



Recreation Settings and Scenery Session

March 1-2, 2011 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Landscape Character Zones

The following landscape character zones provide a thematic and geographical context for forest management by highlighting unique geographic, geological, ecological, and cultural elements of different parts of the Forest. Landscape character zones not only provide the reference condition for scenery, but they also help identify unique resource values associated with different areas of the Forest that should be retained or enhanced by activities and developments. Scenery, but helps identify particular resource values associated with different areas of the Forest that should be retained or enhanced by activities and developments. These landscape character zones are intended to be used in conjunction with other plan direction that would be applicable to any given area of the Forest.

The desired landscape character for these zones may be very similar to the existing landscape. The edges of these zones are not always distinct on the ground and may vary over time with changes from natural disturbance and climate change. Map **XX** provides a general understanding of their location but areas around the boundaries may exhibit or blend with the character of the adjacent zone. On-the-ground interpretation of these zones is acceptable based on site-specific knowledge.

Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone

The Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone is the largest on the Forest and extends from the northern Forest boundary to the northern boundary of the East Clear Creek Watershed (add the watershed in HUC level format to be consistent with other parts of the plan). Western edge of the character zone is defined by the Mogollon Rim and features of this character zone may extend down its slope and into adjacent character zones. On the eastern boundary is Anderson Mesa Landscape Character Zone. The transition between these two character zones is defined by the presence of piñon-juniper and Great Basin grasslands. The transition is gradual, and there may be areas that have a mixed character. This character zone is a portion of the largest ponderosa pine landscape in Arizona.

This character zone overlaps with the Long Valley, Walnut Canyon, and the Flagstaff Neighborwoods Management Areas.

Desired Conditions for Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone

The Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone itself is flat to gently sloping with scattered, steeper landforms including Mormon Mountain, lands around Kendrick Peak, the West Clear Creek drainage, Walnut Canyon, Pumphouse Wash, Fry Canyon, Saddle Mountain, a number of prominent hills and mountains in the northern portion of the character zone and various escarpments throughout. On the northern end, evidence of volcanic geology is more common.

This area is valued for its continuous stands of ponderosa pine, old-growth “yellow-belly” ponderosa pine stands, and beautiful lakes for boating and fishing. This character zone is comprised of ponderosa pine forest and piñon-juniper woodland vegetation types which cluster around broad expanses of grassy openings and picturesque lakes. Ponderosa pine is all-aged and has large trees with open, well-formed crowns. The Forest is a generally open and park-like with a diverse understory of grasses and shrubs. Denser tree conditions exist in places across the landscape including north facing slopes and canyon



bottoms. The distribution and class of trees across the landscape corresponds with the ecological desired conditions for this vegetation type. Old growth ponderosa pine in groups or individual provides a valued landscape feature that adds to the sense of diversity and discovery in this zone. Snags, top-killed trees, down logs, and other evidence of fire and wind disturbance occur individually and in patches of varying sizes. They provide an intriguing feature that moves throughout the landscape with time. Standing dead trees provide character and wildlife habitat and they are retained (See ponderosa pine Vegetation Type Desired Conditions for details).

Small natural and artificial lakes and wetlands are scattered throughout this character zone. They are highly valued for their recreation opportunities, especially boating and fishing, and scenic attributes. Lakes provide a viewing platform for mountains and hillsides in the vicinity and the some provide views of the San Francisco Peaks. The presence of water provides for ecological diversity and wildlife viewing in these areas, and it is a highly valued scenic attribute.

Gambel oak and aspen provide contrast to the evergreen pine in fall. In winter, this character zone provides a refuge from noise for motorized and non-motorized recreationists in a white, snow-covered landscape that contrasts with evergreen trees. In the summer, it provides cool shady areas for a variety of recreation activities. Arizona walnut trees in Walnut Canyon are another valued feature in this character zone. It contributes an interesting bark and texture against the winter sky and yellow fall color.

Clear, dark night skies are valued for stargazing and as a professional astronomical astronomy resource. Astronomical facilities are present and visible in defined areas.

