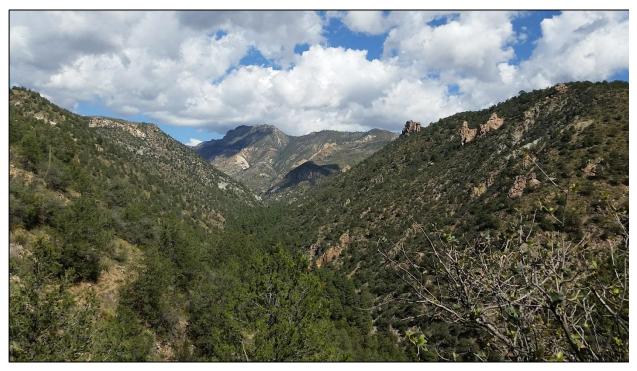Gila National Forest Plan Revision

DRAFT Evaluation of Lands Inventoried for Potential Wilderness Characteristics

DRAFT Process Paper, October 2017

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Introduction

The Gila National Forest is in the process of revising a land and resource management plan (i.e. Forest Plan) that has been in place since 1986. The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219) provides the framework to create local land management plans for national forests and grasslands across the nation. The rule establishes an ongoing, three-phase process: 1) assessment; 2) plan development or revision; and 3) implementation and monitoring.

The 2012 Planning Rule is intended to create a plan that guides resource management on the Gila National Forest within the context of the broader landscape. It takes an integrated and holistic approach that recognizes the interdependence of ecological, social, cultural and economic systems. Collaboration with stakeholders and process transparency are key components of this approach. Each national forest undertaking 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 (hereafter referred to as process), and determine whether to recommend any of the evaluated lands to Congress for wilderness designation. Congress reserves the authority to designate wilderness through legislation. Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 Chapter 70 provides direction and guidance for the four-step process to be completed as one part of the larger Plan Revision effort:

1. **Inventory** to identify all National Forest Lands in the plan area that may have wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act

2. **Evaluation** of the wilderness characteristics possessed by the lands identified in the Inventory step of the process

3. **Analysis** of the evaluated areas that are determined to be potentially suitable for inclusion in one or more alternatives as part of the Forest Plan Revision National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process

4. **Recommendation** of any lands determined by the Forest Supervisor (Responsible Official) that should be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Only Congress may designate wilderness

Step One – Inventory

An Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) of diverse Forest Service resource specialists that was assigned by the Forest Supervisor is in the process of developing and seeking public input to complete a transparent, reasonably broad, and inclusive inventory process that identifies the Gila National Forest lands that may have wilderness characteristics as Step 1 of the overall process.

The Inventory Process for Identifying Lands with Potential Wilderness Characteristics Final Process Paper outlines in detail the process employed to accomplish the Inventory. This process paper was developed with input and feedback from stakeholders during community and technical meetings and draft review periods. To help refine and improve this preliminary effort, the draft inventory maps were released for public review and feedback for 30 days before incorporating this input where appropriate and being finalized. The primary purpose of the Inventory step of the process is to efficiently and transparently identify the lands in the plan area that may have wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act. The Inventory Maps include all National Forest areas that were identified as meeting the criteria for that process and will be carried forward to the next step, Evaluation.

This document outlines the process, including methods for public engagement and feedback, to accomplish Step two: Evaluation of the Inventoried areas for wilderness characteristics. The lands shown on all preliminary maps and described in all process documentation do not imply any form of designation or convey or require a particular kind of management.

Process for Step Two - Evaluation:

1. **Publically release the draft Evaluation Process Document for public review and comment.**

   This will allow stakeholders to provide input on and be familiar with the process used to evaluate the wilderness characteristics of the lands that were earlier identified in the Inventory in order to maximize the time available for comment, and to facilitate comments on the process. The draft evaluation process paper will be adjusted based on consideration of stakeholder feedback before being finalized.

2. **Grouping Together of Similar Sized, and Common-Adjacency to Existing Wilderness Evaluation Areas**

   The Forest Supervisor may divide or consolidate lands identified in the inventory into grouped areas for the purpose of evaluation, and may vary the scope of the evaluation based on the specific characteristics of each area or portions thereof.

