

R3 Potential Wilderness Inventory Process

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 2007 to conform to the requirements of the 1982 Planning Rule provisions.

This document outlines the criteria to be used in determining an area for inclusion in the inventory of potential wilderness. Follow the steps below to create your inventory of potential wilderness areas as specified by FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70 - **Wilderness Evaluation**.

Important reminders¹:

- The **application of the inventory criteria should rely on local knowledge and judgment** regarding unique, site-specific conditions of each area being considered for placement on the inventory of potential wilderness.
- When delineating areas for the potential wilderness inventory; locate boundaries at prominent natural or semi-permanent human-made features to facilitate easy on-the-ground identification.

Step One: Create an initial list and map of areas using the following two criteria from FSH 1909.12 Ch 70, Section 71.1

1. Areas that do not contain forest roads, or other permanently authorized roads;
2. Areas that are at least 5,000 acres in size, **or** less than 5,000 acres but meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. Area can be preserved due to physical terrain and natural conditions.
 - b. Area is a self-contained ecosystem, such as an island, that can be effectively managed as a separate unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
 - c. Area is contiguous to an existing wilderness, primitive area, Administration-endorsed wilderness, or other potential wilderness in other Federal ownership, regardless of their size.

Step Two: Utilize the **Criteria for Including Improvements** outlined in FSH 1909.12 Ch 70, Section 71.11 to identify areas from Step One that should be precluded from the potential wilderness inventory (*see attached Supplement A*). These would include areas such as timber harvest areas where logging and road construction are evident, mineral leases with surface occupancy, and developed recreation sites, as well as others. You may have GIS layers that relate to some of these criteria that would make them easy to identify.

Step Three: Apply the criteria for dealing with roaded areas, fingers, and other extrusions to exclude areas that do not meet the purpose of considering an area for potential wilderness (*see attached Supplement B*). Generally fingers or necks less than ½ mile in width can be used as an adjustment point. Explain the rationale for excluding the area from your inventory in the documentation.

Step Four: Review the areas resulting from the above three steps to determine 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 improvements² or human habitation, which;***

¹ See FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, Section 71.

² We recognize that the phrase in the Wilderness Act that says “***without permanent improvement***”, conflicts with the directives that allow improvements based on the criteria outlined in section 71.11. Please follow the criteria outlined in section 71.11 of the directives when considering areas with improvements.

1. Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;
2. Has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Discussion on Step Four: This step is where it is important to apply your local knowledge and judgment for the areas under consideration. Although there are no precise definitions for terms such as “primarily affected by the forces of nature” or “substantially unnoticeable”, Section 3 of General Technical Report on Monitoring Selected Conditions Related to Wilderness Character: A National Framework³ provides interpretation of these phrases and terms from Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act. **It is important to note that although an area must meet the statutory definition of wilderness to be included in the inventory; this is meant to be a more cursory look at whether the area meets the definition based on initial look. The more in-depth review of how the area measures up in terms of wilderness character is done in the capability step of the evaluation. This will include a more thorough look at the characteristics as outlined in Section 72.1 – Capability, including manageability.** In developing the inventory, it is sufficient for you to discuss and document reasons why a particular area is not being included in your inventory based on the criteria provided, your knowledge of the specific area, and professional judgment. For example, you may have an unroaded area adjacent to an existing wilderness or primitive area, but because of existing active mineral operations in that area that require surface occupancy, you find it is reasonable to not include the area in the inventory as per the criteria in FSH 1909.12 Ch 70, 71.11. Document your rationale for the planning record. Another example may include an area that is greater than 5,000 acres, part of which was recently burned in a wildfire. Containment lines and temporary roads are still apparent but are beginning to revegetate. Since these are not considered permanent improvements, it is prudent to include this area in your inventory. **(See example documentation in the form below for additional examples).**

Step Five: Use the form below (or some similar method) to document your results and rationale for including/excluding areas for your potential wilderness inventory. This will become part of your planning record.

Step Six: Prepare a final list (and map) of your potential wilderness areas that will be evaluated. Include the area's common name, formal identification number (see below), acreage, and location on the forest. You must also include a list (and map) of existing wildernesses and primitive areas, and other areas as outlined in Section 71.2.

Naming Scheme: Final identification of potential wilderness areas should be in the following format:

PW-03-XX-001

PW = potential wilderness

03 = Region 3

XX = insert your unit number

001 = the # of the potential wilderness area, beginning with 001 and continuing in sequence (002, 003, etc).

