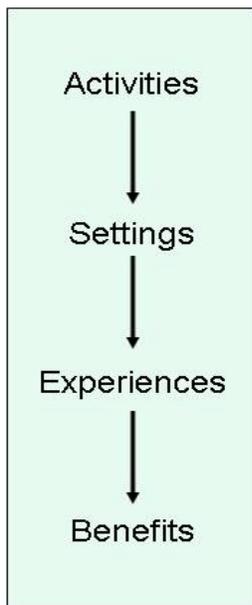


## Planning for Recreation

Over time the importance of recreation programs available on the Forest has grown, along with the number of visitors and the variety of recreational opportunities they wish to participate in. One tool to help with understanding what visitors want and expect, and conversely, what management can actually provide or change through planning is the demand hierarchy.



### *The Demand Hierarchy*

USDA Forest Service-General Technical Report PNW-GTR-705, March 2007, page 54 gives the following description.

"The demand hierarchy is so named because it represents demands for recreation at four levels, based on their complexity, visibility, and understandability.

Demands for recreation occur at several levels, from specific activities (such as camping), through settings (e.g. roaded natural), through experiences (learning about nature) to benefits -improved conditions- such as family cohesiveness. Managers play a critical role in this hierarchy because the setting is essential for satisfactory experiences."

### *Recreation Settings and Forest Planning*

Recreation settings are a part of the demand hierarchy that managers address in forest planning. The Forest provides opportunities for individual activities in different settings, and the experience is an outcome of both the activity and setting. For instance, hiking in remote backcountry from Spirit Lake is very

different from hiking along an interpretive trail near the Flaming Gorge Dam. Forest visitors, then, choose both activities and settings, with expectations of certain type of experiences. Visitors may also recognize other potential benefits, such as spiritual renewal or improved family cohesiveness. Therefore, if land managers provide the settings, visitors may choose to recreate where the settings and activities can provide their desired experiences and benefits.

With information about visitors, activities, recreation trends, existing settings, and other natural and cultural resources and resource management, the Forest's potential to provide (plan) opportunities for positive experiences and benefits for individuals, families, and communities can be better understood.

### *Components of the ANF Recreation Assessment*

By heading and order the following components are found in this assessment. **Existing management direction** summarizes current national, regional, and local direction for managing recreation resources on the Forest. **The recreation niche** provides an overview of the Forest's recreation visitors, defining features, and four niche areas. **Recreation programs and facilities** shows the Forest's infrastructure, services, and other forest resources managed for visitors. **Visitors, activities, and trends** displays data about who visits the forest, what outdoor activities are most common on the Forest and other public lands used by local residents, population projections, and outdoor recreation trends locally and nationally. The **recreation settings** section introduces the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, and provides a map and data of existing ROS settings across the Forest. The **demand and recreation resources** section shows predicted future demands for settings and activities on the Forest, and describes potential risks to the current settings and programs under current management direction and demand predictions. **Recreation by geographic area** describes place-based features, predominant activities, niche, and settings in each of five geographic areas described for revising the Forest Plan.

## Existing Management Direction

Recreation is a key resource program on the Ashley National Forest and is one of the four national emphasis items in the agency's Natural Resource Agenda. Recreation resources on the Forest have local, regional, and national significance. Congressionally designated areas, Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (FGNRA), the High Uintas Wilderness Area, and several designated byways and trails are national treasures within which much of the recreation activity on the Forest is concentrated.

### *National Direction*

Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2300 provides direction for managing developed recreation sites, dispersed recreation opportunities, privately provided recreation on F.S. lands (outfitters, resorts, etc.), recreation special designations, and scenery management. This direction defines the types of recreation that may be provided on National Forest lands, and guides management of recreation opportunities. FSM 1909.12\_10 gives general direction on addressing recreation in forest plans. These handbooks have been updated as needed.

*The Built Environment Image Guide, FS-701 December 2001*, supplements FSM 2300 and others for design of recreation and administrative facilities.

In 2001 unmanaged recreation was identified as one of four threats to National Forest lands. As a result, unmanaged recreation and ecological damage due to recreation use are issues that should be addressed to some degree in Forest Planning. (Four Threats, USDAFS, 2003).

In 2005, the Forest Service published *36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295, Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule*. This travel rule governs motor vehicle use, including off-highway vehicles (OHV), on national forests and grasslands. The rule requires each national forest to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. Travel planning to implement the rule is being conducted on the Ashley National Forest. The resulting travel plan will be a part of the existing Forest Direction, once it is completed.

In 2007 Chief Kimble challenged F.S. personnel to address three additional areas of national concern. One focus area is reconnecting people, especially kids, with nature. This focus area is the most important to recreation. The concern results from continuing urbanization of people and American culture, and research showing a decline in per capita recreation use and interaction with natural environments.

### *Regional Direction*

The current Region 4 Business Plan focuses recreation management to "manage and provide quality, sustainable recreation settings and opportunities consistent with regional and forest niches". The plan objectives focus on providing a variety of recreation travel opportunities, developed recreation opportunities, and dispersed recreation opportunities. Each objective has measurable subparts to be applied by the Forests through management of the recreation programs described above.

### *1986 Forest Plan and other Forest Direction*

The 1986 Forest Plan Desired Future Condition (DFC) provides for a special emphasis on recreation because of "unique characteristics, public demand, and management direction". It focuses on meeting demand for recreation opportunities through maintaining upgrading, and adding developed recreation sites and trails while maintaining the mix of opportunities present in 1986. The DFC also emphasizes management of the High Uintas Wilderness and other special designations or areas.

Forestwide direction is also provided for recreation developments. This direction generally repeats direction found in FSM 2300 and associated handbooks.

Management Area Direction includes general prescriptions about what types of recreational opportunities or activities fit within the area emphasis, and in some cases described tools to help achieve the direction. Goals, objectives, and standards-guidelines direct managing dispersed uses, trails, and developed sites. Variations for each of these tie to the management area emphasis. Much of the management area direction repeats national and regional direction.

Twenty amendments have been made to the plan since 1986. Only those affecting recreation direction in the plan are mentioned here.

- Amendment 8: High Uintas Wilderness use restrictions were set, July 1991. The direction was superseded by Amendment 12.
- Amendment 9: The Flaming Gorge direction was amended in September 1991, and allowed for the Dutch John land exchange.
- Amendment 12: The High Uintas Wilderness Plan, September 1997, provides for managing the entire Wilderness, including Ashley and Wasatch-Cache National Forest Lands. The plan has three management areas. Limits of Acceptable Change methods are used to monitor effects to wilderness characteristics, and adjust recreation uses as needed.

The Forest Niche was approved in 2005, and is summarized below with an overview of the Forest's four distinct recreation areas and special places, and three main visitor groups. The niche did not amend or otherwise change the Forest Plan. It does include priority program objectives. The objectives are not included here; however, the niche and niche map layer are available in the project file.

## Recreation Niche

The Ashley National Forest recreation niche was developed by forest and district personnel with the help of partners from other agencies. It was formally approved in 2005. The niche provides a broad overview of the Forest's recreation resources, programs priorities by area, and unique opportunities. The niche description focuses on who visits the Forest, what draws the majority of visitors to the Forest, what makes the Ashley National Forest a recreation destination. Big Fish and Ancient Rocks were identified as the two defining features that attract visitors to the forest. Below is a summary of the four characteristic settings or special places and three primary visitor groups identified in the recreation niche.

### Primary visitors to the Forest

|          |   |                   |
|----------|---|-------------------|
| Local    | Live one hour from the Forest. Visits may be spontaneous.   | (75% of visitors) |
| Regional | Live about 3 hours away from the Forest. Visits require very little planning.   |                   |
| National | Plan visits in advance, stay multiple days, often are served by outfitters and guides, and are attracted to the area by the NRA, Green River, High Uintas, and nearby National Parks & Monuments. (25%) |                   |

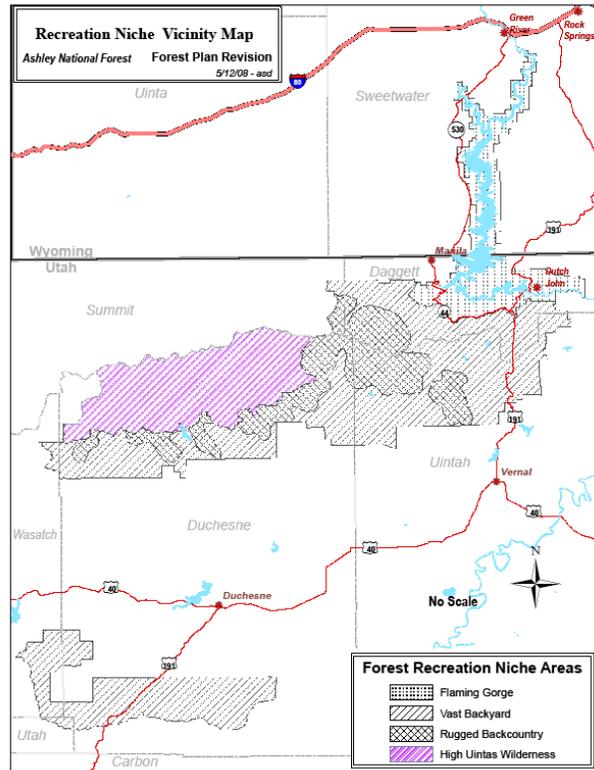
### Settings, Special Places, and Values

The Ashley National Forest is characterized by rounded mountain ranges, incised plateaus, isolated lakes, and the water-filled gorge, all of which provide healthy habitat for a diverse array of wildlife and fish species. Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, the Green River, and the High Uintas Wilderness are national attractions. Scenic Byways and Backways interpret local geology, paleontology and wildlife, and connect local communities with the Forest. The Forest has four distinct areas; each provides a different range of visitor opportunities.

