

Capability Rating Criteria

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.

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 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