   Certain areas such as those in relatively close proximity, being less than 5,000 acres size individually, and located contiguous to the same existing wilderness or similar designated area, may be grouped together for wilderness characteristics evaluation.

3. **Evaluation Process of Lands Inventoried for Potential Wilderness Characteristics:**

Rain Creek Trail, Gila Wilderness

   The ID Team will preliminarily evaluate for subsequent public review and feedback all lands identified in the inventory to determine and rank the level of wilderness characteristics they possess according to four criteria (and sometimes there is a fifth criteria):

   1. **Sufficient Size to be Practicable to Manage as Wilderness** (if less than 5,000 acres size);
   2. **Manageability to Protect Wilderness Characteristics** (factors other than size);
   3. **Apparent Naturalness**; and
   4. **Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**;
   5. **Other Features of Value** is not mandated to be present for an area to have wilderness characteristics, and is evaluated only where it occurs.

These wilderness characteristics criteria are derived from the definition of Wilderness provided in the Wilderness Act of 1964, and by the Forest Service Planning Handbook 1909.12 Chapter 70.

Each criterion will be evaluated systematically and in the numerical order they are assigned here in the Evaluation process documentation. If at any point in the process an area receives a rating of "NONE" for any of the first four evaluation criteria, the evaluation will not continue for that area. The evaluated area shall instead be assigned a summary score of NONE for the level of wilderness characteristics that it possesses, and it shall be removed from any further consideration in the process (unless the Forest Supervisor exercises the authority to do otherwise).

Each evaluated area will be assigned an overall, or summary, ranking of the level of wilderness characteristics it possesses: NONE, LOW, MODERATE, HIGH, or OUTSTANDING.

The IDT will make use of a detailed spreadsheet to assist with preliminary analysis; this spreadsheet will be updated and refined, provided for stakeholder comment and input, and will ultimately be included in the DRAFT and FINAL Evaluation Report to provide a summary and quick reference to evaluation results.

The spreadsheet will also be used inform the detailed individual area detailed narrative reports included within the DRAFT and FINAL Evaluation Report documentation.

Step 1 -   Determination of Sufficient Size Practicable to Manage as Wilderness

The IDT shall determine and document the rationale if any inventoried areas that are less than 5,000 acres in size, but were carried forward in the inventory due to sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

All inventoried areas greater than 5,000 acres in size, and inventoried areas that are less than 5,000 acres but are contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, administratively recommended wilderness, or wilderness inventory of other Federal ownership will automatically continue on to Evaluation Step 2.

If the area is determined to be NOT SUFFICIENT SIZE to be practicable to manage as wilderness, the evaluation will be discontinued for that area, the reasoning for the determination will be documented in the draft Evaluation Report, and the area will receive a Summary Ranking of NONE for possessing wilderness characteristics.

If the area is determined to be of SUFFICIENT SIZE to be manageable as wilderness, it will continue to be evaluated for the remaining criteria.

General Guidelines that an area may be determined NOT MANAGEABLE as wilderness at less than 5,000 acres may include (but are not limited to):

The area is less than 5,000 acres in size and is not contiguous to any existing wilderness, primitive areas, administratively recommended wilderness, or wilderness inventory of other Federal ownership, and one or more of the following apply:

- The existing terrain, bodies of water, vegetation cover, or geographic location do not allow for manageable wilderness boundaries or do not make preservation of wilderness characteristics practicable;
- And/or surrounding or inholding areas that are in non-federal ownership or are managed for uses that would have significant negative effects on the wilderness characteristics of the area due to its relative size;

- And/or there are some other existing laws, legally established uses or valid existing rights that would make the area impracticable to manage to protect and preserve its wilderness characteristics

General Guidelines that an area may be determined Manageable as wilderness at less than 5,000 acres may include (but are not limited to):

The area is less than 5,000 acres in size but is contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, administratively recommended wilderness, or wilderness inventory of other Federal ownership.