**Flaming Gorge:** Congress established this National Recreation Area to provide for public outdoor recreation, and to conserve scenic, scientific, and historic resources. The primary features include 91-mile-long Flaming Gorge Reservoir and the Green River. Red canyon walls provide a scenic backdrop for water-based recreation. Development is concentrated in a few areas, leaving the rest in a predominantly natural state. (16 percent of the Forest)

**Vast Backyard:** This roaded area is easily accessed, yet offers both motorized and non-motorized remote experiences. The feeling of expansiveness is enhanced by the proximity of Wilderness and rugged mountain settings. (48 percent of the Forest)

**Rugged Backcountry:** Remote areas of intact natural vegetation and healthy ecosystems epitomized this setting. These areas, because of difficult access, often provide greater solitude than Wilderness. (17 percent of the Forest)



**High Uintas Wilderness:** Opportunities include hiking to destination lakes, peak-bagging, multi-day backpack trips, horse packing, fishing, and outfitter-guide support. (20 percent of the Ashley plus Wasatch-Cache-Uinta N.F. Lands)

### Recreation Programs and Facilities

The Forest Service organizes its recreation management into programs. Each program covers multiple activities and settings. Some overlap with other programs for recreation or other resources. Managing by programs and within recreation niche areas helps ensure that a range of recreation opportunities are provided. It also gives managers a way to track where recreation budgets are spent and what has been accomplished in each program area.

#### Developed Recreation

Developed recreation takes place at facilities constructed for specific activities or groups of activities. Developed sites offer visitors a sense of security and structure as well as facilities, such as toilets, parking, tables, and cooking areas. The developed sites, with the exception of boat camps, are all accessed by roads. Minimally to highly developed facilities are available, depending on the setting and use.

Developed recreation is measured in terms of the PAOT (people at one time) days of developed facility capacity available during the recreation seasons for the facility. Developed recreation programs are managed by ranger districts. The largest and most complex program is on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District, mostly within the FGNRA.

| Facility Type  | Sites | PAOTs |
|--|-------|-------|
| Campgrounds  | 58    | 8127  |
| Rental Yurts & Cabins  | 6     |       |
| Boat Ramps   | 17    | 3068  |
| Day use (trailheads, overlooks, amphitheaters, fishing access sites, beaches, picnic areas, interpretive sites, other) | 64    | 3842  |
| USFS Visitor Information Service Sites   | 4     |       |

Additional opportunities associated with developed recreation, such as resorts and marinas, are managed through the recreation special use program.

#### Recreation Special Uses

| FY 2006 Recreation Special Uses | Number of Permits |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Campground Concessions          | 2                 |
| Marinas                         | 3                 |
| Resorts                         | 6                 |
| Outfitter-Guides                | 64                |
| Recreation Events               | 85                |
| Recreation Residences           | 59                |

The Forest facilitates some of its recreation program through the Recreation Special Use program. The program helps the Forest to provide recreation opportunities that would be otherwise unavailable on National Forest Lands. The campground concessions, resorts, and marinas contribute to the developed recreation program, while outfitter-guide permits mostly contribute to the dispersed recreation program.

**Travel Routes**

Roads and trails provide opportunities for dispersed recreational travel activities, such as scenic driving, ATVing, horseback riding, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and hiking. They also provide access to developed sites and areas for other dispersed activities. Trails are managed as a recreation program. Roads are commonly used to access other types of resource uses and management, and are usually managed as an engineering program. Travel management on both types of routes is generally coordinated among resource specialties. **NOTE: Complete when validated by travel planning**

| Type of Route   | Miles |
|---|-------|
| Roads under County, State, other Federal jurisdiction | xx    |
| Forest System Roads                                   | xx    |
| Motorized Trails                                      | xx    |
| Non-Motorized Trails (non-wilderness)                 | xx    |
| Wilderness Trails                                     | 330   |
| Total   |       |

**Dispersed Recreation**

Dispersed recreation on the Forest includes travel or access via roads and trails, and water-based access along the Flaming Gorge, other reservoirs, and the Green River. Camping, fishing, and travel on trails or roads are among the most popular dispersed recreation activities. Outfitted opportunities include boating, rafting, fishing, hunting, and wilderness trips with stock or on foot.

Dispersed recreation areas are mapped as 1,098,108 acres of general forest areas and 110 concentrated use areas covering 904 acres\*. General Forest is the Forest, outside the developed sites, wilderness, and concentrated use areas. Concentrated use areas are areas where few facilities are provided, and people gather and/or camp with high frequency and/or in larger groups. These use categories include lands mapped in all ROS categories. (*Forest Infra data- 2006*)

\*The dispersed recreation program includes heavy and concentrated use on Flaming Gorge Reservoir and within the Green River corridor. These areas can only be reached by watercraft. Since it is currently unclear how to account for water-based concentrated use areas, and direction is pending, they are not included in the acres shown above.

**Interpretive Services**

Visitor information is provided at ranger district offices in Green River, Wyoming, and in Manila, Dutch John, Vernal, Duchesne, and Roosevelt, Utah. Seasonal visitor services are offered at Red Canyon, Flaming Gorge [dam], and Rock Creek Visitor Centers. Additional interpretive facilities include signs at roadside pullouts, trailheads, historic sites, and other features.

**Special Designations and Features**

**Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area** - The area is one of the five geographic areas on the Forest, and is described in the section below.

**High Uintas Wilderness** - The area is one of the five geographic areas on the Forest, and is described in the section below.

**Sheep Canyon Geologic Area** is described in the ecology section.

**Other Special Interest Areas and Research Natural Areas** are described in the ecology section.

**Dinosaur Diamond Scenic Byway** includes the segment of U.S. Highway 191 between Duchesne and Helper, Utah. The segment is the same as the Indian Canyon Scenic Byway, and crosses the South Unit

of the Forest. As the Dinosaur Diamond Scenic Byway, it is managed to promote tourism along its route through Colorado and Utah.

**Indian Canyon Scenic Byway** includes the segment of U.S. Highway 191 between Duchesne and Helper, Utah where it crosses the Forest. The segment is the same as the Dinosaur Diamond Scenic Byway, and follows Indian Creek through the Forest to the 9100 foot summit on the Forest's southern boundary.

**Flaming Gorge - Uintas National Scenic Byway** is also known as The Drive through the Ages. The byway includes U.S. Highway 191 from Vernal to Dutch John, Utah, and Utah Highway 44 from U.S. Highway 191 to Manila. This drive along the eastern edge of the Uinta Mountains and the southern rim of Flaming Gorge Reservoir affords outstanding views of the river gorge and the High Uintas. Interpretive pullouts provide roadside geology, ecology, and history lessons.

**Sheep Creek – Spirit Lake Scenic Backway** - The backway includes a 13 mile loop of Forest Road 218 around the Sheep Creek Geologic Area from Utah Highway 44, and a 17 mile spur from FR 218 along Forest Road 221 to Spirit Lake. The road provides access to and a drive through the unique geological features of Sheep Creek and the visually dramatic Uinta Fault. The Backway is also managed as a recreation access road to dispersed areas, Spirit Lake, and the High Uintas Wilderness, and as access for other resource management activities.

**Red Cloud-Dry Fork Loop Scenic Backway** extends 45 miles in a loop with U.S. Highway 191 north of Vernal Utah to the Forest Boundary in Dry Fork northwest of Vernal. The road provides access to and a route through the eastern Uinta Mountains for full size vehicles and mountain bikes. Interpretive sites, overlooks, dispersed use areas, lakes, ATV trails, and hiking trails are additional opportunities off of the Backway.

**Reservation Ridge Scenic Backway** connects U.S. Highways 191 and 6 along Reservation Ridge and Right Fork White River on the Ashley and UintaWasatch-Cache National Forests. Forest Road 147, along the ridge, offers un-crowded driving with views in all directions. Road 181 follows the river through the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

**Little Hole National Recreation Trail**, Forest Trail 006, follows the Green River through the Forest from the Flaming Gorge Dam through Red Canyon to Little Hole Day Use Area. The seven mile trail is open to hiking and mountain biking, and provides access to the Green River for fly-fishing

**Fish Creek National Recreation Trail** follows a ridgeline above Fish Creek between Moon Lake and Center Park Trailhead in the southern Uinta Mountains. The six mile trail is managed for horse and foot travel under a minimal maintenance schedule.

**Jedediah Smith Trappers Route 1824, Utah** – Managed by the USDI Park Service, the Forest part of this route follows the Green River and the Flaming Gorge Reservoir (Public Lands.org).

**Swett Ranch Historic Site** – The historic ranch is managed as an interpretive site on the Flaming Gorge NRA. The ranch was home to the large Swett family, who ran the ranch in the early and mid-1900s.

**Ute Tower Historic Site** is a fire lookout tower constructed between 1933 and 1935. Though no longer serving as a lookout tower, the structure remains, and give people the opportunity to see what living and working in the tower was like for early lookouts.

**Carter Military Road** led to developments and growth of communities in the Uinta Basin and Mountains. Completed in 1881, the road was built without surveys by Fort Bridger's Judge Carter as a supply route between military forts. The road is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Whiterocks Cave** – the cave contains impressive formations of water deposited calcium. Guided tours are offered in September to a few visitors. Access is difficult. The area is otherwise closed to public access due to safety and vandalism concerns.

## Recreation Visitors, Activities, and Trends

### National Visitor Use Monitoring

The Forest conducted its first National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) from October 2000 through September 2001. The results were compiled as National Visitor Use Monitoring Results, August 2002, USDA Forest Service, Region 4, Ashley National Forest. Some of the report information is presented below.

