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Service

**Southwestern
Region**

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Special Areas and Forest Plan Revision

Special Area Work Group
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Operational Draft: This document is prepared to provide guidance to Forest Plan revision teams. As this guidance is implemented, we expect to learn improved ways to do this work. As we learn, this document will be updated. This document was reviewed and revised as appropriate in October 2009 to conform to the requirements of the 1982 Planning Rule provisions.

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Introduction

Special Area recommendations are one of the forest plan components and reflect one of the decisions that a forest plan makes. Special Areas must be consistent with the desired conditions and other plan components developed in the revised forest plans. The Need for Change evaluations will also help to determine the potential need for new Special Areas, for re-designation as a different type of Special Area, or for removal of designations of existing Special Areas¹. This paper is meant to supplement existing Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Forest Service Handbook (FSH) guidance.

Current Special Area guidance may be found in the following locations:

- FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70 – Wilderness Evaluation
- FSH 1909.12 Chapter 80 – Wild and Scenic River Evaluation
- FSM 1923 – Wilderness Evaluation
- FSM 1924 – Wild and Scenic River Evaluation
- FSM 2320 – Wilderness
- FSM 2354 – Wild and Scenic Rivers
- FSM 2360 - Special Interest Areas (focused on Cultural Resources management)
- FSM 2370 - Special Recreation Designations - Contains direction for management of these areas, such as those designated by law, administratively, or through the National Registry of National Landmarks

This document is organized to provide a basic understanding of what special areas are and how they fit under the auspices of the 1982 Planning Rule provisions. Existing areas already designated in current forest plans are considered first. Second, potentially new special areas, specifically those that require evaluation within the analysis (Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers,) are described in this document, including sample methods for documentation, as shown in the appendices. Finally, information is provided for consideration of new other types of designations for special areas. This section is ordered last as it is optional to accomplish with the forest plan revision, and should be given consideration during revision only if it will meet the desired conditions, timeline, and budget constraints on each forest. The only requirement for consideration of special areas is to evaluate potential wilderness and the eligibility of wild and scenic rivers. The Responsible Official may choose to address other new potential areas in future plan amendments. If this approach is taken, it should be clearly communicated to the public that these will be considered in future plan amendments and/or site-specific NEPA documents.

What are Special Areas?

Special areas are places or areas within the National Forest System designated because of their unique or special characteristics (FSM 1905 – Definitions). These designations may occur as a result of Congressional action, through statute, or through separate administrative processes.² Existing plans have congressionally designated areas such as wilderness and/or wild & scenic rivers. In addition many plans have administratively designated special areas, such as developed

¹ It is highly unlikely that forest plans would recommend removal of Congressional designations, such as wilderness or wild and scenic river segments. References to removal of designations throughout the remainder of this document are focused on levels below Congress.

² These types of designations are listed in Appendix A, along with which level of government has the authority to create or undo the designations.

recreation areas, research natural areas, botanic areas, or geologic areas. These types of designations are listed in Appendix A along with which level of government has the authority to create or remove those designations. Appendix A represents the designations known as Special Areas within Forest Service policy.

Special Area Considerations during Forest Plan Revision

Land management plans should recognize special areas that have been previously designated by statute or through a separate administrative process. Plans may also include special areas designated by the responsible official at the time of plan approval. Where a responsible official lacks authority to designate a special area, the official may recommend designation in the Record of Decision. While recommended areas are not “special areas,” they can and will be identified in the plan as management areas.³

An initial review of existing forest plans will identify areas on the national forest that have been designated as special to some portion of the public or the Forest Service. Each responsible official needs to review these designations. Those that were designated by Congress will be carried forward into the revised plan. Other designations may no longer function for their original intent due to changes such as expanding residential development on adjacent lands. How each responsible official chooses to handle these existing designations will be based on the need for change evaluations, and on the desired conditions collaboratively identified during the development of the revised plan. Another consideration during the need for change evaluations is the information contained in the assessment of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values toward National Forest System lands and the Socio-Economic Assessments created for each National Forest in Region 3. These documents contain some information concerning Special Areas within each forest and the region.

Within the revised forest plan the Responsible Official should provide appropriate plan components for existing designations and any new recommended designations. For example, plan components are required for eligible or suitable wild and scenic rivers, recommended wilderness, and wilderness study areas. Other special areas in the revised forest plan may have area-specific desired conditions, objectives, suitability, guidelines, and if necessary, standards, in addition to forest-wide direction found elsewhere in the existing forest plan. Monitoring guidance may also be developed as needed. The responsible official needs to consider whether additional management direction is necessary to protect the area and therefore warrants the extra effort of maintaining or perhaps creating a new special area. Appendix A has a list of potential special area designations.

All special areas should have a discrete boundary that is mapped⁴. These maps should be made available with the revised forest plan⁵ unless the location is protected by federal laws, such as the

³ See Appendix A for the list of the types of special areas that are appropriate for designation during plan revision –types of areas not listed in Appendix A can be developed as management areas during plan revision, but not as special areas.

⁴ Roads and trails may or may not make the best boundaries. Using roads/trails without buffers can in some cases create unintended consequences such as eliminating the ability to do road maintenance and other management activities.

⁵ Note that boundaries may change during the designation process for recommended wilderness and that final boundaries will be determined upon designation of the area by Congress.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act or Federal Cave Resources Protection Act. Such maps may be withheld from the public and made available for agency use only.

