INTRODUCTION

Landscape character gives a geographic area it's visual and cultural image, and consists of the combination of physical, biological and cultural attributes that make each landscape identifiable or unique. Landscape character embodies distinct attributes that exist throughout an area, and descriptions concentrate on positive attributes. The landscape character descriptions represent the human habitat, heritage, and social ties to the landscape in combination with the physical and biological characteristics of the landscape. The landscape character descriptions include a social component and ecological component summarized in the following categories:

Human Habitat - Social Component categories

- Valued Landscape Attributes
- Recreation Opportunities
- Cultural Ecological Influences on the Landscape

Ecological Component categories

- Dominant Environmental Regimes
- Disturbance Regimes

Cultural ecology along with ecological environmental regimes and disturbance regimes relating to potential natural vegetation types (PNVT) associated with the range of historic range of variability (HRV) will primarily be discussed at a forest wide scale.

PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST EXISITNG LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The existing landscape character describes the existing set of valued aesthetic attributes that express the positive image of the current landscape.

The Prescott National Forest (Prescott NF) is a recreation destination for Arizona residents as well at visitors from neighboring states. The 1.25 million acre forest is located in northwestern Arizona. People are drawn to the area for its open spaces, remoteness, tranquility, beautiful scenery, and the cool climate of the high elevation provides an escape from the desert heat. The scenery is diverse including mountains, pine forests, grasslands, lakes, streams, rugged canyons, and high desert plains. This spectrum of contrasts provides for sweeping, expansive views and uncrowded spaces. The variety of historic elements is rich in character and culture. Wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities are found throughout the landscape. Winding through various parts of the forest, travelers enjoy viewing scenery and reliving history on the Mingus Mountain Scenic Road. The Prescott National Forest has identified 10 geographic areas (GA) within the Forest. This document will first examine the common characteristics of the Forest at a Forest wide perspective, and then will display the unique characteristics of each geographic area.