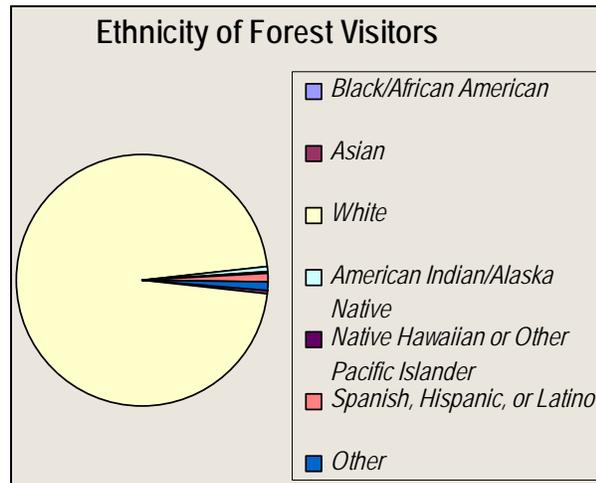
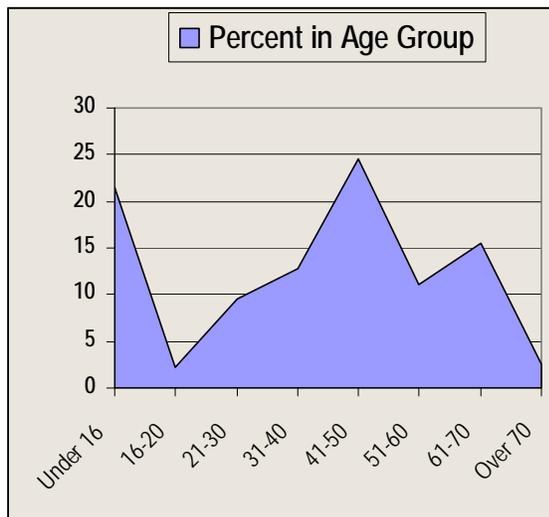
A **National Forest visit** is defined by NVUM as the entry of one person upon a national forest to participate in recreation activities for an unspecified period of time. A national forest visit can be composed of multiple site visits. A site visit is defined as the entry of one person onto a national forest site or area to participate in recreation activities for an unspecified period of time.

The report summarizes the 2001 visits as follows.

Recreation use on the forest for fiscal year 2001 at the 80 percent confidence level was 1.42 million national forest visits +/- 13 percent. There were 1.58 million site visits, an average of 1.1 site visits per national forest visit. Included in the site visit estimate are 11,778 Wilderness visits.

### Forest Visitors

A profile of Ashley N.F. forest visitors was developed based upon those visitors interviewed during NVUM. According to the surveys, 74.4 percent of visitors to the forest are male and 25.6 percent are female. The information below further describes the visitors to the Forest.

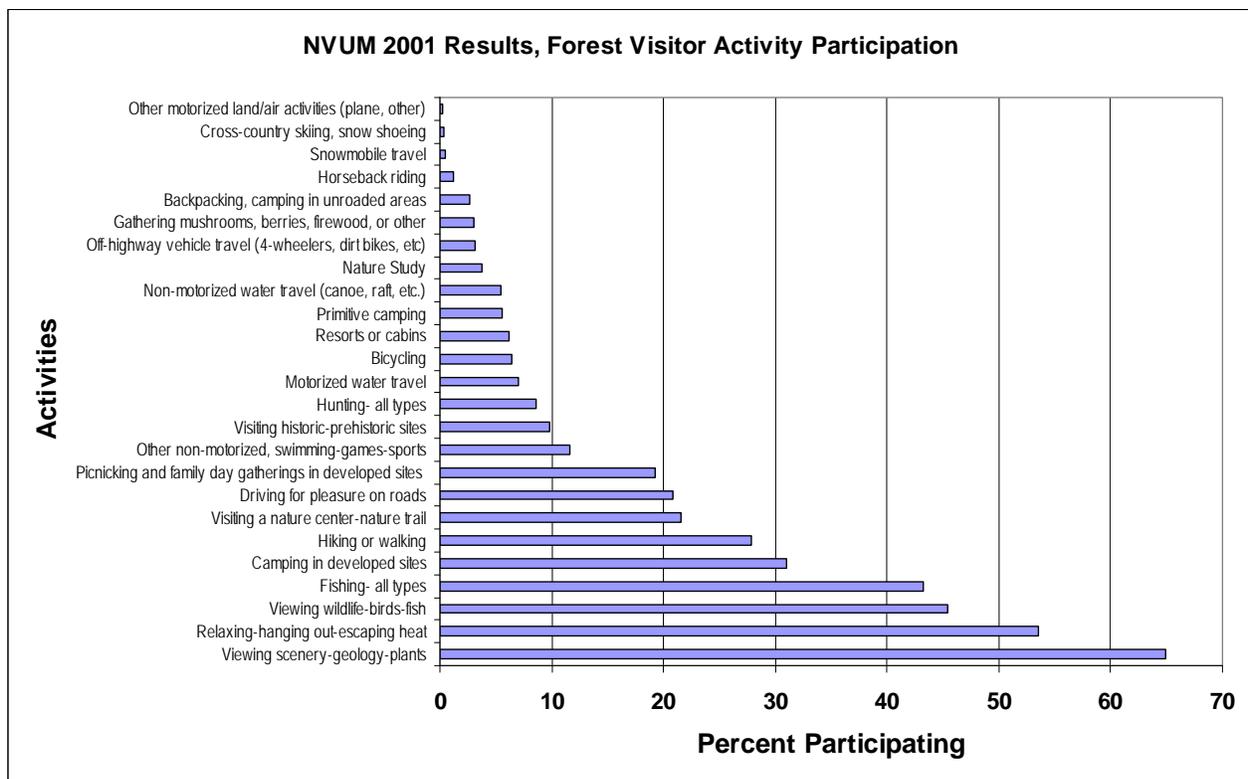


**Visitor travel distance to the forest** was also recorded during NVUM interviews. Seventy-five percent of visitors interviewed came from counties in Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado that are within 214 miles of the Forest. (The data did not lend itself to an exact percentage split between counties with ANF lands and those slightly more distant). Twenty-five percent of the visitors traveled from 220 to 2800 miles to get to the Forest. The interviewed visitors in total reported living in 44 different states, and a few visitors came from other countries. This data is consistent with the summary of the ANF recreation niche visitor groups (see niche discussion above).

**Recreation Activities of Ashley National Forest Visitors**

The most common recreation activities reported in NVUM surveys include viewing scenery, wildlife, and natural or historic features. Over one-third of visitors stayed overnight on the Forest, whether at developed campgrounds, in cabins and resorts, or at dispersed sites along the road and in the back country. The overnight stays, one-day gatherings with family and friends, and general relaxing, emphasize the popularity of developed areas and travel routes on the Forest. Many of these activities also take place in dispersed areas, most commonly along roads. Fishing is also among the most popular activities on the Forest.

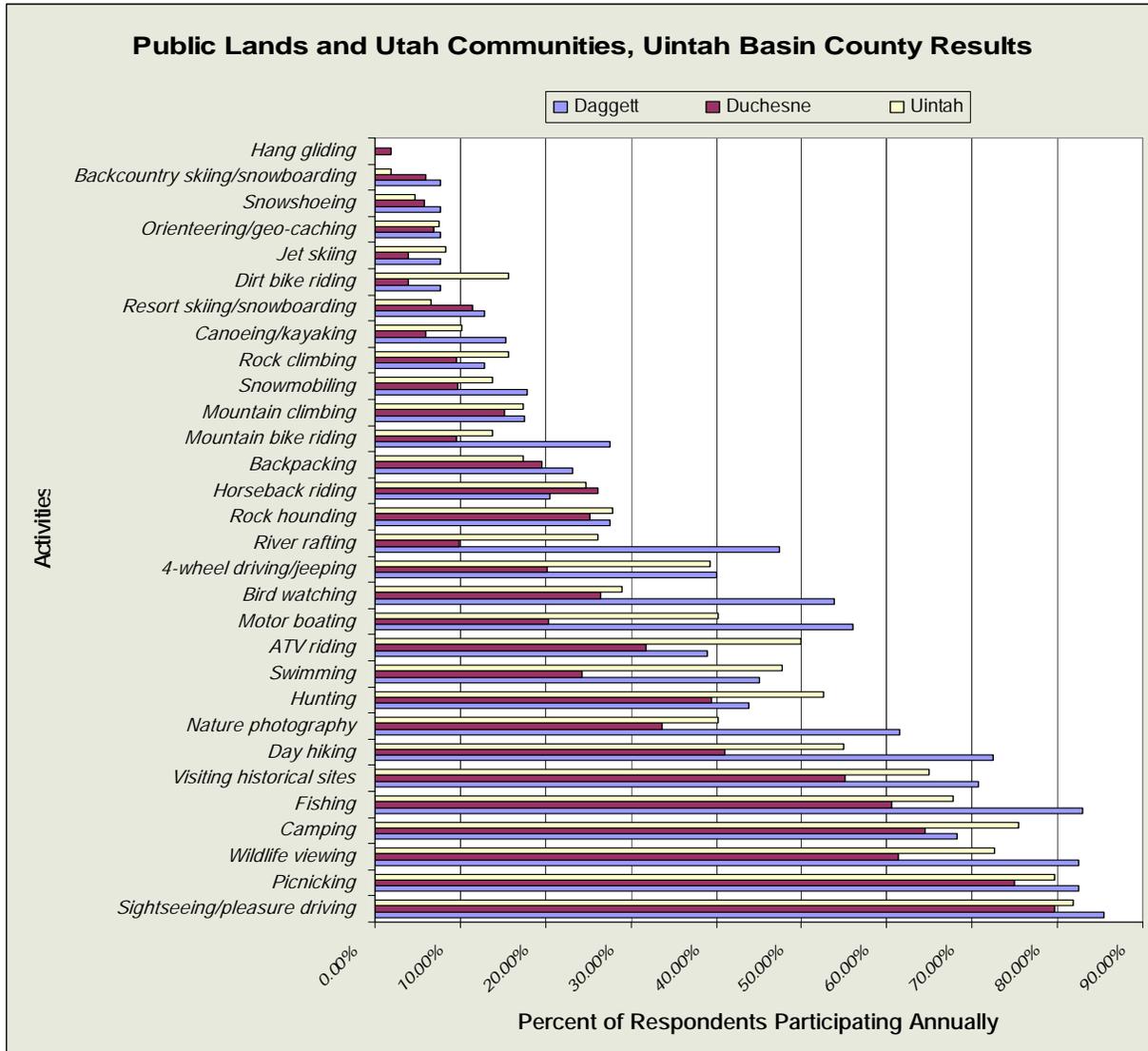
Those visitors who were interviewed on the Forest during NVUM were asked to identify, from a pre-determined list, the activities they participated in while visiting the Forest. The results from the survey show activities from the list, and are charted below. Note that most respondents said they participated in multiple activities, so the results total greater than 100 percent.



