

1 LISA T. BELENKY (CA Bar No. 203225)  
2 JUSTIN AUGUSTINE (CA Bar No. 235561)  
3 CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
4 1212 Broadway Street, Suite 800  
5 Oakland, CA 94612  
6 T: (510) 844-7100 • F: (510) 844-7150  
7 E: lbelenky@biologicaldiversity.org  
8 jaugustine@biologicaldiversity.org

9 *Counsel for Plaintiff*  
10 *Center for Biological Diversity*

11 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
12 FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
13 WESTERN DIVISION

14 CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY , ) Civ. No.  
15 Plaintiffs, )  
16 vs. ) **COMPLAINT FOR**  
17 U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT; ) **DECLARATORY AND**  
18 U.S. FOREST SERVICE; ) **INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**  
19 Defendants. )

20 **INTRODUCTION**

21 1. This civil action requests declaratory and injunctive relief for violations  
22 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1271 et seq. Specifically, this action  
23 seeks to compel preparation of eight (8) long over-due management plans required to  
24 be prepared under the Act.

25 2. Congress designated segments of 8 rivers in California to be protected  
26 under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on March 31, 2009, PL 111-11 (MAR. 30,  
27 2009) 123 STAT. 991 (codified at 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(196, Amargosa River), (197,  
Owens Headwaters), (198, Cottonwood Creek), (199, Piru Creek) (200, North Fork

1 San Jacinto River), (201, Fuller Mill Creek), (202, Palm Canyon Creek), (203,  
2 Bautista Creek)).

3 3. For these designated rivers, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires the  
4 preparation of Management Plans to “protect and enhance . . . outstanding remarkable  
5 values” for “future generations,” and such Plans must be complete within a specified  
6 time frame, 3 years for the rivers at issue here. 16 U.S.C. §§ 1271, 1274(d)(2),  
7 1281(a). The statutory deadline for plan preparation has thus long since passed.  
8 There are no River Management Plans in place to protect and enhance the natural  
9 resources found in any of these eight rivers.

10 4. Because Defendant the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has failed to  
11 prepare a River Management Plan for the designated wild and scenic river segments in  
12 the Amargosa River or the Cottonwood Creek that cross BLM managed public lands,  
13 the agency has violated the express terms of the Act.

14 5. Because Defendant the U.S. Forest Service has failed to prepare a River  
15 Management Plan for the designated wild and scenic river segments in Owens  
16 Headwaters, Cottonwood Creek, Piru Creek, North Fork San Jacinto River, Fuller  
17 Mill Creek, Palm Canyon Creek, or Bautista Creek that are within National Forest  
18 lands managed by the Forest Service the agency has violated the express terms of the  
19 Act.

20 6. Plaintiffs seek an injunction ordering the BLM and the Forest Service to  
21 complete the Management Plans promptly.

## 22 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

23 7. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1346, because  
24 Defendants are agents of the United States and because Plaintiffs’ claims arise under  
25 federal law. The Court may issue a declaratory judgment and further relief pursuant  
26 to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201-02. An actual justiciable controversy exists between the parties.  
27

1 8. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e)(2), because  
2 a substantial part of the omissions giving rise to the claims occur in this district, and a  
3 substantial part of the federal land that is the subject of this action lies in this district.  
4 Assignment to the Western Division of this Court is proper under General Order No.  
5 16-05 I.B.1.a.(1)(b).

6 **PARTIES**

7 9. Plaintiff Center for Biological Diversity (the “Center” or “CBD”) is a  
8 national non-profit conservation organization with over 61,000 members dedicated to  
9 the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems throughout the world. CBD works  
10 through science, law, and creative media to secure a future for all species, great and  
11 small, hovering on the brink of extinction, with a focus on protecting the lands, waters  
12 and climate that species need to survive. CBD has offices in California and over  
13 7,000 members across the state. CBD is actively involved in species and habitat  
14 protection on the federal land at issue in this case.

