

**Gila National Forest
Technical Meeting
Topics: Designated Areas
August 22, 2017
Silver City, NM**

INTRODUCTION

Tracy Weber, Acting Forest Supervisor for the Gila National Forest, welcomed the group, shared his commitment to engaging with the public and encouraged participants to share their thoughts and opinions. The purpose of the technical meetings is to offer community members the opportunity to engage in deep-dive conversations about topics relevant to the Gila National Forest Plan revision.

Participants introduced themselves. Participants represented a broad range of interests and organizational entities, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, The Wilderness Society, Interstate Stream Commission, and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. There were also a couple County Commissioners present.

DESIGNATED AREAS OVERVIEW

Eric Flood, Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Gila National Forest, presented an overview of designated areas in the context of the Forest Plan revision. The revised US Forest Service (USFS) Planning Handbook and the direction of the 2012 Planning Rule includes specific guidance for addressing designated areas as part of the revision process.

- Every National Forest has areas that contain special, exceptional, or unique values. Many of these areas meet the criteria to be given special status on a national, regional, or local scale. Designation of these areas requires a rigorous process that can last years, depending on individual circumstances.
- The definition of designated areas is: “specific areas or features within the Plan area that have been given a permanent designation to maintain a unique special character or purpose.”
- The term “designated area” refers to categories of areas or features that are established by, or pursuant to, statute, regulation, or policy. During the revision of the Forest Plan, there are some designated areas that the USFS is required to address. There are others that do not need to be addressed.
- Land management plan decisions may include recommendations to establish additional or modify existing designated areas. However, it is important to remember that changes to statutorily-designated areas are reserved for Congress alone. Congress has not empowered the USFS to make recommendations that second-guess their previous legislatively-made decisions. The only exception to this rule is wilderness study areas, because the legislation directly asks for a recommendation from the USFS about areas that should be designated.
- Designated areas may be established by either administrative processes (administratively-designated areas) or by statute (statutorily-designated areas). Administratively-designated

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means that an area may be designated by USFS leadership as an administrative decision. Statutorily-designated areas must be designated by the passage of legislation by Congress.

- There are a range of types of administratively-designated areas that could be recommended by the Forest Supervisor including botanical area, geological area, historical area, recreational area, scenic area, zoological area, and research natural areas. The Forest Plan revision may be the best time to identify a need for some types of designated areas, or to identify specific areas that would benefit from being given one of these designations in order to protect special, exceptional, or unique values. When the Forest Supervisor recommends areas that are not designated for some reason by the next planning cycle, those recommended areas can be re-evaluated for some other type of management.
- The different types of statutorily-designated areas include national recreation areas, national scenic areas, national scenic and historic trails, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness (or wilderness study areas), and national scenic byways. The Gila National Forest is required to address some of these. Others can be addressed outside of the Forest Plan revision.
- If a land area needs specific management guidance but does not qualify as a designated area or has not been designated, the responsible official may identify the area as a management area to apply specific plan components in the land management plan.
- The terms “management area” and “geographic area” describe how plan components apply to specific parcels of National Forest System lands. The difference between the approaches is that geographic areas are based on the place, while management areas are based on the purpose.

Clarifying Questions

Participants asked clarifying questions about administrative and statutory areas. Questions are indicated in italics with the responses below.

On the ground, would people be able to tell the difference between administratively-designated areas and statutorily-designated locations? Does the public interact differently with the two types of designated land?

It depends on the specifics of that designated area and on the type of management components the Gila National Forest staff decided were appropriate for that area. There is more flexibility for administratively-designated areas.

Are management areas also defined geographically?

Management areas may be limited to a geographic area, but it is possible for there to be many different types of management within that geographic area. For example, the wildland urban interface could be considered a management area even though it is all over the place. However, the purpose of management is the same no matter where it is.

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Does the USFS have a management area comparable to an “area of critical environmental concern?”
“Designated areas of critical environmental concern” is a Bureau of Land Management term. Depending on the value that needs to be maintained, the USFS could designate a similar “zoological area” or “botanical area.”

How are experimental areas designated?

Experimental areas are designated through a different branch of the USFS. The USFS partners with a research station to establish areas that align with research objectives. This is not done during the Forest Plan revision. The request/proposal for experimental areas could also come from other sources, like universities.