Not all areas which have a current special area designation belong in the special areas section of the forest plan. Special areas by definition must have unique or special characteristics for which specific management is required. Some may be more appropriately managed as management or geographic areas with specific Desired Conditions, Suitability, Guidelines, or in some cases, Standards in the forest plan. In addition, the contrary may also be true of some current forest plans. Some areas that qualify for Special Area designation in the revised plan may not be clearly identified as a Special Area in the current forest plan.

The following flowchart summarizes the assessment process for Special Areas described later in the document.

NEPA and Forest Planning

Revision of forest plans completed under the 1982 planning rule provisions will be analyzed with an environmental impact statement (EIS). Any special area recommendations for new designations, removing designations, enlargements, or reductions in size will need to be analyzed in a NEPA process; either as part of the plan EIS or in a separate NEPA process subsequent to plan approval. Preliminary recommendations for areas such as wilderness or wild and scenic rivers will be handled in a subsequent NEPA process with an associated forest plan amendment. If a separate management plan is required by law, regulation, or policy, that plan must be evaluated by a separate NEPA process subsequent to the plan revision process. An example would be a Comprehensive River Management Plan for a wild and scenic river. In such cases where a subsequent NEPA process will be utilized, the forest plan must include interim direction to protect unique values. Other special area designations made in the forest plan should comply with the authorities outlined in Appendix A per FSM 2372.04.

Collaboration

Reviewing and consideration of special areas is a required component of a revised forest plan, and public collaboration must be a part of the process. Collaborating from the initial revision stages will build support for the final product and may reduce conflict throughout the evaluation process. Whether integrated into a comprehensive public participation plan or treated as a stand-alone process, collaboration should be a primary method for building external and internal support for the identification, evaluation, and recommendations for special areas. In some cases public participation is required at certain points in the process. One example is during the needs assessment portion of the evaluation of potential wilderness.

There is a wide variety of collaboration techniques and models for forests to choose from to suit their needs. Collaboration activities for special areas should include the following components:

- **Common Understanding of the Process** - It is imperative for all audiences to know and understand the parameters of the process such as the timeline, budget, and scope. Special area recommendations must be supported by the desired conditions and can be accomplished during the plan revision process; however, designation may require subsequent NEPA analysis.

- External/Internal Audience - Key people from both external and internal audiences should be identified and included as early in the process as possible. Tribal consultation is one type of activity that requires additional attention. This engagement should be continued throughout the revision process.
- Iterative and Adaptive Process - From start to finish, ensure that the collaboration process on special areas is providing meaningful and timely opportunities for all audiences to provide input. An adaptive process recognizes that plans may change and provides enough flexibility to allow for future change. For example, don't make an irreversible commitment to provide quarterly newsletters only to find out a year down the road that they don't suit your needs.
- Action Plan - A good action plan will provide the collaboration effort with the purpose, direction and motivation needed to accomplish its goals. Who? What? When? Where? Why? Consideration of special areas within the revision collaboration action plan should answer these questions in identifying which activities or processes will be used to meet the intent of forest plan revision.
- Documentation Strategy - Collaboration activities for special area evaluations, needs to be reflected as part of the Documentation of the Collaboration Process, part of the Planning Record.

Existing Special Areas

As part of the need for change evaluations, existing Special Area designations should be reviewed. This list, with any accompanying management direction, will provide a baseline for the evaluation of further special area needs on the forest and to inform the public during the collaboration process. Sources for existing special areas may include the current Forest Plan and official designation documents. Review any existing special management areas in the current Forest Plan. Evaluate if each qualifies as a Special Area, and if they are supported by desired conditions.⁶ If an area does not qualify as a Special Area, and the need for management direction is still valid, other plan components should be used to provide the needed management direction.

This information should also be used for transition to the revised plan. An evaluation of the current management will determine if there is a need for change in management direction in response to changes in desired conditions. Changed conditions should be considered from the ecological, social, and economic aspects.

If current management direction is inadequate for existing special areas, review to determine what direction is needed and which plan components are most appropriate to achieve it. Development of the necessary plan components is done during development of the revised plan.

During review of existing special areas, a forest may determine that an area no longer fits the desired conditions and/or designation applied to it. In this case, the designation should be removed. If the area is within the designation authority of the Responsible Official, then removal of the designation may proceed. When authority does not lie with the Responsible Official, but rather a higher official or part of government, the forest can only recommend removal of the designation.⁷ In this case, the most appropriate management direction would be to make a recommendation in the plan approval document to remove the designation of the special area to be consistent with the desired conditions.

⁶ Appendix A lists the Special Area designations that are appropriate..

⁷ ...unless delegation of decision authority has occurred subsequent to the original special area designation.

Creating New Special Areas

These processes address three general types of special areas: Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Special Areas. Forests are required to consider the first two during revision. Other special areas may also be considered if the evaluation/collaboration process can meet the revision timelines/budget of the Forest. It is recommended that forests have a strategy for other special area consideration outlined and identify those activities as part of the collaborative process.

If an area is designated by other authorities (e.g. state or local governments), the Responsible Official may choose to establish desired conditions and management direction for these areas or otherwise acknowledge their existence in the revised forest plan. Examples would include the Arizona Trail or the Santa Fe National Historic Trail.

