



U.S. Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region



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## Frequently Asked Questions The Wilderness Evaluation and Identification Process

What is the wilderness evaluation and identification process?

We are revising the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests' land and resource management plans as directed by the 2012 Planning Rule. This rule requires us to identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are four steps in this process: inventory, evaluation, analysis and recommendation. The process outlined in the wilderness process document explains our approach to the second step. This process follows guidance outlined in the 2012 Planning Rule Directives, Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 Chapter 70, and the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Will this process be used in the future?

Yes. We will use the process outlined here for future forest plan revision efforts; however, as we complete the wilderness portion of our planning process, we will apply any lessons learned here to improve future planning efforts.

When will the Forest Service make the wilderness evaluation narratives available to the public?

We intend to share the wilderness evaluation narratives for these areas soon. These narratives summarize the wilderness characteristics of each polygon and will help explain our thought process for how we are considering areas to move forward for further wilderness analysis.

Is the wilderness evaluation complete for these three national forests?

Not yet, but we are making progress. In August 2014, we shared a preliminary wilderness inventory with the public to gather feedback on the lands that we'd inventoried. Next, we evaluated each area's wilderness characteristics. Using this information, public feedback, and our resource specialists' knowledge, we began to identify areas to consider for analysis as recommended wilderness. In May 2015, we shared our progress on the wilderness evaluation process. Since then, we have continued our analysis of potential areas to include for wilderness consideration.

What does "polygon" mean in the process outlined here?

We use the term "polygon" to refer to an area identified on a forest map during the first step of our wilderness evaluation process, the inventory step. During the inventory step, we identified those lands that meet size and improvement requirements for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Check out our [wilderness evaluation and identification process](#) Web site for more details.

## How has the Forest Service used information the public provided in the wilderness evaluation so far?

We have gathered public input in various ways and are considering it throughout our wilderness evaluation process. To date, we have incorporated comments from scores of individuals and other organizations in our wilderness evaluations. For example, some of the substantial and specialized input we received came from The Wilderness Society. The Forest Service reviewed and synthesized that information into one cohesive report for each forest. The forest supervisors are using these reports, along with all the public and stakeholder input we have received, in considering which areas to bring forward into the wilderness environmental analysis (required under the National Environmental Policy Act), which is the next step in the four-step process noted above.

## Can I provide feedback to the wilderness evaluation and identification process?

As always, we welcome input. If you have questions, concerns or feedback about this process please contact Mark Metcalfe at 707-562-8848 or submit your input via Web-form at: <http://tinyurl.com/earlyadoptersfpr>. You will also have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on our process for identifying and evaluating areas for possible wilderness consideration when the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) is released. The wilderness analysis will appear as an appendix in the DEIS, which we anticipate releasing later this year.

## How is the Forest Service collaborating with the public?

This is our first opportunity to use the 2012 Planning Rule, so many of its requirements are new to us. Like you, we're learning as we move through our first attempt at implementing this new rule. We appreciate your patience and participation; we are sharing information and engaging with the public as we can. In the past year, we've convened public discussions on several plan revision topics as we have information available, including:

- *June 2014:* Preliminary wilderness inventory, step one of the wilderness evaluation process
- *August 2014:* Began National Environmental Policy Act process for forest plan revisions
- *November 2014:* Shared issues and concerns heard during public scoping
- *January 2015:* Sierra Cascade Dialog session about monitoring programs
- *May 2015:* Update on our wilderness evaluation progress
- *June 2015:* Inyo National Forest hosted a wilderness evaluation public workshop
- *July 2015:* Draft proposed species of conservation concern lists

## How can I obtain more information about forest plan revisions?

There are several ways you can find more information about forest plan revision efforts, including:

- Visiting our Web site: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r5/FPR>;
- Subscribing to our mailing list: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAFS/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=NEPA\\_3375\\_S](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAFS/subscriber/new?topic_id=NEPA_3375_S);
- Contacting your local Forest Service office.

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