**NOTE:** The age of the data, changes in recreation choices since 2001, and observations by Forest personnel indicate more trail uses than were reported in the NVUM results. Recent Utah recreation data shows participation in OHV and motorcycle use on all public lands at a much higher rate than NVUM data indicates. Wilderness visits are also likely underestimated (26.3% error rate in data) because many visitors to the High Uintas Wilderness access the area from the Wasatch Cache National Forest. In fact, the Wasatch-Cache 2004 NVUM Report shows more than 162,000 wilderness visits, including visits to two other wilderness areas and a similar data error rate. It is likely that many of these visitors actually spent time on the Ashley National Forest but were not counted because only exit interviews on the Ashley National Forest were used for the Ashley report.

**Recreation Activities on Public Lands in Utah**

Utah State University completed a survey, Public Lands and Utah Communities, in 2007 (PLUC). The survey responses include participation in specific recreational activities on public lands within the last year. The results shown below are the grouped responses the three Uintah Basin counties with the majority of Ashley National Forest lands in Utah. The results show similar most common activities to those reported from NVUM surveys. The survey addressed all general types of land use on all public lands. Though the data is not identical to that of NVUM, the survey responses are useful for addressing participation in outdoor recreation and preferred activities of nearby residents.



**Activity Preference Findings from NVUM and PLUC**

Even though these two surveys were conducted with a different purpose, audience, and even survey questions, they do validate each other on several points. (Data similar to the Utah data was not available for Wyoming)

- People participate in a broad range of activities on the Ashley National Forest and on other public lands in Utah.

- Nearby residents are dependent upon the Ashley National Forest for at least some of their leisure time individual and group activities.
- The majority of the respondents said that pleasure driving, and viewing scenery, wildlife, and other natural and historic features were a part of their activities.
- Camping, fishing, and gathering with family or friends for picnics or to escape their normal routine were also among the top reported activities.

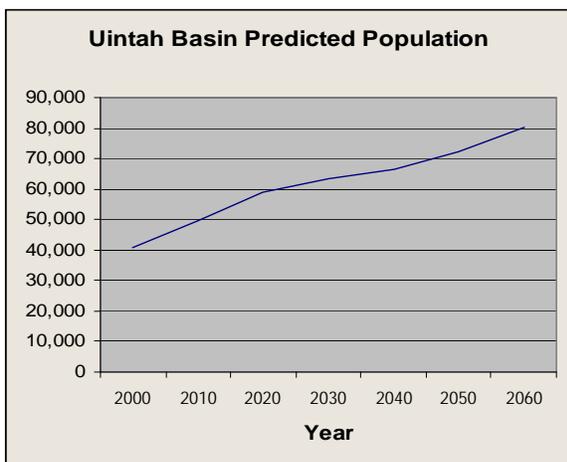
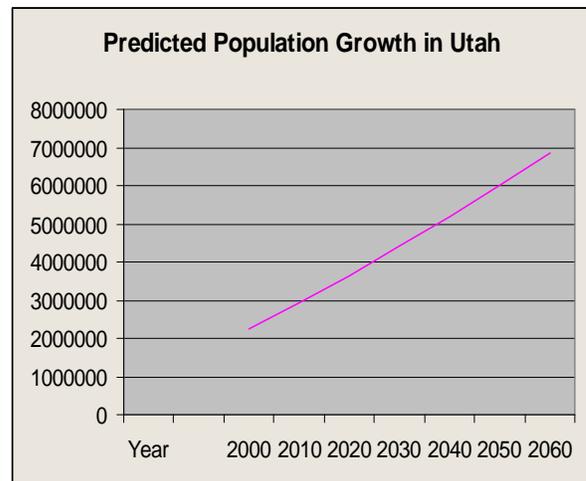
The variables of the two surveys are compared in the table below. It shows the frameworks that account for differences in survey outcomes.

| >Survey Variable                | Purpose   | Spatial Limit          | Sample Population               | Timeframe                             | Survey Method                 |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| National Visitor Use Monitoring | Monitor recreation use & visitor satisfaction on the Ashley N.F. & N.F. System Lands nationally | Ashley National Forest | Ashley National Forest Visitors | October 1999 through Sept. 2000       | Exit Interviews for the visit |
| Utah Public Lands Survey        | Collect information on all public land uses and public perception of public land uses in Utah   | Public Lands in Utah   | Utah resident sample by county  | 2007, Activities within the last year | Questionnaires by mail        |

**Population and Trends in Recreation**

Known and predictable trends at local, regional, and national scales are likely to affect forest visitation and visitor choices in nature-based recreation activities in the future. These trends are summarized below.

1. About 75 percent of Utah's more than 2.5 million people live within four counties along the Wasatch Front. The current population growth in Utah is expected to continue, and to double by 2035. This information is important because NVUM reports indicate that 75 percent of visitors to the Ashley National Forest come within 214 miles of the Forest, and this distance zone includes most of the land in the Wasatch Front counties.



Source: Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2008 Baseline Projections. Uintah Basin predictions are of people residing in Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties, Utah, where substantial growth is predicted. The data does not reflect transient populations related to the current local boom in oil and gas employment. No or much smaller population increases are predicted for Uinta and Sweetwater Counties, Wyoming, and for the State of Wyoming for the same timeframe.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total U.S. population will increase by slightly less than 1 percent each year. The trend toward an "older" population on the average is expected to continue.

2. Research presented in *Evidence for a fundamental and pervasive shift away from nature-based recreation*, Oliver Pergams & Patricia Zaradic, University of Illinois, 2008 indicates a steady decline in per capita outdoor recreation participation in the U.S. and other countries. Visits to U.S. National Parks peaked in 1987, and as of 2006 had dropped by 23 percent. Other data, such as issuance of hunting and fishing licenses and state data (including Utah) show participation declines of 18 to 25 percent in a similar timeframe. Japan has had similar decreases in outdoor recreation in about the same timeframe. BLM and National Forest visitation data contains time gaps, and earlier information is difficult to compare with more recently developed NVUM data for Forests. Though the researchers used the available data for these lands, the results were inconclusive. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume the trend of per capita National Forest recreation visits would be similar to trends cited above, and would continue at a similar rate over the next several years (1 to 1.5% per year).

3. Trends in recreation visits nationally include shorter trips of one to five days, and an increasing percentage of one-day visits. Most visitors indicate at least some time spent in nature appreciation (viewing scenery, wildlife, or other features, nature study, and similar activities) and walking. In fact, bird watching was the most rapidly growing activity nation-wide between 1981 and 2001 (*Recreation and the Environment as Cultural Dimensions in Contemporary American Society*, Cordell, Betz, and Green). Rapid increases in motorized activities on roads and trails over the last 10 years are locally evident in Utah surveys (*Public Lands and Utah Communities*, preliminary Uintah Basin reports, Utah State University, Nov. 2007), and in observation of activities in Wyoming and Utah parts of the Forest by Forest personnel.

4. The number of people camping has continued to increase since the 1960's. Since then, the percentage of people who camp with self-contained recreational vehicles has increased, while tent and open-air camping has decreased. The trailers and motorized vehicles in use, including boats, have ever increasing amenities, and the average size of RVs being purchased appears to be increasing. This suggests a general trend away from more primitive recreation activities. (*National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 2000 Report*, USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station)

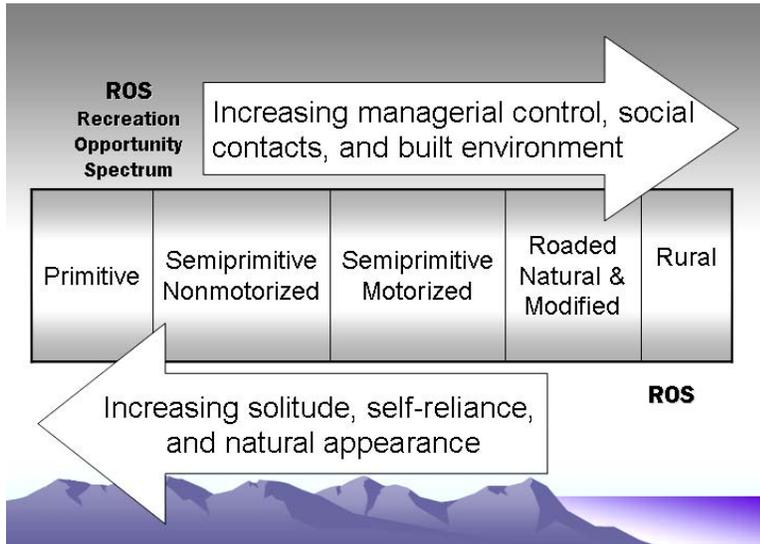
5. Results of *Public Lands and Utah Communities Survey*, preliminary Uintah Basin reports November 2007, Utah State University, show in responses to resource use questions that residents of local counties value recreation opportunities on public lands. The majority of these people would like to see the present mix of opportunities retained. Many survey participants would like to see trail opportunities for motorized vehicle travel increase; others would like to see more areas and trails available for mountain biking and other nonmotorized activities.

6. *Outdoor Recreation Participation Study for 2005* from *The Outdoor Industries Foundation (OIF)* shows short term (1999 through 2005) trends in participation similar to the Forest, the state of Utah, and the Nation.

## Existing Recreation Settings

### ROS – The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a method used by the Forest Service and other agencies to inventory and display a range of settings. ROS inventories are maps of current conditions. The ROS inventory provides baseline information, and informs the planning process for the future settings.



**Left – Graphic generalization of the five ROS classes found on the Forest.**

These classes represent the typical range of settings provided on National Forest lands. (Urban ROS class is not included) Site-specific inconsistencies are present on the landscape, but most Ashley National Forest lands fit the classification system.

**Three setting components of ROS**

are mapped during the inventory. The area's biological and physical setting includes natural features and cultural (man-made) features such as infrastructure or other developments. The social setting is generally

assessed based on the average number of encounters a visitor could expect, or the density of people generally using the area. The managerial setting is based on managerial controls such as signing, presence of agency personnel, and other immediate management influences.