San Francisco Peaks Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for San Francisco Peaks Landscape Character Zone

The San Francisco Peaks Landscape Character Zone is located within the White Mountains-San Francisco Peaks-Mogollon Rim Ecological Section on the Coconino NF. This character zone is characterized by distinctive mountains with steep slopes and alpine peaks, including the highest point in Arizona, Mount Humphreys. The Arizona National Scenic Trail crosses this character zone.

The San Francisco Peaks, including the Kachina Peaks Wilderness, are sacred to many American Indian tribes as a significant religious landmark and traditional cultural place that contains many shrines and sacred places. For the Hopi, the Peaks are the single-most important place that is central to their religious beliefs. It is an icon that gives them their identity as a people. The San Francisco Peaks are one of several mountains that demarcate the boundaries of the traditional and sacred heartland of the Hopi, Navajo, Zuni, Acoma, Apache, Havasupai, and Hualapai. Many tribes continue to conduct centuries-old religious observances on the San Francisco Peaks that are central to their culture and religion.

This character zone overlaps with the Fort Valley-Mount Elden and the Flagstaff Neighborwoods Management Areas.

Desired Conditions for San Francisco Peaks Landscape Character Zone

The San Francisco Peaks are a distinctive volcanic mountain with several alpine peaks and steep slopes. It is a focal point of background views from adjacent zones up to 80 miles away including the Grand Canyon National Park and the Verde Valley. The middleground of views from the Peaks is dominated by sky, air and clouds with background views of dry steep canyons and expansive forests.



Vegetation varies along the elevation gradient from open ponderosa pine stands with views of the surrounding landscape to sun-dappled shade of spruce-fir and mixed conifer to rocky and sparsely-vegetated alpine communities. Within these vegetation types, steep, cool drainages and fire disturbance create microclimates with a surprising diversity of landscape features such as high elevation mountain meadows, communities of bristlecone pine, and aspen that contrast to dark evergreen surroundings. Aspen and grasslands, in particular create openings that provide a sense of the surrounding landscape. The lower slopes of the zone gradually flatten and blend into the surrounding plateau.

The San Francisco Peaks are highly valued for their scenic character year-round. In autumn, aspen lights up the mountains with beautiful yellow, gold, and orange colors contrasted against dark conifer forests. Wildflowers provide dramatic splashes of color in mountain meadows in the spring and late summer. In winter, the snow-covered peaks can be viewed from great distances and the area is a destination for snowplay.

The San Francisco Peaks are sacred to many American Indian tribes and is a significant religious and traditional place. There are individual shrines and sacred places that are valued for their cultural setting on the mountain. The area is valued for its heritage resources and cultural importance, spectacular scenery and high scenic integrity, cool climate escape from desert heat, a diverse range of year-round recreation opportunities, and its distinctive landscape features.

Volcanic Woodlands Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for Volcanic Woodlands Landscape Character Zone

The Volcanic Woodlands Landscape Character Zone is part of the White Mountains-San Francisco Peaks-Mogollon Rim Ecological Section and the Painted Desert Ecological Section on the Coconino NF. It is largely defined by the north and northeast extents of the San Francisco Peaks volcanic field associated with more recent volcanic activity.

A number of cinder cones and mountains in this character zone are important cultural and religious places for several tribes. They are the sources spiritual force with shrines that are the focal point for prayers of several religious societies.

This character zone overlaps with the Flagstaff Neighborwoods Management Area.

Desired Conditions for Volcanic Woodlands Landscape Character Zone

This character zone is characterized by gently rolling topography with sudden inclusions of black, red, and gray cinder cones; volcanic craters; and rugged lava flows. Areas with these volcanic features have open growing ponderosa pines which may have unique forms and shapes due to the growing conditions. The forest understory is often sparse with patches of native grass or shrubs. Lava flow areas are distinctive and generally devoid of vegetation being dominated by the unique rock forms. Most of the character zone is characterized by piñon-juniper woodlands interspersed with grasslands on gently rolling to flat topography. Water is scarce throughout this character zone. Located in this character zone are Sunset Crater National Monument, Cinder Hills OHV recreation area, and Painted Desert Vista. Outside of the Cinder Hills OHV area, cinder cones are generally undisturbed by human activity. The area is valued for its volcanic scenery, motorized recreation opportunities, and distinctive features such as Red Mountain (a designated Geological Area), Cochrane Hill, and other cinder cones and lava flows. The southwestern boundary of this character zone blends gradually into the ponderosa pine characteristics of adjacent character zones.