³ See Monitoring Selected Conditions Related to Wilderness Character: A National Framework, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-151, April 2005.

Sharkland National Forest

Yes = meets criteria

No = does not meet criteria

~ = not applicable

Step	Criteria	PW-example 1	PW-example 2	PW-example 3	PW-example 4
1	Is at least 5000 acres, or is < 5000 acres and meets one of the following:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	can be preserved due to physical terrain and natural conditions, or	~	~	~	~
	is a self-contained ecosystem, such as an island, that can be effectively managed as a separate unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System, or	~	~	~	~
	is contiguous to an existing wilderness, primitive area, Administration-endorsed wilderness, or other potential wilderness in other Federal ownership, regardless of their size.	~	Contiguous to an existing primitive area	~	~
	Does not contain forest roads, or other permanently authorized roads.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Area removed due to criteria in 71.11. Document rational in proper box.	~	Area contains mineral leases/operations with surface occupancy	~	~
3	Area removed according to R3 criteria for addressing roaded areas, fingers, and extrusions	~	~	~	Area has multiple roads protruding inwards that are < 1/2 mile apart. After adjusting the boundary based on R3 criteria, area is less than 5000 acres
4	Meets the statutory definition of wilderness as outlined in sec. 2(c) of the Act: <i>an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which:</i>	Area contains multiple user-created ATV trails. However, these are not permanent improvements. The area otherwise meets the criteria.	~	Part of area was recently burned. Containment lines and temporary roads are still apparent but beginning to revegetate. Improvements are not permanent. Area otherwise meets criteria	~
	generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable	Yes	~	Yes	~
	has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation	Yes	~	Yes	~
	I = INCLUDE or E = EXCLUDE	I	E	I	E

Potential Wilderness Inventory Supplement

A. Criteria for Including Improvements (FSH 1909.12 Ch 70, Sec 71.11)

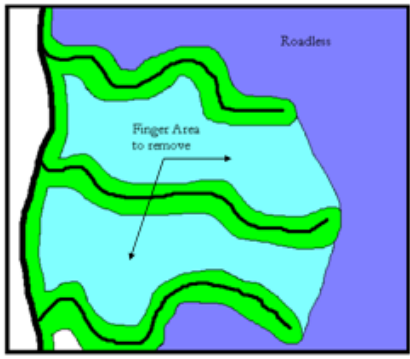
Areas may qualify for the inventory of potential wilderness even though they include the following types of areas or features:

1. Airstrips and heliports.
2. Cultural treatments involving plantations or plantings where the use of mechanical equipment is not evident.
3. Electronic installations, such as cell towers, television, radio, and telephone repeaters, and the like, provided their impact is minimal.
4. Evidence of historic mining (50+ years ago). Do not include areas of significant current mineral activity, including prospecting with mechanical or motorized earthmoving equipment. The inventory may include areas where the only evidence of prospecting is holes that have been drilled without access roads to the site. Potential wilderness also may include:
 - a. Areas that otherwise meet inventory criteria if they are covered by mineral leases having a “no surface occupancy” stipulation.
 - b. Areas covered by mineral leases that otherwise meet inventory criteria only if the lessee has not exercised development and occupancy rights. If and when these rights are exercised, remove the area, or portion affected, from the inventory unless it is possible to establish specific occupancy provisions that would maintain the area in a condition suitable for wilderness.
5. Structures or evidence of vegetative manipulation resulting from past management practices in National grasslands and prairies. National Grassland and Prairie areas that contain the following features may qualify for the inventory:
 - a. Areas where vegetation type conversions are reverting to native vegetation with minimal evidence of cultivation.
 - b. Areas with less than one mile of interior fence per section.
6. Federal ownership of less than 70 percent if it is realistic to manage the Federal lands as wilderness, independent of the private land.
7. Minor structural range improvements (FSM 2240.5), such as fences or water troughs. Exclude areas where nonstructural range improvements are readily visible and apparent. Areas with spray or burning projects are permissible if there is little or no evidence of the project.
8. Recreation improvements such as occupancy spots or minor hunting or outfitter camps. As a general rule, do not include developed sites. Areas with minor, easily removable recreation developments may be included.
9. Timber harvest areas where logging and prior road construction are not evident, except as provided in Section 71.12 for areas east of the 100th meridian. Examples include those areas containing early logging activities related to historic settlement of the vicinity, areas where stumps and skid trails or roads are substantially unrecognizable, or areas where clearcuts have regenerated to the degree that canopy closure is similar to surrounding uncut areas.
10. Ground-return telephone lines, electric lines, and powerlines if a right-of-way has not been cleared.