### Recreation Infrastructure and Activities generally consistent with ROS Classes.

| Primitive   | Semi-Primitive Non-motorized | Semi-Primitive Motorized                        | Roded Natural & Modified | Rural                            |
|---|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|   |                              |   |                          | Ski and other Recreation Resorts |
|   |                              |   | Camping in campgrounds   |                                  |
|   |                              | Motorized watercraft activities                 |                          |                                  |
|   |                              | Scenic driving on asphalt or gravel roads       |                          |                                  |
|   |                              | Four-wheeling (full-size) on low standard roads |                          |                                  |
|   |                              | ATV & motorcycle riding on trails               |                          |                                  |
|   |                              | Mountain Biking                                 |                          |                                  |
| Stock use, hiking, backpacking, spelunking, non-mechanized water travel |                              |   |                          |                                  |
| Dispersed Camping   |                              |   |                          |                                  |
| Hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing                                      |                              |   |                          |                                  |
| Mineral Collection  |                              |   |                          |                                  |

**Not consistent with the setting**

**Consistent with the setting**

**ROS Classes**

The Ashley National Forest offers opportunities in the five ROS classes common on National Forest Lands. These classes are described below, and the current distribution (inventory) is shown on the vicinity map. The Ashley N.F. ROS map is based on seasons when over-snow travel is not allowed; mostly summer and fall. Winter opportunities are not represented; however, winter travel is represented on Ashley visitor maps.

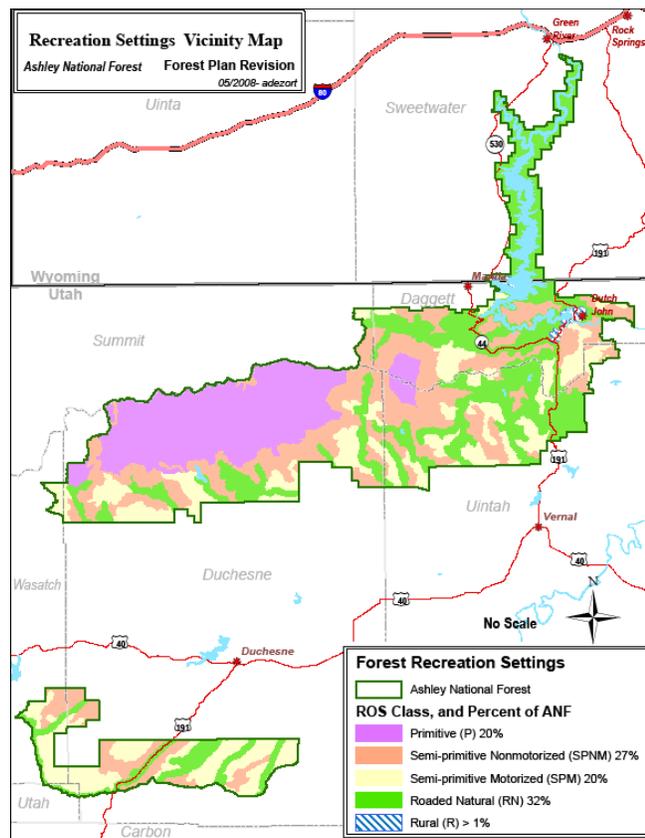
**Primitive- (P)** Areas mapped as primitive have minimal modification to the natural environment. They are greater than 5000 acres in size, either alone or in combination with SPNM areas. Motorized activities and access are rarely allowed, and mechanized activities are limited to certain areas and uses outside HUW. Interactions with other people are very limited. Facilities are limited to bridges and other structures necessary to protect the natural environment from erosion or other damage that may result from recreation use. In the High Uintas Wilderness there are some inconsistencies within this class based on higher concentrations of visitors. These are recorded as concentrated use areas on another map.

**Semi-primitive Non-motorized- (SPNM)** The area is characterized by a natural-appearing environment, usually greater than 2500 acres in size (alone or in combination with primitive and SPM) and 1/2 mile from motorized routes. Interaction between visitors is low, and there may be minor evidence of human activities. These areas also include motorized routes that are used on rare occasion for administrative access to water developments, fences, or for other infrequent management needs.

**Semi-primitive Motorized- (SPM)** These areas are characterized by a predominantly natural appearing environment, and are usually greater the 2500 acres in size, alone or in combination with semi-primitive nonmotorized. The concentration of users is low, but there is some evidence of other visitors. The area is managed with minimal on-site controls.

**Roaded Natural- (RN)** Areas have moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of man. Such evidence usually harmonized with the natural environment, though areas of timber harvest and other resources are included in this class. Interaction between users may frequent, an evidence of other users is common. Conventional motorized travel is allowed, and is planned in design and construction of facilities.

**Rural- (R)** Areas are characterized by a natural environment that has been modified by structure and vegetative manipulation, or pastoral agricultural development. Resource use practices may be used to enhance specific recreation activities or maintain vegetation and soils. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and interaction between people is moderate to high. There are many facilities and/or facilities designed for use by a large number of people. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available. Ski areas and marinas are examples of Rural ROS settings on National Forests.

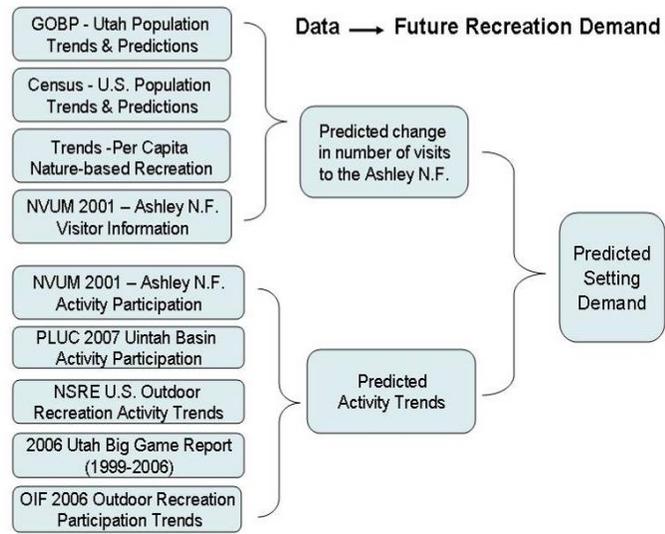


## Demand and Recreation Resources

The preceding sections show data used to predict future visitation, activities visitors will participate in, and what settings will likely be in demand. This section describes predictions and assumptions developed from the data, and implications of the assumptions to recreation settings and programs; and therefore, to visitor opportunities.

### Recreation Demand Projections

*The relationship between the data and the predictions below is graphically represented on the right.*



### Recreation visits to the Forest –

Over the next 15 years the population along the Wasatch Front & within the Uintah Basin is estimated to increase 40 to 50 percent. Though recent population data was not found for nearby Colorado and Wyoming areas, there may be growth at similar or slightly slower rates. These are the areas where 75% of the ANF visitors reside. The U.S. population trend shows slightly slower growth, and contributes most of the other 25% of visitors. On the other hand, per capita nature-based recreation participation may decline as much as 15% if current trends continue. (The visitation estimate is a qualitative due to the varied data and unpredictable variables affecting people's recreation choices.)

- Based on the predicted population increases and tempered by the decline in per capita outdoor recreation participation, an estimate of 15 – 30 percent growth in visitation is predicted over the next 15 years on the Ashley National Forest.

### Activities –

- Activities likely to show increases in overall rate of participation (as a percentage of visitation) are motorized trail activities, bicycle trail travel, and visits to developed areas for motorized and nonmotorized day use activities (water based, trail based, interpretive, and viewing).
- Activities likely to show little or no change in the rate of participation are developed and dispersed camping, snowmobiling, and fishing. Visitor use of private providers, including resorts and outfitter-guide services, also falls in this category.
- Activities likely to show decreasing participation rates are non-motorized travel (other than bicycling) and hunting.

**Settings** – Predictions for setting demand are based on the combination of expected increases in visitation and the expected change in choices for activities and settings as described in previous sections.

- Based on expected increases in visitation, and activities trends, increased demand is expected for all ROS classes.
- Based on activity and other preference trends, ROS classes likely to see the greatest increases in recreation visitation are the three classes offering motorized opportunities and a mix of opportunities for day use activities; rural, roaded natural, and semi-primitive motorized.

### ***Demand, Resource, and Recreation Opportunities***

**Recreation Niche** - As described, the Recreation Niche can likely be maintained under existing management direction. There is some risk that increases in visitation will displace local recreationists from their preferred areas of use. This, in turn, could affect the areas defined in the niche. ROS setting creep, as described below, would only affect the niche if the setting creep occurred over large areas.

**Recreation Settings** - Given recreation trends, providing adequate settings (ROS classes - the current inventory or alternatives) will become increasingly difficult over time, particularly where Forest Plan direction does not limit changes to ROS. These challenges are tied to demand predictions and described as risks to the existing settings. The settings, in turn, affect visitor experiences and satisfaction.

Setting creep is possible, particularly in areas of existing heavy dispersed use. This unplanned change in ROS class results from incremental increases in use, activities, and supporting developments in an area - to a point at which the area meets the definition of a more developed ROS class. For example, heavy use in a Semi-primitive Motorized dispersed area along a road accessible by high clearance vehicles could lead to gravel surfacing of the road, hardening of dispersed sites, addition of toilets, and other amenities. The area would then meet the definition of Roaded Natural Setting. Setting creep often results in displacing traditional recreation users to another area.

Increased visitation is expected in all ROS classes. The increased visitation and changes that favor the increase are among the most likely triggers of setting creep. Existing ROS classes likely to see the greatest increases in recreation visitation are the three classes offering motorized opportunities and a mix of day use: rural, roaded natural, and semi-primitive motorized.

Semi-primitive motorized settings are the most vulnerable to creep. Contributing to this vulnerability are increases in the percentage of visitors participating in motorized trail activities, predicted increases in visitation, and the low user density that defines these areas as semi-primitive settings.

