

# The Wilderness Process

How it works, who's involved, and why it matters



During the plan revision process, the Forest Service must identify lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend any areas for wilderness designation. Only Congress can designate areas as wilderness, but plan revision plays an important role in which lands are considered. The GMUG will initiate the Wilderness process in January 2018, and we hope you'll lend your voice to this essential process.

While the Wilderness process is an important and required step in the plan revision, it also tends to elicit confusion and misunderstandings. Our goal is to avoid those miscommunications and make this process as seamless and transparent as possible, and we hope you'll be involved every step of the way. The diagram below illustrates the four primary steps of this process.

It's important to remember that each step includes opportunities for you to provide feedback.

1. Inventory- The inventory is a very inclusive stage. Areas that are included in the inventory:
  - Are at least 5,000 acres OR are adjacent to existing wilderness,
  - Do not have roads that are open to motor vehicles, and
  - Do not have other "substantially noticeable" human impacts on the land.

The GMUG has a lot of areas that qualify at this step! But being included in the wilderness inventory does **not** mean that an area will be managed in any special way—it is just the first filter, and means that the area's qualities will be evaluated. When the map and criteria go live in January for public comment, please look at the initial inventory map with an open mind and an eye on the entire process.\*

2. Evaluation- Next, the planning team must evaluate the character of each inventoried area with feedback from the public. Some areas will undoubtedly have really low wilderness character, and others will be more "wild." Look out for this draft report later this winter.

If you know an area particularly well and can speak to your experiences there, tell us. You may even consider sending in photos.

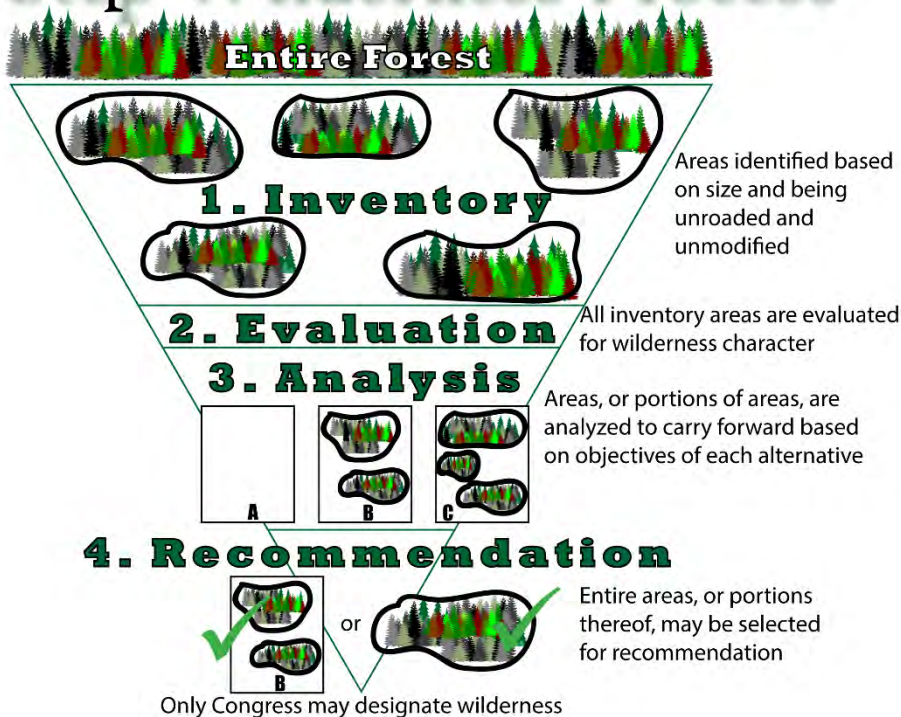
3. Analysis- After the evaluation, the GMUG will consider preliminary wilderness recommendations (if any) for the different Revised Forest Plan alternatives, and will analyze any recommendations in a draft plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) for public review and comment. Your feedback will be incorporated before the plan and EIS are finalized.

4. Recommendation- Based on information gathered throughout the previous steps, the forest supervisor will decide which areas, if any, to recommend in the Final Revised Forest Plan for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). If areas are recommended for wilderness in the Final Revised Forest Plan, they will be managed to protect existing wilderness characteristics. Remember: any recommended areas in the Revised Forest Plan will provide preliminary administrative recommendations; only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness.

The best decisions will be made with input from all people who care about the GMUG, people like you! So please stay tuned and provide feedback as we move through the wilderness process.

\*If you'd like to learn more, please check out the Wilderness Inventory Criteria.

## 4-Step Wilderness Process



The Wilderness process provides a step-by-step method to review the entire forest and hone in on any areas with wilderness characteristics. Regardless of the direct result, information gathered from the public, specialists, and other entities through this process can also be really helpful to the rest of plan revision, highlighting place-based values that can inform other parts of the plan, such as management areas.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact us or visit our website for more helpful resources and information.

[fs.usda.gov/goto/gmug/forestplan](https://fs.usda.gov/goto/gmug/forestplan)

gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us