

## APPENDIX 4: STEPS CONCURRENT WITH THE ASSESSMENT PHASE

There are four analyses that are done concurrently with the Assessment Phase of plan revision. The Planning Rule and the Forest Service Handbook provide the direction for analyzing these additional areas. The four areas consist of: species of conservation concern (SCC), wilderness planning, coal unsuitability, and wild and scenic river evaluation.

### Public and Agency Outreach

The Forest solicited SCC-specific input from the public during 8 public meetings throughout communities near the Forest in September 2016. Public comments were also sought at two public workshops held in November 2016. The public was invited to submit their input at the meetings, online, or via email. SCC related public comments and responses were compiled in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Species of Conservation Concern Public Comment Report (March 2017).

At the September meetings the Forest shared the initial RO lists for consideration and the Forests draft species reviews. In September the Forest completed a second round of reviews for potential non-plant SCC species using feedback from the RO and the public; these were submitted to the RO in late September. The updated list of recommended SCC species was shared with the public at the November meetings.

### Species of Conservation Concern

#### Laws, Regulations and Policy

The 2012 Planning Rule [§219.7(c)] and the FSM 1921.01 state that “The regional forester shall identify the species of conservation for the plan area in coordination with the responsible official.” SCC species are defined as, “...a species other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species’ capacity to persist over the long-term in the plan area” (§219.9(c)). FSH 1900.12, Chapter 10, 12.52 outlines the development of a potential SCC species list and criteria to identify SCC. Chapter 10, 12.53 identifies relevant information to be evaluated when reviewing potential SCC species.

#### How SCC Fit into Forest Planning

The 2012 Planning Rule incorporates SCC in the Assessment Phase [§219.6(b) (5)], and the Plan Development Phase [§219.7(c) (3), §219.9(b) (1-2), and §219.9(c)], and the Monitoring Phase [§219.12(a) (5) (iv)]. Assessment Topic 5 – At Risk Species includes “Threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, and potential species of conservation concern present in the plan area...” §219.6(b)(5). Once SCC are identified, they are included in the development of the revised forest plan components along with Federally listed species. Desired conditions and monitoring requirements are put into place with the purpose of minimizing impacts to these species and their habitats.

#### Process Overview

The SCC review process is a multi-step, iterative process that includes ongoing communication between the Regional Office (RO) and the Forest. In early 2016, the RO conducted a preliminary analysis of plant and non-plant potential SCC to identify species that met the initial criteria of *must* or *should* be considered. The RO sent

the Forest two lists with 53-plant and 26-non-plant species in the spring of 2016, for a Forest review. The Forest completed an initial review of the lists in May 2016 and submitted their draft findings to the RO in June 2016. The RO concurred with the non-plant list in September 2016.

The RO and the Forest continued to coordinate on the plant list through the winter of 2017. A key point of discussion with both the RO and the public was how to handle *must* consider species for which the Forest had no available information on the species. It was determined that the presence of any known threats, or a lack of available information, would be considered sufficient to designate these species as potential SCC, thus species would be included on the SCC list until such time that information is available to warrant their removal from the list. The Forest provided additional reviews of plant species and provided a recommendation to the RO in March 2017. The RO is in the process of reviewing the Forest's documentation on the plant species and will provide a response in the spring of 2017.

## **Forest Guidance**

The Forest developed two flowcharts to provide clarity to the Forest team and the public. One flowchart focused on the overall process followed to arrive at the SCC list. This flowchart is shown in Figure 1. The second flowchart focused on the criteria applied to each species as it was considered for inclusion on the list. This flowchart is shown in Figure 3. The Forest also wrote a procedural document to provide more context around steps taken to analyze species and to document communication between the Forest and the RO as coordination occurred to develop the SCC list. A chart showing the coarse and fine filters applied through the process are also shown in Figure 2.

