

# Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Draft Wilderness Evaluation Report

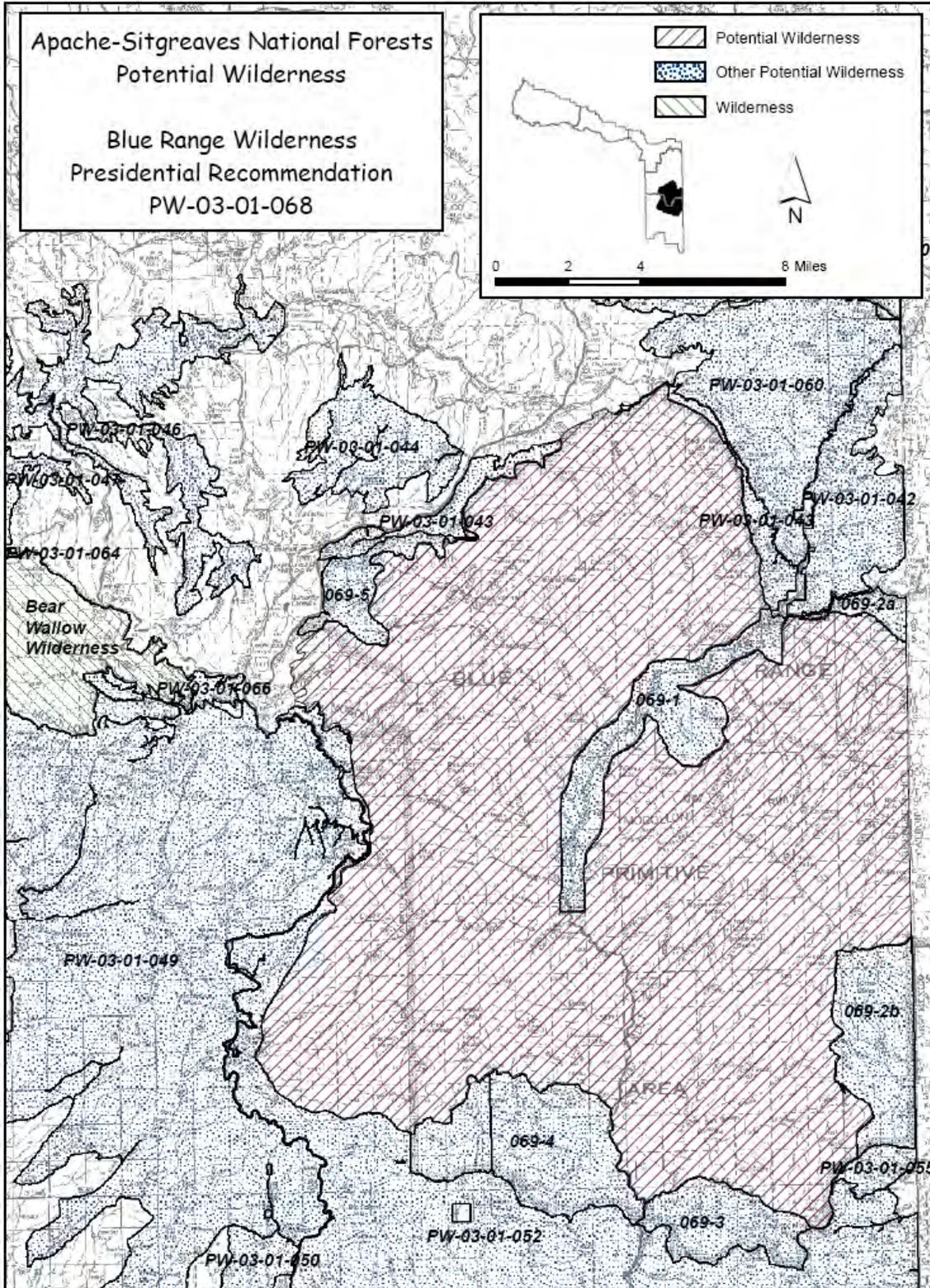
Blue Range Wilderness  
Presidential Recommendation

PW-03-01-068

June 2009

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Map created June 2009 by etreiman.

## *Introduction*

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As part of the Forest Plan Revision process for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs), the Forest Service has prepared this Wilderness Evaluation Report.

### *Purpose*

The Forest Service must evaluate all lands possessing wilderness characteristics for potential wilderness during plan revision (39 CFR 219.17). Completion of a potential wilderness inventory and evaluation is an essential step in the plan revision process. Wilderness is just one of many special area designations that the Forest Service considers during plan revision, but it is one of only three special area evaluations that are mandatory. If an area is recommended for wilderness designation, then the revised plan would contain desired conditions, objectives, and/or guidelines that would protect its wilderness characteristics.

### *The Process*

The wilderness evaluation began with an inventory of potential wilderness, which includes areas of federal land over 5,000 contiguous acres and other areas that meet the criteria in FSH 1909.12 Ch. 71, and then determined if those areas meet the definition of wilderness. Once a list of potential wilderness areas was created, each area was evaluated for capability, availability, and need. These evaluation factors are described in the introduction to each evaluation step and in Appendix A. This report summarizes the wilderness capability, availability, and need evaluations based on the best available information.

The ASNFs will use this report to determine whether or not to make a preliminary administrative recommendation for wilderness designation for the Blue Range Wilderness Presidential Recommendation. The Responsible Official's (Forest Supervisor) recommendation will be documented in the final Plan and the Plan Approval Document. Public comments on this report will be accepted and considered throughout the plan revision process. If a potential wilderness is recommended for wilderness, the recommendation will receive further review by the Chief of the Forest Service and the Secretary of Agriculture. If the Chief of the Forest Service intends to move forward with a wilderness recommendation, the Forest Service will complete a detailed analysis of the trade-offs and impacts in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, including further public review and comment. Ultimately, only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness.

## *Background*

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<b>Name</b>	Blue Range Wilderness Presidential Recommendation
<b>Number</b>	PW-03-01-068
<b>Acres</b>	166,591
<b>Ranger Districts</b>	Cifton, Alpine
<b>History (if applicable)</b>	<p>The Blue Range Primitive Area was administratively designated by the Forest Service (L-20 regulations) in 1933 to preserve its wilderness qualities.</p> <p>In 1971, the Forest Service submitted a recommendation to the president for the Blue Range Wilderness in New Mexico and Arizona. The president forwarded the recommendation to Congress, who eventually acted on a portion of the recommendation. In 1980 Congress designated, and the president signed into law, the Blue Range Wilderness in New Mexico. That portion of the Forest Service and presidential recommendation in Arizona has not been acted upon; the Blue Range Primitive Area continues to be the only remaining “Primitive Area” in the United States.</p> <p>The entire Blue Range Primitive Area and recommended additions have been managed as wilderness as prescribed in the 1987 Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Plan.</p>
<b>Current Status</b>	<p>Because a recommendation to the president and Congress has already been made for this potential wilderness, the capability, availability, and need analyses will not be repeated. The entire Blue Range Wilderness Presidential Recommendation in Arizona will continue to be managed as wilderness.</p> <p>Several portions of the Blue Range Primitive Area were found to not have wilderness character and were excluded from the Forest Service and presidential recommendations. These exclusions will be reevaluated (see report for PW-03-01-069).</p>