15 10. The Center’s staff and members have used, and intend to continue to use  
16 the Amargosa River, Owens Headwaters, Cottonwood Creek, Piru Creek, North Fork  
17 San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, Palm Canyon Creek, and Bautista Creek and  
18 adjacent lands for observation, research, aesthetic enjoyment, hiking, camping,  
19 swimming, birding, fishing, and photography, and other recreational, scientific, and  
20 educational activities. CBD and its members advocate on behalf of species found in  
21 and near each of these designated wild and scenic rivers segments and intend to  
22 continue to do so. Species that depend on the Amargosa River and its riparian  
23 corridors include the Amargosa vole, the Amargosa niterwort, and the least Bell’s  
24 vireo; the riparian areas also include designated critical habitat for the southwestern  
25 willow flycatcher. Species that depend on the Owens Headwaters and its riparian  
26 corridors include Yosemite toad which are found in Glass Creek Meadows and the  
27 area provides habitat for the highest diversity of butterflies in the Eastern Sierra.

1 Species that depend on Cottonwood Creek and its riparian corridors include Piute  
2 cutthroat trout and spotted bat. Species that depend on Piru Creek and adjacent areas  
3 include arroyo southwestern toad, California red-legged frog, California condor, and  
4 native trout. Species that depend on North Fork San Jacinto River and its riparian  
5 corridors include mountain yellow-legged frogs, California spotted owls, the rubber  
6 boa and the San Bernardino flying squirrel. Species that depend on Fuller Mill Creek  
7 and its riparian corridors include mountain yellow-legged frogs, California spotted  
8 owls, the rubber boa and the San Bernardino flying squirrel. Species that depend on  
9 Palm Canyon Creek and its riparian corridors include southwestern willow flycatcher  
10 and Peninsular bighorn sheep. Species that depend on Bautista Creek and its riparian  
11 corridors include arroyo toads, southwestern willow flycatchers, Quino checkerspot  
12 butterfly and the slender-horned spineflower. The above described aesthetic,  
13 conservation, recreation, scientific and wildlife preservation interests of Plaintiffs and  
14 their members have been and will continue to be adversely affected and irreparably  
15 injured by Defendants' failure to prepare River Management Plans for these  
16 designated river segments.

17 11. Defendant U.S. Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") is the agency  
18 charged with the administration of the designated Amargosa River wild and scenic  
19 segments and the Cottonwood Creek designated segment on public lands at issue here  
20 and is responsible for compliance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for these  
21 designated river segments.

22 12. Defendant U.S. Forest Service is the agency charged with administration  
23 of the wild and scenic rivers within the national forests at issue in this matter.

#### 24 **WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT**

25 13. Congress enacted the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968 to preserve the  
26 rivers of the United States in their natural condition. 16 U.S.C. § 1271. Congress  
27 intended to protect rivers of exceptional value for public use and enjoyment. The

1 lands and waters that comprise the Wild and Scenic River Act system should be  
2 managed essentially as wilderness.

3 14. The purposes of the Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1272, are to carry out the policy  
4 that “certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments,  
5 possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife,  
6 historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition,  
7 and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and  
8 enjoyment of present and future generations.” 16 U.S.C. § 1271. And further, that  
9 these rivers or segments be maintained “in their free-flowing condition to protect the  
10 water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.”  
11 *Id.*

12 15. Congress designates a river for inclusion in the Act’s system if it  
13 possesses “outstanding remarkable values.” 16 U.S.C. § 1273(a). These values may  
14 include “scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other  
15 similar value.” *Id.*

16 16. Congress classifies rivers, or segments thereof, as a “wild,” “scenic,” or  
17 “recreational” river. 16 U.S.C. § 1273(b). “Wild” rivers are those in their most natural  
18 state, representing “vestiges of primitive America.” *Id.* § 1273(b) (1). Wild rivers are  
19 free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or  
20 shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. *Id.* “Scenic” river are “rivers  
21 that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive  
22 and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.” *Id.* §  
23 1273(b)(2). “Recreational” rivers are “readily accessible . . . may have some  
24 development along their shorelines, and . . . may have undergone some impoundment  
25 or diversion in the past.” *Id.* § 1273(b)(3).

26 17. For rivers designated after January 1, 1986, the Federal agency charged  
27 with administration over the river “shall prepare a comprehensive management plan

1 for such river segment to provide for the protection of the river values.” 16 U.S.C. §  
2 1274(d)(1). Plans must “address resource protection development of lands and  
3 facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary or desirable to  
4 achieve the purposes of th[e] Act.” *Id.* River management plans must be prepared  
5 within 3 years of the river being designated. *Id.*

6 18. In 2009, Congress designated segments of eight rivers in California under  
7 the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. PL 111-11 (MAR. 30, 2009) 123 STAT. 991  
8 (codified at 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a) (196, Amargosa River), (197, Owens Headwaters),  
9 (198, Cottonwood Creek), (199, Piru Creek) (200, North Fork San Jacinto River),  
10 (201, Fuller Mill Creek), (202, Palm Canyon Creek), (203, Bautista Creek)).