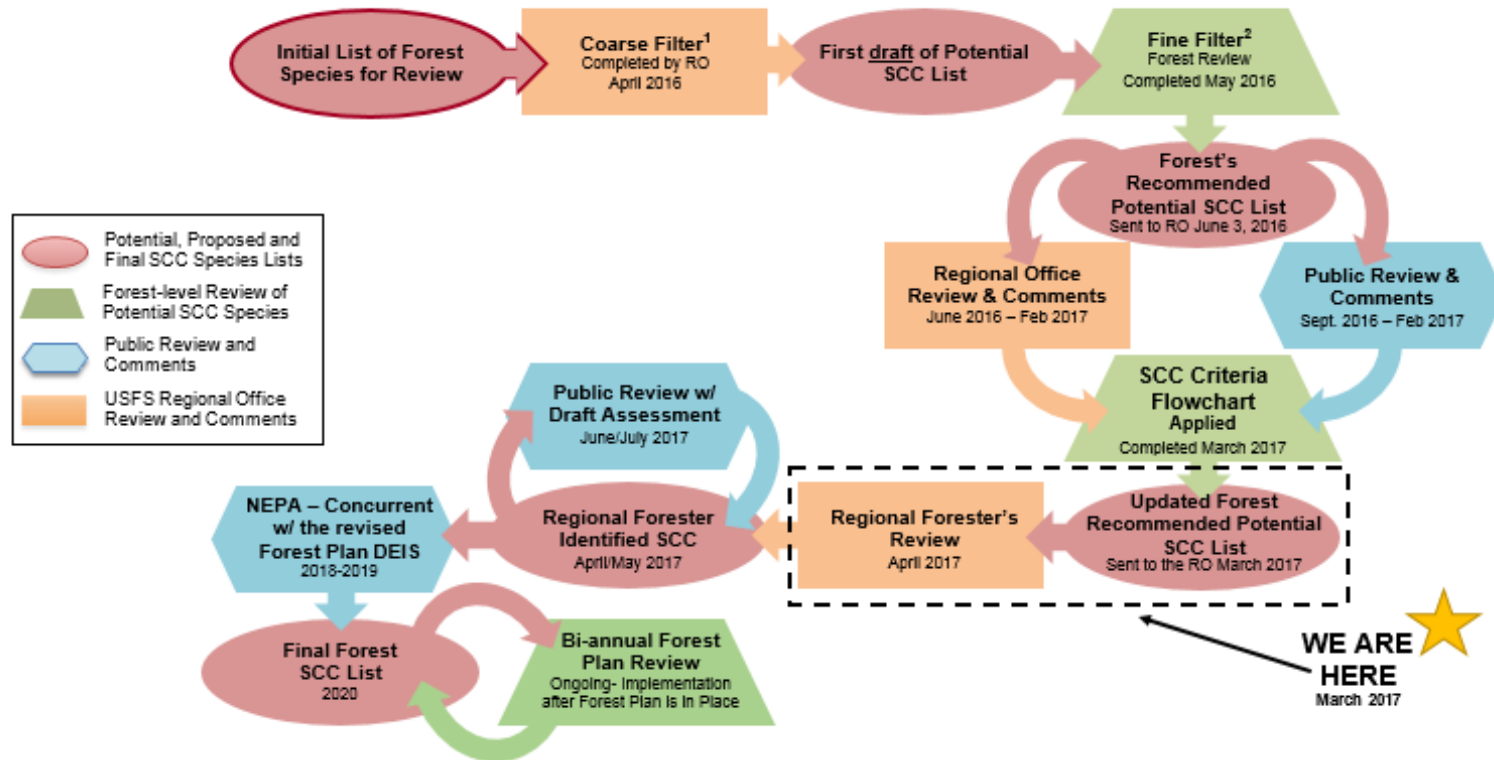
## **Next Steps**

Once the final species recommendations are submitted to the Regional Office, the Regional Forester will determine which species will be on the SCC list for the Forest. Those species will be carried forward throughout the development of the revised Forest Plan, including the development of the monitoring plan and the NEPA process.

## Manti-La Sal National Forest Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) Selection Process\*

This flowchart describes the process followed to identify which species will be placed on the Manti-La Sal National Forest's SCC list. This list will be incorporated into the revised Forest Plan per the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219).

- The **Regional Forester** is responsible for determining which species will be placed on the Forest's SCC list.
- The **Forest** is responsible for providing input, assisting in the review process and for soliciting input from the public.



**Species of Conservation Concern:** A species "...other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species' capacity to persist over the long-term in the plan area." (36 CFR 219.9(c))

\*Additional information regarding this flow chart is available on the back side of this handout.

Updated March 12, 2017

Figure 1. Diagram of the species of conservation concern selection process.

## Manti-La Sal National Forest Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) Selection Process\*

| <sup>1</sup> Coarse Filter Criteria  | <sup>2</sup> Fine Filter Criteria  |
|--|--|
| Species occurrence: (1) native and (2) known to occur in the plan area                         | Best Available Scientific Information (BASI)   |
| NatureServe Status at three scales: global (G), national (N) and state/province (S)            | Adjacent National Forest Species' Status   |
| Removed from the Federal Threatened & Endangered (T&E) List in Last 5-years                    | State & Federally Recognized Tribes T&E and High Priority Species Status                       |
| Positive '90-day finding' for Federally Listed Status  |  |
| Substantial concern about the species' capacity to persist over the long-term in the plan area | Substantial concern about the species' capacity to persist over the long-term in the plan area |