**Recreation Programs** - There are administrative challenges to sustaining recreation programs. Continuing budget declines for National Forests over the last several years have led managers to more closely examine expenditures by program area. As a result, some programs have much less funding than in the past. For instance, less money is available for maintaining trails across the Forest than in the past. This translates into fewer trails receiving maintenance each year on the Forest. Reduced budgets have also led to changes in the way some programs are managed. Many campgrounds and day use areas, once maintained by F.S. employees, are now administered through concessionaire permits. Other tasks traditionally completed by local Forest personnel are now done through volunteer programs, employees from other locations, or contractors. While these solutions have helped the Forest to continue its recreation programs, the options remaining for adapting recreation infrastructure and services to smaller budgets are becoming quite limited. Facilities maintenance, visitor services, and addressing enforcement issues becomes increasingly difficult in light of declining budgets and increasing demand.

**Other Resource Values** - Environmental factors and other resource concerns or commitments may also affect opportunities provided in recreation program areas. For instance, resource concerns, such as viability of species or soil movement, may lead to area or route closures, and in turn affect visitors or

visitor satisfaction. Resource development, such as oil and gas, could provide more open routes or reduce scenic integrity within an area.

***Measurements for Recreation Resources***

Below are some of the measures currently used to monitor setting changes and the success of recreation programs.

- Wilderness characteristics in the High Uintas Wilderness, Limits of Acceptable Change monitoring...annually
- 10 Year Wilderness Challenge...annually
- NVUM surveys of visitor numbers, activity participation, and visitor satisfaction...every 5 years
- Accomplishment reports for program areas, such as miles of trails maintained to standard....annually, through the INFRA database

Other possible measures include

- Acres in each ROS class compared to existing and/or planned ROS.....during NEPA for forest planning, project planning, and 5 year or other monitoring schedule
- Check project consistency with niche program descriptions during NEPA

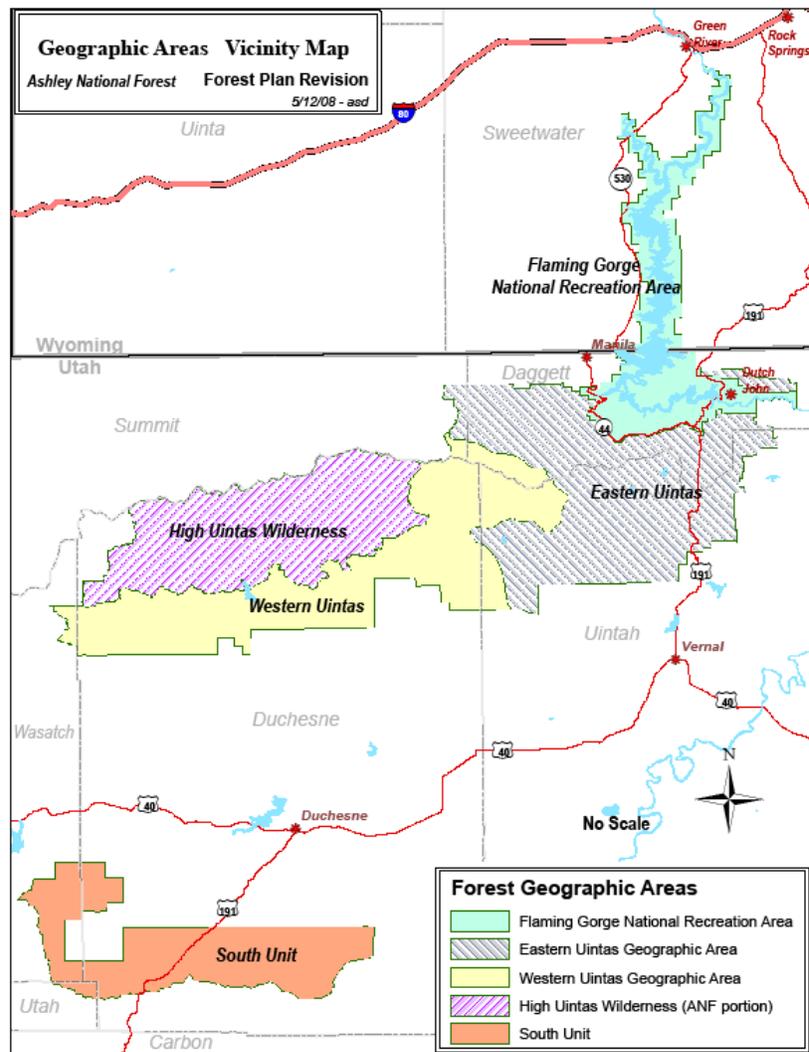
## Recreation by Geographic Area

The Forest has been divided into five broad geographic areas for Forest Plan revision. These geographic areas were delineated using differences in topography, dominant ecosystems, and existing management direction. The following discussion summarizes existing recreation information by geographic area.

Each of the Forest's five geographic areas of the Forest includes portions of one or more recreation niche areas, though one is usually dominant. Each geographic area also offers a different mix of recreation settings (ROS classes). The infrastructure supporting access and recreation is influenced by the physical characteristics, past management of each area, and past decisions about recreation each area offers. The descriptions include some of the common recreation activities occurring in each area. However, participation in activities by geographic area is not quantified because little data has been collected that is accurate at the geographic area scale.

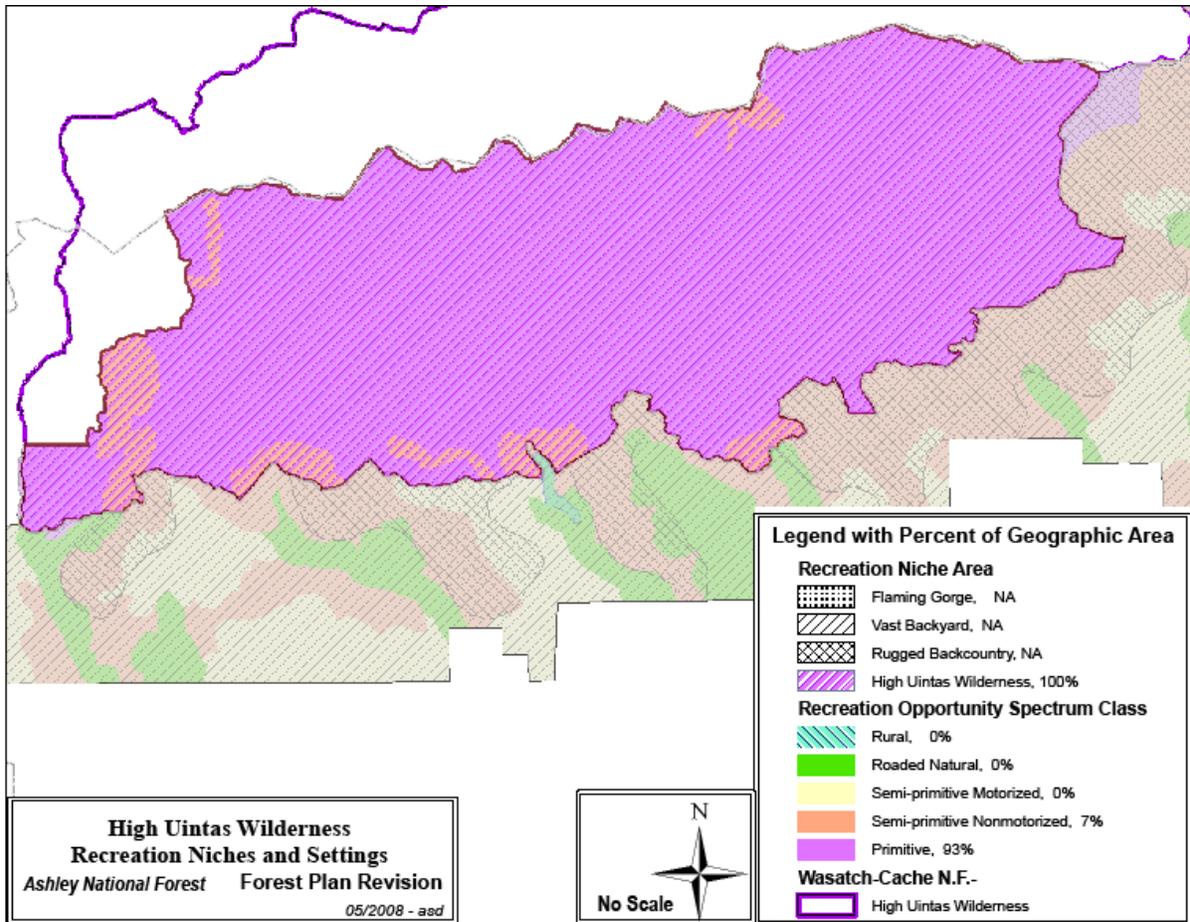
*The Geographic Areas shown on the map to the right and table below were delineated in 2005 as the basic building blocks for a revised forest plan. Recreation information is presented by geographic area to provide consistency with future planning documents.*

| Geographic Area                        | Acres   | Pct. of Forest |
|--|---------|----------------|
| Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area | 201,112 | 14%            |
| Eastern Uintas                         | 388,858 | 27%            |
| Western Uintas                         | 332,560 | 24%            |
| High Uintas Wilderness                 | 273,937 | 20%            |
| South Unit                             | 204,438 | 15%            |



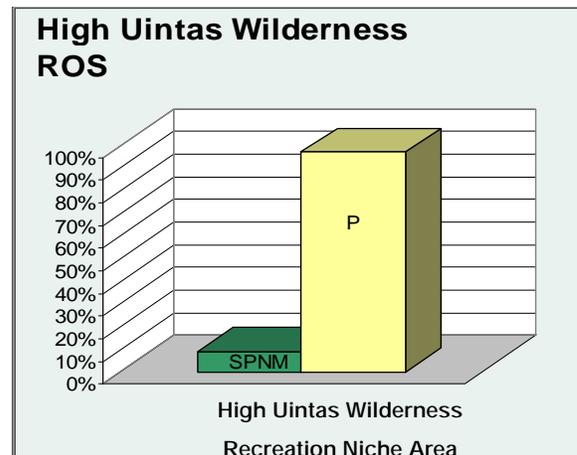
**High Uintas Wilderness**

The High Uintas Wilderness provides a nearly pristine natural setting (primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized ROS). Opportunities are available for horse and foot travel to lakes and other natural features. Longer duration activities include back packing, stock packing, and primitive camping. Fishing, hunting, and climbing are common. The wilderness includes 456, 705 total acres. It is managed jointly by the Ashley and Wasatch-Cache-Uinta National Forest under the High Uintas Wilderness Management Plan, 1997. Only the 60% of the HUW on Ashley N.F. lands is detailed in the data below.