Or, the area is less than 5,000 acres in size, but is judged by the IDT to be of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable because of (but not limited to) one or more of the following factors:

- Some combination of terrain, bodies of water, vegetation cover, and geographic location in or surrounding the area allow for manageable wilderness boundaries and make preservation of wilderness characteristics practicable;
- There are no inholdings or surrounding areas that are not in non-federal ownership and/or that are managed currently (or are likely to be managed in the foreseeable future) for uses that would be likely to negatively affect wilderness characteristics due to the relative size of the area;
- And/or there are no other existing laws, legally established uses or valid existing rights that are likely to negatively affect manageability of the area to protect and enhance wilderness characteristics

Step 2 -   Determine Manageability to Protect Wilderness Characteristics:

The purpose of this step is to evaluate if an inventoried area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics, considering such factors as:

- Shape and configuration of the area;
- Legally established rights or uses within the area;
- Specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics;
- The presence and amount of non-Federal land in the area; and
- Management of adjacent lands

All inventoried areas that are determined to be MANAGEABLE to protect wilderness characteristics will be carried forward for consideration in Step 3: Apparent Naturalness. If the area is determined to be NOT MANAGEABLE to protect wilderness characteristics the evaluation will be discontinued for that area, the reasoning for the determination will be documented in the DRAFT Evaluation Report, and the area will receive a Summary Ranking of NONE for possessing wilderness characteristics.

General Guidelines to determine if an area is NOT MANAGEABLE to protect wilderness characteristics may include (but are not limited to):

- The shape, location, and/or configuration of the area preclude protection of wilderness characteristics
- A substantial portion of the area is too narrow in width for roads or other development or uses beyond the boundaries to be substantially unnoticeable;

- Modification of area boundaries is not possible or would not sufficiently address the presence of substantially noticeable road, development or installations
- There are non-federal inholdings within the area possessing high levels of development or uses that would prohibit protection of wilderness characteristics throughout the area;
- There are existing legally established uses or valid existing rights that would prevent management of the area to protect wilderness characteristics

General Guidelines to determine if an area is MANAGEABLE to protect wilderness characteristics may include (but are not limited to):

- The shape and/or configuration of the area are not an impediment to protection of wilderness characteristics;
- A majority of the area is wide enough for roads or other development or uses beyond the boundaries to be substantially unnoticeable;
- Area boundaries exclude substantially noticeable roads, developments or installations ;
- The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness, primitive areas, administratively recommended wilderness, or wilderness inventory of other Federal ownership;
- There are no non-federal inholdings within the area containing levels of development or uses that effect the ability to manage wilderness characteristics throughout the area;
- There are no existing legally established uses or valid existing rights that would affect the manageability of the area to protect wilderness characteristics

Step 3 -   Evaluate the Apparent Naturalness of the Area:

For each identified area, the ID team will evaluate how much the overall area appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of modern human activity substantially unnoticeable (apparent naturalness).   The standard for this criterion is how natural the area would appear to an average, reasonable person.

The IDT shall apply a ranking of NONE, LOW, MODERATE, HIGH, or OUTSTANDING, accompanied by a detailed narrative rationale for the ranking assigned.

Each ranking level also has a point range, and a point score within the range is to be assigned to accompany the ranking. This selected point within the range is based on the gradient where the area is judged to fall within that ranking – for example: If an area is ranked as LOW for apparent naturalness, but is very close to deserving a MODERATE, then it would be appropriate to assign it the highest point in the range for a ranking of LOW (i.e. 2). See Figure 1 for the matrix of rankings and points to assign for each criteria.

The ranking for Apparent Naturalness consists of 3 factors, with each evaluated and ranked separately, with the average of the sum of the parts being assigned as the overall ranking and ranking points assigned for each area (see Figure 1 for more detail). These 3 factors of Apparent Naturalness are:

a) The composition of plant and animal communities, determination if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural (for example, past management activities have created a plantation style forest with trees of a uniform species, age, and planted in rows);

b) The extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with a lack of human intervention; and

    c) The extent to which improvements included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness.

If the area receives a ranking of NONE, then the evaluation shall be discontinued for that area, and the area will be assigned an Overall Ranking of Wilderness Characteristics of NONE.

