

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Wilderness Evaluation Report

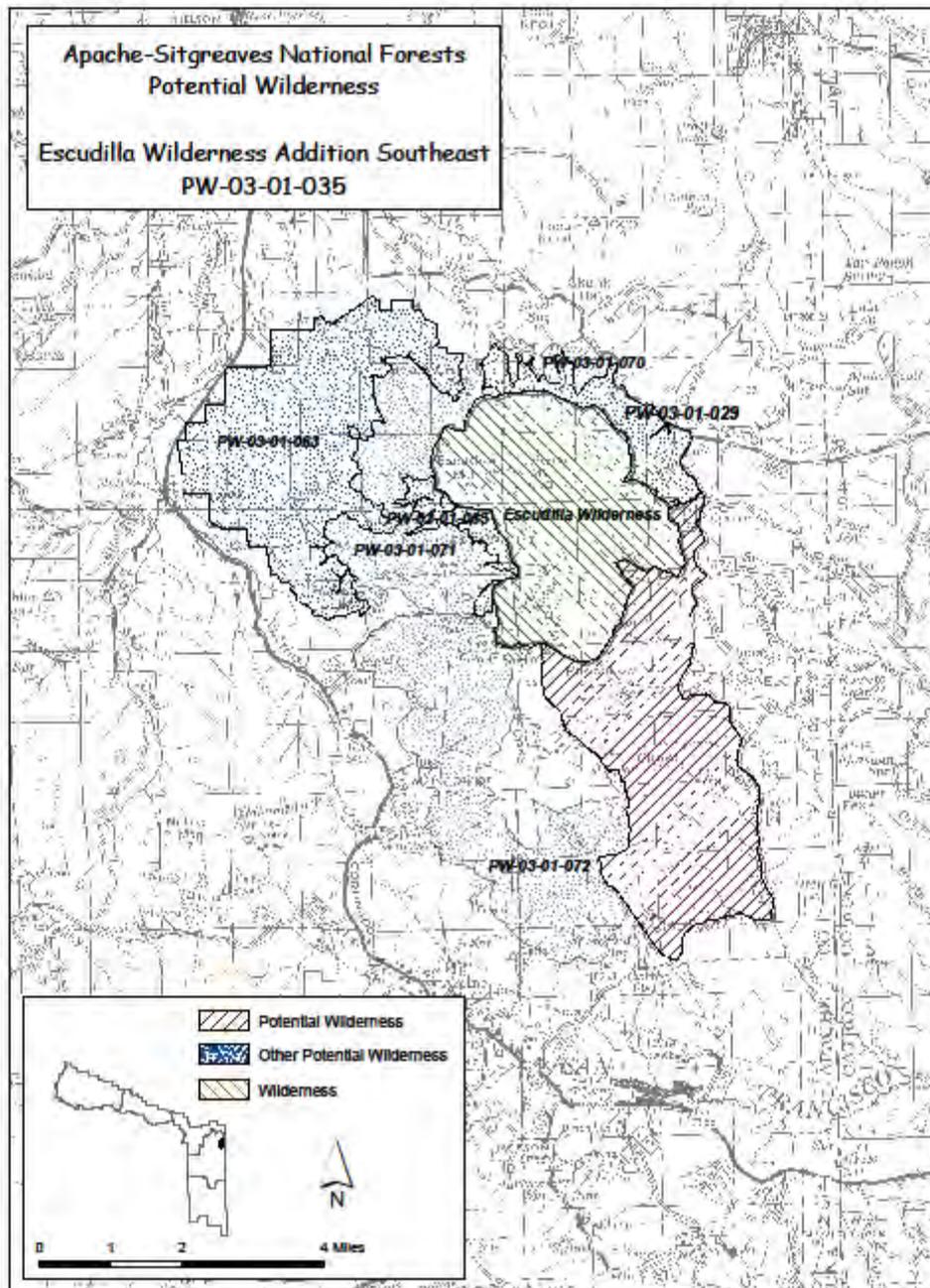
Escudilla Wilderness Addition Southeast
Potential Wilderness

PW-03-01-035

October 2012

Table of Contents

| | |
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| Introduction | 1 |
| Background | 2 |
| Capability Evaluation..... | 4 |
| Availability Evaluation | 6 |
| Need Evaluation | 8 |
| Effects of Recommendations | 10 |
| Appendix A: Wilderness Evaluation Process..... | 17 |
| Appendix B: Capability Evaluation Worksheet | 20 |
| Appendix C: Availability Evaluation Worksheet..... | 24 |
| Appendix D: Need Evaluation Worksheet | 26 |



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Map created June 2009 by ctreman. Updated October 2012.

