

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

REGION 4 WILDERNESS PLANNING PROCESS

When developing or revising a forest plan, the Forest Service must identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands to be designated as Wilderness. The Region 4 Forest Service is completing this process in a consistent way across the seven Forests that will be undergoing Forest Plan Revision. Key factors regarding the R4 Wilderness Planning Process include:

- Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Forest is required to review any lands that may be suitable for Wilderness designation and analyze the impacts for recommendation of such lands.

- The final result of this process could include a recommendation to include an area into the National Wilderness Preservation System as designated wilderness, although it also could include no recommendations for potential wilderness designation.

- The Forest Service has no pre-determined goals for future wilderness designation.

- This process is intended to provide an objective review to identify if any lands truly meet the requirements of the Wilderness Act and the Chapter 70 Directives for inclusion into the NWPS, and the end result is based on the analysis that occurs during the four step Wilderness Planning Process.

- Any recommendations for wilderness designation as a result of the analysis are brought forward from the Forest Supervisor and Regional Forester to the Chief of the Forest Service. That recommendation and the rationale used, is then forwarded on the Secretary of Agriculture for his/her review. Congress has reserved the final authority to make final Wilderness designations.

- If an area has been recommended for wilderness designation by the Final Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision, the Forest is required to manage the area in a manner that will not impair the areas Wilderness Characteristics until Congress makes its final decision to designate the area as Wilderness or release it from consideration.

- Public and partner participation during this process is imperative to making the best informed decision. There will be opportunities to get involved during each phase of this process. Comments should be timed according to each phase, and specific rather than generalizing, broad opinion statements.

The following Forests will be completing the Wilderness planning process in as part of Forest Plan Revision:

THE ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST, 2016

THE MANTI LA SAL NATIONAL FOREST, 2016

THE SALMON-CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST, 2017

THE BRIDGER-TETON NATIONAL FOREST, 2018

THE DIXIE NATIONAL FOREST, 2019

THE FISHLAKE NATIONAL FOREST, 2020

THE HUMBOLDT-TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST, 2021

The Wilderness planning process takes all lands within the administrative boundary of a Forest and over the course of the 4 step process, uses a set of criteria to complete a preliminary administrative review. This process acts as a filter, applying a narrower review with each step and eliminating areas that do not meet the criteria. For more information on implementation and public involvement see the reverse side.



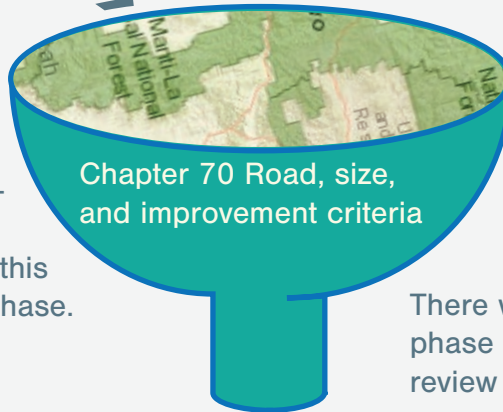
IMPLEMENTATION of the REGION 4 WILDERNESS PLANNING PROCESS

THE FOREST SERVICE WILL APPLY THE FOLLOWING PROCESS PER CHAPTER 70 DIRECTION:

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT AT EACH PHASE OF THE PROCESS. COMMENTS SHOULD FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING:

INVENTORY

This phase is broad and inclusive. The inventory will apply the size, road and other improvement criteria to the entire Forest administrative boundary. The result is a set of polygons (areas) that meet this criteria and move on to the next phase.



- providing any on-the-ground knowledge or corrections to the improvement and roads data.
- providing information on use trends (popular mtn biking routes, or ohv areas.)

There will be opportunities for comment on this phase through public meetings and an informal review period.

EVALUATION

The criteria applied during the evaluation phase is based on the areas Wilderness Character described in the Wilderness Act. This criteria is used to determine if the polygons identified in the inventory phase have Wilderness Characteristics. The result of this phase is a report describing the Wilderness Characteristics of each polygon.

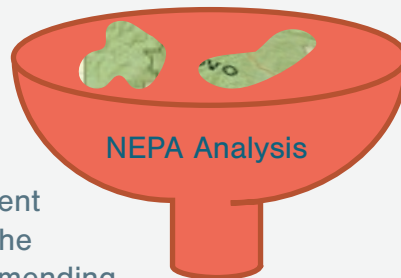


- providing comments regarding the areas Wilderness characteristics. Comments should be specific and apply any on-the-ground knowledge about the criteria used to evaluate these areas.

There will be workshops, meetings, and an informal review period for public comment.

ANALYSIS

During the Analysis phase the Forest will select which areas to bring forward into a range of alternatives for the analysis as part of the Forest Plan Revision Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The analysis will disclose what the impacts would be as a result of recommending or not recommending any areas included in the alternatives.



During the first part of this phase, public involvement should focus on providing feedback on developing alternatives and deciding which, if any areas to include for further analysis. Once determined, participation and comments should focus on the analysis of impacts for the range of alternatives. At this phase there will be public meetings and a formal public comment period.

RECOMMENDATION

In the final phase of this process the Forest Supervisor will issue a decision on whether to recommend specific areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System based on the analysis disclosed in the final EIS for the proposed revised forest plan, developed with input received during public participation opportunities. Several reviews occur within the Department of Agriculture for these areas, and ultimately Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on Wilderness designation. For lands in the inventory and evaluation that were not recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, the decision document must briefly identify and describe what management direction is provided in the plan for those lands.