

# Carson National Forest Wilderness Recommendation Process Step 2: Evaluation Draft Evaluation Process

The second step in the Wilderness recommendation process is Evaluation. This is the step where the inventoried land from step one is evaluated for Wilderness character. Like in inventory, there are guidelines for making this determination. In the case of Evaluation however, these guidelines are taken from the Wilderness Preservation act of 1964 in the form of Wilderness characteristics. While the categories defined in the Wilderness Preservation Act are broad in nature, there are considerations under each characteristic that help to narrow down each character trait. The Carson National Forest has defined the five Wilderness characteristics from the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964 along with some considerations for each in the table below. Please note that these may change or be further refined from public input, or as the characteristics are being applied.

Wilderness characteristic and Considerations Table:

Wilderness Characteristic	Considerations
<p><u>Characteristic 1: Apparent Naturalness</u></p> <p>Answers: Does the area generally appear to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially noticeable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The make-up of plant and animal communities—do they appear natural or unnatural (e.g. past timber harvest areas)?</li> <li>• Does the area reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?</li> <li>• Do the improvements in the area detract from apparent naturalness?</li> <li>• Are there non-native/invasive species present in the area?</li> <li>• What evidence is there of human activity?</li> <li>• Is there a departure from natural conditions?</li> <li>• Are there developments that may detract from an undeveloped quality?</li> <li>• What is the condition of watershed/water supply?</li> <li>• Are there improvements from past restoration activities?</li> </ul>

Wilderness Characteristic	Considerations
<p><u>Characteristic 2: Opportunities for solitude or unconfined recreation</u></p> <p>Answers: Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation (one or the other, doesn't have to be both)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there impacts that influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the area? Factors to consider may include topography, presence of visual screening, distance from other impacts, degree of disruptions to solitude, and disruptive sights and sounds from outside the area.</li> <li>• Are there opportunities to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature?</li> <li>• Consider visitor use information to determine possible congested areas.</li> <li>• Look at the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) for the area. This is a system the Forest Service uses to define what type of recreation activities are appropriate for various types of forest settings. For example, backcountry settings have more primitive recreation opportunities, forest areas near urban settings have highly developed and/or constructed recreation opportunities. Solitude is a factor in the ROS.</li> <li>• Are there future plans for the area that may affect opportunities for solitude?</li> <li>• What are the nearby activities?</li> <li>• What uses occur in the area – including winter activities?</li> </ul>
<p><u>Characteristic 3: Size</u></p> <p>Answers: Is the area of sufficient size to practically manage it for its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider areas less than 5,000 acres if they are adjacent to another Wilderness area – or an area proposed to be one.</li> <li>• Consider primitive areas, or areas that are part of another wilderness inventory on an adjacent land management agency unit.</li> <li>• Consider if areas smaller than 5,000 acres can be combined.</li> </ul>

Wilderness Characteristic	Considerations
<p><u>Characteristic 4: Ecological, scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values.</u></p> <p>Answers: Does the area contain ecological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value? These are not required to be present, but should be identified and evaluated where they exist.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems present in the area? Rare can be determined locally, regionally, or nationally.</li> <li>• Are there outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?</li> <li>• Are there historic and cultural resource sites in the area? (Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056)).</li> <li>• Are there any existing or proposed research natural areas in the area? Research natural areas are specially designated areas that have outstanding research and education values.</li> <li>• Are there any high quality water resources or important watershed features?</li> <li>• Are there any outstanding features in the area that make it stand out?</li> <li>• Are there habitat considerations in and around the area?</li> </ul>

Wilderness Characteristic	Considerations
<p><u>Characteristic 5: Wilderness characteristics manageability</u></p> <p>Answers: Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the shape and configuration of the area?</li> <li>• What legally established rights or uses exist within the area?</li> <li>• Consider specific Federal or State laws that may impact the availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics.</li> <li>• Consider the amount of non-Federal land in the area.</li> <li>• How would the management of adjacent lands impact/benefit the manageability of wilderness characteristics?</li> <li>• Would current/future management needs for highly departed ecosystems (i.e. unhealthy ecosystems) as indicated in the completed ecological and social/economic assessment impact/benefit the manageability of wilderness characteristics?</li> <li>• Consider the area’s historic, traditional, and cultural uses. Consider such uses as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Firewood and wood (latillas and vigas) harvesting</li> <li>b. Livestock grazing</li> <li>c. Plant and medicinal herb gathering</li> <li>d. Hunting and fishing</li> <li>e. Forest access to traditional, cultural, and historic uses not already addressed under travel management</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What is the potential for vehicle encroachment?</li> <li>• Are there any mining claims and/or oil and gas leases established in the area?</li> <li>• Are there any fire management considerations that need to be taken into account for the area?</li> <li>• Are there any Wild Horse Territories present?</li> <li>• Consider Sustained Yield Units for Timber production, specifically the Vallecitos Federal Sustained Yield Unit.</li> </ul>

**CARSON NATIONAL FOREST – FOREST PLAN REVISION**

Questions, Comments, Input? Contact us: Carson National Forest 208 Cruz Alta Rd. Taos, New Mexico 87571 or call 575-758-6221.

Email: [carsonplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:carsonplan@fs.fed.us). For information and updates on our forest plan revision process visit our website at: [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/carsonforestplan](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/carsonforestplan)