The General Guidelines for ranking of <u>OUTSTANDING</u> (8-10 points range) for Apparent Naturalness of an area that may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The composition of plant and animal communities appears natural throughout the area, and does not appear to be manipulated by humans;
- There is non-existent, or nearly non-existent, evidence of any type of modern human land management activity throughout the area
- Any improvements are not substantially noticeable, do not detract from the apparent naturalness of the area, are distributed widely, are difficult to locate, do not appear modern, and/or they contribute significantly to the historical character and cultural context of the area

The General Guidelines for ranking of <u>HIGH</u> (7-8 points range) for Apparent Naturalness of an area that may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The composition of plant and animal communities visibly appears to be natural for at least 90% of the area;
- There is only minor evidence of any type of modern human land management activity, and/or it is limited mostly to areas close to the outside boundaries;
- Improvements are not substantially noticeable, are very few in number and rarely encountered, are not concentrated in location, do not appear modern, and/or they contribute to the historical character and cultural context of the area and their appearance detracts very little from apparent naturalness

The General Guidelines for ranking of <u>MODERATE</u> (3-5 points range) for Apparent Naturalness of an area that may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The composition of plant and animal communities appears natural in the majority of the area
- Modern human land management activity is noticeable in some locations;
- Prevalence of improvements is generally low throughout the area, and may be concentrated in some locations, they contribute to a limited extent to the historical character and cultural context of the area, may appear to be fairly modern, and by their presence may impose limitations on the apparent naturalness of the area

The General Guidelines for ranking of <u>LOW</u> (1-2 points range) for Apparent Naturalness of an area that may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Vegetation appears natural in some locations, but not commonly in the area;
- There is noticeable evidence of modern human land management activity, and the area has a high level of modern human-caused disturbance;
- The prevalence of improvements is high throughout the area, are often concentrated and contribute very little to the historical character and cultural context of the area; they may appear somewhat modern, some improvements may be substantially noticeable and detract significantly from apparent naturalness in some locations

The General Guidelines for ranking of <u>NONE</u> for Apparent Naturalness of an area that may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The composition of plant and animal communities represents a visible departure from apparent naturalness in the majority of the area
- There is widespread and obvious evidence of modern human land management activity;
- Prevalence of improvements is very high and widespread across the area, there are very few locations where improvements are unseen, they appear to be modern, are not historic, nor do they contribute to the cultural context of the area; a significant number of improvements are substantially noticeable and detract considerably from apparent naturalness throughout the area

Average the point scores for the three factors for Apparent Naturalness to determine the Apparent Naturalness Overall Score (See Figure 1 for more detail).

Step 4 -   <u>Evaluate the Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation of the Area</u>:

"Solitude" is an experience of feeling alone, remote from civilization, and removed from society. Solitude experiences may include seeing few or no other people, having privacy, and freedom from societal constraints and obligations. "Primitive and unconfined recreation experiences" are non-motorized, non-mechanized, nature-based recreation opportunities of personal challenge, self-discovery and rejuvenation that are free from excessive management restrictions.

The area shall be evaluated to determine the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The word "or" means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities for either experience on every acre.

The IDT shall evaluate for both Solitude and Primitive/Unconfined Recreation. If both receive a ranking of NONE, then the evaluation shall be discontinued for that area and the area shall receive and Overall Ranking of Wilderness Characteristics of None.

The IDT shall apply a ranking of NONE, LOW, MODERATE, HIGH, or OUTSTANDING, accompanied by a detailed narrative rationale for the ranking assigned.

Each ranking level also has a point range, and a point score within the range is to be assigned to accompany the ranking. This selected point within the range is based on the gradient where the area is judged to fall within that ranking– for example: If an area is ranked as LOW for Opportunities for Solitude, but is very close to deserving a MODERATE, then it would be appropriate to assign it the highest point in the range for a ranking of LOW (i.e. 2).

- Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area. Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area;
- Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature. Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback

riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature

Rankings for Opportunities for Solitude:

General Guidelines for ranking OUTSTANDING (8-10 points) Opportunities for Solitude may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- It is easy to attain a feeling of being alone or remote from civilization throughout the area;
- Encounters with other visitors are very rare to non-existent;
- Encounters with groups of visitors together are rare to non-existent
- Sights and sounds of human activities are rare to non-existent

General Guidelines for ranking HIGH (6-7 points) Opportunities for Solitude may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- In a majority of the area it is possible to attain feeling of being alone or remote from civilization;
- Encounters with other visitors are uncommon but may occasionally occur;
- Encounters with groups of visitors together are uncommon but may occasionally occur;
- Sights and sounds of human activities are possible, but infrequently encountered

General Guidelines for ranking MODERATE (3-5 points) Opportunities for Solitude may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Feeling of being alone is possible, but may require some effort to attain;
- Encounters with other visitors are likely in popular locations, but are not unavoidable throughout the entire area;
- Occasional encounters with large groups visitors are to be expected in popular locations but are not unavoidable throughout the entire area;
- Sights and sounds of civilization and/or human activity are likely to be encountered

General Guidelines for ranking LOW (1-2 points) Opportunities for Solitude may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Little opportunity of feeling alone;
- Encounters with other visitors are common, and may encounter large-numbered groups;
- Large groups of other visitors are commonly encountered;
- Sights and sounds of civilization and/or human activities are difficult to avoid

General Guidelines for ranking NONE for Opportunities for Solitude may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Opportunity of feeling alone are almost non-existent for a majority of the area;
- Encounters with other visitors are common, frequent, and difficult to avoid;
- Human activities or presence are prevalent throughout the area

Rankings for Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:

General Guidelines for ranking OUTSTANDING (8-10) Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The setting provides opportunity for a very broad range of recreation types at all skill levels;
- There are no limitations to visitor use by regulations or restrictions to entry
- Few to none limitations to visitor use are required protect wilderness characteristics

General Guidelines for ranking <u>HIGH</u> (6-7) Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The setting provides opportunity for a range of recreation types and skill levels;
- There are very few limitations to visitor use by regulations or restrictions to entry
- Some additional limitations to visitor use are required to protect wilderness characteristics

General Guidelines for ranking <u>MODERATE</u> (3-5) Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The setting provides opportunity for a moderate range of activities and skill levels;
- There is a moderate level of limitations to visitor use by regulations and restrictions to entry
- Some additional limitations to visitor use are required to protect wilderness characteristics

General Guidelines for ranking <u>LOW</u> (1-2) Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Setting provides few opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation;
- There are significant limitations to visitor use by regulations and restrictions to entry;
- Significant additional limitations to visitor use are required to protect wilderness characteristics, such as a permit system and areas closed to camping

General Guidelines for ranking of <u>NONE</u> for Opportunities for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation are very poor or nonexistent
- There are strict limitations to visitor use by regulations and restrictions to entry
- Any limits to visitor use are likely to be inadequate to protect wilderness characteristics

Step 5 -   <u>Other Features of Value</u> – *Considered only where they exist:*

Evaluate the degree to which the inventoried area may possess ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence shall be identified and evaluated with detailed documentation of why the IDT considers them of value.

- Rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems. Rare can be determined locally, regionally, nationally, or within the system of protected designations;
- Outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features;

- Historic and cultural resource sites. (Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056));
- Research natural areas;
- High quality water resources or important watershed features

The IDT shall evaluate the degree to which each inventoried area possess Other Features of Value. The presence of Other Features of Value shall be assigned points for its ranking that will be included in the tally of the total score as a "bonus" to raise the Overall Wilderness Characteristics summary score.

Areas that do not possess other features of value will not be evaluated and ranked for this criterion, and the absence of this characteristic will not have any negative effect to the ratings of evaluated areas.

The IDT shall apply a ranking of LOW (1 point bonus), MODERATE (2 point bonus), HIGH (3 point bonus), or OUTSTANDING (4 point bonus), accompanied by a detailed narrative rationale for the ranking assigned.

Step 6 -   <u>**Assign Each Evaluated Area an Overall Wilderness Characteristics Summary Score**</u>

Assign the Area an Overall Summary Rating of NONE, LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH or OUTSTANDING Score for Presence of Wilderness Characteristics.

