

## Prescott National Forest Potential Wilderness FAQs

### **Q. What prompted the Prescott National Forest to evaluate new potential wilderness areas?**

A. The Prescott National Forest is required to conduct an evaluation of potential wilderness areas as part of its forest plan revision process. The 1982 planning rule, which provides the direction for conducting these forest plan revision efforts, outlines the requirement for the potential wilderness evaluation as follows “...[unroaded] areas within the National Forest System shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness areas during the forest planning process...” (Section 217.17).

### **Q. How were potential wilderness areas evaluated?**

A. There were four major steps the Prescott National Forest followed to evaluate these areas:

1. Inventory – Identify and inventory lands which meet the legal definition of “wilderness.”
2. Capability – Evaluate how well these lands meet basic wilderness characteristics such as naturalness, solitude, and manageability.
3. Availability – Compare the trade-offs involved in managing the area for wilderness character versus other values such as timber, grazing, wildlife, or minerals.
4. Need – Determine if there is a need for additional wilderness in the region by considering the unique ecological and social values these lands contribute to the National Wilderness Preservation System and what other wilderness areas are already established.

During the evaluation process, the Prescott National Forest identified 28 areas meeting the initial inventory criteria that were then evaluated for wilderness capability. Twenty areas were determined to be capable of supporting wilderness character and providing a wilderness experience; these areas were then evaluated on availability and need. More information about these areas can be found in the Potential Wilderness Area Evaluation report on the Prescott National Forest Web site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/prescott/plan-revision/concurrent-processes-wldns.shtml>

### **Q. Where can I find information on the Forest Supervisor’s recommended areas?**

A. The Forest Supervisor’s recommended areas will be included in the final draft of the revised Prescott National Forest Land Management Plan (also known as the forest plan). However, the potential wilderness areas included in this recommendation will depend on the version of the revised plan that is selected at the conclusion of the forest plan revision process. A summary of the potential wilderness areas included in each plan alternative can be found in the Wilderness Recommendations document on the Prescott National Forest Web site.

### **Q. What is the process for wilderness designation, and how long will it take?**

A. Only Congress can create a designated wilderness area.

The Potential Wilderness Evaluation is the first step in a process for the Forest Service to recommend new wilderness areas to Congress. This evaluation will be used by the leadership of the Prescott National Forest to determine if any areas will be sent to the Regional Forester (the deciding official) for consideration. The Forest Supervisor’s recommendations to the Regional Forester will be documented in

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the draft of the revised Prescott National Forest Land Management Plan , and public comments will be accepted and considered throughout the plan revision process.

Any potential wilderness areas recommended by the Regional Forester will receive further review by the Chief of the Forest Service. The Chief may elect to forward a recommendation with wording for a Congressional bill to the Secretary of Agriculture, who may then elect to transmit the proposed bill to Congress. It takes an act of Congress to designate a wilderness area, and the process of drafting and passing a wilderness bill can take an uncertain amount of time. The most recent legislation to create designated wilderness in Arizona was the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990.

### **Q. What IS and IS NOT allowed in wilderness?**

A. The use of motorized or mechanized equipment and vehicles, road construction and commercial activities are prohibited in wilderness, except under special provisions provided for by the 1964 Wilderness Act. Examples of uses that are prohibited include: mountain biking, hang-gliding, off-highway vehicles, motorcycles, and chainsaws.

### **Q. What IS and IS NOT allowed in recommended areas?**

A. Recommended wilderness areas are not wilderness and are not subject to the same restrictions. Recommended wilderness areas will be managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics, including their scenic beauty, natural conditions, solitude, and identified special features. However, the Forest Supervisor may allow the continued use of mechanized and motorized equipment in the area if it does not permanently impair the area's wilderness character. Examples may include the continued use of mountain bikes or the implementation of an ecosystem restoration or habitat project. New road construction or improvement in a recommended area would be discouraged due to its impact on wilderness character.

### **Q. How would wilderness designation affect current grazing on allotments that overlap with areas being considered for wilderness?**

A. Grazing is permitted in allotments that were being grazed prior to an area's designation as wilderness. The Forest Service uses the Congressional Grazing Guidelines, which can be found in Forest Service Manual 2320. These guidelines allow for the reasonable use of motorized and mechanized equipment to manage the range resource, including improvements such as tanks and fences.

### **Q. Who can I contact if I have additional questions?**

For general forest plan revision inquiries, contact Mary C. Rasmussen  
(928) 443-8265 or email: [mcrasmussen@fs.fed.us](mailto:mcrasmussen@fs.fed.us)

For wilderness-specific questions, contact Christopher Brown  
(928) 443-8218 or email: [christopherjbrown@fs.fed.us](mailto:christopherjbrown@fs.fed.us)

Comments may also be submitted electronically on the Prescott National Forest Web site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/prescott/contact/feedback.shtml>