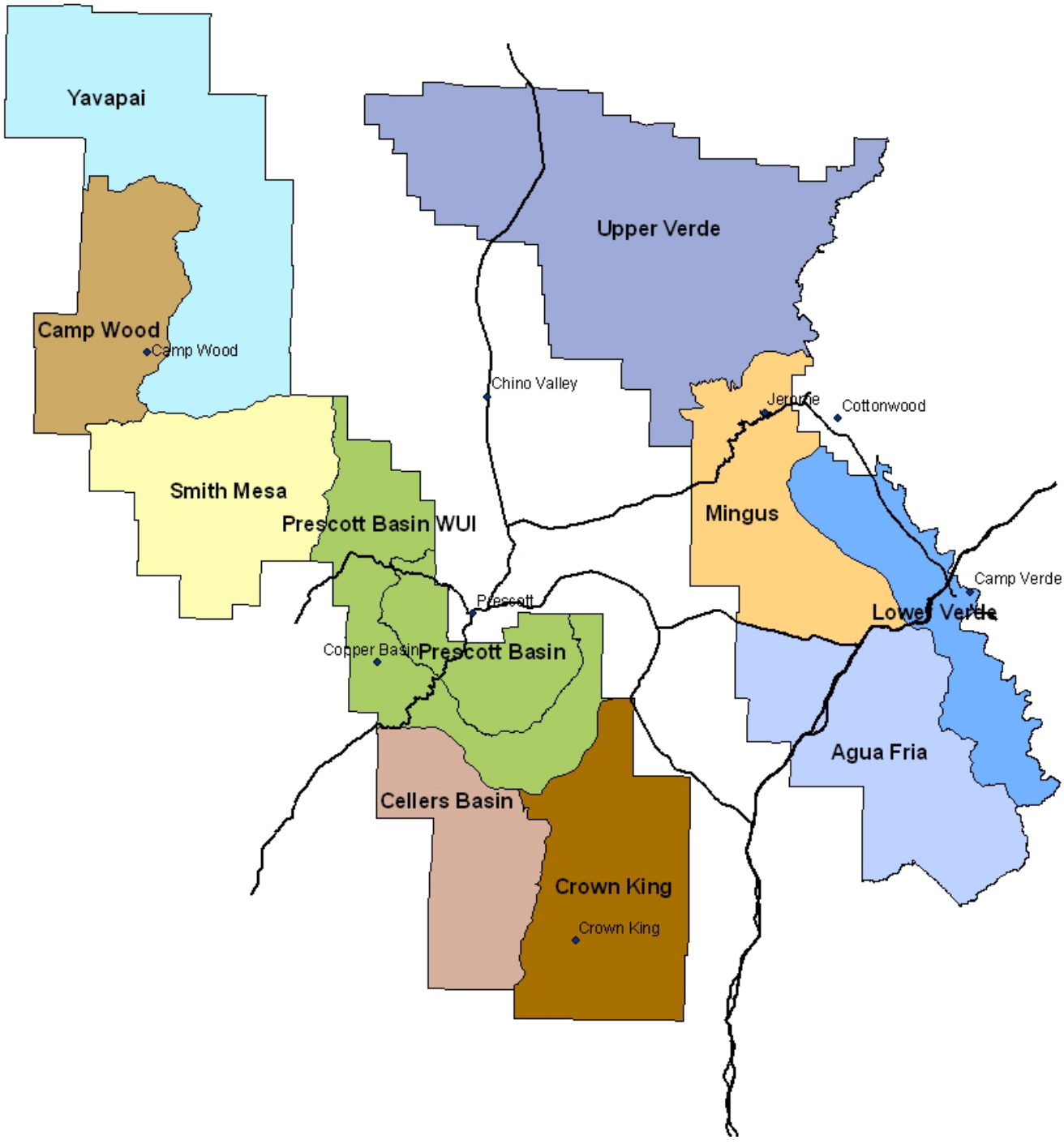

Figure 1. Geographic Areas of the Prescott National Forest

TYPICAL FOREST WIDE LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

Ecological Sections

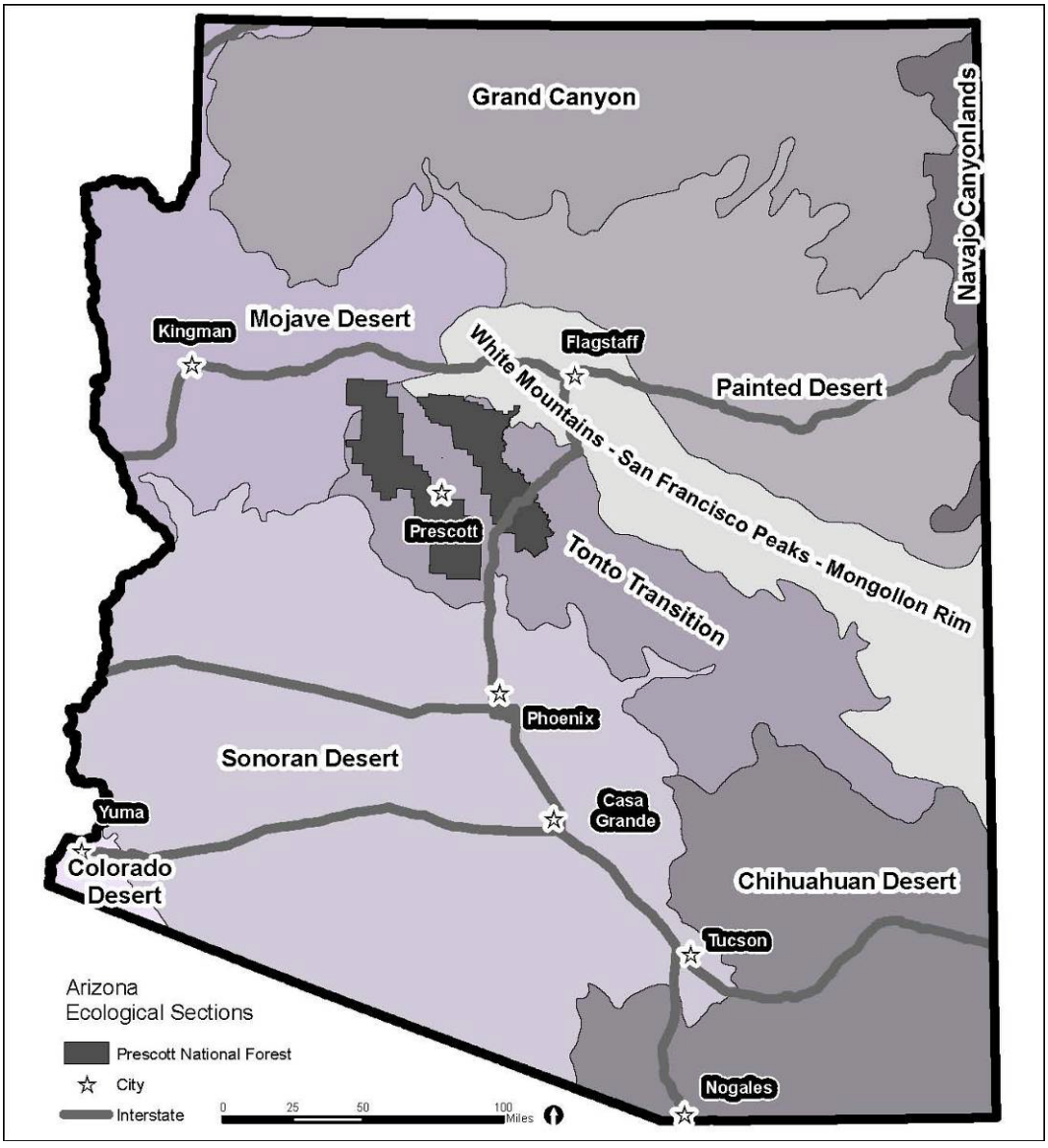

Figure 2. Ecological Sections of Arizona

The majority of the Prescott National Forest lies within the Tonto Transition ecological section as shown in figure 2. Small portions of the Forest are located within the Mojave Desert and White Mountains-San Francisco Peaks- Mongollon Rim ecological sections. Following are the ecological section descriptions with emphasis on the Tonto Transition section, since it encompasses the majority of the Forest. These descriptions are from the *Draft Ecological Sustainability Report for the Prescott National Forest.*

Tonto Transition Section (describes 92% of PNF)

Geomorphology. The Tonto Transition section is located in the highlands of central Arizona below the Colorado Plateau and above the basins of the Sonoran Desert. Volcanic activity and sedimentary deposition were major geomorphic processes. Lava flows, plugs, dikes, and relatively flat sedimentary deposits resulted. Major landforms are mountains, hills, scarps, and some plains. Major landform features include the Mazatzal Mountains, Black Hills, Aquarius Mountains, Bradshaw Mountains, and the Superstition Mountains. Elevation ranges from 3,000 to 7,400 ft (915 to 2,255 m).

Climate. Precipitation ranges from 10 to 25 in (250 to 635 mm) annually, with more than half of the precipitation falling during the winter. Winters are mild below about 6,800 ft (2,075 m) and cold at higher elevations. The growing season lasts 70 to 170 days.

