



## Appendix 1: The Kootenai and Kaniksu National Forests

The Kootenai and Kaniksu National Forests feature high precipitation, lush forests, steep blue-water streams, and a full suite of native species. This unique eco-region contains species and experiences found nowhere else in Montana. The streams of the region offer refuge for rare species as well as the adventurous paddler, angler, or sightseer. While large rivers on the forests like the Clark Fork, Kootenai and Moyie are fragmented and impacted by dams, tributary streams in these watersheds remain largely free of dams and diversions. Although logging has long been occurring in the area, many steep-walled river and stream corridors boast scenic and intact first or second growth forests. A total of 15 streams and 266 streams miles are recommended for Wild and Scenic eligibility.

We recommend the following rivers and streams be found eligible for Wild and Scenic designation.

### 1.1 Big Creek (Confluence of N and S Forks to Lake Koocanusa)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Lake Koocanusa	7	Yes	F, R, S

- Fisheries: Bull trout are present in the stream, but it is not considered critical habitat.
- Recreation: Big Creek has a middle section of low gradient, followed by a Class III/IV lower section. Camping abounds along the creek, and a side trail leads to a dramatic waterfall on a tributary.



### 1.2 South Fork Big Creek (FR 255 to North Fork Big Creek)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Lake Koocanusa	9.5	Yes	F, R, S

- Fisheries: Bull trout are present in the stream, but it is not considered critical habitat.
- Recreation: Big Creek has a Class IV/V upper section followed by a scenic float. Camping abounds along the creek.

### 1.3 Bull River (Confluence of N and M Forks to Clark Fork River)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Clark Fork River	13	Yes	F, R, S

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Bull River as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 considers it a local population.
- Recreation: The Bull River provides a highly scenic Class I-II float trip for kayakers and canoeists.
- Scenery: The Bull River carves out a large, beautiful valley at the base of the Cabinet Mountains offers stunning views of the range that are unique to the region.



#### 1.4 East Fork Bull River (Source to Bull River)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Clark Fork River	7	No	F, S

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the East Fork of the Bull River as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 considers it a local population.
- Scenery: The East Fork is set in a dramatic valley in the Cabinet Mountains, with a trail leading along the creek to its source at St. Paul Lake.



#### 1.5 Callahan Creek (FR414 to FS Boundary)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River	7	No	F, H, R, S

- Fisheries: Callahan Creek, an entirely forested watershed with connectivity to the Kootenai River, is home to a local population of bull trout, according to USFS Region 1. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Callahan Creek as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009. The creek (along with the East Fork of the Yaak) is also home to the last remaining, genetically pure population of Columbia River redband trout, a USFWS species of special concern.
- History: The Historical trail provides interpretive information on the history of logging in the gorge. Off-route hikers will find a myriad of cabin sites and mining relics.
- Recreation: Callahan Creek offers whitewater paddlers a unique and challenging adventure as they navigate a spectacular slot canyon. A historic trail high above on river left provides hikers with sweeping views of the gorge.
- Scenery: Blue water, light colored bedrock, a towering slot canyon, and numerous rapids and falls combine to make Callahan Creek gorge unique and spectacular.



### 1.6 Granite Creek (Granite Lake to Trailhead for TR 136)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River (Big Cherry-Libby Creek)	7	No	F, R, S

- Fisheries: USFS Region 1 indicates that bull trout are present in Granite Creek.
- Recreation: A scenic designated hiking trail follows the creek. During the spring Granite Creek provides high quality Class IV-V paddling opportunities.
- Scenery: Sweeping views of the Cabinet Mountains, A Peak, Granite Lake, Granite Creek Falls and other natural features.



### 1.7 Grave Creek (FR114 to Forest Boundary)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORVs
Tobacco River	10	No	F

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Grave Creek as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 considers it a local population. Grave Creek is connected to Lake Kooconusa via the Tobacco River.



## 1.8 Kootenai River (See Nationwide Rivers Inventory - NRI)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Columbia River	46	Yes	F, H, R, S

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Kootenai River as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 confirms their presence. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found that “suitable spawning and incubation habitats appear to exist” for the endangered Kootenai River population of the White Sturgeon in the canyon reach of the Kootenai River in Montana.<sup>1</sup> The Kootenai River is also home to a population of Columbia River redband trout, a USFWS species of special concern.
- Historical: From the native Ktunaxa people to fur traders, gold miners, and Russian immigrants, the river has a storied and multi-layered history.
- Recreation: The Kootenai River at Kootenai Falls offers kayakers a high volume waterfall, freestyle kayaking opportunities on Super Wave, and challenging big water boating through the gorge below the Falls. The area also offers a short hike to a unique high-volume waterfall, and angling opportunities. The area below Libby Dam has produced state record rainbow trout and mountain whitefish.
- Scenery: The Kootenai River forms a beautiful, wide, river valley surround by snow-capped peaks for much of the year. The steep gradient of the riverbed forms, high-volume waterfalls and rapids that are popular with site-seers, photographers, and paddlers alike. It is hard to find such a large river where waterfalls of this quality remain intact.