Wilderness Recommendations

A required part of plan revision during development of the revised plan is to evaluate and consider recommendations for potential new wilderness designations and to create interim management guidance for the protection of wilderness character for any recommended areas. It is possible that there are no portions of the forest that are appropriate for new wilderness recommendation. The purpose of this section is to inventory and evaluate potential wilderness and consider recommendations as appropriate. There is no requirement to make wilderness recommendations, however, if a recommendation is made as part of the proposed plan, subsequent NEPA will be required. For a complete and detailed description of all the required and optional steps, please refer to FSH 1909.12 Ch 70, FSM 1923, and the R3 Regional Guidance on conducting wilderness evaluations⁸.

Required Steps

Step 1: Inventory of Potential Wilderness

This step is done at the Forest level and requires completing an inventory of potential wilderness areas based on the criteria in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70. Three criteria need to be considered, and these are identified at Section 71.1. Criterion 3 is that areas do not contain forest roads or other permanently authorized roads. Forest roads would be those roads identified as Maintenance Level 1 – Level 5 in the INFRASTRUCTURE (INFRA) database. To use GIS to identify areas without roads may necessitate linking roads INFRA data with GIS data, if this has not already been accomplished. In general, areas with improvements should not be included in the inventory; however, Section 71.11 provides a list of types of improvements that are acceptable. A potential wilderness area is not synonymous with an Inventoried Roadless Area, although there may be overlap between the two.

Forests may want to exclude some areas from the inventory based on the presence of the following improvements:

- Cultural treatments where the use of mechanical equipment is evident.
- Areas with significant current mineral activity.
- Areas with less than 70 percent federal ownership if it is unrealistic to manage the Federal lands as wilderness.

⁸ See <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/plan-revision/tech-guides.shtml>

- Areas with nonstructural range improvements that are readily visible and apparent.
- Areas containing recreation developments that are not easily removable.
- Timber harvest areas where logging and prior road construction are evident.
- Transmission lines and other utility corridors where vegetative clearing has taken place and is still evident.
- Watershed treatment areas where the use of mechanical equipment is evident.

In addition to meeting the three criteria outlined in Section 71.1, areas qualify for placement on the potential wilderness inventory only if they meet the statutory definition of wilderness as outlined in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act:

An area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which 1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable, and 2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Following are appropriate screening questions for meeting this definition, based on language in the Wilderness Act and guidance in the document referenced in item four. In addition, the R3 guidance provides a process for conducting the potential wilderness inventory.⁹

1. 1. Is the area untrammeled? This means the area is essentially unhindered and generally free from modern human control and manipulations.
2. 2. Is the area natural appearing? This means the area's ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.
3. 3. Is the area essentially undeveloped? This means the area is essentially free of permanent improvements or modern human occupation, with the exception of those allowed under the criteria in section 71.11.
4. 4. Does the area provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? To meet this element the area should provide outstanding opportunities for people to experience solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, including the values of inspiration and physical and mental challenge.¹⁰

If through collaboration or other means the public brings forward an area that does not meet the criteria for potential wilderness in its current management condition, the 1982 planning provisions allow the Responsible Official to add it to the inventory to be evaluated at his or her discretion.

All potential wilderness areas should be listed, named, mapped, and numbered. See Sections 71.2 and 71.3 for details. Use a numbering sequence of "PW" (Potential Wilderness) – Region (03) – Forest (xx), and area number (001 – 999).

⁹ See R3 Potential Wilderness Inventory Process at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/plan-revision/tech-guides.shtml#wilderness>.

¹⁰ Landres, P. et al 2005. *Monitoring Selected Conditions Related to Wilderness Character: A National Framework*. Rocky Mountain Research Station: United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

Step 2: Evaluate Potential Wilderness

Evaluating potential wilderness involves three steps: determining capability, availability, and need.

1. **Capability** – This evaluates the **degree** to which the area contains the characteristics that make it suitable for wilderness recommendation. This evaluation is done at the forest level. See FSH 1909.12, section 72.1 for details. See Appendix C for a list of criteria that should be evaluated. See Appendix D for the R3 rating system for capability. The rating system should be used in conjunction with a narrative explaining how the ratings were determined and can be adjusted to meet the unit’s specific needs. This system is especially valuable as a course filter when a forest has a large number of potential wilderness areas to evaluate. If an area is determined to have medium to low capability, it may be dropped from further evaluation. A rationale should be provided for this in the documentation.
2. **Availability** – This evaluates the value of and need for wilderness compared to the value of and need for other resources and uses. This evaluation is done at the forest level. See Section 74 for a list of resource uses to evaluate.
3. **Need** – This evaluates the contribution of potential wilderness to the overall National Wilderness Preservation System. This evaluation should be done at the regional and forest levels.

Region 3 has developed a detailed process for evaluating the need for wilderness. Forests should use this process to conduct the need portion of the evaluation and provide the appropriate documentation. The tools and documentation for conducting this process are available on CD from the Regional Office.¹¹

Sections 72.4 and 74 identify required documentation associated with the potential wilderness evaluation. Ensure that the documentation includes the following:

- For each area evaluated, comprehensively assess and describe resource trade-offs and consequences associated with non-wilderness options.
- Consider measures designed to avoid or minimize the impact to or loss of wilderness characteristics.
- Develop and evaluate wilderness and non-wilderness options.

