

# the mudroom

With the blasting of the Marmot Dam, the Sandy River has gone au naturel.

## Raging Beauty

Sure, Oregon has the most wild and scenic rivers in the country. But we want another one.

FORTY YEARS AGO, on October 2, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—a kind of beauty pageant for Mother Nature that assesses rivers' aesthetic, cultural, and wilderness qualities and aims to protect the most valuable ones (or at least sections of them)—only eight rivers made the cut, including 84 miles of the Rogue River. Today 165 rivers carry the designation, and 46 of those are in Oregon, giving us more than any other state. But we want more, and we may just get our wish. Until recently, only the headwaters and mouth of the Sandy River were eligible for wild and scenic status because the Marmot Dam in the middle stretch blocked the river's natural flow. But with the blasting of the dam this summer, the entire river could be up for consideration. Of course, there are still years of work to do before the Sandy can wear the wild and scenic sash. But if, eventually, it does, it will join the nearby Salmon as one of only a few rivers in the continental United States whose entire length is considered wild and scenic. Which means if this really were a beauty pageant, Oregon would surely have already claimed the crown. —Kristen Hall-Geisler