11 19. Congress designated three (3) segments of the Amargosa River: 12.1  
12 miles as scenic, 7.9 miles as wild, and 6.3 miles as recreational. 16 U.S.C. § 1274  
13 (a)(196). The Amargosa River is an entirely spring-fed perennial desert river system,  
14 harboring a level of biodiversity which is all the more remarkable when considered in  
15 contrast to its austere setting, the hottest and driest part of the Mojave Desert. The  
16 River harbors the entire wild population of the endangered Amargosa vole (*Microtus*  
17 *californicus scirpensis*), including its critical habitat; and provides habitat for the  
18 endangered Amargosa niterwort (*Nitrophila mohavensis*), the endangered least Bell’s  
19 vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*); and designated critical habitat for the southwestern  
20 willow flycatcher (*Empidonax trailii extimus*). The designated river segments are  
21 located on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management within the  
22 California Desert Conservation Area, 43 U.S.C. § 1781, and include areas within the  
23 Amargosa River Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

24 20. Congress designated eight (8) segments of the Owens Headwaters (along  
25 the Upper Owens River, Glass Creek and Deadman Creek): 6.3 miles as wild, 6.6  
26 miles as scenic, and 6.2 miles as recreational. 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(197). Owens  
27 Headwaters and its adjacent riparian areas provide habitat for many species including

1 the threatened Yosemite toad and a wide diversity of butterflies. The designated  
2 segments of the Owens Headwaters are located on public lands managed by the U.S.  
3 Forest Service within the Inyo National Forest.

4 21. Congress designated two (2) segments of Cottonwood Creek: 17.4 miles  
5 as wild and 4.1 miles as recreational. 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(198). Cottonwood Creek  
6 and its adjacent riparian corridors provide habitat for Piute cutthroat trout and spotted  
7 bat. The designated wild segment of Cottonwood Creek is located on public lands  
8 managed by the Defendants at the U.S. Forest Service within the Inyo National Forest.  
9 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(198)(A). The designated recreational segment of Cottonwood  
10 Creek is located on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. 16  
11 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(198)(B).

12 22. Congress designated two (2) segments of the Piru Creek: 4.25 miles of  
13 Piru Creek as a wild river, and 3 miles as a recreational river. 16 U.S.C. § 1274  
14 (a)(199). Piru Creek is a tributary of the Santa Clara River which flows to the ocean.  
15 Piru Creek contains unique geological formations, unusual gorges, and riparian  
16 vegetation. Piru Creek and its adjacent riparian corridors provide critical California  
17 condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) nesting and roosting sites and habitat for arroyo  
18 toad and native trout. The designated segments of Piru Creek are located on public  
19 lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service within the Los Padres National Forest.

20 23. Congress designated six (6) segments of the North Fork of the San  
21 Jacinto River: 7.18 miles as wild, 2.26 miles as scenic, and 0.68 miles as recreational.  
22 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(200). The North Fork of the San Jacinto River and its adjacent  
23 riparian areas provide habitat for mountain yellow-legged frogs, California spotted  
24 owls, the rubber boa and the San Bernardino flying squirrel. The designated segments  
25 are located on public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service within the San  
26 Bernardino National Forest.

27



1           24. Congress designated three (3) segments of Fuller Mill Creek: 2.6 miles as  
2 scenic and 0.9 miles as recreational. 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(201). Fuller Mill Creek and  
3 its adjacent riparian corridors provide habitat for mountain yellow-legged frogs,  
4 California spotted owls, the rubber boa and the San Bernardino flying squirrel among  
5 others. The designated scenic segments are located on public lands managed by the  
6 U.S. Forest Service within the San Bernardino National Forest.

7           25. Congress designated one (1) segment of Palm Canyon Creek: 8.1 miles  
8 as wild. 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(202). Congress also instructed that Defendants enter  
9 into a cooperative management agreement with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla  
10 Indians “to protect and enhance river values.” *Id.* Palm Canyon Creek and its  
11 associated riparian corridors provide habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher and  
12 Peninsular bighorn sheep. The designated wild segment is located on public lands  
13 managed by the U.S. Forest Service within the San Bernardino National Forest.