Is it possible to layer different designations to manage for different values?

The USFS tries to avoid layering designations because one designation may have a conflicting management mandate with the other designation. However, layering sometimes occurs. For example, there are often areas of critical habitat in wilderness. The Forest Supervisor considers all of the factors and proposes a rational solution that best meets all of the legal requirements for managing overlapping designations.

Is there a hierarchy of designations? How does the USFS segregate and prioritize opposing management objectives (e.g., do management objectives for endangered species take priority over wilderness designations)?

Often, the presence of endangered species is important to wilderness values, and protecting a native species is beneficial to the wilderness. Analyses occur at the project level and decisions are often case-dependent. It can get complicated, given the number of statutes and management mandates we must comply with.

Does the USFS do something similar to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for visual resource management?

There is a separate USFS analysis called the scenery management system to assess scenic character of National Forest Lands. There also was a preliminary recreational opportunity spectrum submitted with the draft assessment.

Group Discussion

Participants discussed the opportunities for additional administrative designations. This discussion is summarized below.

- There should be a botanical area designation for unusual or rare plant communities.
- There should be archeological area designations. Specific destinations that should be designated include Taylor Creek Caves and C Bar Canyon.
- The USFS should consider Tadpole Ridge (15 miles north of Silver City) for its zoological characteristics. There is an extraordinary bear habitat there.

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- There are parts of the San Francisco River drainage that have a population of bighorn sheep in need of protection. Many sheep have migrated away from this area. The USFS is working with Game and Fish to manage that population, but it is important to coordinate with Game and Fish to ensure that their management plan is adequate. If the population has migrated, it may be necessary to change the management area or revise Forest Plan components to make the area more habitable. Game and Fish has introduced a targeted mountain lion harvesting effort in this area, but there has also been a rise in predators statewide. It is important for predator control to be scientifically-informed.
- The USFS should assess riparian areas for high biological diversity and determine which areas should be considered for special protection. These areas should be designated “special riparian areas.” For example, the population of salamanders has decreased, and it is important to protect their habitat. Many riparian areas are designated as critical habitat, which is a Fish and Wildlife designation. The USFS manages in accordance with that designation.
- The USFS should consider special designation for seeps and springs. Over the years, Game and Fish has developed and replaced structures that collect water and supply to wildlife, but those structures have not been well-maintained. There should be more coordination between the USFS and Game and Fish.
- The USFS should consider enriched proposals for special designations to create more jobs and make designated areas more economically productive.
- Decisions about designated areas should be based on science and local knowledge/experiences.

INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS

Eric Flood provided an overview of inventoried roadless areas. Roadless areas are USFS lands that do not contain existing roads and were determined to be suitable for roadless area conservation.

- Inventoried roadless areas were established by the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE) process. The most recent review of inventoried roadless areas began in 1998 and concluded in a set of USFS regulations in 2001 that are collectively known as the Roadless Rule.
- Although cartographic errors and other minor changes could be addressed during plan revision under the 1982 Planning Rule, the 2012 Planning Rule changed this. During the Forest Plan revision, the USFS is not permitted to add new inventoried roadless areas, remove existing inventoried roadless areas, or make changes to the boundaries of existing inventoried roadless areas. There is a separate process outside Forest Plan Revision to address cartographic errors.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Eric Flood provided an overview of the process for designating wild and scenic rivers.