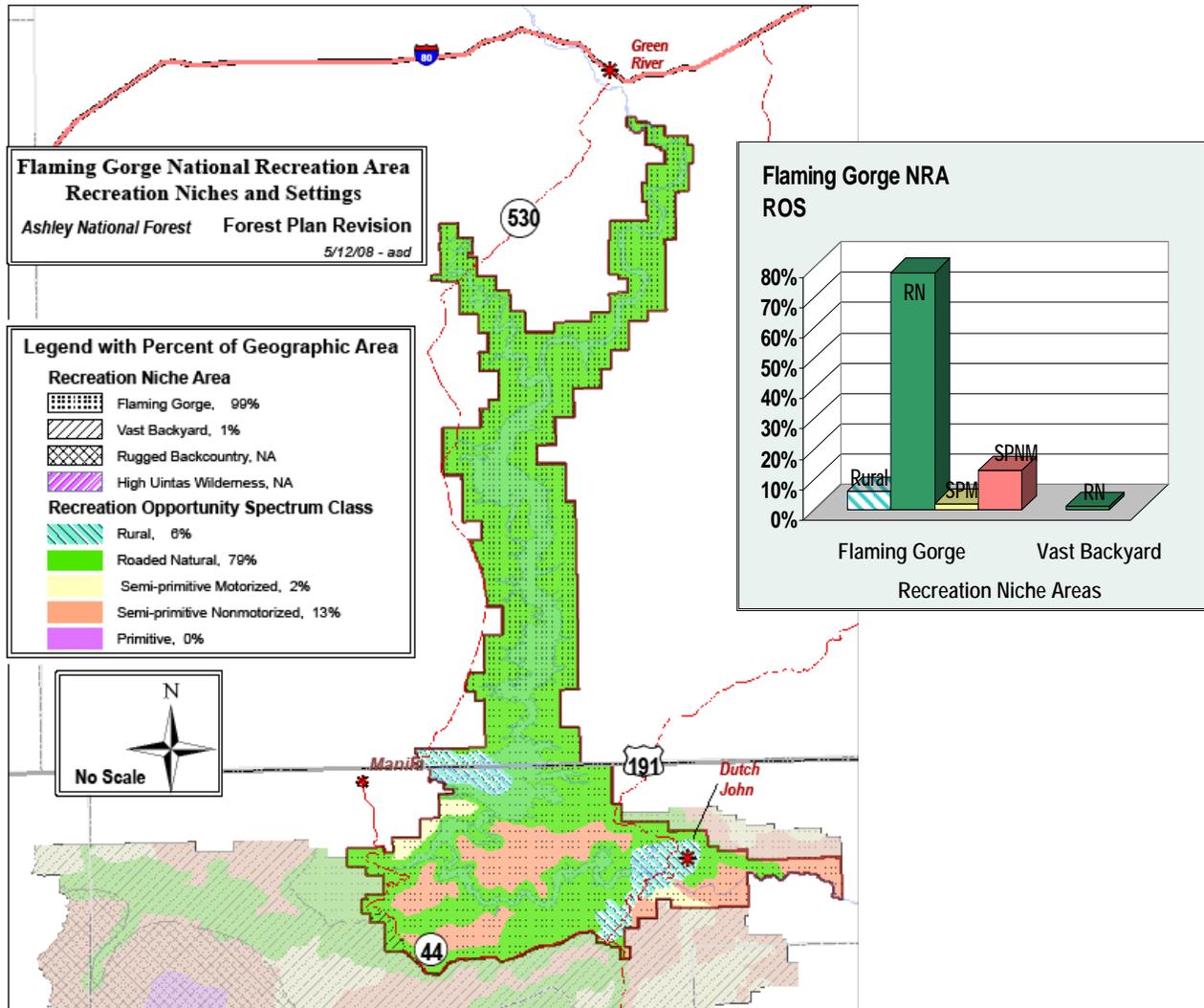
There are xxx miles of trails, xxx miles are on the ANF part of the area.

Numerous high mountain lakes, abundant wildlife, and unique alpine ecosystem are attractions for visitors.



### Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area

The Flaming Gorge NRA is most known its geology, and for fishing opportunities on the Flaming Gorge Reservoir and the Green River. Catches include record lake trout and other fish species in Utah and Wyoming. The area overall has the most developments supporting water and road-based opportunities.

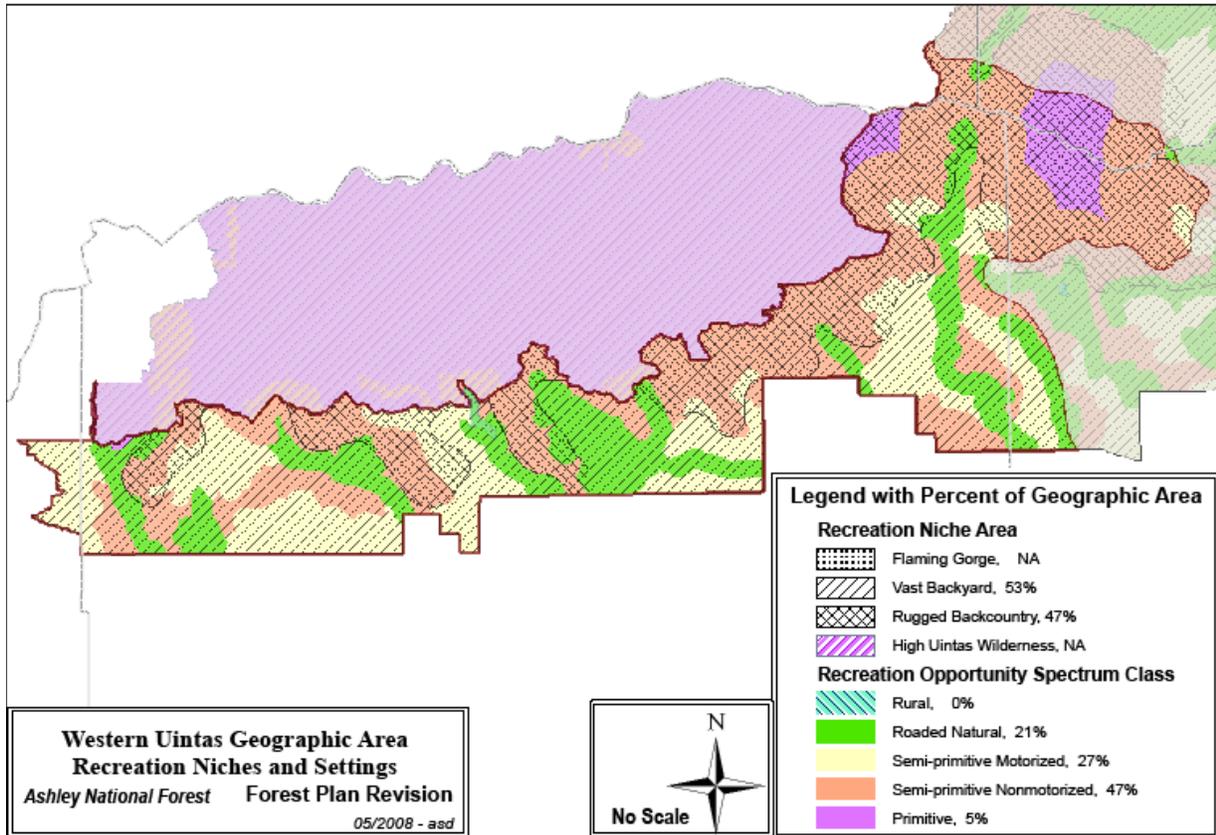


### Facilities and features of FGNRA

- Sections of the *Flaming Gorge-Uintas Scenic Byway* and the *Sheep Creek-Spirit Lake Scenic Backway*, as well as the entire *FGNRA*
- 62 F.S. developed recreation sites, as well as private resorts and marinas
- xx miles of system roads
- Xxx miles of system trails
- Flaming Gorge Reservoir, Dam, and Visitor Center, a section of the Green River popular for rafting, boat-in campgrounds, and dispersed camping areas, and the historic Swett Ranch with interpretive facilities.

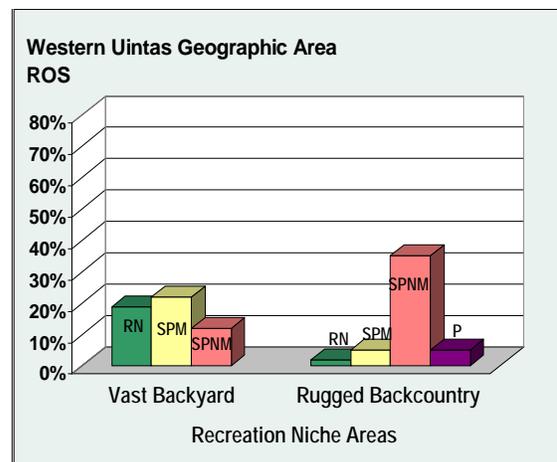
### Western Uintas Geographic Area

The Western Uintas has the highest percentage of non-motorized recreation settings and undeveloped lands of any non-Wilderness area on the Forest. The area provides access via roads and trails, as the southern and eastern gateways to the High Uintas Wilderness. Road based recreation along main river and road corridors includes camping and day use opportunities in developed or dispersed areas. More remote areas provide primitive, backcountry recreation opportunities with a relatively high degree of solitude, challenge, and risk for Forest visitors. There are a few designated ATV trails at the lower elevations of this area, but most trails provide for non-motorized travel.