11. Watershed treatment areas if the use of mechanical equipment is not evident. The inventory may include areas where minor watershed treatment has been accomplished manually such as small hand-constructed gully plugs.

B. Criteria for Roaded Areas, Fingers, and Extrusions

Fingers

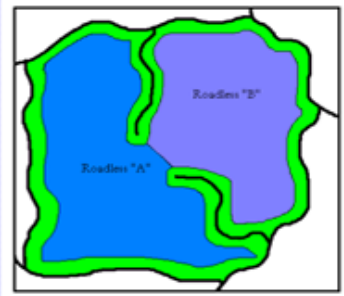


The diagram shows a light blue area labeled 'Roadless' with several irregular protrusions (fingers) extending into a larger light blue area labeled 'Finger Area to remove'. A double-headed arrow indicates the width of one of these fingers.

- Remove small fingers less than 1/2 miles across if they do not exhibit wilderness character
- Adjust to manageable boundary

Consider the effect roads may have on wilderness character where the distance between roads is less than 1/2 mile. Consider whether the area retains a natural appearance with man's impact substantially unnoticeable.

Extrusions – large

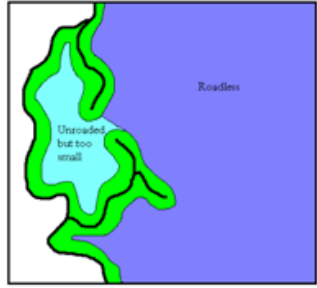


The diagram shows two light blue areas labeled 'Roadless A' and 'Roadless B' connected by a narrow strip. The strip is highlighted with a green border, indicating it is the focus of the criteria.

- Determine character of connection
- Keep intact if both sides are >500 acres and connector has wilderness character
- Separate into two areas if common area is <1/2 mile or lacks wilderness character

Consider whether the connection between the roads retains wilderness character. Use the same 1/2 mile distance for fingers in your determination. Consider whether the area retains a natural appearance with man's impact substantially unnoticeable.

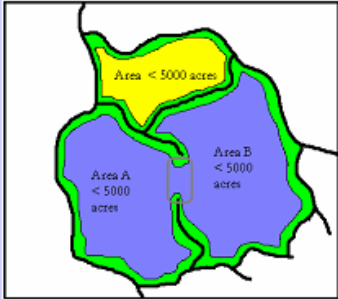
Extrusions – small



- Determine size of extrusion and distance of opening (<1/2 mile)
- Eliminate areas <5000 acres that would not be considered on their own if they do have wilderness character
- Consider effect to total area

Consider whether the area retains a natural appearance with man's impact substantially unnoticeable.

Extrusions – mixed/small areas



- Determine size of each extrusion
- Consider area of connection if less than 1/2 mile
- Eliminate areas <5000 acres that would not be considered on their own if they do have wilderness character
- Consider effect to total area

Consider areas that might be affected by narrow connections between roads. If the distance is less than 1/2 mile do the resulting polygons retain wilderness character? If not, eliminate. If so, if the total area is greater than 5000 acres include in the inventory

Contiguous Areas



■ Consider all contiguous areas regardless of jurisdiction

- BLM wilderness
- BLM study areas
- BLM roadless
- NPS lands

Separated Areas

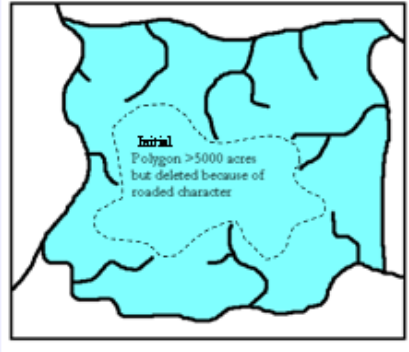


■ Consider each if >5000 acres

■ Consider effect of road corridor on wilderness character

- could unit be managed as one
- could road be closed

Roaded Network



- Eliminate areas <5000 acres after deleting portions of the roaded network
- Assumes remaining area does not have wilderness character and is <5000 acres

In heavily roaded areas an initial polygon greater than 5000 acres may be created that is adversely affected by the road network. But if after considering the effects of roads less than ½ mile distant, the resulting unroaded area is less than 5000 acres, eliminate the area from the inventory