

# **FACT SHEET AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS for the Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation Planning Process for the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests**

## **Background**

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The Sierra, Sequoia and Inyo are three of eight “early adopter” forests revising their land management plans using the new National Forest System Planning Rule which was completed in 2012.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires us to identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

There are two separate Forest Service processes occurring at the same time:

- To gather public feedback related to the evaluation of areas located on National Forest System lands on the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) (due by 9/22/2014, 8:00am PST).
- To gather official public scoping comments for each of the three California national forests that are revising their forest plans (due 9/29/2014).

Both processes will help shape the final decisions by the each of the responsible officials for the revised forest plans concerning whether or not to recommend additional areas as wilderness on the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests.

There are four primary steps in the wilderness evaluation process: inventory, evaluation, analysis and decision. Currently, we are working on the evaluation phase. Additional detailed information about this process can be found at

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3803609.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3803609.pdf).

The inventory and evaluation of areas located on National Forest System lands on the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests that may be suitable for inclusion in the NWPS will be documented in an appendix in the draft and final environmental impact statement (EIS) for forest plan revisions. The draft EIS is expected to be released for public comment in the spring of 2015.

The EIS decision document of the revised forest plans will describe any recommendations for wilderness.

If areas are recommended for wilderness, the responsible official will include forest plan direction to protect ecological and social characteristics so that the wilderness character of the recommended area(s) is not reduced before congressional action on the recommendation can take place.

In June 2014, the Forest Service discussed the preliminary wilderness inventory at public workshops and requested public and tribal feedback on the inventory of areas that what may be suitable for inclusion in the NWPS. The following maps and more details can be found on the wilderness inventory webpage at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r5/FPRWilderness>.

## **Overview map of the three-forest area**

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[Inyo National Forest - North](#)

[Inyo National Forest - South](#)

[Sequoia National Forest](#)

[Sierra National Forest](#)

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

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### **Where are we in the process?**

We have completed the inventory and are currently in the evaluation phase of the wilderness evaluation process.

### **What happened to the wilderness feedback I provided?**

If you provided wilderness inventory and evaluation feedback in June 2014, the feedback relative to the inventory was used to inform the final wilderness inventory and feedback relative to evaluation is currently being used to inform the evaluation. We are accepting feedback on the evaluation through the website called Talking Points.

### **What is wilderness “Talking Points” and how do I use it?**

We have posted a map of areas that will be evaluated in detail on a collaborative mapping website. The website is called “Talking Points”. We invite participation in this evaluation process and encourage people to provide any information that they think will be helpful to us as we work to evaluate the wilderness character of each area. Input on the wilderness evaluation is most effective and appreciated if received before 8:00 am Pacific Time, Monday, September 22, 2014. More information providing feedback on the wilderness evaluation, Talking Points, and a link to Talking Points can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r5/FPRWilderness>.

### **Is my wilderness feedback considered part of NEPA scoping?**

No. The feedback we received in June and that we are receiving now through Talking Points is not considered formal comments for participating in the scoping process for the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests. Feedback sent through Talking Points is an important opportunity to provide information for consideration during the wilderness evaluation.

### **Why are formal comments important?**

Forest plan revision is subject to a pre-decisional administrative review process, commonly referred to as the “objection process.” Under the forest plan revision process, individuals and entities may file objections after the draft EIS document is completed and before a final decision document is signed. Those who may file an objection are individuals and entities who have submitted substantive formal comments related to plan revision during official comment periods. During the plan revision process, there are two official opportunities to provide comments: 1) during the scoping period, and during the draft EIS comment period. To provide formal comments pertaining to any wilderness concerns, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/r5earlyadopters>.

### **How was public feedback on motorized trails and mountain bike trails used?**

All public input, comments, and feedback were reviewed, considered and sorted by which stage of the process it applied to. Comments that applied to the inventory steps were shared with the relevant forest(s) to review during the time the preliminary inventory was being updated. The inventory phase is a systematic and objective process, which is outlined in the proposed Forest Service Handbook for completing wilderness evaluations (FSH 1909.12 – Chapter 70). Following this process, areas that contain motorized and mountain bike trails are to be included during the inventory phase.

The effects that motorized and mountain bike trails have on wilderness character comes into play during the evaluation phase. We are currently in the evaluation phase, during which public comments on motorized trails and mountain bike trails will be considered.

### **Why are their inconsistencies between the pdfs and talking points map?**

These are two different maps. The new PDFs are final wilderness inventory maps. They show all areas considered as part of the wilderness inventory. Some areas were considered and moved forward into the evaluation, while other areas were considered but did not move forward into the evaluation. This was based on criteria from FSH 1909.12.

The Talking Points map only shows areas that moved forward into the evaluation, i.e. these are the areas that will be evaluated for wilderness character. In addition, the Talking Points map identifies evaluation areas where there are motorized trails, which are shown in gray. This is the first step of the evaluation process. These areas with authorized motorized trails were examined and determined to lack wilderness character due to the prevalence of motorized activity and impacts to the surrounding area. Additionally, there is a high level of commitment to maintaining these authorized motorized trails. As a result, the focus for the detailed evaluation will be on the portions of the wilderness evaluation areas that do not contain motorized trails.

### **Why is the feedback period for the evaluation two weeks?**

We have been working to thoroughly review and validate the data on the maps and prepare it for Talking Points. This was completed on Friday, September 5, 2014. At this point, we sent a note to stakeholders letting them know the Talking Points website was running and ready to accept their input on the wilderness evaluation areas.

Our draft wilderness evaluation must be completed in time for the three Forest Supervisors to decide what they want to move forward from the wilderness evaluation into one or more of the forest plan revision EIS alternatives. They need to be able to make this decision in early October 2014 to stay on track with their forest plan revision timeline.

We are interested in hearing from the public while the evaluation is being developed and share the most current information as soon as we have it to post on the internet. The public also has the opportunity to submit scoping comments relative to the wilderness evaluation process. The public will be able to review and comment on the draft wilderness evaluation and any recommendations in the DEIS during the public comment period following the release of the DEIS.