Step 3: Make Preliminary Administrative Recommendations

The forest will make a “preliminary administrative recommendations” for those areas that will be recommended for wilderness designation as part of the land management planning process. Public review and comment on preliminary wilderness recommendations is a key requirement of this step. This should occur within the 45-day comment period for the Draft Plan/Draft EIS (DEIS).

¹¹ Contact Matt Turner, R3 Regional Planner at mturner@fs.fed.us

Step 4: Prepare Plan Components

The forest will develop plan components for recommended wilderness areas¹², and for congressionally designated Wilderness Study Areas not released by Congress (even if not administratively recommended for wilderness). Plan components for administratively recommended wilderness need to provide for the protection of wilderness character. This is best documented in the desired condition. The following are suggested components of the desired condition which would protect wilderness potential:

- Wilderness character is preserved.
 - The area is unhindered and free from modern human control and manipulation.
 - Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.
 - The area is essentially without permanent improvements or modern human occupation. Roads do not exist. Other permanent structures do not exist. The manipulation of vegetation is substantially unnoticeable.
 - The area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Recreation settings are managed to maintain existing Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classifications.
 - Outstanding opportunities exist for primitive recreation such as hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and rock climbing.
- Commercial services which are needed for the purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use are present.

Optional Step:

If the forest wants to establish management direction that prohibits or limits an existing use within a recommended wilderness, the appropriate NEPA must be completed. This is best accomplished with the use of an order¹³ and the accompanying NEPA conducted concurrently with or outside of the revision process. If the NEPA is done concurrently, the order may be included in the plan and authorized in the revised plan ROD (Record Of Decision). The Responsible Official may also consider using guidelines to achieve the desirable protection.

Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Recommendations

A required part of plan revision is to identify rivers with potential for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System based on a systematic inventory. Agency policy is to protect free-flow, Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs), and classification of eligible or suitable rivers. The purpose of this section is to summarize existing guidance and provide additional guidance for how wild and scenic river evaluation should be conducted in the plan revision process. For a complete and detailed description of all the required and optional steps, please refer to FSH 1909.12 Ch 80, and FSM 1924.

¹² There may be IRAs that are not recommended for designation as wilderness, though other special areas designations may be appropriate, such as scenic or botanic area.

¹³ See 36 CFR 261 Subpart A – General Prohibitions and 36 CFR 261 Subpart B – Prohibitions in Areas Designated by Order: http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=c03a1574ac8fb3256990c155c94f4acc&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title36/36cfr261_main_02.tpl

Required Steps:

This document summarizes/outlines, and in some cases clarifies, instructions found in the handbook and the manual. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs federal agencies to identify potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in Section 5(d)(1) of the act through federal planning processes.

Step 1: Identify the status of WSR assessment in the current land management plan (need for change evaluations)

Arizona Forests have completed eligibility. Eligible rivers are identified in *Resource Information Report for Potential Wild, Scenic, Recreational River Designation, National Forests of Arizona*, September 1993. Four New Mexico Forests (Gila, Lincoln, Cibola, and Carson) completed eligibility and protected river values via Forest Plan amendments in 2001 and 2002. The Santa Fe National Forest completed eligibility during their initial forest planning process in the mid-1980s. Document the findings of this review.

Step 2: Review inventory of Potential Rivers (need for change evaluations)

Forests should review their inventory of potentially eligible rivers to ensure that all free flowing rivers with at least one potential ORV were included. If a systematic inventory of eligible rivers or a comprehensive forest, grassland, prairie, or other comparable administrative unit-wide suitability study has been previously completed and documented, additional assessment and study at time of land management plan revision need only be done if changed circumstances warrant additional review of eligibility.¹⁴ Forests should document the findings of this review. Intermittent rivers may be potentially eligible, if the volume of water is sufficient to sustain or compliment the river's outstandingly remarkable value(s). Appendix E displays an example template that forests may want to use to document the potential river inventory.

Step 3: Review Eligibility Determinations (revised plan development)

Forests should review the adequacy of their eligibility determinations to ensure the rigor required by agency policy has been met (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 80).

Eligibility identifies whether a river or segment is free-flowing and possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable value(s). Modifications may be made to a previously completed inventory of eligible rivers based on changed circumstances. Examples of changed circumstances would be landscape changing events like wildfires and floods, changes in species rarity, land ownership adjustments, new state designations, and new federal statutes. Also, changes to an inventory could be made if information on which it was based is not currently factual.

The format shown in Appendix F is recommended for documenting a new eligibility analysis for a river not previously considered, or a change in current eligibility status. These changes can also be documented using another format as long as it includes all the required information. Any changes made to a forest's existing inventory must be well documented, and a logical rationale must be cited. This documentation must be included in the planning record.

¹⁴ See FSH 1909.12 Chapter 80, Section 81.2.

Step 4: Determine Potential Classification (revised plan development)

For rivers added to the eligible river inventory as a result of the reviews in Steps 2 and 3, the potential classification must be identified. The WSR Act specifies three potential classifications: wild, scenic, and recreational rivers. Classification is based on the condition of the river and adjacent lands; specifically, water developments, shoreline developments, accessibility, and water quality and may be documented for each river/segment in Section III of Appendix F. The inventory of all eligible rivers, modified or not as a result of Steps 2 and 3 should be included in the plan set of documents. Appendix G provides a template that may be used.