Vegetation. Vegetation consists of interior chaparral (mix of deciduous and evergreen shrubs) on coarse igneous parent materials and steep slopes. There are pinyon-juniper woodlands on elevations higher than about 4,200 ft (1,280 m); ponderosa pine occurs in frigid and limited mesic soil temperature regimes at higher elevations. Low elevation vegetation consists of semi-arid grasslands and desert shrub-scrub communities.

Disturbance Regimes. The natural fire frequency is highly variable, ranging from 2 to 100 years, depending on aspect, elevation, soil moisture, and plant composition. Flash floods and droughts are common. Land uses include livestock management, irrigated crop land, recreation, and harvest of small areas of commercial timber.

White Mountain-San Francisco Peaks-Mogollon Rim Section (describes 5% of PNF)

Geomorphology. Located on the Colorado Plateau, this section is in central and eastern-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico. Geomorphic processes active in this section involve recent volcanism, including basaltic lava flows, cinder cone eruptions, and volcanic ash. Major landforms include mountains, plains, plateaus, and hills. Major landform features include the San Francisco Mountains, White Mountains, and Jemez and Mogollon Mountains. Elevation ranges from 6,000 to over 12,600 ft (1,820 to 3,860 m).

Climate. Precipitation ranges from 20 to over 32 in (500 to over 800 mm) annually, with more than half of the precipitation falling during the winter. The growing season ranges from less than 50 to 110 days, and winters are cold.

Vegetation. Plant communities vary over a soil temperature and moisture gradient with ponderosa pine and gambel oaks on the relatively warm and dry sites; white fir and Douglas-fir forests on cool, moist sites; and Engelmann spruce and corkbark fir on the coldest, wettest sites.

Disturbance Regimes. Natural fires occurred in ponderosa pine about every 3 to 10 years, but have been prevented recently. This has led to a higher canopy cover and increased fuel loads, resulting in a less resilient ecosystem and increased hazard of wildfire. Land uses include timber management, rangeland and recreation.

Mohave Desert Section (describes 3% of PNF)

Geomorphology. This area comprises widely separated short ranges in desert plains located in Nevada, Utah, California, and in a small portion of west-northwest Arizona. It contains isolated mountains, plateaus, alluvial fans, playas, basins, and dunes. Elevation ranges from 300 ft below sea level (Death Valley) to 11,000 ft above sea level (-91 to **Climate.** Precipitation ranges from 3 to 10 in (80 to 250 mm). It mostly occurs as scattered high intensity storms of short duration. The growing season lasts 200 to 300 days.

Vegetation. Plant communities include creosote bush, blackbush, greasewood and saltbush on basins, plains, and hills; Joshua tree-dominated communities occur on plains and hills; and basin sagebrush, western juniper and pinyon pine communities occur on mountains.

Disturbance Regimes. Areas with less than about 8 in (200 mm) of rainfall rarely support enough vegetation to carry a fire. Fire occurrence in areas receiving more than about 8 in (200 mm) has been influenced by introduced grasses. Fires are variable in frequency and intensity. Flash floods are commonly associated with the irregular occurrence of precipitation events.

EAST SIDE OF THE PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST

This half of the Forest lies to the east of the city of Prescott, Arizona. Landscape features on this side of the Forest include Black Hills mountain range, Mingus Mountain, and the Black Mesa

Nearly half of the Forest is on the west side of the city of Prescott, Arizona. Mountain ranges on this side of the Forest include the Juniper, Santa Maria, Sierra Prieta, and Bradshaw Mountains.

Agua Fria Geographic Area _____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

This geographic unit lies on the southeast portion of the Prescott National Forest and covers approximately 144,002 acres making it the 4th largest geographic area on the Forest.

Valued Landscape Attributes

A unique characteristic of this area are the large grassland mesas including the Arnold, Yellow Jacket, Marlow and Tule Mesas. Rolling hills surrounding the mesas lead up to the west slopes of the Black Hills Mountain Range. Elevations range from 3,840 feet along the mesas to 6,760 feet at Pine Mountain. Perennial streams include Sycamore, Indian, Little Ash, and Dry Creeks. Scenic Attractiveness class A vegetation includes ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen and deciduous mix, and Arizona oak.

Other special or distinctive features include:

- Sycamore Historic Site
- Great Western Trail
- A portion of the Pine Mountain Wilderness Area
- Heritage sites

Cultural Ecological Influences on the Landscape

The Sycamore Cabin, once a Ranger Station built in 1921, can be rented and used as a base camp to enjoy the recreation activities of the area. Sycamore Creek runs directly by the cabin providing opportunities for fishing. Horseback riding is popular and this area offers approximately 39 miles of equestrian trails. Equestrian trails on the south side of the unit include Double T, Salt Flat, Nelson, Pine Flat, and other trails in the Pine Mountain Wilderness Area. On the north side of the unit the General Crook and Sheep trails offer equestrian opportunities. Approximately seventeen miles of trails are available that offer all terrain vehicle (ATV) experiences. This includes Sycamore, Yellow Jacket, and Cottonwood

trails on the south side. The north side of the unit offers ATV riding along the Box T and Tompkins trails. Overall, there are approximately fifty-four miles of trail in this geographic area.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform / Geomorphology

The landform of the Agua Fria Geographic Area includes plains, hills and mountains. Approximately 42,777 acres of elevated, lowland and valley plains make up the 0-5% slope range. The 6-15% slope range is composed of lowland and elevated plains over 16,145 acres of the unit. The area is dominated by the rolling hills covering 57,211 acres in the 16-39% slope range. About twenty percent of the geographic area has steep terrain in the mountains. This area is located in and around the Cedar Bench and Pine Mountain Wilderness areas. The steep mountains in the 40%+ slope range, provide topographic relief across 27,841 acres as shown on figure 12.

