

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS): A method for classifying types of recreation experiences available, or for specifying recreation experience objectives desired in certain areas. Classes include:

Primitive (P): An area characterized by having essentially unmodified natural environment of 5,000 or more acres. Interaction between users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. The area is managed to be essentially free from evidence of human-induced restrictions and controls. Motorized use within the area is not permitted. There is a high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of outdoor skills in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM): Area characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment of 2,500 or more acres. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present but are subtle. Motorized use is not permitted. There is a moderately high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of woodsman and outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk.

Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM): Area characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment of 2,500 or more acres, with a moderately high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance through the application of woodsman and outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk. Motorized use is permitted.

Roaded Natural (RN): Area characterized by a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment with a low probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of man. Interaction between users may be low to moderate, but with evidence of other users prevalent. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation may be provided.

There are no Primitive ROS class areas inventoried on the forest and there is little or none of it known to exist anywhere in the East. Thus the Semi-Primitive classes (SPNM and SPM) are the most primitive to be found on the GW and comprise roughly a third of the GWNF land area. While this is significant percentage of the forest, on a landscape scale these areas are scarce and comprise a very small percentage of the total land base (less than 2% of Virginia). The national forest is the primary provider of these types of settings and opportunities which are dependent upon land that is at least ½ mile from a better than primitive road to provide remoteness.

Acres of ROS Class			
ROS Class	1993 Inventory (Acres)	1993 Adopted (Acres)	2009 Inventory (Acres)
SPNM	167,000	150,000	198,266
SPM	203,000	208,000	211,000
RN	691,000	703,000	655,200