To calculate the Overall Summary Score, tally the rankings' point scores of Apparent Naturalness criteria from Step 3, Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation criteria from Step 4, and Step 5, other features of value, where they exist.

For more information on determining the Overall Wilderness Characteristics Summary Score, see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 -Area Ranking Matrix for Ranking of Wilderness Characteristics			
Wilderness Characteristic	**Process Description**	**Ranking**	**Range of Ranking Points**
Size (if less than 5,000 acres)	**Step 1** - Determination if Areas Less than 5,000 acres are Practicable as Wilderness	SUFFICIENT SIZE NOT SUFFICIENT SIZE	Continue Evaluation Cease Evaluation
Manageability to Protect Wilderness Characteristics	**Step 2** - Evaluate if an inventoried area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE NOT MANAGEABLE	Continue evaluation Cease Evaluation
Apparent Naturalness	**Step 3** - Evaluate degree the area appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with modern human activity substantially unnoticeable. The standard is how natural the area would		
a) Composition of Plant and Animal Communities (determine if appear substantially unnatural)		NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	0 1-2 3-5 6-7 8-10

b) appears to reflect ecological conditions normally associated without human intervention	appear to an average reasonable person.	NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	0 1-2 3-5 6-7 8-10
c) extent to which improvements represent a departure from apparent naturalness		NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	0 1-2 3-5 6-7 8-10
Apparent Naturalness Overall Score	**Determined by the average of the sum of [a + b + c]**	NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	Cease Evaluation 1-2 3-5 6-7 8-10
Opportunities for Solitude -OR-	**Step 4** - The area has outstanding opportunities for solitude <u>or</u> primitive and unconfined recreation. The "or" means that an area has to possess one or the other, but does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for either experience on every acre. Use the highest ranked and point scored of the two – if they are equally ranked, only count the ranking once, but document in the evaluation that both are available in equal measure.	NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	Cease Evaluation if both are NONE 1-2 3-5 6-7 8-10
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation		NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	Cease Evaluation if both are NONE 1-2 3-5 6-7 8-10
Other Features of Value	**Step 5** - Evaluate degree to which the area possesses ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These must be identified and evaluated only where they occur.	NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	N/A 1 2 3 4
Overall Area Ranking of Wilderness Characteristics	**Step 6** -Overall area score is determined by adding the assigned scores for steps 3 and 4, with the score from Step 5 (Where it exists) added to the overall score as bonus points	**Ranking**	**Total Points Tallied**
		NONE LOW MODERATE HIGH OUTSTANDING	N/A 2-4 5-10 11-14 15 +

Step 7 - <u>**Required Documentation of the Evaluation:**</u>

The IDT will first complete a preliminary DRAFT Evaluation Report for public and stakeholder review and feedback.

- See Figure 2 for the outline format for the Individual Area Evaluation Documentation as part of the overall Evaluation Report, including Figure 3, the Wilderness Characteristics Ranking Score Worksheet for the area evaluated
- Each individual polygon that has been assigned an identification number and common name will be evaluated, however smaller areas in close proximity or adjacent to the same larger contiguous areas may be evaluated together
- The draft Evaluation Report will be released for a public review and feedback period of at least 30 days duration
- Stakeholder feedback will be considered and incorporated where appropriate into the updated Evaluation Report
- The FINAL Evaluation Report will be released for use in Step 3 - Analysis

The ID Team will document the evaluation results within the Evaluation Report along with the maps documenting the Inventory process, any maps updated as part of the Evaluation process, and any additional relevant documentation, as an appendix to the plan revision EIS. The intent of the Forest Supervisor and the planning team is to ensure that the process for inventory and evaluation is transparent and accessible to the public for input and feedback. This documentation will also be available at public participation opportunities during the plan revision or development process.