Surface Water Characteristics

Perennial streams include Ash, Little Ash, Sycamore, Little Sycamore, Horner and Dry Creeks. Water bodies in the geographic area are mainly tanks. There are nearly one-hundred tanks in the area. The Orme Reservoir is also located in this geographic area.

Potential Vegetation Types

Potential Natural Vegetation in the Agua Fria GA is composed of 36% semi-desert grasslands, 26% PJ chaparral, 24% PJ grassland, 9% interior chaparral, 2% ponderosa pine forests with evergreen oak, 1% ponderosa pine forest, and1% riparian. This composition closely resembles the existing vegetation mix. Refer to the Typical Forest wide Landscape Characteristics for information regarding disturbance regimes. Refer to figure 16 for a display of the Agua Fria GA PNVT.

Disturbance Regimes

Livestock grazing, and impacts from recreation activities and fire suppression have led to disturbances in this landscape. Erosion is occurring on unmanaged roadbeds.

Lower Verde_____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

Valued Landscape Attributes

The Lower Verde geographic area covers 83,854 acres of the Forest. This geographic area includes a portion of the Verde River on the southeast portion of the Prescott National Forest. The valley floodplains along the Verde River strongly contrast with the steep Black Hills Mountains that define the valleys edge. Both the Black Hills Mountains and the Verde River are highly valued landmarks for this portion of the Forest. The vegetative mosaic is dominated by pinyon-juniper with inclusions of desert shrubs.

Figure 3. M261Gd – Lower Verde Geographic Area

Perennial streams that run through the GA include Verde River, Gap and Chasm Creeks. Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation includes ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix and evergreen/deciduous mix.

The Verde River is one of the most distinctive features of the geographic area. It has been identified as an eligible Wild and Scenic River. Figure 18 is a photo of the Verde River taken at the Clear Creek Day Use Area. The riparian vegetation is a unique feature on the Forest. The river corridor provides habitat for the majority of plant and animal species throughout the Forest. This lush habitat provides a high probability of wildlife viewing.

The Black Hills Mountain range provides a scenic backdrop for the communities of Cottonwood, Camp Verde, and Cornville. These communities have all identified the importance of natural appearing open spaces and scenic views of the Forest and how they are a component of the community character in the document *A Landscape Vision for the Verde Valley, West of the Verde River* the Community Vision Statements. The Cedar Bench Wilderness is nestled in the southern portion of the geographic area.

Recreation Opportunities

The Verde River corridor offers a variety of recreation opportunities including fishing, driving for pleasure, swimming, canoeing, wildlife viewing, bird watching, picnicking, hiking, and a cool micro-climate offering relief from desert heat. The Hayfield Draw ATV area offers around thirty-five miles of motorized trails. There are approximately thirty-seven miles of non-motorized trails in the Lower Verde Geographic Area. Primitive recreation experiences can be pursued in the Cedar Bench Wilderness Area. Once the Tule Mesa is reached, expansive views of the desert below reward the visitor.

The White Bridge Day Use Area offers shaded picnic areas. Visitors can see the Black Hills from the picnic area.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

The Verde Valley has a rich mix of historical activity. Farming began in the Valley around 700 A.D. These farms included irrigation systems for the crops of cotton, corn and beans. Some pastoral farming landscapes are still found in the Valley. Native Americans living in the valley included the Yavapai and Apache tribes. The Fort Verde Historic State Park and Montezuma Castle National Park Cliff Dwelling are dominant historic markers of the past near the Lower Verde Geographic Area. Camp Verde is the oldest settlement in the Verde Valley. The area became more populated as mining and ranching boomed.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

This geographic area is dominated by elevated, lowland and valley Plains with 27,600 acres in this landform type. The rolling foothills compose approximately 25,790 acres. The Black Hills Mountains range covers around 20, 230 acres.

Surface Water Characteristics

Nearly sixteen miles of the Verde River wind through the geographic area. Other perennial streams include Chasm and Gap Creeks. Each creek extends around 2 miles in the geographic area.

Existing Vegetation

Existing vegetation groups on the plains are dominated by juniper woodlands 40%, PJ woodland 25%, grasslands 17% .Vegetation on the rolling hills is dominated by chaparral, juniper woodlands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands with inclusions of grasslands, desert scrub. The vegetation in the mountains is dominated by pinyon woodlands, juniper woodlands, and pinyon-juniper woodlands and chaparral.

Potential Natural Vegetation

Potential Natural Vegetation in the Lower Verde GA is composed of 44% PJ chaparral, 31% semi-desert grasslands, 13% interior chaparral, 8% PJ grassland, 3% riparian, and <1% mixed broadleaf deciduous.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the vegetation zones represented in this GA. Livestock grazing, and impacts from recreation activities has led to disturbances in this landscape.

Mingus _____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

Valued Landscape Attributes

The Mingus geographic area covers 109,573 acres of the Forest. Mingus Mountain is the dominant landmark of this geographic unit. Elevations range from 4,520 feet along the Historic General Crook Trail on the south end, to 7,726 feet on Mingus Mountain.

Scenic attractiveness Class A vegetation includes blue grama grass, ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix, ponderosa pine/oak mix, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen/deciduous mix and Arizona oak. Landforms include rolling hills, and steep mountain slopes of the Black Hills mountain range. Yeager Canyon is a unique feature of the area with the steep, winding canyon walls dotted with manzanita, pinion-juniper, mountain mahogany and scrub oak.

Vegetative patterns include chaparral with ponderosa pine in the Mingus Mountain area. Pinyon-juniper is dominant throughout the foothills. The drive along the Mingus Mountain Scenic Road provides access to Forest Road 104 leading to recreation areas on Mingus Mountain and to amazing scenic vistas of the Colorado Plateau and Mogollon Rim. Forest visitors from the desert areas greatly value the relief from the heat while recreating in the ponderosa pine forests in this area.