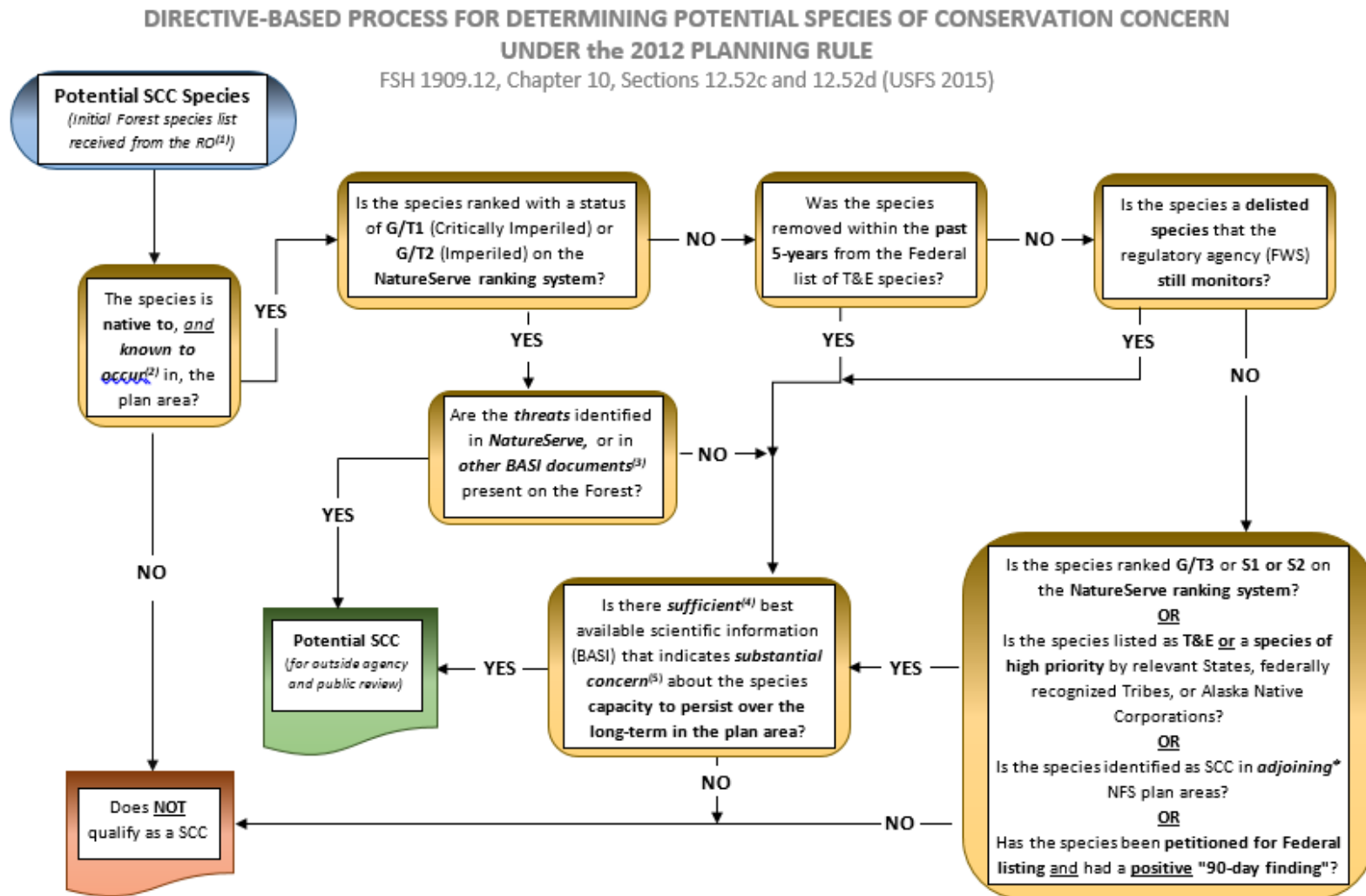
  

| LITERATURE CITED   |  |
|--|--|
| U.S. Department of Agriculture (DOA), Forest Service. 2012. The 2012 Planning Rule. Federal Register 36:219 (April 9, 2012).   | U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Forest Service Handbook (FSH). 2015. 1909.12 – Land Management Planning Handbook; Chapter 10 – Assessment. Technical Amendment. Amendment No. 1909.12-2015-1 (Effective Date: January 20, 2015). |
| U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Forest Service Handbook (FSH). 2015. 1909.12 – Land Management Planning Handbook; Chapter 10 – Assessment. Technical Amendment. Amendment No. 1909.12-2015-1 (Effective Date: January 20, 2015). | U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Regional Office (RO). 2016. Intermountain Region Species of Conservation Concern (DRAFT Feb. 2, 2016).   |
|  | U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Washington Office (WO). 2016. SCC Enquiry, Summary of Responses. Compiled by WFWARP, RVE, EMC staff.   |

\*Additional information regarding this flow chart is available on the back side of this handout.

Updated March 12, 2017

Figure 2. Filters to select species of conservation concern.



**Species of Conservation Concern (SCC):** "...is a species, other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species' capacity to persist over the long-term in the plan area." [USDA 2012; 36 CFR 219.9(c)].

(1)(2)(3)(4)(5) Definitions and clarifications available on back of flowchart.