Lands shown on the preliminary series of inventory and evaluation process maps and described in the Evaluation Report and other process documentation, do not imply designation or convey or require a particular kind of management, and inclusion or removal of any of these lands will continue to be open for consideration throughout the process until the Forest Supervisor signs the Record of Decision for the Forest Plan EIS. Copies of the DRAFT and FINAL Inventory Maps will be made available in both electronic and hardcopy form

Figure 2: DRAFT Outline of Individual Area Evaluation Report:

Introduction to the Evaluated Area:
- Common Name and Identification Number
- Representative photos or other illustration (Other Features of Value, etc.)
- General description of the geographic location, and significant landmarks.
- General description, size, vegetation cover, character of the geography and terrain.
- Map of the evaluated area

Documentation of the Evaluation Process:
- Criterion 1 - Areas Less than 5,000 acres Practicability as Wilderness:
  - Detailed narrative explanation of reasoning for determination
  - If a determination of NOT SUFFICIENT SIZE, the evaluation is stopped, and a brief narrative explains why and that the area will be excluded from further consideration
- Criterion 2 -Manageability to Protect Wilderness Characteristics:
  - Detailed narrative explanation of reasoning for determination
  - If a determination of NOT MANAGEABLE, the evaluation is stopped, and a brief narrative explains why and that the area will be excluded from further consideration
- Criterion 3 -Apparent Naturalness:
  - Assigned score: None, Low (1-2 points), Medium (3-6 points), High (7-8 points), or Outstanding (8-10 points)
  - Detailed narrative explaining the rationale for the criteria rating
  - If the area receives a score of none, the evaluation is stopped, with a brief narrative to explain that the area will be excluded from further consideration
- Criterion 4 -Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:
  - Assigned score of None, Low (1-2 points), Medium (3-5 points), High (6-7 points), or Outstanding (8-10 points)
  - Detailed narrative explaining the rationale for the criteria ratings
  - Rank for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined recreation using the highest ranking and scoring of the two
  - If both criteria receive a score of none, the evaluation is stopped, with a brief narrative to explain that the area will be excluded from further consideration
- Criterion 5 - Other Features of Value, *considered only where they exist* - ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.
  - Assigned ranking of Low, Moderate High
  - Detailed narrative explaining rationale for the criteria rating
- Assigned Summary Ranking of the Area's Wilderness Characteristics:
  - Assigned overall, summary score of Low, Medium, High, or Outstanding
  - Summary narrative of the overall rating

Figure 3 -Wilderness Characteristics Ranking Score Worksheet		
Step/Criteria	**Ranking**	**Score Assigned**
Step 1 – Size if less than 5,000 acres	N/A – Greater than 5,000 acres	N/A
Step 2 - Manageability	MANAGEABLE	N/A
Step 3 – Apparent Naturalness (averaged score of 3 factors)		
Step 4 – Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation		
Step 5 Other Features of Value		
Overall Ranking of Wilderness Characteristics		

Next Steps in the Process

Step Three: Analysis

After the Evaluation step is completed, the evaluations will be used to inform the Forest Supervisor's selection of which areas, or modified areas, are to be analyzed in each of the forest plan revision Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) alternatives. Public comments will also be an important consideration for the analysis, modification, and inclusion of the areas in the preferred alternative prior to release of the DRAFT plan revision EIS. Any evaluated area that is not analyzed in any of the alternatives will have a justification documented and included in the EIS.

Step Four: Recommendation

The Forest Supervisor may recommend in the signed Record of Decision for any of the lands analyzed through the process to be designated by Congress for inclusion in National Wilderness Preservation System. This is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness through legislation. Also, the revised plan must include components that provide for managing recommended wilderness areas to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that are the basis for each area's suitability for wilderness recommendation. Only if an area is included in the Forest Plan EIS Record of Decision as Recommended Wilderness to Congress for consideration as designated wilderness will it from that time be managed so as to protect these wilderness characteristics. This management direction will continue until Congress acts on the recommendation one way or another, or when the next planning cycle reevaluates any recommended areas.

For more information on the Plan Revision Process, including the Inventory and Evaluation of Wilderness Characteristics Process, please visit the Gila Forest Plan Revision webpage.

Definition of Wilderness, from the Wilderness Act of 1964

"...lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition..." Section 2(a)

DEFINITION OF WILDERNESS

"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value." Section 2(c)

"...shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historic use." Section 4(b)

References:

USDA FS (U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service). 2012. National Forest System Land Management Planning; Final Rule. 36 CFR Part 219. USDA.

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