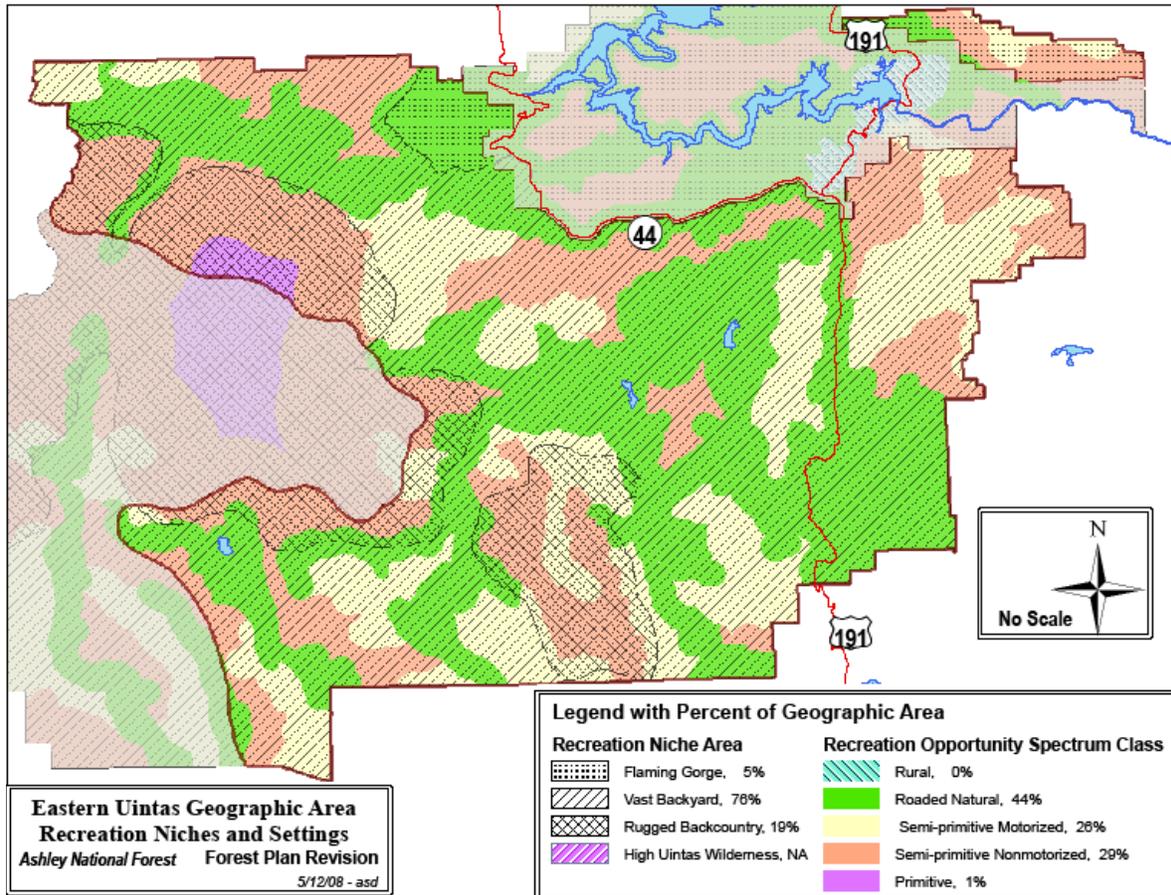
### Recreation facilities and features

- 35 developed recreation sites, and 63 concentrated use areas.
- xxx miles of system roads
- xxx miles of system trails
- Stillwater Reservoir, Moon Lake, and many smaller lakes and reservoirs; The Uinta, Yellowstone, White rock, and other rivers, and supporting lodges, marinas, and other facilities to support fishing and other water-based activities.



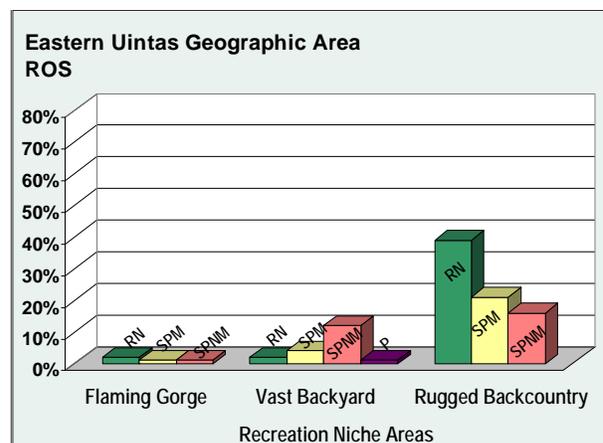
### Eastern Uintas Geographic Area

The Eastern Uintas is most used by residents of northeastern Utah or southern Wyoming. These visitors often have a long tradition of using certain areas for annual gatherings of families and friends. Hunting, fishing, camping, and firewood gathering are common activities. Because of the relatively gentle terrain, there are few limitations to travel and several loop roads exist. U.S. Highway 191 provides year-round access to the higher elevations. Snowmobile use is extensive, and non-motorized travel opportunities are provided through designated ski trails and two yurts.



### Facilities and features of the Eastern Uintas

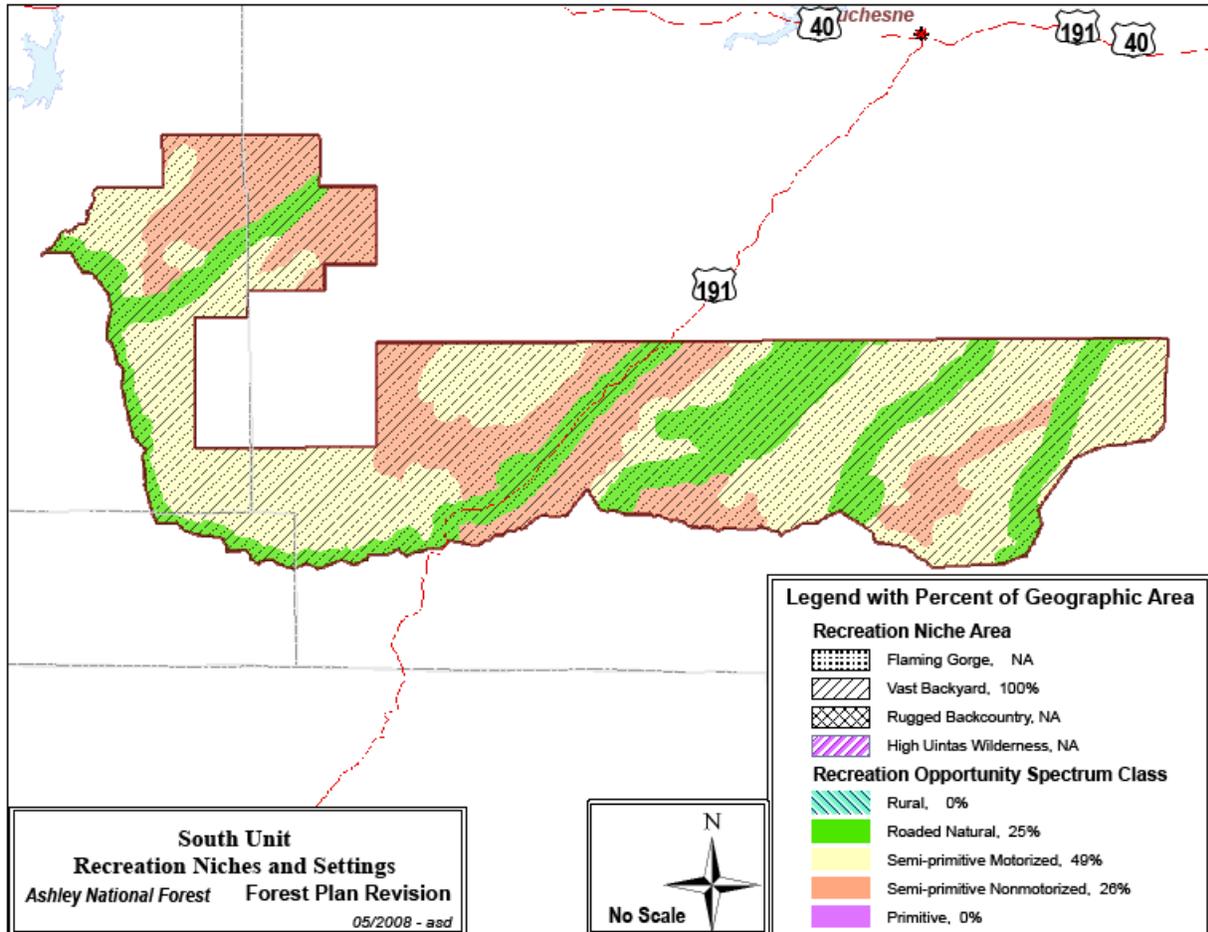
- *Flaming Gorge – Uintas Scenic Byway (U.S. 191), Red Cloud- Dry Fork Loop Scenic Backway, Sheep Creek –Spirit Lake Scenic Backway, Sheep Creek Geologic Area, and the Carter Military Road* are special designations that add to recreational opportunities. Additional features include Ashley Gorge and many mountain reservoirs and lakes.
- 16 developed recreation sites, 57 additional concentrated use areas of dispersed recreation. and yurts and historic F.S. cabins as rentals.
- **xxx** miles of system roads and **xxx** miles of



system trails

**South Unit**

The South Unit receives only a small amount of the Forest's recreation use. Most visitors are residents of the Uinta Basin or Carbon County. The predominant recreational activity is big game hunting, although hiking and camping not associated with hunting occurs as well. Outfitter/guide services support some of these activities.



**Facilities and features the South Unit**

- The section of Highway 191 from Duchesne to Price, Utah, is the *Indian Canyon Scenic Byway*. The road bisects the South Unit.
- *Reservation Ridge Scenic Backway* follows the divide of this range from Highway 191 west to Highway 6.
- Avintaquin Campground is located along Reservation Ridge. There are no concentrated use areas or developed trailheads.
- xxx miles of system roads, and xxx miles of system trails provide for recreational travel and access.