Step 5: Prepare Plan Components (revised plan development)

The forest will develop plan components for each eligible or suitable river segment. Guidance for protecting the river's free flow, outstandingly remarkable values, and classification may be found at FSH 1909.12, Chapter 80, Section 82.5; Interim Management of Eligible or Suitable Rivers, and should be cross-referenced.

The inventory of eligible rivers should be included in the forest planning record. At a minimum, the following information must be included: name of river, location description, river mileage (studied and eligible), determination of free flow, ORVs, and classification.

Optional Steps:

Suitability Process

The Responsible Official has complete discretion to proceed with the following optional steps. Suitability provides the basis for the determination of which rivers to recommend as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Suitability answers two questions:

- What is the best use of the river corridor?
- What is the best method to protect the river corridor?

Many factors are considered as a basis for the suitability determination, including:

1. River characteristics
2. Land ownership
3. Potential land uses that would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed
4. Who would manage the river
5. To what extent river management would be shared by other agencies
6. Cost of acquiring additional lands
7. Do other agencies have the ability to manage the river on non-federal lands
8. Consistency with other agency plans, programs, policies
9. Support or opposition to designation
10. Contribution to river system integrity
11. Potential for water resources development
12. Contribution to other regional objectives/needs

Following an analysis of the suitability factors, the following steps may be completed:

Make Preliminary Administrative Recommendations. The "Preliminary Administrative Recommendation" is prepared by the forest. It identifies whether or not each eligible river segment is administratively recommended for designation. The Preliminary Administrative Recommendation allows those rivers found not suitable to be managed for other values.

Other Types of Special Areas

In past forest planning efforts, some forests have compiled extensive inventories of areas that potentially fit special area designations and have evaluated each for appropriateness. Because of the time and financial constraints being placed on this plan revision effort, it will not be possible to complete such an extensive inventory. The “inventory” for potential special areas, will most likely come from information gathered in previous revision efforts and/or collaboration with internal and external audiences. The following is intended to provide a method of evaluating special areas for potential designation without compiling an extensive inventory.

When a forest develops a list of proposed special areas, they will need to determine which designations fit the areas.¹⁵ For a list of special area designations and authorities see Appendix A. Acreage of the area is an additional determinant in the authority to designate a special area. Table 1 identifies these limits as outlined in FSM 2372.04. Further information can be found in FSM 2372. If there is no designation that fits the purpose and conditions of the special area, other plan components may be developed to provide direction for that area.

Table 1: Special Area Acreage Limits on Designation Authority

Designation Authority	Acreage Limit	Comments
Forest Supervisor	Up to 160 acres	Requires delegation of authority from the Regional Forester
Regional Forester	Up to 100,000 acres	
Secretary of Agriculture	100,000 acres or more	

Special area designations represent a wide spectrum of management possibilities which have differing amounts of flexibility depending on how and by whom they are designated. The forest may want to consider designating a new special area if a natural and cultural resource is or will soon be threatened by human activity, or when the area is highly valued or strongly advocated. A strongly advocated area may be strongly opposed as well. In these instances, consideration of the entire spectrum of special area designations may be a point of negotiations between parties. An ideal solution would be a collaboratively identified designation that all parties can accept. Even if there are no resources that need additional protection in an area, it may still make sense to designate a special area based on social or economic considerations, such as the ability of local communities to market the area for tourism purposes.

Use the following process to inventory and identify Other Special Areas.

Step 1: Compile list of existing special areas (need for change evaluations)

Forests should examine existing documentation and land designations to identify existing special areas that occur on the Forest.

Step 2: Based on current desired conditions, conduct inventory and evaluation to validate existing special area designations (need for change evaluations)

A forest should validate the designation of existing special areas and the current management direction through internal and external evaluation. If there is a need to change the current

¹⁵See Appendix A for the list of appropriate special area designations.

management direction or a need to remove designation from an area, identify in the need for change evaluations.

Step 3: Identify potential new special areas

Internal and external collaboration conducted during the need for change evaluation may have generated a list of potential new special areas. This list may exceed a forest's ability to deal with detailed management guidance for these areas in the revision process. The Responsible Official needs to consider if there are other ways to respond to the identified need via desired conditions, objectives, suitability of areas, guidelines, or in some cases, standards. It is strongly recommended that forests prioritize the recommendation for implementation of management for these areas. There may be legislative, regulatory, political, or financial reasons for giving some areas a higher priority for implementation over others. The prioritized list will allow the forest to schedule the future site-specific designation of these special areas subsequent to the completion of revision.

Step 4: During Revised Plan Alternative(s) Development, consider Special Area recommendations needed to achieve desired conditions (revised plan development)

During collaborative Plan Alternative(s) development, new or modifications to existing Special Areas may be recommended in order to achieve desired conditions and objectives.

Step 5: Develop management recommendations for potential special areas (revised plan development)

Make management recommendations for proposed special areas, based on the desired conditions collaboratively developed with the public. This may include, but is not limited to, determining whether additional designation is necessary, or whether additional site-specific analysis under NEPA is required (identification and implementation of projects or activities) and subsequently amending the revised Forest Plan as necessary.