Figure 3. Process to determine potential species of conservation concern.



|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| (1) | RO Species List                                | The initial Forest “ <i>native and known to occur</i> ” potential SCC species list is generated using BASI in the form of: (a) the USFS NRIS wildlife Database; (b) TESP database; (c) and the State Heritage database.  |
| (2) | “... <i>native to and known to occur ...</i> ” | “ <i>An organism that was historically present in a particular ecosystem as a result of natural migratory or evolutionary processes and not as a result of an accident or deliberate introduction...</i> ” (§219.19)<br><br>“ <i>A species is known to occur in a plan area if, at the time of plan development the best available scientific information indicates that a species is established or is becoming established.</i> ” (FSH 1909.12(10)(12.52)).  |
| (3) | Other BASI documents                           | In instances where there is not sufficient information for NatureServe to identify threats for a species, other BASI documents will be used if available. These include: (a) historical Forest documents (such as surveys and site visit information); (b) State Natural History species-related documents; and (c) additional information relating to the community type that species occurs in (such as the USFS Regional Intermountain Adaptation Partnership (IAP)).   |
| (4) | “... <i>sufficient...</i> ”                    | As available data and habitat condition varies between species, ‘sufficient’ BASI was deemed to have been met when BASI was available to address population/trend and distribution of a species in addition to any known threats. The determination of ‘sufficient’ BASI was on a species basis by IDT specialist*.<br><br>*For a G1/T1 or G2/T2 designated species, a lack of available BASI to address all identified threats, <b>OR</b> a lack of any available BASI to identify threats, meets the criteria for ‘sufficient’ BASI to indicate “... <i>substantial concern about the species capacity to persist over the long-term in the plan area.</i> ” |
| (5) | “... <i>substantial concern...</i> ”           | “... <i>best demonstrated by some combination of threats either directly or indirectly to its characteristic habitat: decline in the sizes and/or numbers of its populations and/or declines in its habitats.</i> ” (USFS 2016)  |

**Literature Cited**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service. 2012. The 2012 Planning Rule. Rule. Federal Register 36:219 (April 9, 2012).

U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Forest Service Handbook (FSH). 2015. 1909.12 – Land Management Planning Handbook; Chapter 10 – Assessments. Technical Amendment. Amendment No. 1909.12-2015-1 (Effective Date: January 30, 2015).

\_\_\_\_\_, Regional Office (RO). 2016. Intermountain Region Species of Conservation Concern (Draft Feb. 2, 2016).

# Wilderness Inventory, Evaluation, Analysis, and Recommendation

## Introduction

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) requires the Forest Service to adopt and periodically revise management plans, or forest plans, for all national forests and to consider the wilderness resource during the forest 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 (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend any such lands to be designated as Wilderness. A description of this process can be found in the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule and Chapter 70 of the Forest Service Land Management Planning Handbook 1909.12 (Chapter 70).

The Wilderness evaluation process takes all lands within the administrative boundary of a Forest and over the course of the four 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.

The sequence of four steps includes a broad and inclusive inventory and evaluation of lands that may be suitable for further wilderness consideration based on a set of criteria. Based on the evaluation of lands identified in the inventory and through public participation, certain areas or portions of areas, in the inventory are analyzed through a range of alternatives in the forest plan environmental impact statement. Finally, a decision is issued, as part of the forest plan revision decision, whether or not to make a preliminary administrative recommendation to add any units of land in the National Wilderness Preservation System. During each step of this process, public participation is a key component and will result in a process and decision that is transparent and inclusive. After the forest plan revision decision is made, the preliminary administrative recommendation will then receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Only Congress can designate wilderness.

## The Four Steps of the Wilderness Evaluation Process

The four steps of the Wilderness evaluation process are: Inventory, Evaluation, Analysis, and Recommendation. U.S. Forest Service Region 4 developed a process for completing the Wilderness evaluation process in a consistent and transparent matter. This will provide for a consistent approach to the methods and analysis used to determine any preliminary administrative recommendations regarding Wilderness, while also utilizing local knowledge and expertise from Forest staff and participating publics. The Region 4 Wilderness evaluation process is consistent with the direction of Chapter 70 of the 2012 planning rule handbook. The following steps are summarized from the U.S. Forest Service Region 4 Wilderness evaluation process.

### Step 1: Inventory

The first step in the wilderness planning process is to determine what lands to consider for wilderness recommendation based on improvements (man-made features on the landscape), roads, and a size criteria. The inventory stage is intended to be comprehensive and broad. It is important to note that lands included in the inventory provide a starting point for further evaluation, and their inclusion is not a designation that conveys or requires a particular kind of present or future management. The directives used to develop this criteria are found in Chapter 70.



During the Inventory phase, we develop and share maps that depict lands that may be included in the inventory for further evaluation and analysis. After applying the 3 criterion described below in the Inventory phase, a draft map will be developed which identifies areas that meet the Inventory criteria. These data will be shared with the public, other agencies, stakeholders, collaborative groups, and internal staff through meetings, workshops, webinars and utilizing online resources. After collecting and considering public comments and feedback, a revised inventory map will be developed. According to the planning directives, if a new area surfaces after the inventory stage has otherwise been completed (such as through public comment on the EIS), the Responsible Official (Forest Supervisor) can update the inventory maps to reflect the additional areas being considered, and these areas will be carried forward into the evaluation and analysis phases of the wilderness planning process.

