

Steps to Wilderness Designation

1. Inventory Potential Wilderness Areas

The Prescott National Forest completes an inventory of lands which meet the criteria for potential wilderness found in FS Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70. This inventory sets the stage for a NEPA analysis, but the inventory itself is not a NEPA decision-making process.

2. Evaluate Potential Wilderness Areas

The Prescott National Forest evaluates the Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs) in a process concurrent with the forest plan revision process. The evaluation assesses these potential wilderness areas based on their wilderness characteristics (Capability), their trade-offs between wilderness and other resources (Availability), and their unique value to the National Wilderness Preservation System (Need).

3. Forest Supervisor Recommends Potential Wilderness Areas

In the draft of the revised Prescott National Forest Land Management Plan and its alternatives, the Forest Supervisor proposes which PWAs, if any, will be “recommended” for wilderness designation.

4. Environmental Analysis and Public Comment

Proposed recommendations are included in the draft of the revised Prescott National Forest Land Management Plan, and are supported by NEPA analysis and decision-making. The public is asked to review these recommendations and provide input for the final administrative recommendation.

5. Regional Forester Recommends Potential Wilderness Areas

In the decision for the final revised Prescott National Forest Land Management Plan, the Regional Forester identifies which PWAs are “recommended” for wilderness.

6. Recommendations go to Washington, D.C.

The Regional Forester’s recommendations go to the Chief of the Forest Service, who may elect to forward a recommendation, with wording for a Congressional bill, to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Administration may elect to transmit the proposed bill to Congress.

7. Congress Designates Wilderness

Congress may enact the proposed bill into law, resulting in designated Wilderness.
Only Congress has the authority to create designated Wilderness.