Resources

Wilderness Resources

Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 88-577

FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, Wilderness Evaluation

FSM 1923 Wilderness Evaluation

Monitoring Selected Conditions Related to Wilderness Character: A National Framework
(http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr151.pdf)

R3 Wilderness Evaluation Guidance (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/plan-revision/tech-guides.shtml#wilderness>)

Wild and Scenic Rivers Resources

Key Documents

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, PL 90-542

FSH 1909.12, Chapter 80, Wild and Scenic River Evaluation

FSM 1924, Wild and Scenic River Evaluation

IWSRCC, The WSR Study Process, December 1999 (<http://www.nps.gov/rivers>)

USDA/USDI Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas dated September 7, 1982. (<http://www.nps.gov/rivers/guidelines.html>)

Resource Information Report for Potential Wild, Scenic, Recreational River Designation, National Forests of Arizona, September 1993

Other Resources

Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council web site. (<http://www.rivers.gov>)

References

Landres, P. et al 2005. *Monitoring Selected Conditions Related to Wilderness Character: A National Framework*. Rocky Mountain Research Station: United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule, [36 CFR Part 219](#) April 2008

Forest Service Handbook [1909.12, Chapter 70](#), Wilderness Evaluation

Forest Service Handbook [1909.12, Chapter 80](#), Wild and Scenic River Evaluation

Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 88-577

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Public Law 90-542

Appendix A - Special Areas - Designating Official and Guidance Cross-reference

Special Areas	Designation Authority	Additional Guidance Location
Statutorily Designated Areas		
National Monument	Responsible Official ¹⁶ recommends Presidential Executive order or Congressional act designates	FSM 2371
National Recreation Area	Responsible Official recommends Congressional act designates	FSM 2371
National Scenic Area	Responsible Official recommends Congressional act designates	FSM 2371
National Trails National Scenic Trails National Historic Trails	Responsible Official recommends Congressional act designates	FSM 2353.4
Wild and Scenic River	Responsible Official recommends Congressional act designates	FSM 1924 & 2354 FSH 1909.12
Wilderness, or Wilderness Study Areas	Responsible Official recommends Congressional act designates	FSM 1923 & 2320 FSH 2409.19
Highway Systems, Interstate and National	Congressional act established process Secretary of the Department of Transportation approves	23 CFR part 470
Responsible Official Designated Areas		
Botanical Area	Responsible Official Designates	FSM 2372
Geological Area	Responsible Official Designates	FSM 2372
Administratively Designated Areas		
Experimental Forest or Range	Responsible Official recommends with concurrence of Station Director Chief designates	FSM 4062
National Natural Landmark National Historic Landmark	Responsible Official recommends Secretary of Interior designates	FSM 2373 FSM 2363.1
Recreation Areas	Responsible Official recommends Secretary of Agriculture designates	36 CFR 294.1 FSM 2360
Research Natural Area	Responsible Official recommends Regional Forester designates, with concurrence of Station Directors	FSM 4063
Scenic Byway - Forest Service	Responsible Official recommends Chief designates	None
Scenic Byway – National	Responsible Official recommends Federal Highway Administration designates	None
Significant Caves National Recreation Trails	Responsible Official recommends Regional Forester designates	36 CFR part 290 FSM 2353.4

¹⁶ The Responsible Official is as outlined in FSM 2372.04.

Appendix B – Table of Processes for Special Areas

	Existing Special Areas	Potential Wilderness	Potential WSR	Other Special Areas
Inventory	Current Plan and Amendments; other official documentation	Inventory all areas meeting criteria.	Review and update river inventory, if needed	Collaboration (Internal and External)
Evaluation	Identify changes that require new management, or removal of designation. (Some designations may not have been included in the existing forest plans.)	Capability, Availability, Need	Review Eligible River Inventories and Potential Classification	Fit to Special Area Designation and determine necessary management direction
Recommendation	N/A	Preliminary Administrative Recommendations	N/A	List of agency recommendations that require future NEPA Designate a new special area Recommend to appropriate official for designation
Management Direction	Yes unless removing designation	Interim	Interim	Depends on recommendation option

Appendix C – Capability Criteria Outline

The following outline is provided to ensure the key evaluation criteria are considered as potential wildernesses are evaluated for their wilderness capability. It is recommended that each of these criteria is addressed. Refer to FSH 1909.12, sections 72.1 and 74.