### Criterion 1: Other Improvements

Chapter 70 lists several improvements that may or may not eliminate an area from further consideration in the Inventory phase. Most are based on the degree to which they are or are not substantially noticeable in the area as a whole. For the Inventory phase, in Region 4, substantially noticeable represents a significant degree of change lasting 20 years or more, to the existing character of the landscape as a result of the improvement. This is measured by applying visual resource management objectives through describing the line, color, texture, form, and pattern of both the improvement and the landscape within which it is located. Each improvement identified as part of the inventory will be included in the draft data set, with a worksheet describing the rationale on why the feature is or is not substantially noticeable in the area as a whole.

We exclude areas from the inventory when management actions of public use have left a substantially noticeable change to the landscape such that wilderness characteristics have been impaired. This includes excluding developed reaction sites, power lines, pipelines and other permanently installed linear structures that have rights-of-way.

We include areas for further analysis that may contain the following improvements: airstrips, historical structures, outfitter and guide camps, and permanently installed structures such as cell towers as long as the maintenance and access needs are minimal and these improvements are not substantially noticeable in the area as a whole.

### Criterion 2: Size

After applying the improvement criteria, the area will be further reviewed to meet the size criteria. Areas that meet the size criteria will be included for further consideration. Those that do not meet the size criteria will be eliminated from further review. We include areas in the inventory that are:

- 5,000 acres or greater.
- Less than 5,000 acres, greater than 50 acres and through Forest staff and public review is determined to be of sufficient size that it is practicable to include in the inventory. Examples are areas such as self-contained islands or canyons, or large enough to be effectively managed as a separate unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Less than 5,000 acres, and adjacent to existing designated Wilderness, primitive areas, and recommended wilderness on both NFS lands and adjacent lands of other Federal ownership.

### Criterion 3: Road Improvements

Chapter 70 provides direction on what type of roads will eliminate an area from being included in the Inventory. The Forest Service defines and manages roads based on a classification system that uses the level of maintenance required for each road segment. The Level 1 through 5 classification definitions can be found in



section 70.2 of Chapter 70 and in the Forest Service directives for road maintenance (Forest Service Handbook 7709.59, Chapter 60).

Areas that meet the improvements and size criteria will be further analyzed based on the presence or absence of the five different maintenance level roads. Any area that contains roads with maintenance level of 3 to 5 are automatically excluded from further analysis because these road require a high level of maintenance, and generally frequently traveled, and do not contribute to an area's suitability for further consideration of inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Level 2 roads are generally excluded from further analysis with several exceptions that re clearly defined in Chapter 70, whereas areas with Level 1 roads are included for further analysis.

## **Step 2. Evaluation**

The next step in the wilderness evaluation process is to take a more detailed look at the areas carried forward from the inventory phase based on the criteria in the Wilderness Act. Beyond meeting the basic size, road, and improvement criteria, during the evaluation phase each area will be further examined to determine if it has wilderness characteristics. These characteristics are defined in Chapter 70, Section 72.1. This will be accomplished by completing an evaluation worksheet for each area identified in the inventory and through field verification. These worksheets will be compiled into a draft report and a map for each area will be available.

Public review and participation in the evaluation phase is critical to make an informed decision later in the process. The draft evaluation report will be made available for public review and comment, and shared with the cooperating agencies, stakeholders, collaborative groups and internal staff through meetings, workshops, webinars and utilizing online resources.

Not all areas evaluated are required to be carried forward to the analysis phase; however, the Forest Service much explain the reason for excluding any evaluated areas (or portions of these areas) from the analysis phase. Just as with the inventory step, the evaluation step may need to be revisited during the subsequent phases of this process if new areas are considered.

## **Step 3. Analysis**

Based on the evaluations and input from public participation opportunities, the Forest Supervisor will identify which specific areas, or portions of areas, from the evaluation to carry forward as preliminary administratively recommended wilderness. The proposed revised forest plan will include overall management direction for areas recommended for wilderness that will protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for each selected area's suitability for wilderness recommendation. Plan Revision.

The Forest Supervisor could elect not to carry areas forward into the Forest Plan alternatives based on data from the evaluations and public input. If any areas identified in the evaluation are not included in the alternatives, rationale will be documented and available for public review.

The analysis will include a range of alternatives, which could include a wilderness recommendation for none, some, or all the areas reviewed in the evaluation phase. Not all lands included in the inventory and subsequent evaluations are required to be carried forward in an alternative.

## **Step 4. Recommendation**

In the final phase of this process, the Forest Supervisor will issue a decision whether to recommend specific areas for inclusion in the NWPS based on the analysis disclosed in the final environmental impact statement for the revised forest plan. The Forest Supervisor will weigh and consider public input received throughout forest plan revision, including the wilderness evaluation process.

Once a decision has been made and documented, the Responsible Official, through the Regional Forest, shall notify the Chief of the Forest Service of the preliminary administrative recommendations for wilderness designation for consideration to submit to Congress as a legislative proposal. Such recommendations may then be forwarded by the Chief to the Secretary of Agriculture for his or her consideration and then on to the President of the United States to submit to Congress as a legislative proposal. 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 NWPS, the decision document must briefly identify and describe what management direction is provided in the plan for those lands.