Introduction

As part of the Forest Plan Revision process for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Apache-Sitgreaves NFs), the Forest Service has prepared this Wilderness Evaluation Report for the Escudilla Wilderness Addition Southeast potential wilderness.

Purpose

The Forest Service must evaluate all lands possessing wilderness characteristics for potential wilderness during plan revision. Completion of a potential wilderness inventory and evaluation is an essential step in the plan revision process. Wilderness is one of many special area designations the Forest Service considers during plan revision; it is one of three mandatory special area evaluations. If an area is recommended for wilderness designation, then the revised plan would contain desired conditions, objectives, guidelines, and/or standards that would protect its wilderness characteristics.

The Process

The wilderness evaluation process began with an inventory of potential wilderness, which includes areas of federal land over 5,000 contiguous acres and other areas that meet the criteria in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, Section 71, and then determined if those areas meet the definition of wilderness. Once a list of potential wilderness areas was created, each area was evaluated for capability, availability, and need. These evaluation factors are described in the introduction to each evaluation step and in Appendix A. This report summarizes the wilderness capability, availability, and need evaluations based on the best available information. This report also presents the potential effects of a wilderness or nonwilderness recommendation.

The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs will use this report to determine whether or not to make a preliminary administrative recommendation for wilderness designation for the Escudilla Wilderness Addition Southeast potential wilderness. The Responsible Official's (Regional Forester) recommendation will be documented in the final revised Plan and the Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision. Public comments on this report will be accepted and considered throughout the plan revision process. If a potential wilderness is recommended for wilderness, the recommendation will receive further review by the Chief of the Forest Service and the Secretary of Agriculture. If the Chief of the Forest Service intends to move forward with a wilderness recommendation, the Forest Service will complete a detailed analysis of the trade-offs and impacts in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, including further public review and comment. Ultimately, only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness.

Background

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Name | Escudilla Wilderness Addition Southeast |
| Number | PW-03-01-035 |
| Acres | 6,039 |
| Ranger District | Alpine |
| History (if applicable) | The potential wilderness overlaps Escudilla Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) (2000 Roadless Area Conservation FEIS, 2001 Roadless Rule) by 993 acres. Escudilla Wilderness (5,200 acres) was designated by Congress in 1984. |
| Location, Vicinity, and Access | Located approximately 18 miles southeast of Springerville, Arizona, in Apache County. It is located on the east and southeast slopes of Escudilla Mountain in the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs in eastern Arizona. The potential wilderness is also southeast of Nutrioso and northeast of Alpine. The area can be accessed from U.S. Highways 180/191 and Forest Roads (FR) 275 and 8056. |
| Geography and Topography | Located along the east and southeast sides of Escudilla Mountain. The area is characterized by steep conifer and aspen-covered slopes. Elevations range from 8,700 feet along the FR 275 to over 9,800 feet on Terry Flat. |
| Surroundings | Escudilla Wilderness and FR 275V ¹ form the northern potential wilderness boundary. The south and east boundaries follow FR 275, while the west boundary is defined by activity areas, and FRs 275I, 8056, 8057U, and 8057V. FR 275V separates this area from Escudilla Wilderness Addition Northeast (PW-03-01-029) to the north. There are no private lands within or adjacent to the potential wilderness. |
| Special Designation | A very short section of the Escudilla National Recreation Trail (NRT) crosses the extreme northwest corner of the potential wilderness. |
| Vegetation | A number of vegetation communities are found within this potential wilderness. Vegetation varies with elevation and slope. Montane/subalpine grasslands are found on Terry Flat. Spruce-fir forest is found high on the east-facing slopes. At mid-slope, wet mixed conifer and dry mixed conifer forests occur. Ponderosa pine forest is found at the lower elevations. Old trees may be found in the dry mixed conifer and ponderosa pine forests. Cottonwood-willow riparian forest occurs along Bob Thomas and Stone Creeks. Wetland/cienega riparian areas are found along ELC Creek. |
| Appearance and Key Attractions | The potential wilderness is part of a very prominent landmark, Escudilla Mountain. It is visible for many miles and dominates the landscape for travelers along U.S. Highways 180/191 between Springerville and Alpine and along U.S. Highway 60 between Springerville and New Mexico. Aldo Leopold described Escudilla Mountain's prominence in the landscape in his essay entitled <i>Escudilla</i> . The area is characterized by steep conifer and aspen-covered slopes. Extensive aspen stands attract fall visitors. |