1. Natural Conditions
 - a. Identify the non-native species which exist (such as non-native plants, animals, fish, livestock, invertebrates, and pathogens), and the extent of the invasion;
 - b. Identify the developments, if any, that degrade the free-flowing condition of rivers and streams (such as dams or other water diversions and impoundments);
 - c. Describe light pollution which exists, if any, that degrades night sky quality and night sky quality related values;
 - d. Describe water quality pollutants, if any;
 - e. Describe the health of ecosystems, plant communities, and plant species that are rare or at risk; and
 - f. Identify any other past or present human activities which have affected natural ecological processes and conditions, and the degree of the impacts.
2. Undeveloped
 - a. Identify the quantity and type of permanent improvements such as trails, dams, administrative structures, range structures, fixed equipment sites, wildlife developments, and mines and energy developments. Document the degree to which the area is affected by these structures.
 - b. Address the degree to which the area's appearance is appropriate and valuable for wilderness.
3. Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation.
 - a. Describe opportunities to provide for physical and mental challenge, adventure and self-reliance, feelings of solitude, isolation, self-awareness, and inspiration.
 - b. Describe the opportunities for solitude that could be provided by this area based on its size, the presence of screening, distance from human impacts, and degree of permanent intrusions.
 - c. Describe the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation that could be provided based on the ability of a visitor to experience isolation from the evidence of humans, to feel a part of nature, to feel a vastness of scale, and to experience a degree of challenge and risk while using outdoor skills. Describe the opportunity for primitive-type recreation activities. These could include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature.
4. Special Features and Values.
 - a. Describe the area's capability to provide other values such as ecologic, geologic, scientific, educational, scenic, historical, or cultural significance, and their contributions to wilderness character.
 - b. Identify rare and endangered plant and animal species and other wildlife.
5. Manageability
 - a. Describe the size, shape, and boundaries of the potential wilderness, and its juxtaposition to external influences. Evaluate the ability of the agency to appropriately manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics of untrammeled, natural conditions, undeveloped, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation.
 - b. Summarize boundary conditions, needs, and management requirements should the area be designated wilderness. Address whether or not boundary changes would enhance wilderness characteristics or lessen the influence of incompatible activities.

Appendix D – Sample Rating System, Wilderness Capability Assessment Criteria

Capability Rating Criteria

Capability Characteristics – when using these criteria to rate capability include a concise description with each rating that documents the rationale behind it.

Natural

1. Presence of non-native species
High- non-native species are not evident
Medium – on-native species are evident in isolated spots.
Low - on-native species are common or scattered throughout the area.
2. Rivers within the wilderness area are in free-flowing condition
High- Rivers within the area are considered free-flowing
Medium – Some rivers have impoundments or other issues that affect their free-flowing character
Low – Rivers within the wilderness area are seasonal or heavily impacted by impoundments
3. Quality of night-sky as affected by light pollution
High – The night sky is clear with little to no interference from light pollution
Medium – Some stars are visible and there is moderate degradation from light pollution
Low – Few stars are visible at night and the presence of light pollution is evident
4. Presence of pollutants that degrade water
High – All rivers/streams have been sampled and there are no water quality issues
Medium – There are no known water quality issues within the area but the not all rivers/streams have been sampled
Low – There are rivers within the area that are listed on the State Impaired Waters List (303d)
5. Area provides elements of biological diversity and naturalness, including unique habitats, TES or rare plants and wildlife.
High - has critical or unique habitats and diverse ecological conditions
Medium - has a mix of habitats and ecological conditions
Low - has limited ecological conditions and habitats
6. Area contains a variety of natural resources, including a variety of tree species and structures. Intermingled grasslands or meadows, numerous recreation opportunities, diversity of wildlife habitats, and wildlife, etc.
High - diverse amount of natural resources
Medium - mixed amount of natural resources
Low - limited amount of natural resource diversity

Undeveloped

7. Area has current or past evidence of human activity.
High - little or no evidence of human activity
Medium - unnoticeable or unobjectionable human activity
Low - obvious evidence of human activity

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

8. Area provides physically and mentally challenging recreation opportunities that promote adventure and self-reliance.
High – Most of the area provides challenging recreation opportunities
Medium- Some parts of the area have the potential for challenging recreation opportunities
Low – Few parts of the area can provide challenging recreation opportunities
9. Opportunity to experience solitude and isolation from human activities while recreating in the area.
High – Significant feeling of being alone or remote from civilization.
Medium – Feeling of being alone is possible but signs of civilization are likely.
Low – Little opportunity of feeling alone.
10. Opportunity to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation such as back-packing, kayaking, hunting, fishing, etc
High - There are many opportunities for engaging in primitive recreation.
Medium – There are some opportunities for engaging in primitive recreation.
Low – There are few to no opportunities to engage in primitive recreation.

Special Features and Values

11. Area contains outstanding or distinct features like rock formations, panoramic views, etc.
High - many distinct features or few but exceptional features
Medium - some distinct features
Low - one or no distinct features
12. Area has potential for scientific research, environmental education, or historic/cultural opportunities.
High - good potential for two or more types of these opportunities
Medium - potential for one type of opportunity
Low - little or no potential for this type of opportunity
13. Area contains unique or rare species of plants and/or animals.
High – area has several unique or rare plants and/or animals
Medium - area has a few unique or rare plants and/or animals
Low - area has no unique or rare plants and/or animals

Manageability

14. Ability to manage the area in for wilderness character, including distance and influence from outside activities; opportunity to access the area; and resource conflicts or encumbrances.
High – isolated from areas of activity; controlled or limited access; no encumbrances or resource conflicts
Medium - somewhat isolated from areas of activity; adequate access opportunities; some resource conflicts and/or encumbrances
Low – areas of activity are nearby; many access opportunities; many resource conflicts and/or encumbrances
15. Motorized use within the area
Yes - has motorized vehicle use
No - does not have any motorized vehicle use

Appendix E - Example Wild & Scenic River Inventory Documentation

Identification of Rivers on the _____ National Forest with Potentially Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)

