

Black Range Ranger District – Gila NF

DRAFT Evaluation Map Identifying Levels of Wilderness Characteristics

This is only Step 2 of a required 4-step process identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and determine whether to recommend any of the evaluated lands to Congress for wilderness designation. **Congress reserves the authority to designate wilderness through legislation.**

The evaluation step examines the level of wilderness characteristics possessed by the lands identified in the Inventory (step 1 of the process). These DRAFT Evaluation maps are available for public review and feedback. Keep in mind that this is only an early step in a larger process and inclusion of an area in the evaluation step does not mean the area will be proposed or managed as a wilderness. 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 and consideration of all factors that have relevance if an area were to be recommended, not just wilderness characteristics.

[Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 Chapter 70](#) provides criteria for the evaluation of wilderness characteristics.

Generally, these are:

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
4. Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation
5. Other Features of Value

The [Evaluation Process of Lands Inventories for Potential Wilderness Characteristics Final Process Paper](#) outlines in detail the process employed to accomplish the Evaluation. This process paper was developed with input and feedback from stakeholders during community and technical meetings and draft review periods.

NOTICE:

Lands shown on this preliminary series of Evaluation maps 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 to consideration throughout the process until the Forest Supervisor signs the Record of Decision for the Forest Plan EIS. Copies of the DRAFT and FINAL Evaluation Maps will be made available in both electronic and hardcopy form (upon request: please email gilaplan@fs.fed.us or call 575-388-8280).

HOW TO COMMENT:

The Gila National Forest welcomes comments on the wilderness characteristic rankings and rationales given to each area as described in the [Draft Evaluation Report](#). Please submit your feedback preferably in digital form to gilaplan@fs.fed.us, or mail to Gila National Forest, Attn.: Plan Revision, 3005 E. Camino del Bosque, Silver City, NM 88061. You can also comment using our Interactive [Web Map](#). If you have comments on a specific area, please include the Identification Number and Name (e.g. Q6-Brushy Springs) in your comment. For information on how to most effectively provide your feedback on the Draft Evaluation Maps, see the [Guide to Making Comments](#).

For more information on the Plan Revision Process, including the Inventory and Evaluation for Wilderness Characteristics Process, please visit the [Gila Forest Plan Revision webpage](#).

