

Gila National Forest Process for Determining Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Desired Conditions for the Plan Revision Process

The recreation opportunity spectrum is a management objective and provides a way of describing and providing a variety of recreation opportunities (USDA Forest Service 1982). ROS provides a framework for stratifying and defining classes of outdoor recreation environments, activities and experience opportunities. The settings, activities and opportunities for obtaining experiences have been arranged along a spectrum divided into six classes defined in terms of its combination of activity, setting, and experience opportunities. Opportunities for experience represent a range from a very high probability of solitude, self-reliance, challenge and risk (primitive) to a very social experience where self-reliance, challenge and risk are relatively unimportant (rural or urban; USDA Forest Service 1986).

As part of the current Forest Plan Revision process, a new ROS inventory was completed (USDA FS Gila NF 2016d). The Forest will continue to develop, implement, and update as needed an ROS desired conditions GIS layer, making use of the data developed during the plan revision process, but also accounting for all areas that may fall within distance thresholds for one opportunity classification, but in reality is managed for a different opportunity. An example would be ROS within designated wilderness; there may be areas within the area boundaries that are within the distance threshold from a motorized road or trail to meet the definition of “semi-primitive motorized”, but by law the area is required to be managed for primitive recreation experiences. In all such instances, the desired conditions GIS layer should be adjusted to reflect that areas within wilderness boundaries should be managed for “primitive” ROS opportunities.

Other areas besides designated wilderness where these adjustments to the ROS classes may also be applicable could include, but are not necessarily limited to, recommended wilderness, recommended and designated Research Natural Areas, Eligible Wild and Scenic River corridors, Rare and Endemic Vegetation Management Areas, National Recreation Trails, and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail management corridor.

DRAFT ROS Desired Conditions will be documented in a map in Appendix C of the DRAFT Plan Revision DEIS to be released for public comment to inform the ROS Desired Conditions Map that will be included in Appendix C of the final EIS. However, the ROS Desired Conditions Map will continue to be a dynamic and adaptable management tool that reflects conditions as they are known to exist on the ground, and it will be updated periodically to reflect any changed conditions.