River/Segment	Length	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	Remarks
Kelly Creek	24.0	x	x		x					
White Sand Creek	12.7	x	x		x					
Moose Creek	10.6									No potential ORVs
Rosebud Creek	21.2	x	x	x						Natural Bridge
Rock Creek	27.3									No potential ORVs
Boulder River	27.4						x			
Lost Cow Creek	6.3		x	x			x			
W. Fk. Clear Cr.	12.6									No potential ORVs
Lake River	13.4		x							Class IV-V rapids
Coal Creek	8.4									No potential ORVs
Beaver River	11.0	x						x		
Danaher Creek	13.5	x							x	Rare plants

Possible ORVs:

- a - Scenic
- b - Recreational
- c - Geological
- d - Fish
- e - Wildlife
- f - Heritage – Historic
- g - Heritage - Prehistoric
- h - Other Values

Document the criteria used for whether or not intermittent rivers are included on the inventory. Document the criteria and identification of which values are potentially outstandingly remarkable in the planning files. Include the minutes of the team meetings at which river values were discussed and evaluated in the planning files.

Appendix F - Example Evaluation Form for Wild & Scenic River Eligibility Analysis

**SUMMARY OF ELIGIBILITY ANALYSIS
SOUTHWESTERN REGION
_____ NATIONAL FOREST**

River Segment:
From:
To:
Evaluated By:
Date:

Evaluation Step	NO	YES
I. ELIGIBILITY ANALYSIS		
<p>A. Free – Flowing Existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip rapping, or other modification of the waterway. The existence of low dams, diversion works or other minor structures does not automatically disqualify the segment for designation. A river segment below or between impoundments may also be considered.</p> <p>Discussion:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>B. Scenery Do the landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features or attractions? (When analyzing scenic values, additional factors—such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed—may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.)</p> <p>Discussion::</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evaluation Step	NO	YES
C. Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are recreational opportunities popular enough or have the potential to be popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison? (River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observations, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting and boating. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes.) • Are recreational opportunities unique or rare within the region? • Are interpretive opportunities exceptional or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the region of comparison? • Does the river provide or have the potential to provide settings for national or regional usage or competitive events? <p>Discussion:</p>		

D. Geology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Does the river or river corridor contain one or more example of a geologic feature, process or phenomenon unique or rare within the region of comparison? (The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage or development, represent a “textbook” example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features--erosional, volcanic, glacial or other geologic structures.)</p> <p>Discussion:</p>		

Evaluation Step	NO	YES
<p data-bbox="253 310 350 338">E. Fish</p> <p data-bbox="253 342 1084 401">(Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of fish populations, habitat, or a combination of these conditions.)</p> <ul data-bbox="253 405 1104 814" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="253 405 1104 604">• Is the river a nationally or regionally important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species? (Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”)<li data-bbox="253 609 1104 814">• Does the river provide exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison? (Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion:		

Evaluation Step	NO	YES
<p>F. Wildlife (Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic populations, habitat or a combination of these conditions.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the river or river corridor contain nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species? (Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, and/or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”) • Does the river or river corridor provide exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, and/or may provide a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species? (Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”) <p>Discussion:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>G. Heritage Resources – Historic (The river, or area within the river corridor, contains important evidence of occupation or use by humans. Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting history). Does the river or river corridor contain a site or feature associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare or one-of-a-kind in the region? A historic site or feature, in most cases, is 50 years old or older and is eligible for the national register of historic places.</p> <p>Discussion:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Evaluation Step	NO	YES
<p>H. Heritage Resources – Pre-Historic (The river, or area within the river corridor, contains important evidence of occupation or use by humans. Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory). Does the river or river corridor have unique or rare characteristics or exceptional human interest value; represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; or may have been used by cultural groups for rare sacred purposes, and is eligible for the national register of historic places? Discussion:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>I. Vegetative /Ecological Values (Vegetative and ecological values may be judged on the relative merits of either populations or communities, or a combination of these conditions.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the river or river corridor contain nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species? (Of importance are species considered to be unique or populations of federal or state listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity and number of species area also important.) • Does the river or river corridor contain nationally or regionally important plant communities? (Communities are exceptionally high quality, unusual or critical communities such as old-growth.) <p>Discussion:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>J. Other Similar Values Consider values such as (but not limited to) hydrology, paleontology, and botany. Include criteria. Discussion:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evaluation Step

NO

YES

II. ANALYSIS OF ELIGIBILITY COMPONENTS

If Item I.A. and one or more other items above are checked “YES”: River Area is eligible for designation.

Conclusion:

III. CLASSIFICATION

If river is eligible, what is the classification? Refer to Table 2 in the 1982 Wild and Scenic River Interagency Guidelines for the criteria used to determine classification.

- Wild
- Scenic
- Recreational

Rationale:

Additional Instructions: It is critical to describe in detail the outstandingly remarkable values and to explain how they are unique, rare or exemplary features significant at a comparative regional or national scale. For each of the potential ORVs, include a description of the region of comparison that was used.

Appendix G - Example Summary Form for Wild & Scenic River Eligibility Status

Rivers Eligible for Wild and Scenic River Status
 _____ National Forest
 _____ Date

Name of River	Segment Number	Segment Milepost From	Segment Milepost To	Free Flowing? (Y/N)	ORVs	Classification	Eligible?	Comments
Tonto Creek	2	6.4	27.9	Y	Scenic Geologic Fish and Wildlife Riparian	Wild	Y	
Tonto Creek	3	27.9	37	Y	Wildlife Riparian Ecological	Scenic	Y	