The rugged mountain peaks, rock outcrops, high elevation forests, alpine lakes and scenic vistas provide a high country scenic setting for those who venture this way. The Black Hills Mountains are highly valued for their cultural, geologic, and scenic attributes. The Woodchute Wilderness provides opportunities for those seeking solitude.

Recreation Opportunities

The Mingus Mountain area receives very high recreation use with a variety of opportunities in all seasons. Recreation opportunities include developed and dispersed recreation ranging from driving for pleasure, hiking, horseback riding, hang gliding, to camping, day use, ATV riding, fishing and hunting. There is a snow play area at the intersection of Forest Road 104 and Highway 89 Alternative Route. Elks Well is a very popular fishing area. Hundreds of recreationists seek the cool temperatures of the ponderosa pine forests found in the Mingus geographic area to escape the heat of the desert below.

Three campgrounds are nestled in the Mingus Mountains. This includes: Potato Patch, Mingus campground and picnic area, and Playground Group campgrounds. The area boasts a multitude of hiking and equestrian trails covering over fifty miles of the Forest. Motorized trails include Martin Canyon, Gaddes, Medlar Springs and Ash Creek

Driving for pleasure is likely the most popular activity with unique scenic viewing opportunities along the Mingus Mountain Scenic Road, and from the Mingus Mountain Vistas. The Mingus Mountain Scenic Road winds up the Yeager Canyon to Mingus Mountain and snakes down to the historic town of Jerome.

A few miles of the Historic General Crook Trail and the Great Western Trail both run through the geographic area. Around twelve miles of motorized trail opportunities are found in the Mingus Geographic Area. There are several summer homes and summer camps in the area.

The Woodchute Wilderness Area is located in this geographic area covering over 5,900 acres on Forest. Elevations range from 5,500 feet to 7,800 feet at Woodchute Mountain. This Wilderness is considered to be an urban Wilderness. Panoramic views of the San Francisco Mountains can be seen from the Wilderness area. The Woodchute Trail winds through juniper and pinion pine stands on the foothills, and ponderosa pine in the mountain highlands.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

The landscape of the Mingus GA has been influenced by timber production, mining, grazing, and fire suppression.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Hills, mountains and escarpments are the dominant landforms in this GA at 47% of the area. Hills compose approximately 37% and plains compose 18% of the area. Mingus is the 3rd most mountainous geographic area.

Existing Vegetation

Existing vegetation in the Mingus GA is dominated by chaparral 48%, and desert scrub 14%. Although the mixed conifer and pine forests are valued landscape attributes, they compose >1% and 9% of the GA respectively. Refer to figure 39 for an illustration of the existing vegetative composition.

Potential Natural Vegetation

Potential natural vegetation is dominated by Chaparral 49%, PJ Woodland 17%, and semi-desert grassland 11% which closely reflects the existing vegetation composition. Figure 40 displays the PNVT mosaic.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the vegetation zones represented in this GA. Livestock grazing, and impacts from recreation activities and fire suppression have led to

disturbances in this landscape. Resources damage including the development of social trails is occurring from unmanaged recreation activities.

Upper Verde_____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

Valued Landscape Attributes

The Upper Verde is the largest geographic area covering 284,724 acres of the Forest. The Verde River is the crown jewel of this geographic area. “It is one of Arizona’s major perennial rivers and a treasured resource in the central part of the state. Free flowing for most of its length, it provides lush riparian habitat, abundant wildlife, diverse recreational opportunities, and spectacular scenery.” Prescott NF

The majority of the Verde River is open to public recreation of all kinds. Fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking, camping, bird watching, and sightseeing are all popular activities. Several threatened and endangered species inhabit the aquatic and riparian habitats of the Verde River.

Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation is the same as the Mingus GA. Geologic features of caves, arches and steep cliffs add interest to the landscape.

The Verde Canyon Railroad parallels the Verde River from Clarksdale up to the ghost town of Perkinsville. The ride offers hours of scenic viewing opportunities in what seems to be the ‘Old West’.

On top of the hills, long sweeping vistas of the juniper covered plains can be seen.

Approximately 26,400 acres of the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness and 18 acres of the Woodchute Wilderness occur in the GA. The Sycamore Canyon Wilderness is only accessible by foot or horseback offering outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude. Sycamore Creek has a lush riparian area surrounding pools created by Parsons and Summer’s Springs that feed the Creek. Cliff Dwellings are scattered in Sycamore Canyon.

Recreation Opportunities

A variety of recreation activities are pursued in the Upper Verde GA. The Verde River provides swimming, fishing, boating, canoeing and kayaking opportunities. Sight seeing from the Verde Canyon Railroad and from the roads and trails that cross the GA is a popular activity. Swimming and fishing are also popular in Sycamore Canyon. Activities that occur in the GA include rock hunting, which is a favorite pastime for some visitors. Viewing ancient ruins can also be done in the area. Visitors may also participate in bird and wildlife watching. Hunting is also popular. There are around 16 miles of motorized trails, 1.3 miles of hiking trail, 4.5 miles of bike trail, and 58 miles of equestrian trails for visitors to enjoy.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

The Upper Verde GA has been influenced by man’s activities for centuries. Ancient cliff dwellings of the Sinagua phase of the Anasazi Culture are found in the Verde Canyon.