¹ Roads may be bounded on one or both sides by the potential wilderness. Where a road is bounded on both sides, a non-potential wilderness corridor or "cherrystem" surrounds the road. Roads that end at the potential wilderness boundary are not listed.

CURRENT USES

- Recreation** The majority of recreation use involves hunting, camping, and viewing scenery and wildlife, excluding the NRT. There are no recreation sites within the potential wilderness. The Escudilla NRT trailhead is adjacent to the area and less than ¼ mile of the trail crosses the extreme northwest corner of the area. Recreation use in almost all of the area is light. Most of the potential wilderness has a recreation emphasis of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, with the remainder Primitive and Roaded Natural.
- Wildlife** Large wildlife species found in the area include elk, mule deer, black bear, and mountain lion. A variety of small animals and birds also inhabit the area. A sensitive northern goshawk post-fledging family area is found just southeast of the potential wilderness. Threatened Mexican spotted owl protected activity centers are found west of and within the area. The area is within the secondary Mexican wolf recovery zone.
- Range** The potential wilderness is within the ELC, South Escudilla, and Stone Creek Allotments. There are 4.8 miles of fence: 1 mile of allotment boundary and 3.8 miles of interior fence.
- Forest Products** Some green aspen poles and a small amount of fuelwood have been removed from the eastern edge of the area.
- Water** The potential wilderness includes Bob Thomas and Stone Creeks and the headwaters of ELC Creek. Gabions were constructed across Stone Creek in the early 1970s, but most are no longer functional. Of the four springs in the area, one is developed.
- Minerals** As of 4/18/2009, there are no mining claims, mineral districts, mineral withdrawals, or coal, oil, gas, or geothermal leases in the potential wilderness.
- Cultural Resources** There are no known historic or prehistoric resources.
- Fire** There have been 31 small fires (most smaller than ¼ acre and the largest 10 acres) in the potential wilderness between 1972 and 2008. Lightning was the primary cause, with smoking and campfires the other causes. The 2011 Wallow Fire burned through this potential wilderness.

Capability Evaluation

Wilderness capability describes the basic characteristics that make the area appropriate and valuable for wilderness designation, regardless of the area's availability or need. Five factors are used to determine capability: naturalness, level of development, opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, special features, and the ability of the Forest Service to manage the area as wilderness. The first four factors consider how the current conditions of the potential wilderness fit the definition of wilderness. Manageability is slightly different because it evaluates features of the area that would make it more or less difficult to manage as wilderness, such as size, shape, and juxtaposition to external influences. The following summarizes the information found in Appendix B.

Summary

Natural

High

The potential wilderness is essentially natural and would supplement the existing biological diversity and naturalness of Escudilla Wilderness. Additional areas of montane/subalpine grasslands, wetland/cienega riparian areas, and cottonwood-willow riparian, spruce-fir, ponderosa pine, wet mixed conifer, and dry mixed conifer forests increase the vegetation and wildlife habitat diversity in the wilderness. The potential wilderness supports Mexican spotted owls and northern goshawks. Mullein, a non-native plant, is found along area roads, but there are no records of the plant in the area. Musk thistle, a non-native plant, has been found southwest of the area. Other non-native species may be present, but no surveys have specifically been conducted in the area. The perennial streams are generally free-flowing; a series of gabions was built on Stone Creek in the early 1970s, but most are no longer functional. The night sky is not affected by light from nearby, small communities. The Wallow Fire did not affect the area's wilderness character because wildfire is considered a natural ecological process.

Undeveloped

High

There is little evidence of human activity within the area, primarily fences. There are no trails.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

High

When considered with the adjoining Escudilla Wilderness, the potential wilderness would enhance the outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The potential wilderness opportunities for hunting, hiking, and viewing scenery and wildlife would complement those in Escudilla Wilderness.