## **Manti-La Sal National Forest Wilderness Inventory Process**

The Manti-La Sal National Forest is currently completing the Inventory step of the Wilderness planning process. During this phase, we are considering two criteria: size and improvements (man-made features on the landscape including roads).

In the fall of 2016, the Forest prepared a preliminary data set and draft Wilderness Inventory maps to share with the public. In September 2016 eight public meetings were held to share information with interested parties and ask for any corrections to the preliminary data set and draft Wilderness inventory maps. The maps shared at these public meetings applied the following set of inventory criteria to the Forest administrative boundary:

- Other ownerships within the National Forest boundary (or inholdings) were not included in the inventory
- Existing designated Wilderness (Dark Canyon Wilderness) was not included in the inventory
- Road footprints for maintenance level 2, 3, 4, and 5 were not included in the inventory
- The following distances were applied to roads to establish the footprint for each maintenance level: maintenance level 2 – 12 feet; maintenance level 3 – 18 feet; maintenance level 4 – 20 feet; maintenance level 5 – 24 feet
- Power lines, pipelines, railroads, communication, and other permanently installed linear structures with rights-of-way were not included in the inventory
- Recreation site footprints were not included in the inventory (by applying a 300 foot buffer to recreation site points)
- The size criteria was applied after removing areas based on the above criteria. Under the size criteria, we identified all areas on the Forest that are over 5,000 acres and are not impeded by improvements listed above. Areas not meeting the size criteria were not included in the inventory except as follows: in some instances, we also identified areas less than 5,000 acres but greater than 50 acres whose position adjacent to BLM Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) would make feasible their management as Wilderness.

## **September 2016 Open Houses**

This section contains a summary of the information shared by the Forest and public feedback received on the Wilderness inventory. The Forest produced a comprehensive report of the September 2016 open houses which can be accessed online at: (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantiLaSal/landmanagement/planning>).

At the eight open houses, we provided attendees with information about the four phases of the Wilderness Evaluation process. The purpose was to show the public the progression of the Wilderness Evaluation process, especially the manner in which the volume of potential Wilderness areas may decrease as additional criteria are added throughout the process.

To aid this explanation, we disseminated informational handouts which provided detailed information about each stage of the Wilderness planning process. Following this explanation, we shared our draft Wilderness Inventory maps with attendees and asked them to identify discrepancies in the data, if any, and to identify areas they would or would not like to see recommended for Wilderness designation. To facilitate the collection of this information, we distributed a Wilderness questionnaire, which was also posted online.

#### Wilderness Inventory Comments from September 2016 Open Houses Report

We received 34 Wilderness comments and after careful analysis of the comments, we noticed that respondents mostly fell into one of two categories. The first were those who viewed Wilderness favorably and wanted to see more Wilderness designations. The second group took the opposite view and advocated against adding Wilderness areas.

Respondents in the North Zone were generally against the recommendation of Wilderness areas, showing concern over the land use restrictions that accompany Wilderness designation. The only exception to this was one respondent's desire to see Candling Mountain carried forward as a potential Wilderness recommendation—a recommendation mirrored in Utah's Public Lands Initiative (PLI).

In contrast, respondents in the South Zone tended to have more favorable attitudes toward Wilderness, particularly respondents from the Moab and Castle Valley areas who recommended several areas in the La Sal Mountains and Monticello District be carried over for consideration as Wilderness. However, much like the North Zone, the communities of Monticello and Blanding mostly opposed any new Wilderness recommendations.

### November 2016 Public Workshops

This section contains a summary of the information shared by the Forest and public feedback received on the Wilderness inventory. The Forest produced a comprehensive report of the November 2016 public workshops which can be accessed online at: (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantiLaSal/landmanagement/planning>).

Additional inventory criteria were applied after the September 2016 open houses in preparation for the November 2016 public workshops. Some data discrepancies and recommendations made during the September open houses were addressed in preparation for the November 2016 public workshops. At these two public workshops, the draft Wilderness inventory maps illustrated areas excluded from consideration due to size, substantially noticeable improvements or roads and highlighted areas which have seen significant vegetation management activities within the last 20 years, existing wilderness, roads and trails. In addition to the criteria previously applied, the following criteria were added:

- Withdrawals, such as mineral, power, reclamation, and water reserves, were not included in the inventory
- Oil and gas well and mine footprints were not included in the inventory
- Watershed treatments, such as contour trenching, were not included in the inventory
- The size criteria was reapplied after removing areas based on the above criteria. Areas not meeting the size criteria were not included in the inventory.

### Comments from November 2016 Public Workshop Report

Comments from participants included recommendations of improvements to not show on the maps, recommendations of improvements to add to the maps, questions about the socio-economic impacts of wilderness designation and whether state trust lands were removed from the inventory. Several areas were identified as having wilderness potential. Participants also recommended there be no wilderness recommendations on the North Zone.

