



# Inventory and Analysis for Potential Wilderness Characteristics

Gila National Forest – Forest Plan Revision

Catron County Commissioners Meeting

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## **2012 planning Rule:**

- Each national forest undertaking Forest Plan Revision must complete a process of identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System
- Forest Supervisor must determine whether to recommend any evaluated areas to Congress for wilderness designation
- ONLY Congress may designate wilderness through legislation
- Transparent – opportunities for stakeholder involvement at each step of the process

## ■ Four Steps:

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

**Step 1: Inventory** to identify Lands that may have wilderness characteristics

- Broad and inclusive
- Generally greater than 5,000 acres or contiguous with existing area
- Without roads level 2 and higher
- Without substantially noticeable improvements

# 4 Step Process

## Step 1) Inventory

### Example Inventory Map



## **Inventory “substantially noticeable”**

- NO definition provided in the Planning Handbook
- Forest, with public input developed definition
- June 2017 public meetings – substantially noticeable exercise
- Identified common themes from range of participants
- Considered in development of definition

## Step 2: Evaluation of inventoried areas to determine their level of wilderness characteristics

1. Manageable at size (< 5,000 acres)
2. Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics
3. Apparent Naturalness
4. Opportunities for Solitude  
OR Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

## 4 Step Process

Example **Evaluation** Map

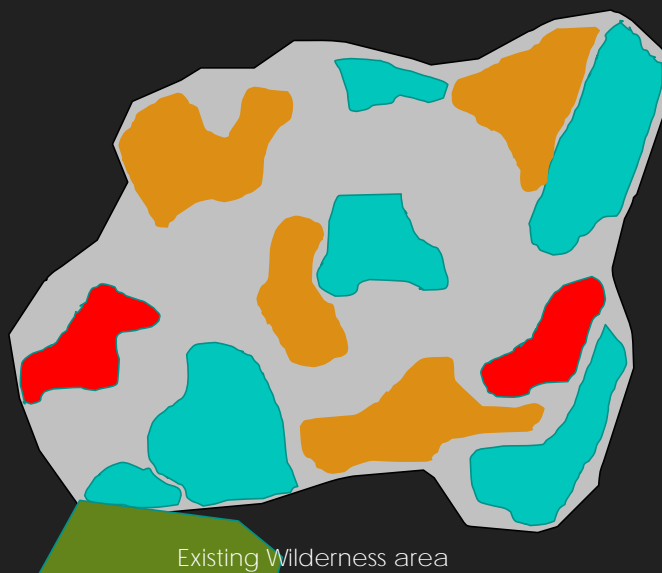
### Step 2) Evaluation

Some areas may be found from the Evaluation to be:

**Unmanageable** or possess

**Low Wilderness Characteristics**

And will not be carried to the next steps



Existing Wilderness area

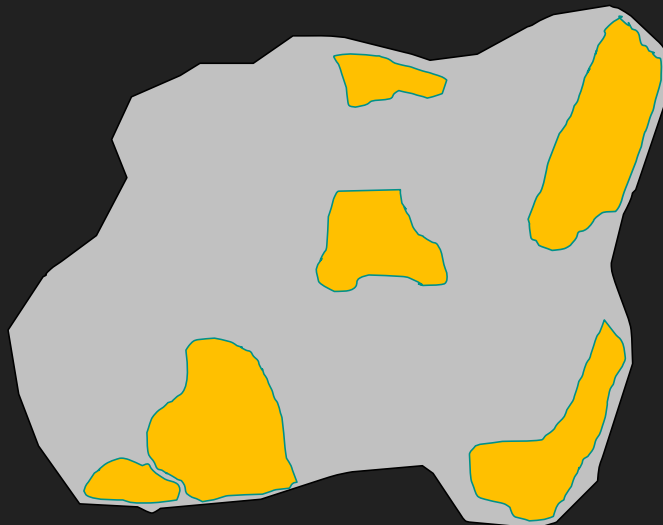
### Step 3: Analysis of evaluated areas in alternatives as part of the Plan Revision (NEPA) process

- Range of Alternatives – from no wilderness to a number of areas
- Consideration of all factors that have relevance if an area were to be recommended, not just wilderness characteristics
  - Defensible Space/wildland urban interface
  - Impacts to local existing or future forest products uses (permitted grazing, fuelwood, etc.)
  - Impacts to current or future non-conforming recreation uses
  - Comparison to quality/quantity of existing areas

## 4 Step Process

### Step 3) Analysis

Example areas to be Analyzed



**Step 4: Recommendation** of any lands the Forest Supervisor (Responsible Official) determines should be designated as wilderness

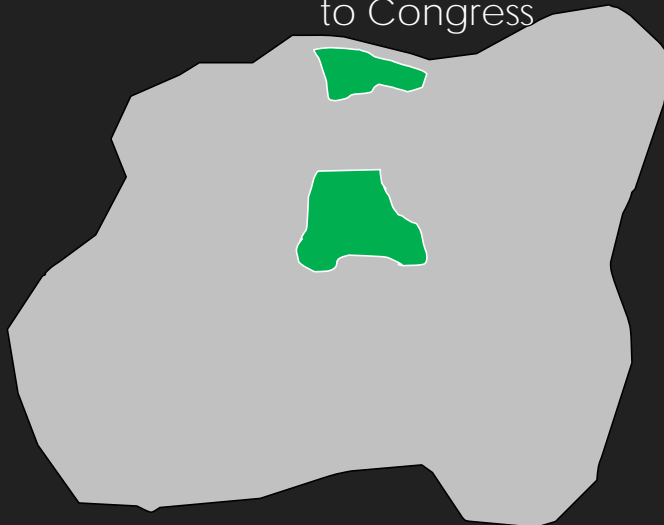
- Final only with ROD signature
- Only Congress may designate wilderness

## 4 Step Process

### Step 4) Recommendation

Example areas **Recommended** to Congress

These two polygons are only presented here as an example – we won't know how many, if any, areas the Forest Supervisor would recommend to Congress until we go through the process



## **The first two steps only evaluate if an area COULD be Wilderness**

1. Inventory – excludes areas that are easily determined to not be suitable
2. Evaluation – determines if the areas left in the inventory have wilderness characteristics, and to what extent

## **The final two steps inform the Forest Supervisor if an area SHOULD be recommended for Wilderness designation**

3. Analysis – includes any and all factors that have relevance if an area were to be recommended, not just wilderness characteristics
  - Defensible Space/wildland urban interface
  - Impacts to local existing or future forest products uses (permitted grazing, fuelwood, etc.)
  - Impacts to current or future non-conforming recreation uses
  - Comparison to quality/quantity of existing areas
4. Recommendation – is determined by the forest supervisor in the Record of Decision – only congress has the authority to designate

# Questions?