

# Carson National Forest Plan Revision Wilderness Process Draft Wilderness Evaluation

## Why is this Wilderness Evaluation being done now?

As part of forest plan revision under the 2012 National Forest Planning Rule the Carson National Forest is analyzing lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System for potential recommendation as Wilderness. No wilderness designation will be made as a result of this plan revision since Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions regarding all wilderness designation.

The plan revision wilderness process requires four primary steps, each of which will involve the public.

1. Preliminary Inventory
2. Evaluation
3. Analysis
4. Recommendation

The Preliminary Inventory identified areas that are now being Evaluated for their potential suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System based on their existing wilderness character. Wilderness character is Evaluated following five characteristics set forth in the Wilderness Act of 1964 based on considerations that were developed in collaboration with the public to specifically address the conditions on the Carson National Forest.

Based on the Evaluation and input from the public, some areas, or portions thereof, will be Analyzed in one or more alternatives in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process as part of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Based on this NEPA analysis and public input the Forest Supervisor may Recommend that certain areas be considered for wilderness designation.

Forest plan revision is an inclusive process, with involvement by local communities, land grant communities, federal, tribal, state, and local governments and agencies, and the general public through letters, meetings, presentations, and a web-based mapping tool.

We would like your input throughout the process. It will be important for the public to stay involved to help shape possible future recommendations for wilderness designation.

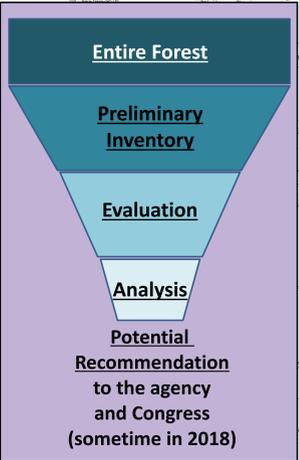
## How was this map created?

The Evaluation describes wilderness characteristics of those lands included in the Inventory. There are five wilderness characteristics set forth in the Wilderness Act of 1964:

1. The area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable (apparent naturalness).
2. The area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.
3. Areas smaller than 5000 acres must be of sufficient size to make their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.
4. The area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not required for recommendation, but they should be identified and evaluated.
5. It is possible to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Through a series of public meetings in April 2016 the Carson NF developed a list of considerations to inform the description of each of the five characteristics. The public was asked to apply those considerations to specific inventoried areas, and that public input was combined with information from Carson personnel to develop this draft Evaluation map and supporting documentation of wilderness character.

Some areas were removed during an initial evaluation phase due to the inability to manage those areas to preserve their wilderness character. The list of reasons for removing areas during this first phase is shown in the box to the left.