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- The 2012 Planning Rule requires the USFS to address eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- There is a three-step process for analysis and recommendation of rivers for designation as wild and scenic: the first step is to conduct an eligibility study; the second step is to assign an initial classification as “wild, scenic, or recreational” to the areas that are determined to be eligible; the third step is to conduct a suitability study. Only the first two steps are required by the 2012 Planning Rule to be completed during the Forest Plan revision.
- Step one, the eligibility study, is the determination of whether a river is free-flowing and has outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs). It must possess both to be eligible for designation.
- “Free flowing” means that the river is flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, riprapping, or other modifications of the waterway. Some minor structures are allowable at the time a river is proposed for designation but this does not authorize any future construction of such structures. The guidelines also state that a river segment between large impoundments may qualify if conditions within the segment meet the eligibility criteria.
- To be considered outstandingly remarkable, a river must have unique, rare, or exemplary features that are significant when compared to similar values from other rivers at a regional or national scale.
- Categories of ORVs include scenery, recreation, geology, fish, wildlife, historic, and cultural values. There are also botanic, hydrologic, paleontological, scientific, and heritage values that may be considered.
- Under the 2012 Planning Rule, the Plan revision process, including wild and scenic rivers eligibility process, is required to provide ample opportunities for transparent public engagement. There will be comment periods throughout, including for the eligibility process paper and consideration of ORVs. The USFS will also be using a new web-based tool called “Story Maps.” This is a user-friendly online tool that allows people to comment on a specific spot on a map.
- After determining eligibility, the Gila National Forest assigns an initial classification of wild, scenic, or recreational, based on criteria provided in the handbook (chapter 80). Congress then determines the final classification (if they choose to designate a river as wild and scenic).
- The final step in the wild and scenic rivers process is a determination of suitability. Eligibility determines if a river could be a wild and scenic river, and the suitability study determines if an eligible river should be determined for designation.
- Although a suitability study may be accomplished during the Forest Plan revision process, it is not required to be done at that time. Once the eligibility study has been completed, the suitability process may be done at any time. If a suitability study is conducted and an eligible river is not found to be suitable, or if Congress declines to designate a river by direction they give in legislation, the protections are removed and the river corridor would be administered under a different management direction.

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Clarifying Questions

Participants asked clarifying questions about the process for designating wild and scenic rivers. Questions are indicated in italics and responses are below.

Will areas that were previously submitted for evaluation for wild and scenic designation but were declined for designation be reevaluated?

The previous evaluation in 2002 will stand unless there have been any changed circumstances to the condition of specific rivers/streams.

Has the USFS decided how to incorporate regional and national frameworks for remarkable values into the wild and scenic river designation process?

The USFS will be convening an interdisciplinary team to discuss the different resource areas and assist planning staff in the eligibility study. They will be Gila National Forest employees. If there are questions that transcend to the regional level, the interdisciplinary team will consult with the regional office.

What does the USFS do if a wild and scenic river designation is adjacent to private property?

The USFS does not have any jurisdiction on private property. The USFS only manages for ORVs on federal lands.

Are there guidelines that specify a threshold for determining ORVs, or are ORVs in the eye of the beholder?

Yes, there are guidelines that define ORVs (See Table 1). This standard can be applied locally, regionally, or nationally.

Table 1: Wild and Scenic Rivers Outstandingly Remarkable Values Criteria	
ORV	Chapter 80 Criteria
Scenery	Landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features or attractions. Additional factors, such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed, may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over different parts of the river or river segment. Outstandingly remarkable scenic features may occupy only a small portion of a river corridor.
Recreation	Recreational opportunities are high quality and attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison; or the recreational opportunities are unique or rare within the region. River-related recreational opportunities include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, interpretation, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. The river may provide settings for national or regional use or competitive events.

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Table 1: Wild and Scenic Rivers Outstandingly Remarkable Values Criteria	
ORV	Chapter 80 Criteria
Geology	The river corridor contains one or more examples of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is unique, rare or exemplary within the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a “textbook” example, or represent a unique, rare or exemplary combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, or other geologic structures).
Fish	<p>Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations or habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Populations. The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance are a diversity of fish species or the presence of wild stocks and/or Federal or State-listed or candidate threatened, endangered, or species of conservation concern. b. Habitat. The river provides uniquely diverse or high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison. Of particular significance is exemplary habitat for wild stocks and/or Federal or State-listed or candidate threatened or endangered species, or species of conservation concern. Consider also rare and unique habitats within the corridor.
Wildlife	<p>Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations or habitat, or a combination of these conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Populations. The river, or area within the river corridor, contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species diversity, species considered to be unique, and/or populations of Federal or State-listed or candidate threatened or endangered species, or species of conservation concern. b. Habitat. The river, or area within the river corridor, provides uniquely diverse or high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, and/or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for Federal or State-listed or candidate threatened or endangered species, or species of conservation concern. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met.