Anderson Mesa Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for Anderson Mesa Landscape Character Zone

Anderson Mesa Landscape Character Zone is located within the White Mountain-San Francisco Peaks-Mogollon rim Ecological Section. The major vegetation types are piñon –juniper and Great Basin grassland. The western and southern parts of this character zone transition gradually to ponderosa pine. This area provides a background to Winona and areas east of the Forest. The Arizona Trail also crosses this character zone.

Anderson Mesa is the location of six large pueblos that are the last archaeological expression of the prehistoric Sinagua culture as it transforms into the nascent Hopi and Zuni cultures in the 1400's. It is also the location of early 20th century homesteads of several families that continue to practice traditional cattle ranching in the region today.

This zone does not overlap any management areas.

Desired Conditions for Anderson Mesa Landscape Character Zone

The Anderson Mesa Landscape Character Zone has mostly gently sloping to flat topography. Steep escarpments form the sides of the mesa. Steep canyons are interspersed along the eastern Forest boundary with Padre Canyon, Jacks Canyon, and East Clear Creek Canyon—distinctive inclusions in this character zone which is otherwise dominated by grasslands and piñon-juniper woodland. The Great Basin grasslands of the mesa provide large open landscapes with individual trees surrounded by piñon juniper and ponderosa pine forests. Grasslands are a valued component of the landscape character where they naturally occur. Anderson Mesa is a destination for hunting and wildlife viewing because of its outstanding wildlife habitat. Other distinctive features in this character zone are wetlands such as Marshall Lake, and lakes, such as Ashurst Lake, Hay Lake, and Long Lake, that contribute to recreation settings and wildlife habitat (See Aquatic Resources for more details).

Clear, dark night skies are valued for stargazing and as a professional astronomical resource. Astronomical facilities are present and visible in defined areas. In spring and late summer, blankets of yellow wildflowers may dominate the grasslands.

The presence of large prehistoric pueblos and historic ranches that are still operating contribute to the sense of history and place that Anderson Mesa provides to the families of several Hopi and Zuni clans as well as Euroamerican ranching families today.

East Clear Creek Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for East Clear Creek Landscape Character Zone

The East Clear Creek Landscape Character Zone is located within the White Mountains-San Francisco Peaks-Mogollon Rim Ecological Section on the Coconino NF.

The Mogollon Rim makes up the southern boundary of the Forest and the southern limit of the Colorado Plateau, draining north into East Clear Creek. It is part of the traditional homeland of the Western Tonto Apache, the scene of numerous skirmishes during the Apache Wars of the 1860's to 1880's, and a passageway for many pioneering families who settled central Arizona in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

This zone overlaps with the Long Valley Management Area.

More information can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/plan-revision.shtml>

If you have questions, please contact: Ms. Yewah Lau at 928-527-3411



Desired Conditions for East Clear Creek Landscape Character Zone

This character zone is characterized by the Mogollon Rim, a rugged escarpment with steep, rocky drainages and narrow canyons and ridges alternating from east to west. This canyon setting provides opportunities for quiet and solitude. Vegetation is composed mostly of ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests with inclusions of maples, aspen and other deciduous trees offering variety year-round. In autumn, magnificent yellows, golds, and reds contrast against a dark conifer forest background. Distinctive features in this character zone include: C.C. Craigen Reservoir; Knoll Lake; Potato Lake; and scenic drainages including East Clear Creek, Barbershop Canyon, Dane Canyon, and Leonard Canyon, to name a few. Leonard Creek and East Clear Creek have perennial flowing water in a steep canyon setting.

The Apache wars and prehistoric/historic settlement are recognized as culturally significant features related to the General Crook National Recreation Trail which partly follows the “Palatkwabi Trail”, an ancient travel route from the Hopi Mesas to the Verde Valley that was used by the Spanish, the American military, and early settlers.”. The Arizona National Scenic Trail provides long distance hiking, biking, and equestrian riding opportunities. Forest Road 300 along the Mogollon Rim provides views into adjacent forest lands and communities below. Past wildfires created views to distant vistas. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests to the east are similar in character to this character zone. North of East Clear Creek, the terrain starts to become more gradual and blends in to the Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone.