14           26. Congress designated one (1) segment of Bautista Creek: 9.8 miles as  
15 recreational. 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(203). Bautista Creek and its adjacent riparian areas  
16 provide habitat for arroyo toads, southwestern willow flycatchers, Quino checkerspot  
17 butterfly and the slender-horned spineflower. The designated segment is located on  
18 public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service within the San Bernardino National  
19 Forest.

20           27. The U.S. BLM is the federal agency charged with administration of the  
21 designated segments of the Amargosa River on public lands within the California  
22 Desert Conservation Area. 16 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(196). The BLM also has  
23 management authority over the designated segment of Cottonwood Creek (B), 16  
24 U.S.C. § 1274 (a)(198)(B), on public lands within the California Desert Conservation  
25 Area.

26           28. The U.S. Forest Service is the federal agency charged with administration  
27 of the river segments that pass through national forest lands as follows: Piru Creek



1 (Los Padres National Forest); Owens Headwaters and Cottonwood Creek (A) (Inyo  
2 National Forest); North Fork San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, Palm Canyon  
3 Creek, and Bautista Creek (San Bernardino National Forest). 16 U.S.C. §§ 1274  
4 (a)(197), (198)(A), (199), (200), (201), (202), (203).

5  
**FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

6 **(BLM: Failure to Prepare a River Management Plan -- 16 U.S.C. § 1274(d)(1);**  
7 **APA 5 U.S.C. § 706(1))**

8 29. Each and every allegation set forth in this Complaint is incorporated  
9 herein by reference.

10 30. The BLM has a mandatory duty to prepare a Comprehensive  
11 Management Plan for the segments of the Amargosa River and the segment of  
12 Cottonwood Creek managed by the BLM. Congress designated segments of the  
13 Amargosa River and Cottonwood Creek under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in  
14 2009. The deadline for completion of the plan was 2012. The BLM has not prepared  
15 a River Management Plan for the designated wild and scenic segments of the  
16 Amargosa River or the segment of Cottonwood Creek managed by the BLM. The  
17 duty to prepare plans remains in effect.

18 31. By failing to prepare a River Management Plan for the wild and scenic  
19 Amargosa River and the designated segment of Cottonwood Creek managed by the  
20 BLM, Defendant BLM has unlawfully withheld or unreasonably delayed compliance  
21 with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act within the meaning of the Administrative  
22 Procedure Act. 5 U.S.C. § 706(1).

23  
**SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

24 **(Forest Service: Failure to Prepare a River Management Plan, 16 U.S.C. §**  
25 **1274(d)(1); APA 5 U.S.C. § 706(1))**

26 32. Each and every allegation set forth in this Complaint is incorporated  
27 herein by reference.



1 Fuller Mill Creek, Palm Canyon Creek, or Bautista Creek segments Congress  
2 designated on March 30, 2009. 16 U.S.C. §§ 1274 (a)(197), (198)(A), (199), (200),  
3 (201), (202), (203).

4 C. Order the BLM, through a permanent injunction, to prepare a  
5 Management Plan for the Amargosa River and Cottonwood Creek, 16 U.S.C. §§  
6 1274(a)(196), (208)(B), by a date certain;

7 D. Order the Forest Service, through a permanent injunction, to prepare a  
8 Management Plan for Piru Creek, Owens Headwaters, Cottonwood Creek, North Fork  
9 San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, Palm Canyon Creek, and Bautista Creek, 16  
10 U.S.C. §§ 1274 (a)(197), (198)(A), (199), (200), (201), (202), (203), by a date certain;

11 E. Award Plaintiffs their costs of litigation, including reasonable attorneys'  
12 fees and costs; and

13 F. Grant Plaintiffs such additional relief as the Court may deem proper.

14  
15 Respectfully submitted,

16 Dated: March 27, 2018

17 /s/ Lisa T. Belenky  
18 Lisa T. Belenky (CA Bar No. 203225)  
19 Justin Augustine (CA Bar No. 235561)  
20 Center for Biological Diversity  
21 1212 Broadway Street, Suite 800  
22 Oakland, CA 94612  
23 T: (510) 844-7100 • F: (510) 844-7150  
24 E: lbelenky@biologicaldiversity.org  
25 jaugustine@biologicaldiversity.org

26 *Counsel for Plaintiff*  
27 *Center for Biological Diversity*