



# Foundation Document Overview

## Obed Wild and Scenic River

Tennessee



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The OBED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER, Tennessee's only wild and scenic river, protects and enhances one of the last free-flowing river systems in the Eastern United States. This system is characterized by rugged terrain and exceptional waters and provides opportunities to experience a dramatic river gorge of the Cumberland Plateau much as it has been throughout human history.*

## Significance

Significance statements express why Obed Wild and Scenic River resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The dynamic free-flowing nature, narrow gorges, and high water quality of the Obed Wild and Scenic River system create an extraordinary biologically diverse riverine system and provide habitat for rare and unique species.
- The remarkable interplay between ongoing geologic and erosional processes forms the dramatic gorges of the Obed River System, which contains a high density and diversity of geologic features including overhanging cliffs, waterfalls, natural arches, and cobble bars.
- The deep and narrow gorges of the Obed River System provide spectacular views of high bluffs, waterfalls, and remarkable scenic vistas unscarred by human development.
- The Obed River System provides a highly scenic, wild, and primitive setting allowing for diverse and challenging recreational experiences, most notably world-class climbing and regionally significant white-water paddling.
- The steep and rugged terrain of the gorges and highly variable flows of the Obed River System limit river access and provide a remnant of primitive America where visitors experience a sense of solitude and an intimate experience with the landscape.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Dramatic and Varying Free-Flowing Condition**
- **Water Quality**
- **Active Geology and Hydrology**
- **Biodiversity and Cobble Bar Communities**
- **Connection to a Primal Landscape**
- **Challenge Yourself at the Obed**
- **11,000-Year Continuum of Human Use**



## Interpretive Themes



Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Water** – Water created the valleys of the Obed watershed, and the free-flowing, relatively unpolluted water that still tumbles down its bluffs into its creeks and rivers sustains the diversity of natural and cultural life that makes Obed WSR a national treasure.
- **Natural Resources** – The natural mosaic of the Obed is an increasingly rare window to America’s past.
- **Human Impact** – The rugged, natural terrain of Obed Wild and Scenic River limited human impact and, until recently, allowed nature to accommodate the resource-related use that did occur.
- **Wild & Scenic Rivers** – Congress created a system of “wild & scenic” rivers, including Obed, to balance the development that was gradually erasing free-flowing, unpolluted rivers and their immediate environments from the map of the United States.

# Description

The Obed Wild and Scenic River was established to preserve one of the last free-flowing, wild river systems in the Eastern United States. The park unit is characterized by rugged and primitive terrain, rare and threatened ecosystems, exceptional waters, and opportunities for challenging recreational activities.

The Obed Wild and Scenic River provides access to free-flowing waters and primal landscapes just outside the urban Knoxville area. Located in the Cumberland Plateau of eastern Tennessee, 45 miles of the Obed and its tributaries, including Clear and Daddys Creeks and Emory River, were designated wild and scenic in October, 1976. The designation covers the Obed River, from the western edge of the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area to the confluence with the Emory River, Clear Creek from the Morgan County line to the confluence with the Obed River, Daddys Creek from the Morgan County line to the confluence with the Obed River, and the Emory River from the confluence with the Obed River to the Nemo bridge.

Partnership agreements with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency are in place to manage the lands within the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area to protect the wildlife resources and primitive character of the area.