## Reasons for removing areas from Evaluation during phase 1

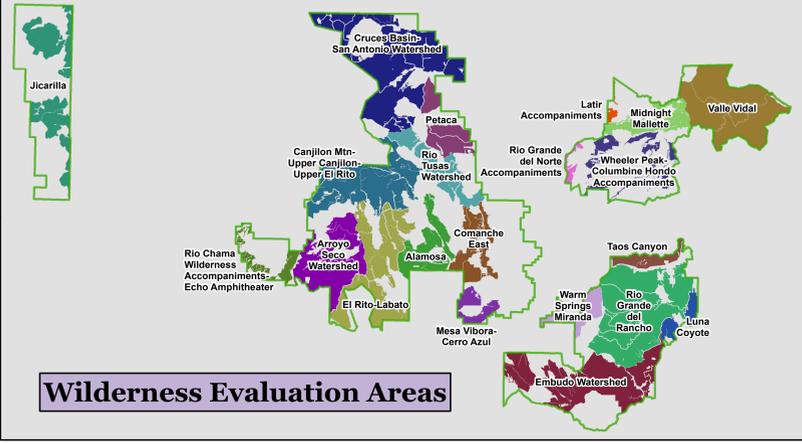
- I. Vallecitos Federal Sustained Yield Unit**  
Portions of Alamosa Area, Rio Tusas Watershed Area, East-West Labato Area, and Upper Canjion-Upper El Rito Watershed Area were removed from Evaluation because they are within the Vallecitos Federal Sustained Yield Unit. This unit was established under Public Law 273 in 1947 to "promote the stability of forest industries, of employment, of communities, and of taxable forest wealth, through continuous supplies of timber. Given that this area was federally designated specifically for timber harvesting projects, large-scale motorized and mechanized equipment would be required to meet the intent of this designation. As such, this area was removed from further evaluation due to the requirements to operate this area as a federal sustained yield unit. Once Unit was removed, if remaining block was then less than 5,000 acres in size, it was also removed.
- II. Motorized Trails**  
Portions of Taos Canyon Area, Embudo Watershed Area, Rio Grande del Rancho Watershed Area, Columbine Hondo Wilderness Accompaniments, Midnight-Mallette Area, and Wheeler Peak Wilderness Accompaniments were split based on open designated Motorized trails that transect them. The Carson National Forest's Travel Management decision designated open motorized trails throughout the forest. The inventory removed the open motorized trails as they do not offer wilderness character. If an area had a designated motorized trail going through it, the trail was removed and the rest of the area was evaluated for wilderness character. If however, the split resulted in two dissected areas that were less than 5,000 acres in size, then those areas were removed based on size criteria.
- III. Fire Management Unit 1**  
Portions of Taos Canyon Area, Embudo Watershed Area, Rio Grande del Rancho Watershed Area, Columbine Hondo Wilderness Accompaniments, Midnight-Mallette Area, Rio Grande del Norte Accompaniments, Chama River Wilderness Accompaniment Echo Amphitheater Area, Petaca Area, Alamosa Area, East-West Labato, Arroyo Seco Watershed Area, Canjion Mountain-Upper Canjion and Upper El Rito Watershed Area, Wheeler Peak Wilderness Accompaniments, and Jicarilla Area were removed from Evaluation because those areas are within Fire Management Unit 1 (FMCU). FMCU units are units on the Carson National Forest in which current fire management direction under the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFSS) states that fire is not desired and is to be suppressed. FMCU units are found near towns or villages where suppression by any means is necessary to protect life and property.
- IV. Acropolis**  
Portions of Embudo Watershed Area, Latir Wilderness Accompaniments Area, Valle Vidal Area, Canjion Mountain-Upper Canjion and Upper El Rito Watershed Area, Cruces Basin-San Antonio Watershed Area - East-West Labato, and Wheeler Peak Wilderness Accompaniments were split based on known Acropolis that have legally existing water rights. Acropolis that prohibit the National Forest Reservation are afforded special rights and status under NFS management. Under the Chief's Policy relating to the Act of July 26, 1864 (Revised Statute 2323), continuing routine operation and maintenance of acropolis is allowed without special use authorization being required. If portions of an area were split by an acropolis and that split portion was less than 5,000 acres in size, that portion was also removed from further evaluation based on the size criteria.
- V. Shape and Configuration**  
Portions of Latir Peak Wilderness Accompaniments Area, Embudo Watershed Area, Luna Coyote Area, Taos Canyon Area, Rio Grande del Rancho Watershed Area, Columbine Hondo Wilderness Accompaniments Area, Midnight-Mallette Area, Valle Vidal Area, Arroyo Seco Watershed Area, Rio Tusas Watershed Area, Chama River Wilderness Accompaniments-Rio Amphitheater Area, Comanche East Area, Cruces Basin-San Antonio Watershed Area, Alamosa Area, East-West Labato Area, Canjion Mountain-Upper Canjion and Upper El Rito Watershed Area, and Wheeler Peak Wilderness Accompaniments Area were removed due to shape and configuration of the area. The basis of removal under the shape and configuration consideration was contingent on pinch points. Pinch points are strips of land within an inventoried area that are less than 1/4 mile wide. It was determined during evaluation that a strip of land less than 1/4 mile wide would not be manageable for wilderness character. Once pinch point was removed, if the resulting area was less than 5,000 acres in size, then it was also removed based on size criteria.
- VI. Wild Horse Territories**  
Portions of Rio Tusas Watershed Area and Jicarilla Area were removed because they were within the Wild Horse Territories Jarita Mesa and Jicarilla. The Carson has four federally designated wild horse territories, however only two are occupied and managed. These include the Jarita Mesa and Jicarilla Wild Horse Territories. The Forest Service is required to manage these wild horse herds to protect the herd and maintain ecological integrity of the land. Management practices frequently include managing population numbers by capturing and transporting members of the herd. This generally requires the use of all-terrain-vehicles and vehicles with trailers. Given the management requirements necessitated by this existing federal designation, the management of any potential wilderness characteristics in these two wild horse territories would be precluded by the previous existing designation of use of the area. For these reasons, these two wild horse territories were removed from wilderness evaluation.
- VII. Valle Vidal Private Property**  
Portions of the land within the Valle Vidal was misidentified as forest land during the wilderness inventory step. Further inspection during evaluation found that it was in fact private land belonging to Vermojo Park. This correction resulted in the removal of the Valle Vidal LA

### Legend

- Carson NF Boundary
- Existing Wilderness
- Inventoried Roadless Area
- Private Land Inholding
- BLM Lands with Wilderness Character
- Existing Inventoried Lands
- Tentative (as part of the draft RGdNNM plan)

### Draft Wilderness Evaluation

- Evaluated as having wilderness character
- Evaluated as not having wilderness character
- Removed from Evaluation during phase 1
- Non-inventory, not Evaluated
- Adjacent, unroaded lands



## How can the public provide feedback on this Evaluation?

The Carson National Forest is currently seeking feedback on the draft Evaluation of inventoried areas. All the gray and brown areas on this map have been evaluated as *not having* wilderness character. The purple areas were evaluated as *having* wilderness character. **Were the five wilderness characteristics applied correctly to reach these conclusions? Do you know of contradictory or additional information that would change or support the conclusion for a particular area? Do you agree with the determination made for each of the evaluated areas?**

Please submit your input on the Evaluation via e-mail to [carsonplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:carsonplan@fs.fed.us) or by U.S. mail to the Carson National Forest, Attn: Forest Plan Revision, 208 Cruz Alta Rd., Taos, NM, 87571. The Evaluation map may also be viewed and feedback given through the Carson Forest Plan Revision webpage: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/carson/fpr>.

**Feedback is requested by July 15th, 2016 so that the Evaluation phase may be finalized.**

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Data Projection: UTM Zone 13 NAD83  
This information was released on: 1/27/2016