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Table 1: Wild and Scenic Rivers Outstandingly Remarkable Values Criteria	
ORV	Chapter 80 Criteria
Historic and Cultural Values	The river, or area within the river corridor, contains important evidence of historic or pre-historic occupation or use by humans. Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting history or prehistory. a. History. Sites or features are associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that is now rare or unique in the region. A historic site or feature, in most cases, is 50 years old or older. b. Prehistory. Sites of prehistoric human use or occupation may have unique or rare characteristics or exemplary anthropological value such as evidence of prehistoric human practices and modes of living. Areas within the river corridor may have been used for rare sacred purposes, or represent the origin or conflict of cultures.
Other Similar River-related values	While no specific national evaluation guidelines have been developed for this category, determinations consistent with the preceding guidance and section 82.73 of this Handbook may be developed for other values that may be outstandingly remarkable, including but not limited to botanic, hydrologic, paleontologic, scientific, and heritage values.

How is “free-flowing” defined spatially?

The proposed area must be both free-flowing and have ORVs. The proposed area may be between two impoundments, and there can be minor structures.

When will the Gila National Forest be conducting a suitability study for wild and scenic rivers?

The Forest Supervisor later answered this question:

The Forest Supervisor intends to conduct a suitability study sometime in the future taking into consideration internal capacity and level of NEPA.

Why is the Gila National Forest not conducting a suitability study as part of the Forest Plan revision?

The Forest Supervisor later answered this question:

As part of Forest Plan Revision, the Gila National Forest is required to conduct an eligibility study of rivers for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Once the eligibility study has been completed, the suitability process may be done at any time (although not necessarily during plan revision). Congress may choose to direct a Forest to perform a suitability study on a river or rivers at any time. The Forest Supervisor may also choose to initiate the suitability process when it’s a timely undertaking. Things to consider when determining the timing of the suitability study include internal capacity and level of NEPA.

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Forest Plan Revision is a rigorous, multifaceted process with limited timelines and funding for completion, and currently we do not have the internal capacity to undertake a suitability study during revision. In addition, the level of the NEPA required for suitability is much more site-specific than the programmatic nature of the NEPA we are doing for the rest of the plan revision effort – if we were to do suitability, we would have to segment the NEPA, getting much more site-specific as we analyzed the eligible segments for suitability. We will continue to assess these factors, and do the suitability study when we can.

If a river has been declined for designation, is there a time limit that must be reached before it can be proposed again?

There is nothing in the legislation. However, it could be revisited if the conditions change in that area.

If a river segment is deemed eligible and no suitability study is conducted, is the USFS required to maintain the protection of the ORVs in perpetuity?

Yes.

Can a river be designated as both wild and scenic and recreational?

A river can be designated as a wild and scenic river and still be managed for recreational purposes. Wild, Scenic, and Recreational are different classifications applied to all Wild and Scenic Rivers to distinguish the levels of development and settings that each classification is required to be managed to. There are more development and active management allowances for the recreational classification as opposed to the “wild” and “scenic” classifications.

Is there a hierarchy in designations? For example, does a wild and scenic designation override a recreational designation?

Each eligible wild and scenic river is classified for either wild, scenic, or recreational purposes, depending on the criteria. Once a river has a recreational classification, it has the same protections as segments designated for wild/scenic purposes. However, user experiences may be different on the different types of segments.

If there is a wild and scenic river designation in a wilderness area, can that segment also be classified for recreational purposes?

Yes, but because it would be in a wilderness area, mechanized transport would not be allowed. The restrictive protections of wilderness areas supersede management for recreation purposes.

Will the Gila National Forest planning staff be assessing main streams and rivers during the eligibility study?

Yes.

When will the Gila National Forest planning staff release the draft process paper?

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Hopefully by the end of September.

Group Discussion

Participants responded to the following prompt questions:

What types of outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) are the most unique to this area and have importance to be protected in rivers on the Gila National Forest?

- The geology on the Gila National Forest is outstanding.
- Several types of ecosystems converge on the Gila National Forest. There are only five places in the world that have this type of convergence.
- Clear, free-flowing water in the southwest is unique.
- The Gila National Forest is a hotspot for biodiversity. There are many native species of vegetation and fish along the Gila and the San Francisco rivers.
- Solitude is a remarkable value on the Gila National Forest.
- The scenery on the Gila National Forest is exceptional.
- The Gila River's headwaters is in the world's first designated wilderness.

What concerns are associated with wild and scenic designation of rivers? What factors could help alleviate those concerns?