Ranching was once a prominent use of the land. The mining boom at Jerome also played a role in the development of the landscape with the need to construct the Verde Canyon Railroad. “The Verde Canyon Railroad (formerly the Verde Valley Railroad, operated by the Santa Fe, Prescott and Phoenix Railroad), was financed by Senator William A. Clark for a hefty $1.3 million. A miracle of engineering, the 38-mile line was built in just one year, from 1911 to 1912. It took 250 men using 200 mules, picks and shovels and lots of Dupont black powder explosives to lay these rails.” *Verde Canyon Railroad.* The railroad was build to support the mining operations near Jerome, but soon was used to transport an array of goods and people across the region.

Other activities that have influenced the landscape include treatment of juniper woodlands, additional mining activities, utility corridors, and dispersed recreation including social trails from ATV riders.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Half of the GA is covered with plains, hills cover 33% of the area and the remaining 17% provides mountainous terrain. This geographic area has the largest expanse of plains of all the geographic areas.

Surface Water Characteristics

Perennial streams include approximately 34 miles of the Verde River and nearly 13 miles of Sycamore Canyon run through the GA.

Existing Vegetation

The primary vegetation groups in the Upper Verde GA are Juniper Woodlands 40%, PJ woodlands 25%, and 17% grasslands, refer to figure 47.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The dominant PNVT are PJ Chaparral 60%, PJ grassland 26% and Colorado Plateau Grassland at 7%. This mix closely reflects existing vegetation groups, refer to figure 48.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the vegetation zones represented in this GA. Livestock grazing has led to disturbances in this landscape. Erosion is occurring on unmanaged roadbeds. Resource impacts have occurred from dispersed camping and user created ATV trails

WEST SIDE OF THE PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST

Nearly half of the Forest is on the west side of the city of Prescott, Arizona. Mountain ranges on this side of the Forest include the Juniper, Santa Maria, Sierra Prieta, and Bradshaw Mountains.

Camp Wood _____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

Valued Landscape Attributes

The Camp Wood is the smallest geographic area covering 87,239 acres of the Forest. The ponderosa pine forest provides ample shade to provide cool relief from desert heat for visitors. The contrast of scattered rock outcrops and vegetation create a scenic landscape. Walnut and Apache Creeks run through the GA. Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation includes blue gramma grass, ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen/deciduous mix and Arizona oak

Two Wilderness Areas are located in the GA, Juniper Mesa Wilderness and the Apache Creek Wilderness. Both of the Wilderness areas are relatively small. The Juniper Mesa Wilderness area is 7,406 acres, and the Apache Creek Wilderness is 5,666 acres.

Several open, sweeping vistas of rolling hills and of PJ and juniper woodlands can be viewed from the primary Forest roads.

Both Wilderness Areas are accessible by foot and equestrian trails.

Recreation Opportunities

The Camp Wood GA provides almost equal amounts of motorized and non-motorized trails with 34 miles of motorized trails, and 31 miles equestrian trails. Most of the equestrian trails are in the Apache Creek and Juniper Mesa Wilderness Areas. Sheridan mountain offers a network of ATV trails. Other recreation activities include wildlife and bird watching, driving for pleasure, and hunting.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

The landscape of the Camp Wood GA has been influenced by grazing, fire suppression timber production, and prescribed burning.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Half of the GA is composed of rolling hills, plains and mesas make up 38% of the area, and mountainous terrain only cover 12% of the area. Mountain ranges in the area include Connell Mountains, Santa Maria Mountains

and Juniper Mountains. The summit of Bald Mountain is 6,900 feet in elevation. The Juniper Mesa Wilderness reaches up to 7,000 feet in elevation near Gobblers Knob. The south end of the Wilderness rises steeply above the valley floor. On the plains, elevations are as low as 5,300 feet in elevation. There are a lot of rock outcrops in this GA.

Figure 4. Landforms of the Camp Wood GA

Surface Water Characteristics

No perennial streams are located in the Camp Wood GA.

Existing Vegetation

The majority of the GA, 40%, is covered with PJ woodlands and 20% is covered by juniper woodlands. There are inclusions of ponderosa pine and chaparral at 13% and 14% respectively. Refer to figure 57 for a map of the vegetative mosaic.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The dominant PNVT are PJ Chaparral 45%, Pine-Oak Mix 20%, Ponderosa pine 12%, and interior chaparral at 11%. This mix closely reflects existing vegetation groups. Refer to figure 58 for a map of the PNVT. Existing vegetation in this area is closer to historical range of variability than other geographic areas.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the vegetation zones represented in this GA. Livestock grazing, and impacts from recreation activities and fire suppression have led to disturbances in this landscape. Erosion is occurring on unmanaged roadbeds.

Cellers Basin _____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

Valued Landscape Attributes

Special or Distinctive Features

The Cellers Basin geographic area covers 87,443 acres of the Forest. Scenic attractiveness Class A vegetation includes ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen/deciduous mix and Arizona oak. A portion of the Bradshaw mountain range runs through the geographic area.

Recreation Opportunities

There are several motorized trails including around 22 miles of ATV trail, and 38 miles of motorcycle trails. There are no developed recreation sites in the Camp Wood GA.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

The earliest known inhabitants of the Bradshaw mountains area were Yavapai Indians referred to as Kwevkapaya. They mined copper in the area from approximately 1100 AD to 1600 AD. During the 1800's the Apaches occupied the area. White settlers began coming to the area by the early 1860's. Soon the Bradshaw range was full of settlers mining for gold, silver and copper. The majority of towns that had developed to support the miners became ghost towns by the early 1900's.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Cellers Basin has the highest concentration of rugged terrain of all the geographic areas with 51% of the landform as mountains in the Bradshaw Mountain Range. Approximately 13% of the area is covered by plains and mesas, and the remaining 36% of the area is rolling hills.