Red Rock Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for Red Rock Landscape Character Zone

The Red Rock Landscape Character Zone makes up about four percent of the White Mountains-San Francisco Peaks-Mogollon Rim Ecological Section on the Coconino NF. However, most of this character zone is located in the Tonto Transition Ecological Section. To the north and northeast is the Ponderosa Pine Landscape Character Zone, which is sharply divided from the Red Rock Landscape Character Zone by the Mogollon Rim. To the south in the Verde Valley, there is gradual transition away from red rock formations to a semi-desert and desert community dominated landscape.

This zone overlaps with the Sedona-Oak Creek (including the Oak Creek Canyon Management Area) and Sedona Neighborhoods Management Areas.

Desired Conditions for Red Rock Landscape Character Zone

The Red Rock Landscape Character Zone is a truly distinct landscape where monumental buttes, soaring multi-hued cliffs, fantastic towering spires, and rugged canyons bombard the eye and the senses and vast sweeps of greenery refresh and inspire the spirit and fill the viewer with expectation. Unified by Oak Creek, the vital riparian link between the Mogollon Rim and the Verde Valley, the landscape is a museum of life, a living crossroads connecting people in time and space. There is no other region on earth exactly like it. This landscape has long been celebrated nationally and internationally as a year-round destination. This character zone is valued for its world renowned scenery, high and very high scenic integrity, lush riparian areas and perennial streams, historic and prehistoric resources, and primitive and developed recreation experiences. The landscape is defined by bright and vibrant variations in color and form such as blue water and skies juxtaposed with red rocks and dark green trees. The rolling terrain in the piñon-juniper forest provides a variety of visual experiences and panoramic views of the rock formations. The contrast created between the red rocks and soil and the gray-green piñon-juniper forest enhances the visual character of the landscape in terms of color, texture, and form. Scenic views from primary viewing areas such as highways, recreation sites, trails, and residential areas are maintained.



From an aerial perspective, the landscape is coarse-textured and has a vegetation pattern that varies from sparse to dense areas of trees and shrubs that range from dark evergreen to gray-green. The light red and reddish brown soil colors contrasts with the vegetation and rock outcrops to create a mottled appearance to the land surface. The large sandstone formations have a smooth appearance, with vegetation dotting the surface of the rocks in an irregular pattern.

With its intriguing human history and remarkable natural environment rich with plants and wildlife, red rock country offers individuals and families the gifts of discovery, inspiration, and solitude. When wandering the character zone, the visitor is free to imagine, explore, and reconnect with the land. Clear, dark night skies are valued.

Some red rock formations are particularly distinctive such as Bell Rock, Cathedral Rock, and Courthouse Butte. Certain locations, such as Crescent Moon Ranch/Red Rock Crossing, Airport Mesa/Airport Saddle, West Fork of Oak Creek, Call of the Canyon and Oak Creek Vista provide exceptional views of the red rock formations and are particularly valued by photographers, artists, and visitors. The area is rich in prehistoric and historic cultural landscapes, including ranches, orchards, cliff dwelling, and rock art and sacred sites. Along the escarpment, that divides the Red Rock –Secret Mountain Wilderness from the lower country, there are several notable cliff dwellings of high scenic and interpretive value such as Palatki and Honanki.

Riparian areas are a destination for fall color viewing. In summer, they offer a respite from heat along shady banks. In winter, snow-covered red rock is a strong feature. During the monsoon season in late summer rainbows are common across the red rock sky.

Riparian areas, in particular Oak Creek, provide a lush dark green environment with perennial water, which begins in a narrow rich canyon and opens into piñon juniper and semi-desert communities. Interior chaparral vegetation adds to the diversity and interest in the area.

Evidence of fire disturbance generally does not detract from visitor experiences.