- Recommend that several areas not be shown on the map including: mechanical treatment areas around Joes Valley Reservoir, the gravel pit north of the Reservoir, prescribed fire areas so that they may still be considered as potential wilderness
- Recommended additions to the map: Finn Canyon road, motorized trails
- Concern that water diversions and ditches and the access to them be shown on map. Access is critical to maintaining them.
- Are state trust lands removed from the inventory?
- What are the socio-economic impacts of a wilderness designation? A special place if designated may be overrun. Is this going to be considered?
- Areas that hold wilderness potential: Candland Mountain, Canal Canyon, and Fish Creek
- Recommendation that there be no wilderness designations on the North Zone

## Inventory work completed from November 2016 to date

From November 2016 to March 2017, we reviewed and incorporated comments provided in the November 2016 workshops, completed the “Substantially Noticeable” worksheets to further identify improvements that are considered substantially noticeable. Improvements identified and documented on the worksheets as substantially noticeable may be removed from the inventory areas. The size criteria will be reapplied after removing areas based on the substantially noticeable worksheets and criteria. Areas not meeting the size criteria will not be included in the inventory unless they are deemed of sufficient size to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

A draft inventory map will be released online in April 2017. The draft Wilderness inventory maps and inventory process used will be shared with the public, other agencies, stakeholders, collaborative groups, and internal staff through online resources. A revised inventory map will be developed after collecting and considering public comments and feedback. The revised map will be shared with the public at the summer 2017 public meetings.

If a new area surfaces after the inventory stage has otherwise been completed (such as through public comment on the EIS), the Responsible Official (Forest Supervisor) can update the inventory maps to reflect the additional areas being considered, and these areas will be carried forward into the evaluation and analysis phases of the wilderness planning process.

The Manti-La Sal National Forest will begin the Evaluation step after releasing the revised Wilderness inventory map.

## Coal Unsuitability Analysis

For the purposes of land management planning, the Manti-La Sal National Forest is evaluating lands that may be unsuitable for coal mining, as directed in FS 1909.12 chapter 20. This FS regulation refers to BLM regulation 43 CFR 3420.1-4, General Requirements for land use planning, where it states, that the *“Department of Agriculture or any other Federal agency with surface management authority over lands subject to leasing shall prepare comprehensive land use plans or land use analyses for lands it administers.”* FS 1909.12 chapter 20 also states that, *“Plan components that deal with minerals must be in accord with Agency jurisdiction, applicable law and Federal regulations, such as coal leasing (43 CFR part 3420).”* The Forest must therefore follow these regulations for land management planning involving coal resources.

The Forest Service has also entered into an interagency agreement with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to cooperate and coordinate in the application of unsuitability criteria under the general provisions of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977.

*This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to assess whether lands within the National Forest System boundaries are unsuitable for surface coal mining operations as part of the Federal lands review under Section 522 of the SMCRA. This delegation is made in order to facilitate the use of surface management agency land use planning as the integrated method for resource inventory and evaluation; to avoid duplication of agency efforts and increase efficiency and to assure the systematic application of the unsuitability criteria, and exceptions, in agency planning that involves a Federal lands review. (need MOU citation).*

The Forest has chosen to begin this analysis at the assessment stage of the Forest Plan Revision process.

## Evaluation Process

During the assessment phase of Forest Plan Revision, the Forest followed the directions set out in 43 CFR 3420 to identify areas that have coal development potential. As a result of this process, a map illustrating areas suitable for mining coal on the Forest was developed with data provided by the BLM. Evaluation, per 43 CFR 3420.1-4, General Requirements for land use planning of the acceptability of lands on the Forest for further consideration for coal leasing is outlined in Figure 4.