<sup>1</sup> [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/fish/Kootenai\\_River\\_white\\_sturgeon/pdfs/critical-habitat-2008.pdf](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/fish/Kootenai_River_white_sturgeon/pdfs/critical-habitat-2008.pdf)

### Libby Creek (Source to FS Boundary)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River	11	No	F, R

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Libby Creek as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 confirms it possesses a local population.
- Recreation: Libby Creek boasts a high quality Class IV creek paddling experience with road access. Good rapids of moderate difficulty, beautiful scenery, and clear water welcome paddlers.



### 1.9 Quartz Creek (Source to FS Boundary)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River	8	No	F, R

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Quartz Creek as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 confirms it possesses a local population.

### 1.10 Rock Creek (Source to Clark Fork River)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Clark Fork	11	No	F

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Rock Creek as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 considers it a local population.

### Ross Creek (Source to Bull Lake)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River	8	No	B, F, R, S

- Botanical: Ross Creek Cedars Natural Area protects 100 acres of towering old growth cedars.<sup>2</sup> Cedars line the river corridor for its entire length.
- Fisheries: While not considered critical habitat, USFS Region 1 has determined that bull trout are present in Ross Creek. A dynamic and steep lower section with significant large wood in the channel and a meandering upper section characterize Ross Creek.
- Recreation: When the natural cycle of wood in Ross Creek allows, the stream offers paddlers a beautiful descent through a Class IV/V gorge. Recognized in at least one guidebook, Ross Creek is one of the few steep creeks in the region that has all the characteristics that make up a desirable creek boating opportunity in Montana.
- Scenery: Ross Creek offers visitors a view of old growth cedars, sparkling clear-blue water, 25-foot Ross Creek Falls, and a lush river corridor.



### 1.11 Swamp Creek (Source to Forest Boundary)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Clark Fork	15	No	F, R, S

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Swamp Creek as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 considers it a local population; Swamp Creek is also home to genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout, supporting high-value fisheries in the tributary system and the Clark Fork River. Swamp Creek trail is a popular access point to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai/about/forest/featured\\_areas/ross\\_creek.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai/about/forest/featured_areas/ross_creek.shtml)

### Star Creek (FR 4022 to Kootenai River)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River	8	No	G, H, S

- Geology: Star Creek slides and free-falls through an impressive, waterfall studded gorge. The consecutive waterfalls on Star Creek are likely the largest in northwestern Montana.
- Scenery: While no designated trail leads to Star Creek Falls, the falls offer a spectacular view for the intrepid hiker.

### 1.12 Vermillion River (Willow Creek to Noxon Reservoir – See NRI)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Clark Fork	13	Yes	F, H, R, S

- Fisheries: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Bull River as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009, and USFS Region 1 considers it a priority restoration watershed.
- History: History of mining, largely centered around the geological formation, the Hogback.
- Recreation: The Vermillion River features miles of easily accessible blue-water shoals and a short section of bedrock ledges in a tight canyon. Angling and paddling opportunities exist, as well as swimming and other water-based recreation.
- Scenery: Beautiful, verdant, and steep slot canyon with waterfalls and blue-water bedrock shoals make the Vermillion River a spectacular place.



### 1.13 Wigwam River (Source to Canadian Border)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORVs
Elk River	39	No	F, R, S, O

- Fisheries: Flowing north into the Kootenay River in British Columbia, the Wigwam is a globally significant bull trout stronghold. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Wigwam River as critical habitat for bull trout in 2009. Within its U.S. reaches, it also supports an extensive population of westslope cutthroat trout of likely pure genetic status.



- Recreation: Popular, high quality fly-fishing can be found in the Wigwam River and the Ten Lakes Scenic Area at its headwaters.
- Other: This is potentially an important river to mark for restoration and protection as a show of reciprocity to Canadians for their protection of the North Fork of the Flathead River in British Columbia.

#### 1.14 Yaak River (Confluence of E and N Forks to Kootenai River – See NRI)

Tributary of:	Mileage	USFS Eligible	ORV's
Kootenai River	46	Yes	F, H, R, S, W

- Fisheries: While not considered critical habitat, USFS Region 1 has determined that bull trout are present in the lower eight miles of the Yaak River, below Yaak Falls. The East Fork of the Yaak River (along with Callahan Creek) is also home to the last remaining, genetically pure population of Columbia River redband trout, a USFWS species of special concern.
- History: Rumored to have been named after the Ktunaxa word for arrow, the Yaak Valley also has a rich history of mining and logging, dating back to the 1880's. Part of an old bridge can be seen beside Yaak Falls.
- Recreation: The Yaak River below Yaak Falls thrills paddlers each year with powerful Class III and IV rapids, as well as the crux rapid "Stone Chest" which is often portaged. The large drainage area and riverbed make the Yaak enjoyable for a longer season than many nearby runs.
- Scenery: Originating high in the Purcell Mountains, the large volume Yaak River carves a path through bedrock in a densely forested valley. The river flows over numerous scenic rapids below the incredible Upper and Lower Yaak Falls.
- Wildlife: Described as one of the last great wild places in the U.S., the Yaak Valley is renowned as habitat for grizzly bears, black bears, wolverines, and wolves.



