



Thomas O'Keefe, PhD  
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director  
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Michael Mottice, Acting State Director  
Oregon State Office, Bureau of Land Management  
P.O. Box 2965  
Portland, Oregon 97208-2965

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Dear Director Mottice:

On behalf of whitewater boaters from across the nation who come to enjoy the Wild and Scenic Illinois River, I am writing to support a 20-year extension of the existing mineral withdrawal on the scenic reach of the river between Deer Creek and Briggs Creek. Specifically, we request that you promptly recommend this extension to the Secretary of Interior.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 5500 individual members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing whitewater paddlers across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. As a conservation-oriented paddling organization, American Whitewater has an interest in the Wild and Scenic Illinois River that supports whitewater recreation. The Illinois River is well known as one of our nation's most outstanding whitewater treasures. The management plan for the river specifically recognizes that the "overriding objective of management is the maintenance of an extremely challenging whitewater boating experience."

The wild section of the Illinois River flows through a steep canyon for 29 miles between Briggs and Nancy Creeks, featuring 150 rapids, of which 11 are Class IV and one is Class V. Our members value the unique wilderness experience this river provides as one of the most remote and inaccessible rivers in the lower 48 states. The scenic section upstream of the wild segment is popular for day-use and as an extension for overnight trips that continue into the wild section. While the wild segment of the river is permanently withdrawn from mineral entry under Section 9(a)(iii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the scenic segment will be opened to new mining claims if the current extension of mineral withdrawal for this segment is not renewed. We believe that mining is not appropriate on any part of this Wild and Scenic River because it is inconsistent with the Department of Interior's obligation to "protect and enhance" the nationally significant scenic, fish, and recreation values inherent to this river. Opening this section to new mining claims will not only directly impact the resource values on the scenic section, but will also have negative consequences for the wild section downstream.

We request that you act quickly to implement the extension and thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Keefe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD  
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

cc:

Ken Salazar, Secretary  
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