Special Features and Values

Medium

There are no distinct features in this potential wilderness, but there are scientific research opportunities. The Mexican spotted owl is found in the southern end of the area.

Manageability

High

The area would be manageable as wilderness. While access to the potential wilderness is relatively easy from FR275, a more manageable wilderness boundary would be a positive result. There are no known encumbrances or conflicts. Terrain generally precludes motor vehicle use.

OVERALL CAPABILITY

High

Potential Boundary Changes

One boundary changes been identified for this potential wilderness, which would improve wilderness characteristics by removing an area which contains a decommissioned, but evident, road. Also, this area is included in a wilderness proposal submitted by the public.

Availability Evaluation

Availability criteria indicate the availability of a potential wilderness for wilderness designation by describing other resource and land use potentials for the area. Availability examines the potential impact of designating an area as wilderness to both the current and future land uses and activities. In essence, it is a summary of the trade-offs between wilderness and other uses. The following summarizes the information found in Appendix C. The letters below in parenthesis refer to the following required considerations: **a.** recreation, including tourism; **b.** wildlife species, populations, and management needs; **c.** water availability and use; **d.** livestock operations; **e.** timber; **f.** minerals; **g.** cultural resources; **h.** authorized and potential uses; and **i.** management considerations including fire, insects, disease, and presence of non-Federal lands.

Summary

Water Yield (c)

High

The area is of value for water yield. However, no impoundments are needed.

Habitat Management (b)

High

Habitat management needs for wildlife or aquatic animals are minimal.

Aquatic Restoration (b)

Medium to High

Site-specific improvements, requiring the use of heavy equipment, are needed along Stone Creek.

Vegetation Restoration (e, h, i)

Medium

Some of the conifer-covered slopes may need to be burned to reduce fuels. This may no longer be necessary post-Wallow Fire. Also, aspen may need to be treated because of high insect activity; the method of treatment and timing is not currently known.

Public Access Needed (a, g)

High

There are no unique characteristics that would require developed public access. Forest roads parallel much of the boundary.

Land Use Authorizations (d, h, i)

High

Current authorizations, primarily grazing permits, do not conflict with potential wilderness.

Adjacent Non-FS Lands (i)

High

There are no inholdings or non-federal lands adjacent to the potential wilderness.

Cultural Resources (g)

High

There are no known sites needing stabilization. Motorized vehicle access to any TCPs or sacred sites is not needed.

Minerals (f)

High

There is a low potential for future mineral uses.

OVERALL AVAILABILITY

High

Need Evaluation

The evaluation criteria below indicate how the potential wilderness might fit into the National Wilderness Preservation System, which includes all wilderness areas in the United States. Need is considered at the regional level and must incorporate public participation. The criteria used to evaluate need include consideration of other wilderness and nonwilderness areas that provide opportunities for unconfined outdoor recreation or preservation of certain ecosystem characteristics. The following summarizes the information found in Appendix D.

Summary

Factor 1 - The location, size, and type of other wildernesses in the general vicinity and their distance from the proposed area. Consider accessibility of areas to population centers and user groups. Public demand for wilderness may increase with proximity to growing population centers.

Low

There are significant wilderness lands (over 2.5 million acres) on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs and within a 100-mile radius of Escudilla Wilderness Addition Southeast potential wilderness and the forests. There are no population centers within a 100-mile radius of this potential wilderness.

Factor 2 - Present visitor pressure on other wildernesses, the trends in use, changing patterns of use, population expansion factors, and trends and changes in transportation.

Medium

The potential wilderness would respond to a need for additional wilderness based on projected population increases, high use in two of the three Wilderness areas on the forests, and underrepresentation of northeast Arizona in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Factor 3 - The extent to which nonwilderness lands on the NFS unit or other Federal lands are likely to provide opportunities for unconfined outdoor recreation experiences.

Low

There are significant nonwilderness lands (over 5.4 million acres) available for unconfined outdoor recreation outside of designated Wilderness and the Blue Range Primitive Area on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs and within a 100-mile radius of the forests.

Factor 4 - The need to provide a refuge for those species that have demonstrated an inability to survive in less than primitive surroundings or the need for a protected area for other unique scientific values or phenomena.

Medium

There are two Forest Planning Species (FPS) and habitat for four additional FPS that would benefit from primitive surroundings.