- There are complications related to layering administrative and statutory regulations. Designating a river as wild and scenic has implications on all the upstream management.
- Designated areas often become "target destinations." Increased visitation could impact the character of the area. If this happens, some participants think that the USFS should have the legal authority to restrict the number of people on the river to avoid damage. This would require a civil rights impact assessment and a rigorous study of the restrictions and fairness of access.
- It is important to evaluate and prioritize areas that are in excellent shape that should be protected against deterioration. It would be helpful if there were specific performance measures or an evaluation system to understand the threats to the values in an area (e.g., habitat destruction) before designation. Quantification of threats would help to clarify potential protective measures that could be taken.

What should the stakeholder and community engagement on wild and scenic rivers look like?

- There is an Interagency document from 2017 that responds to frequently asked questions regarding the impacts from wild and scenic river designation on values, property, etc. (see <https://www.rivers.gov/documents/q-a.pdf>).
- During community meetings, it is important that the presentations clearly describe the issues and options. The informational presentations should be able to diffuse preconceived notions, educate people about the issues, and clarify the benefits of going through a wild and scenic river designation process.

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- The Gila National Forest planning staff should consider holding a meeting that presents multiple views on a specific issue and offer moderation of a discussion about the pros and cons of each stance.
- There should be maps at the next meeting for people to reference. The map should reveal the current and proposed designated areas and the potential impacts to stakeholders. These maps could be separated by ranger district. There are challenges associated with providing maps. Sometimes maps convey a sense of finality and people can become worried that decisions are pre-determined. To address this challenge, there could be removable mylar layers on top of maps that convey different components (wilderness, grazing, private property, etc.).

WILDERNESS AREAS

Eric Flood provided an overview of the process for designating wilderness areas.

- Each National Forest undertaking a Forest Plan revision under the 2012 Planning Rule must complete a process of identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The wilderness designation process must be transparent, with opportunities for public participation. The Story Maps application will be an important tool for public input in the wilderness designation process as well.
- Unlike the wild and scenic rivers process, the USFS is required to complete the entire wilderness recommendation process during the Plan revision. The four steps of the process are:
 1. Inventory
 2. Evaluation
 3. Analysis
 4. Recommendation
- The purpose of the inventory is to identify all National Forest lands in the Plan area that may have wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act. The USFS handbook directs that this process must be broad, inclusive, and transparent. To be included and in an evaluation, lands must not contain any roads level two or higher or any substantially noticeable improvements. Any area included in the inventory that is less than 5,000 acres must be manageable as a wilderness at that size. The Gila National Forest is currently in the inventory step of the process, and is expecting to release the draft inventory maps soon.
- There is no definition provided in the USFS handbook for “substantially noticeable.” In June 2017, the Gila National Forest planning staff held five community meetings. Participants were asked to help define “substantially noticeable” improvements as they related to inclusion in the inventory of lands with potential wilderness characteristics. Common themes identified throughout the meetings were considered during the development of a draft definition of “substantially noticeable.” The draft inventory process paper was also released for a 30-day informal comment period.

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- During evaluation, areas are assessed for four criteria. First, any area less than 5,000 acres included must be manageable as wilderness at that size. Second, areas of any size must be manageable to protect the wilderness characteristics they contain. Third, areas are assessed for apparent naturalness, which can be affected by many factors, including vegetative treatments, the presence of human-made improvements, and non-native, invasive species. Fourth, there must be opportunities for solitude or primitive/unconfined recreation. The area does not have to contain both, but will receive recognition in the evaluation if it does.
- The determination of whether the plant and animal communities in an area appear natural is a professional judgement within the discretion of the Forest Supervisor, as informed by an interdisciplinary team and public input. The USFS handbook defines apparent naturalness as “the degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially unnoticeable,” The handbook directs the USFS to consider factors such as:
 1. The composition of plant and animal communities;
 2. The extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention;
 3. The extent to which improvements located in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness.
- There is a fifth criteria for evaluation, only considered where it occurs. An area must be evaluated for geological, ecological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not required to be present for an area to be recommended as wilderness, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist. Such features or values may include rare plant or animal communities, rare ecosystems, outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies or geologic features, historic and cultural resource sites, research natural areas, high-quality water resources, or important watershed features.
- Step three of the wilderness process is the analysis of evaluated areas in alternatives as part of the NEPA process. This is the first opportunity to deliberate factors and issues other than substantially noticeable improvements, roads, and wilderness characteristics.
- The final step is the recommendation. Any lands determined by the Forest Supervisor to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System are recommended in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the NEPA document. Inclusion or removal of any lands for recommendation are subject to consideration up until the Forest Supervisor signs the ROD.
- The Forest is responsible to protect the wilderness characteristics of the recommended wilderness areas at the level they existed at the time of the recommendation. Congress may not act on the recommendation until the next planning cycle, or may disagree with the Forest Supervisor’s recommendation and return the area to other types of management.