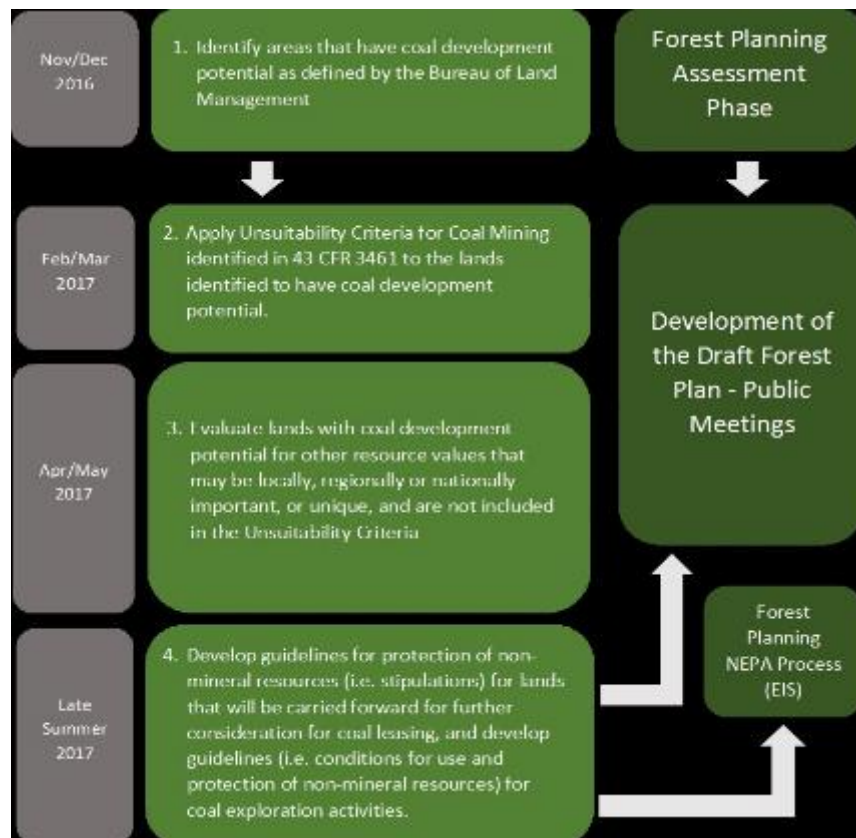


Figure 4. Coal evaluation process and timeline on the Forest.

Steps 2 and 3 are part of the planning phase of Forest Plan Revision and are directed by the Unsuitability Criteria for Coal Mining identified in 43 CFR 3461. The 20 unsuitability criteria are applied to the areas identified in Step 1 of the Coal Evaluation Process. If the lands do not meet the unsuitability criteria, they are identified as potential areas for coal development, and are then evaluated for other resource values that may be locally, regionally, or nationally important or unique (Step 3). Steps 1 through 3 identify lands that will be

carried forward into Step 4, which is developing guidelines for protection of non-mineral surface resources in the potential coal development areas on the Forest. Through all of these steps, the public and Cooperating Agencies are asked to participate and offer information and feedback to the Forest through meetings and workshops.

As stated above, the Forest has completed Step 1 of the Coal Evaluation Process and developed a map that shows the areas that will be evaluated in Steps 2 and 3. Step 2 begins the process of addressing the 20 coal unsuitability criteria within the coal development potential area, documenting those findings and tracking them in a complimentary spreadsheet, similar to the documents drafted during the 2006 Plan Revision effort. During Step 2, we reviewed unsuitability criteria, and which natural resources meet that criteria. Step 3 of the process addresses areas within the coal development potential area that are not addressed in the 20 unsuitable criteria listed in 43 CFR 3461.5, and these were recorded in a separate document. During Step 3, we identified additional natural resources that could be impacted by coal development. The results of Steps 2 and 3 will be shared with the public and Cooperating Agencies during public meetings in the summer of 2017. The Forest will then begin Step 4 of the coal evaluation process. The guidelines developed during this step will be incorporated into the public engagement process when the Forest begins drafting the Forest Plan. The guidelines developed during Step 4, with input from the public and Cooperating Agencies, will become part of the Forest Plan.

## Wild and Scenic River Evaluation

One of the 15 topics for the assessment phase requires the Forest to evaluate “existing designated areas located in the plan area including Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers and potential need and opportunity for additional designated areas.” (36 CFR § 219.6 (b) (15)). The 2012 Planning Rule further states the Forest shall “Identify the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, unless a systematic inventory has been previously completed and documented and there are no changed circumstances that warrant additional review.” (36 CFR § 219.7 (c)(2)(vi)). If a systematic inventory of eligible rivers has been previously completed, the extent of the study during the plan development or revision can be limited to the evaluation of rivers not previously evaluated for eligibility, and those with changed circumstances. (36 CFR § 219.6).

In 2008, the Forest conducted Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) eligibility studies and signed a decision determining that there were no river segments suitable for a WSR designation. However, since the completion of 2008 analysis, the Forest Service has been given new criteria for evaluating WSRs (FSH 1909.12, Ch. 80). Current direction requires that all “named streams” on the 7.5-minute USGS quad maps, need to be evaluated. This is a different criterion than was used by the Forest in 2008. We have identified 8 stream segments to move forward with in the evaluation process. These will be shared with the public during the summer of 2017.

## Evaluation Process

The Forest Service’s Handbook 1909.12, Ch. 80 provides direction for WSR evaluation. The evaluation process includes three-steps: determining eligibility, assigning potential classification, and determining suitability. Eligibility studies determine whether a river is eligible and assign it a classification. For a stream to be eligible, it must be free flowing and have one or more Outstandingly Remarkable Value, based on three key features (river-related, regionally significant, and rare, unique, or exemplary) and seven categories (Scenic, Recreational, Geological, Fish/ Wildlife, Historic, Cultural or Other similar value). If a stream is eligible it is assigned one of the following preliminary classifications:



- **Wild River Segments** are rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.
- **Scenic River Segments** are rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational River Segments** are rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

The preliminary classification establishes guidelines for management until either a suitability determination or a designation decision is reached. Once classified, the Forest considers tradeoffs between corridor development and river protection. Considerations include environmental and economic consequences as well as the manageability of a water body if it were to be designated.

## Next Steps

The Forest is in the process of determining if any streams need to move forward for classification. Any determinations will be shared with the public during the summer of 2017.