Surface Water Characteristics

Nearly 3 miles of the Hassayampa River run through the north end of the GA providing riparian vegetation and cooler temperatures than the desert area below.

Existing Vegetation

The dominant vegetation group is chaparral covering 51% of the GA. Desert scrub covers 24% of the area with inclusions of juniper woodlands and pinyon woodlands at 8% and 9% respectively.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The dominant PNVT is interior chaparral covering 42% of the area. PJ chaparral and the semi-desert grasslands are the next largest PNVT providing cover for 22% and 20% of the

area respectively. PJ grasslands compose 10% of the area. The PNVT for this GA is similar to the existing vegetation.

Disturbance Regimes

The primary disturbance regime in this area is wildfire. Motorized recreation has a role in the appearance of the current landscape. Over the last century, mining has impacted the landscape as well.

Crown King _____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

Valued Landscape Attributes

This geographic area covers 131,209 acres of the Forest. Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation includes blue grama grass, ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen/deciduous mix and Arizona oak. Horsethief Basin Lake is a unique water feature on the southwest portion of the Forest.

The entire Castle Creek Wilderness is located in this GA. Saguaro cactus, paloverde, jojoba, catlcaw and mesquite can be found in the southern end of the Wilderness along the lower elevations. The mountains are dotted with ponderosa pine, and the rolling hills are covered with scrubby live oak, mountain mahogany, manzanita, and PJ. Elevations range from 2,800 to 7,000 feet.

Recreation Opportunities

There are several recreation opportunities in this geographic are. Forest visitors can participate in camping, picnicking, hiking, fishing, non-motorized boating, swimming, hiking, horseback riding, motorcycle and ATV riding. Ghost town tours are available in the area. There are 103 miles of trails in this GA. This includes 13 miles of ATV, 52 miles of motorcycle, 1 mile of hiking, and 37 miles of equestrian trails. Refer to the trial locations as shown in figure 65. The Prescott NF Horse thief Cabin rental is available for visitors to use as their recreational getaway.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

The earliest known inhabitants of the Bradshaw mountains area were Yavapai Indians referred to as Kwevkapaya. They mined copper in the area from approximately 1100 AD to 1600 AD. During the 1800s the Apaches occupied the area. White settlers began coming to the area by the early 1860's. Soon the Bradshaw range was full of settlers mining for gold, silver and copper. The majority of towns that had developed to support the miners became ghost towns by the early 1900's.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Crown King GA landforms consist of 49% Mountains, hills and escarpments (scenic attractiveness class A), 43% rolling hills, and 9% plains and mesas. Refer to figure 68 for a map of the landforms. Elevations range from 2,640 to 7,600 feet elevation.

Surface Water Characteristics

Horsethief Lake is the primary water feature in this GA. There are several small water tanks scattered across the GA.

Existing Vegetation

Existing vegetation in the Crown King GA is dominated by chaparral at 51%, and desert scrub at 24% of the area. The rest of the vegetative mosaic has inclusions of oak woodlands, ponderosa pine/oak mix, juniper and pinyon woodlands. Refer to the existing vegetation map in figure 69.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The dominant PNVT for the Crown King area are interior Chaparral at 60%, and semi-desert grassland at 20% of the area. The PNVT closely resembles the existing condition. Refer to figure 70 for a map of the Crown King PNVT.

Disturbance Regimes

The landscape has been influenced by historical mining activities, fire suppression and now prescribed fires, heavy motorized recreation use, dispersed and developed recreation activities both managed and un-managed, and illegal motorized recreation in Wilderness.

Prescott Basin

The Prescott Basin GA is 161,557 acres, and is the 3rd largest geographic area on the Forest. This GA provides the scenic backdrop for the city of Prescott, AZ.

Valued Landscape Attributes

The Forest has very little Aspen stands. This GA has the largest aspen stand on the Forest at approximately 30 acres. Thumb Butte is the main landmark for the Prescott Valley.

The ponderosa pine and PJ woodlands along the mountains and rolling hills provide cool temperatures for recreation and leisure activities. Long sweeping vistas of the Copper Basin can be seen from Forest Road 373 as it winds through the Sierra Prieta mountains.

Lynx Lake and Granite Basin Lakes provides a scenic summer oasis for Forest visitors.

Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation includes blue grama grass, ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen/deciduous mix and Arizona oak.

Recreation Opportunities

Recreation uses include camping, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, ATV riding, picnicking, dispersed camping, driving for pleasure, canoeing, and swimming. Refer to figure 75 for a map of the recreation opportunities. The 9,799 acre Granite Basin Wilderness provides a primitive setting for hikers and horseback riders. Forest visitors enjoy boating, picnicking and fishing at Granite Basin Lake is just south of the Wilderness area.

Established in 1896, the Groom Creek School House was an active school until 1952. The building is now registered as a National Historic Place, and is made available for public use during summer months by the Prescott NF. The group day use area provides accessible picnic sites and restroom facilities. The site also has an interpretive trail.

The landscape has been influenced by mining activities, development of utility corridors, fire suppression in the past, and now fuel reduction activities. There is a lot of private land interspersed with Forest lands. This mix of private and Forest lands has led to creation of social trails and other types of unmanaged recreation use such as illegal ATV use.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

The dominant landform in the Prescott Basin is rolling hills covering 47% of the area. Mountains with inclusions of escarpments make up 34% of the area, and plains and mesas cover 18%. Elevations range from 4,600 in the Copper Basin to 7,920 feet at Mt Union, the highest point on the Forest. Refer to the landform map in figure 79. The Sierra Prieta Mountain Range, Mt Union, Big Bug Mesa and Copper Basin are primary landforms in this GA.