Group Discussion:

Participants responded to the following prompt questions related to wilderness area designation:

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What does “apparently natural” mean to you?

- Apparently natural means that there are no man-made structures that are intact or maintained. Scale is important; structures should not dominate the visual landscape.
- There are some man-made structures that are historic and are being reclaimed by nature. These can enhance “naturalness.” The definition of “apparently natural” should reflect an average user’s relative perspective (use Brooklyn visitors as a barometer).
- Nature has already been altered by human-caused events (e.g., the Whitewater-Baldy Complex fire scar, where the scar is a product of human management). Nature is a construct and is subject to interpretation. The trail of human intervention has made it difficult to distinguish “natural” areas. There are no areas on the Gila National Forest that are ecologically intact and match the desired reference conditions. Therefore, wilderness designations should not be discussed until the ecological reference conditions are met.
- It is difficult to make management decisions about such a vague concept. “Natural” should be considered in terms of human disturbance. Wilderness should be in areas where there is minimal disturbance.
- Because humans have been a part of nature for a long time, primitiveness should be the indicator for apparent naturalness. For example, there are historic pictographs in areas, and that should not disqualify that area from being considered as wilderness.
- It is important to have discussions about wilderness without dividing the community. The community may never agree about the definition of “apparent naturalness,” but factual information should be clarified about the multiple uses on the Gila National Forest.

Because “other features of value” are only considered where they exist, what impact should they have on the overall ranking of an area for having wilderness characteristics, and why?

- Other features of value should have a 20% weight on wilderness characteristics where they exist.
- Wilderness characteristics inherently include scientific, educational, and scenic values. They are inseparable.
- This is an artificially enforced question because the factors are all integrated. It is important to distinguish whether “other features of value” amplify wilderness characteristics or double count wilderness characteristics. “Other features of value” should inform wilderness characteristics as bonus points. There will be a low, medium, and high ranking of wilderness characteristics (as opposed to yes/no).
- This question can be interpreted as: “are there areas that possess outstanding educational, scenic, or historic value that deserve recognition? If so, what impact should that have on the designation process?” The planning staff would like to know how to fairly assess extra features of value so that people understand how the rankings were applied consistently.
- It would be helpful to hold a community meeting and do an activity similar to the one that the planning staff led on “substantially noticeable.”
- Areas without other features of value should not be penalized in the overall ranking of wilderness characteristics.

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The Gila National Forest will continue to engage stakeholders and community members more on the wilderness process. What should this stakeholder and community engagement look like?

- The Gila National Forest planning staff should consider targeting specific groups. Local governments can assist with outreach to rural communities.
- The environmental justice community should be engaged.
- The meetings should be held where people live, not just in Silver City.
- It would be helpful to have more clarity of purpose for the meetings. Agendas should be shared in advance so that expectations for the meeting are clear.
- Community members have a lot to say about whether there should be wilderness areas, and while that was not a topic for discussion during this meeting, it may be helpful to hold a separate meeting to discuss this topic.
- Participants should be mindful that maps do not always represent every feature or concern.
- After the meeting, community leaders should speak to their constituents and dispel any misconceptions about the Forest Plan revision process.

Next Steps

- The Gila National Forest planning staff will finalize the draft wild and scenic process paper within a month. All comments will be considered, and the modifications will be incorporated into the final paper where possible.
- The next technical meeting is on September 12. This meeting will address issues related to soils, watersheds, and riparian areas. The technical meeting on September 29 will address infrastructure sustainability. Gila National Forest planning staff will send e-mail reminders about these meetings.
- The final meeting summary will be posted on the Gila National Forest Plan revision website.