer bluffs which expose the older sedimentary formations ranging in age from 65 to 100 million years. These deep valleys cut through the flat to gently rolling topography and usually have very wide, flat floors that form low, swampy flood plains with heavy vegetations.

The soils along the stream are sandy-loam, thus little siltation occurs in the river, even during heavy runoff.

From the Highway 701 crossing of South River to the confluence of the Black River with the Cape Fear, the river is relatively flat.

Vegetation--The upper flood plain is covered with bottom land hardwoods. The banks along the lower end of the stream are dotted with cypress knees and Spanish moss hangs heavy from the trees. There are many pot-holes in the swamp areas adjacent to the stream where the pin oaks have not been harvested, and where wood ducks and mallards feed during the winter months.

The immediate flood plain has not been disturbed by logging.

In general, the riverbanks and stream edges are made up of heavy timber stands consisting of cypress, maple, tupelo gum, green ashe, water, willow, and pin oaks, blackgum, sweetgum, and several bays. Most of the adjacent land has been cut over many times but the difficult logging conditions have resulted in a relatively unharvested fringe of timber along the edge of the stream. At present, much of the land in this area is highly valuable timberland and various types of forest-ation work are common. However, the difficult logging conditions again cause this type of activity to stop short of the actual water edge.

Land and Water Use--Most common land use is timber production, pasturage and farming. According to the North Carolina Division of Commerce and

Industry, there are no industrial sites in the area and Carolina Power and Light has no plan to impound the waters for electric power production. Similarly, the Corps of Engineers has no plan for impoundments. However, the Black River is the object of the authorized Black River, North Carolina, navigation project. Although the Corps of Engineers stated that they do not anticipate significant commercial navigation in the "near future" some clearing and snagging was accomplished in 1967 for recreational boating purposes. The section of Six Runs Creek included in this proposal has also been approved for clearing and snagging as part of a flood control project. The Corps has expressed the view to the State that these projects would be compatible with the designation of these streams for preservation as scenic or recreational rivers.

Population--All of the counties in this area have had a decrease in their populations over the past 10 years. Figures for the basin counties contained in the Advance Report for the 1970 Census of Population are as follows:

<u>County</u>	<u>1970 Population</u>	<u>Percent Change 1960-1970</u>
Bladen	26,477	-8.3
Pender	18,149	-1.9
Sampson	44,954	-6.4
Columbus	46,937	-4.2

The nearest large urban areas are Fayetteville, 50 miles to the northwest (population 53,510); Wilmington, 20 miles to the southeast (population 46,169); and Goldsboro, 60 miles to the north (population 26,810).

Recreation Resources--Nearest major recreation complexes of regional significance are in the Cape Hatteras area 150 miles to the northeast and Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, 80 miles to the south.

Recreation facilities within a radius of 50 miles include one State park, seven local government parks and one private park. The State park offers 10 campsites; local parks, 315 campsites; and the private park, 60 campsites. All of these recreation areas have facilities for trailers, picnicking, and a variety of conveniences.

The River

Physical Characteristics--The reach being considered includes the South River, from Highway 701 to its confluence with the Black River (25.75 miles); the Coharrie Creek from Highway 701 to its confluence with Black River (7.5 miles); Six Runs Creek from Highway 42 to its confluence with Black River (11.5 miles); and Black River from the upper boundaries listed above to its confluence with the Cape Fear River (an additional 64.5 miles).

The lower 15 miles of Black River is affected by tides. The main stem of the river is one of the most beautiful black-water streams in the Coastal Plains of North Carolina. The area along the river is sparsely populated

except for a few summer cabins located intermittently along the stream. The flood plain of the lower stream section is a tidal swamp area where bald cypress grow profusely. Here Spanish moss hangs like drapery along the stream.

Black River, as the name indicates, is a slow-moving, black water stream with an average depth of approximately 6 feet and an average width of 150 feet. The surface area of this river at normal water stage is 909 acres.

Six Runs Creek was made navigable from its mouth to North Carolina Highway 24 bridge by partially removing the obstructions during the summer of 1969. In the past few years, two summer cabins have been built along the banks, otherwise the stream exists in its original wild and scenic state.

Big Coharrie Creek is very much like Six Runs Creek in size and physical characteristics. The stream remains in its original wild state. The land bordering the stream is in private ownership and the main occupation in the watershed is farming.

South River in the lower portion is easily navigated with a small boat. The entire river has a gravel and sand bottom. The entire watershed along this river is in private ownership with a few summer cabins located on the lower portions downstream from North Carolina Highway 41 bridge in Bladen County.

The Black River and its main tributaries provide a beautiful and scenic route for the small boat enthusiast. The watershed has approximately 175 miles of navigable waters at normal flows.

Fish and Wildlife--Black River is noted throughout the State for its excellent redbreast sunfish fishery, as well as the tidal area for its bluegill and pumpkinseed fishery. Other highly prized fishes caught in the river are large-mouth bass, chain pickerel, yellow perch, warmouth, and bullheads. During the spring months, anadromous species ascend the river to spawn. These fish include the American shad, bludback herring, and striped bass. Black River can be fished from a boat or from the bank.

Game animals are abundant along the stream. These include deer, bear, squirrel, raccoon, opossum, and gray fox, as well as waterfowl.

Six Runs Creek has good redbreast sunfish and chain pickerel populations. The stream provides excellent fishing in the lower 25 miles, above this point the stream is too small to fish. Fishing can best be done from a small boat or by wading during periods of low flow.

Six Runs Creek is a good stream to drift for squirrel and for wood duck hunting. Deer are becoming established in the watershed and should provide fair hunting in the near future.