Visitors are drawn to the Chapel of the Holy Cross for its distinctive architecture and for the panoramic vistas of the surrounding red rock landscape. From the adjoining Chapel of the Holy Cross plaza, one can see several prominent rock formations including Eagle Head Rock, the Two Nuns, and the Madonna and Child. To the Yavapai and Tonto Apache people, the Red Rock formations and canyons are recognized as the locations of legendary events that relate to their origins in the Verde Valley/Red Rocks Country. The unique geology and local rock formations of the Red Rock Country make it a multi-cultural landscape that has been recognized for centuries. The unique geology and local rock formations of the Red Rock Country, combined with the distinctive architecture and historic significance of the Chapel of the Holy Cross, make it and the surrounding area a cultural landscape.

Verde Valley Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for Verde Valley Landscape Character Zone

The Verde Valley Landscape Character Zone is located within the Tonto Transition Ecological Section. The vegetation is predominantly semi-desert grasslands, desert communities, and riparian. The Verde Valley has a continuous history of human occupation, beginning with Clovis Paleo-Indian mammoth hunters of 12,000 years ago. The Verde Valley comprised the southern Sinagua culture area until A.D. 1400, as highlighted by Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, and Tuzigoot National Monuments and the Clear Creek Ruins, Red Tank Draw, Sacred Mountain, and V-V Rock Art Heritage Sites of the Coconino NF. About A.D. 1250, the northeastern Yavapai entered the Verde Valley, and later, the Tonto Apache.

More information can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/plan-revision.shtml>

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Both groups continue to live in the Verde Valley as the Yavapai-Apache Nation. Euroamerican miners, farmers, and ranchers spread into the Verde Valley starting in the 1860's, and several of those pioneering families still work in the Camp Verde and Sedona areas. Fort Verde State Park; the towns of Camp Verde, Cottonwood, and Clarkdale; the General George Crook Road; 13 Mile Rock; and scattered ranches represent the historic period growth of the Verde Valley. The Verde Valley has a long history of prehistoric and historic settlement as highlighted by national monuments and historic trails within the Forest's administrative boundary.

This zone overlaps with the House Mountain-Lowlands Management Area.

Desired Conditions for Verde Valley Landscape Character Zone

This character zone is defined by the large Verde River Valley and semi-desert grasslands and desert communities. Broad valleys with lonely rounded hills are common in the north and western portion of the zone and steep drainages characterize the eastern portion. The Verde River, designated as a Wild and Scenic River, separates the Prescott and Coconino National Forests on the southwest. The Wild and Scenic Verde River runs along the southern end of the Forest. Oak Creek, Sycamore Creek, West Clear Creek, Wet Beaver Creek and the Wild and Scenic Fossil Creek emerge from deep cottonwood and mixed broadleaf lined canyons which cut into the Mogollon Rim and continue as ribbons of riparian vegetation across the piñon juniper and semi-desert grasslands before merging with the Verde River. Canyons along the Mogollon Rim show evidence of past flooding and are periodically flooded. Cool shady pools of water in and along the rivers provide an ideal setting for water-based recreation activities and a refuge from the dry hot landscape that surrounds them. Escarpments, rocky outcrops, and mesas provide a diversity of landforms and leads to unexpected changes in vegetation. Some snow may occur but the transition is mild and gradual. Deciduous trees along riparian areas in the late fall provide some scenic benefits. Some of these riparian areas also have Arizona walnut, which contributes an interesting bark and texture against the winter sky and yellow fall color.

Painted Desert Landscape Character Zone

General Description and Background for Painted Desert Landscape Character Zone

The Painted Desert Landscape Character Zone is predominantly a transition zone between ponderosa pine and piñon juniper woodlands and the Painted Desert. Views of the Painted Desert are in the background from this area, but it lacks some of the characteristic features of the Ecological Section in the foreground.

This zone does not overlap any management areas.

Desired Conditions for Painted Desert Landscape Character Zone

Topography is relatively flat with the exception of Deadman Wash and lands around Doney Picnic Area. Vegetation is comprised of grasslands and piñon juniper woodlands opening onto a vast, largely-undeveloped, desert landscape in the background. Cultural features and evidence of prehistoric habitation are the most predominant scenic attractions in this character zone. Panoramic views of volcanic fields and the characteristic Painted Desert land formations are visible from this character zone.