Surface Water Characteristics

Perennial streams include approximately 9.5 miles of the Hassayampa River and 2 miles of the Copper Basin Wash.

Existing Vegetation

The dominant vegetation group in the Prescott Basin GA is chaparral at 44%, followed by pine-oak mix at 14%, PJ woodlands at 11% and oak woodland at 10%. There are inclusions of ponderosa pine, herbaceous grasslands, juniper woodlands, madrean woodlands, pinyon woodlands, and mixed conifer. Refer to figure 80 for the existing vegetation map.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The dominant PNVT is interior chaparral at 43% of the GA, followed by ponderosa pine-mild at 21%, and PJ chaparral at 19%. There are inclusions of ponderosa pine, dry mixed conifer and Colorado plateau grasslands. The PNVT vegetative mix is similar to existing vegetation, however there is less ponderosa pine in the existing vegetative mosaic.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the GA. With the high amount of private lands and wide array of recreation use, the amount of invasive plants is increasing. Resource damage is occurring from high levels of recreation use including user created social trails and unmanaged ATV use.

Smith Mesa Geographic Area _____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

The Smith Mesa Geographic Area is 119,946 acres.

Valued Landscape Attributes

Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation includes blue grama grass, and ponderosa pine. The ponderosa pine stands provide cool temperatures for summer visitors to escape the heat. Juniper and PJ woodlands are scattered across the mesa's providing the main vegetative mosaic of the area.

Recreation Opportunities

The primary recreation use is ATV riding. The Sheridan Mountain-Smith Mesa ATV trail system has over 50 miles of trails to explore. There is also around 3 miles of the Wood Trap equestrian trail. Hunting and hiking are also popular activities with a sense of remoteness in the backcountry. There are no developed recreation sites in this geographic area.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

Ranching including livestock grazing has been taking place for a long time, and has had an impact on the existing vegetative composition and introduction of noxious weeds.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Smith Mesa dominant landforms are plains and mesas at 43%, followed by 33% rolling hills and 23% mountains and escarpments. Elevations ranged from 3,340 feet in Smith Canyon to 6,466 feet at Cottonwood Mountain. Mesas in this GA include Smith Mesa, Tailholt Mesa, and Sycamore Mesa. Another high peak in this GA is Sheridan Mountain at 6,199 feet elevation.

Surface Water Characteristics

Just a little more than a half mile of the Strickland Wash runs through the GA. Sheridan Lake is located on the south-west side of the area.

Existing Vegetation

The dominant vegetation group is juniper woodlands at 35% of the area, followed by PJ woodlands at 29% and chaparral at 19%. There are also inclusions of desert scrub, herbaceous grasslands.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The dominant PNVT for the Smith Mesa GA is PJ chaparral covering 52% of the area, followed by interior chaparral at 33%, and PJ grasslands at 11% and Colorado plateau grasslands for 6% of the area. PNVT is similar to existing vegetation, but has far more chaparral than the existing vegetative mosaic.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the GA. Livestock grazing occurs in the area, and overgrazing may be causing resource damage. Juniper encroachment of herbaceous grasslands is occurring. Resource damage may be occurring from unmanaged ATV use.

Yavapai_____

SOCIAL COMPONENT

The Yavapai Geographic Area is 200,911 acres, making it the second largest geographic area on the Forest.

Valued Landscape Attributes

Scenic attractiveness class A vegetation includes blue grama grass, ponderosa pine, ponderosa pine/Arizona oak mix, ponderosa pine/gambel oak mix, evergreen/deciduous mix and Arizona oak.

Recreation Opportunities

The Yavapai GA offers 46 miles of ATV trails to recreationists. Dispersed recreation and hunting occur in the area. There are no developed recreation facilities in the area.

Cultural Ecological Influence on the Landscape

Ranching was a predominant use of the part of the Forest. Range management of clearing PJ woodlands and cattle grazing has influenced the current landscape. "Walnut Creek Station in 1908 to serve as the District Ranger Station for the northwest quadrant of the Prescott National Forest. Walnut Creek also served as a major center for fire suppression activities, working in concert with the nearby Hyde Mountain fire lookout. The station was used as a camp by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930's. During this time, the CCC built the ranger's residence (1934) and the multipurpose building (1936)." Walnut Creek Center for Education and Research.

ECOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Dominant Environmental Regimes

Landform/Geomorphology

Elevations range from 4,680 on the east side of the unit to 6,960 feet at Gobler Knob. The dominant landform on the Yavapai GA is plains/mesas at 48% of the area, followed by rolling hills at 38% and mountains cover 13% of the area. The Juniper Mountain range runs through the GA. Refer to figure 93 for an illustration of the Yavapai GA landforms.

Surface Water Characteristics

Less than 1 mile of the Walnut Creek Wash runs through the area. This part of the Forest is very dry.

Existing Vegetation

The dominant vegetation group is juniper woodlands at 49%, followed by PJ woodlands at 22%, and grasslands at 19%. There are also inclusions of ponderosa pine and chaparral. Figure 94 illustrates the existing vegetation composition.

Potential Natural Vegetation

The Yavapai geographic area PNVT is dominated by PJ woodlands and PJ chaparral, both representing 34% of the area. The next highest concentration of PNVT is the Colorado Plateau Grassland representing 17% of the area. There are inclusions of ponderosa pine, mixed broadleaf deciduous and interior chaparral. Figure 95 illustrates the PNVT mosaic.

Disturbance Regimes

Wildfires vary in frequency and intensity within the vegetation types. The high amount of private lands within the geographic area make it hard for visitors to know if they are on Forest land or private lands. This scenario has led to development of some social trails, and unmanaged recreation. Juniper is encroaching on the herbaceous grasslands.