Big Coharrie Creek provides approximately 22 miles of small boat fishing water. A small boat or wading is recommended during periods of low water conditions. The dominant fish in this sand-bottomed stream is the redbreast sunfish, while warmouth and chain pickerel are also abundant. Presently, the stream is only lightly fished.

South River is approximately 60 miles from its mouth to its origin near Dunn. The upper portion of South River is known as Black River. That portion of South River which is located in Sampson and Bladen Counties is best known for its excellent redbreast sunfish fishery. From North Carolina Highway 242 bridge to its mouth, South River provides unexcelled redbreast sunfish fishing. The lower portion of the river is easily navigated with a small boat and fishing is also good. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has two public fishing access areas on South River in Bladen County. Small boats may be launched from all road crossings. The stream may be waded during periods of low water. Cane poles are the favorite type of fishing gear used, although fly, spinning, and casting rods can be used effectively.

Bird life is abundant and the pileated woodpecker is often seen.

Historic and Cultural--The Black River and its major tributaries--South River, Six Runs Creek, and Big Coharrie Creek, drain substantial portions of Bladen, Cumberland, Sampson, and Pender Counties. The area encompassed by this drainage system is rich in colonial and State history. Indians used the area in early times as evidenced by the abundant number of Indian artifacts found. Significant historic sites near the Black River and its tributary streams include:

1. South River from Rhodes Pond to its mouth.
 - a. Averasboro Battleground, Godwin vicinity, 1865. The battleground covered an area from Godwin in Cumberland County to Averasboro in Harnett County.
2. Six Runs Creek from North Carolina Highway 24 bridge to its mouth.
 - a. Daniel Joyner House, Clinton vicinity, circa 1810. One of Sampson County's oldest houses.
3. Black River, from its point of formation in southern Sampson County to its mouth.
 - a. Revolutionary War gun factory site. On North Carolina Highway 41 just west of Black River. Richard Herring and John Devave operated a gun factory on the site during the Revolutionary War. The factory was destroyed by Tories.
 - b. Black River Church, Ivanhoe vicinity. Presbyterian Congregation started on site circa 1740. Present church building dates from 1859.
 - c. Moore's Creek National Military Park, Pender County, 1776. Site of first major military engagement of the Revolution in North Carolina.

Streamflow--Precipitation in the basin averages about 48 inches per year. About two-thirds of this water is evaporated or absorbed by vegetation, the remaining water drains off into the creeks and river.

The Black River and the South River are formed in the southwestern coastal plain where the basins are characterized by moderate to gentle land and stream slopes. Streams in this area respond slowly to precipitation with rates of rises not exceeding several tenths of a foot per hour during intense storms.

Lowest daily flow recorded at the Black River gage during the period 1959-1968 was 8.5-cubic feet per second. Highest drainage was 11,200-cubic feet per second, which occurred during the 1965 flood. Average daily flow is 750-cubic feet per second.

Winter and early spring are the months with the highest flows while summer and fall have flows that are somewhat lower. Flow during the dry months is augmented and sustained to some extent not only by the water stored underground but also by that water being held in swamps. This residence time in the swamps allows organic materials to be dissolved in the water giving it the characteristic black color.

Water Quality--Water in all of the river segments included in this proposal have been classified by the State as Class C swamp water. Additional sampling will be needed to determine present water quality levels.

Land Use and Ownership--All of the land through which these streams flow is privately owned with the exception of four river access areas; these are owned and operated by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

Major land uses are timber production, pasture and, to a less extent, farming. A large proportion of the land is owned by paper and pulp companies.

Transportation and Access--There are four State road crossings and seven State secondary road crossings for the Black River and all of the tributaries named in this proposal. Although only four developed public access areas have been built by the State, it is possible to launch a small boat from most of the road crossings.

Travel to these streams by automobile is not difficult as paved highways cross them at a number of places. U.S. 421 on the east, U.S. 701 on the west are both north-south routes. To the south of the river U.S. 74/76 provides for east-west travel.

Railway service is available at Fayetteville and Wilmington with one line (Atlantic Coast Line) connecting the two cities and passing through Atkinson about 7 miles east of the Black River.

Air Service is available at both Fayetteville and Wilmington.

Recreation Limitations and Opportunities--The Black River and its tributaries are free-flowing streams with a predominately natural setting. The streams provide excellent fishing and boating opportunities which could be enhanced by the addition of better access areas and enlarged facilities at the nearby Singletary State Park and Jones Lake State Park. Although they are located in the 1,000-acre Bladen Lakes State Forest, these parks have very limited facilities.

The river probably would not qualify in the wild category as defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. However, it is very likely that on closer study these streams will be found worthy of preservation as scenic and recreation resources.

Bibliography

"Planning for Progress," North Carolina State Planning Division, Volume 4, Winter 1970, Page 14.

Much of the information contained in this proposal was provided by the State Liaison Officer for Outdoor Recreation for the State of North Carolina. The State has recently published a backup report for streams to be considered for inclusion in the State system as follows:

"Report and Recommendations of Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Committee," State of North Carolina, May 1971.

Maps

Location Map

1:250,000 Topographic Map Showing River Segment

Major Land Use Map

General Landownership Map

Transportation (Highways, Railroads, Bridges, Etc.)



THE BLACK RIVER AT ITS CONFLUENCE WITH THE CAPE FEAR RIVER

LOWER SECTION OF BLACK RIVER





INTERSECTION OF BLACK RIVER AND SOUTH RIVER

ACCESS TO THE BLACK RIVER NEAR THE MIDPOINT OF ITS LENGTH





PREDOMINANT LAND USE ALONG UPPER REACHES OF BLACK RIVER