Factor 5 - Within social and biological limits, management may increase the capacity of established wildernesses to support human use without unacceptable depreciation of the wilderness resource.

Medium

Of the three wilderness areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs, only Bear Wallow Wilderness could accommodate some increased use without affecting wilderness resources.

Factor 6 - An area's ability to provide for preservation of identifiable landform types and ecosystems. Consideration of this factor may include utilization of Edwin A. Hammond's subdivision of landform types and the Bailey-Kuchler ecosystem classification. This approach is helpful from the standpoint of rounding out the National Wilderness Preservation System and may be further subdivided to suit local, subregional, and regional needs.

Medium

Six underrepresented ecosystems (cottonwood-willow riparian forest, dry mixed conifer forest, montane/subalpine grasslands, spruce-fir forest, wet mixed conifer forest, and wetland/cienega riparian areas) occur across 53 percent of the potential wilderness. There are no underrepresented landforms.

OVERALL NEED

Medium, and is contiguous to Escudilla Wilderness

Effects of Recommendations

| | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | WILDERNESS | NONWILDERNESS | |
| | | LANDS WITH ROADLESS CHARACTER | NONWILDERNESS |
| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values |
| Wilderness Characteristics | EFFECTS ON WILDERNESS RESOURCES AND VALUES | | |
| Natural Undeveloped Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation Special Features and Values | Wilderness characteristics would be maintained and protected. The area would remain natural and generally undeveloped. Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation would continue to be present. Any existing special features and values would be protected. | Wilderness characteristics would be maintained. The area would remain natural and generally undeveloped. Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation would continue to be present. Any existing special features and values would be protected. | Wilderness characteristics would be diminished by management activities along Stone Creek, should the gabions be rebuilt. Obvious signs of activities would cause the Stone Creek area to be removed from potential wilderness. Minimal management activities are expected within the remainder of the area. It is anticipated that the wilderness character of this portion would remain. |
| Resource/Use | EFFECTS ON OTHER RESOURCES AND USES | | |
| Soils | Long-term soil productivity may increase because the acreage is generally not available for management activities. Shorter-term risks to soil productivity may be increased until fire-adapted ecosystems (especially ponderosa pine) are restored. Soil erosion risk would be reduced. | There is a slight potential for soil-disturbing activities related to restoration activities. There may be short-term soil erosion risks. Long-term soil productivity would not be affected. Treatments may reduce soil loss by reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire. | The natural functions of watersheds could be affected by activities. The threat of soil erosion from associated motorized uses and land-disturbing activities would increase with the degree of use. However, mitigation would be required. Compaction from recreation uses in popular areas would likely continue. Treatments may reduce soil loss by reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire. |

| | | | | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|----------------|--|--|
| | | WILDERNESS | NONWILDERNESS | | | |
| | | | LANDS WITH ROADLESS CHARACTER | NONWILDERNESS | | |
| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values | | | |
| Water Quality and Quantity | The natural functions of watershed systems would be maintained. The risk of human-caused alterations, other than fire, affecting the watershed condition would be primarily limited to localized recreation activities. There could be short-term risks to watersheds until fire-adapted ecosystems (especially ponderosa pine) are restored. Water quality would more likely be affected by management outside of wilderness. | The effects would be the same as described for wilderness designation, except that restoration activities could result in short-term effects to water quality. Treatments may reduce sedimentation by reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire. | Water quality could be affected by management activities. However, mitigation would be required to reduce effects to water quality. Management activities could be conducted to increase water yield. Treatments may reduce sedimentation by reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire. | | | |
| Air Quality | There would be no direct effects to air quality specifically from wilderness designation. Wilderness designation would not preclude the use of planned or unplanned ignitions to accomplish specific resource objectives, which may result in short-term air quality impacts. | There may be some short-term direct effects to air quality from burning slash. Planned or unplanned ignitions could result in short-term air quality degradation. | There may be some short-term direct effects to air quality from fugitive dust from product removal and smoke from slash disposal. Planned or unplanned ignitions could result in short-term air quality degradation. | | | |
| Wildlife Habitat | Wilderness designation would provide greater protection for wildlife and wildlife habitat. Wildlife would not be harassed by motorized uses and habitat fragmentation would be minimized. Repair and replacement of existing wildlife improvements may be allowed, but new improvements and habitat enhancements would be rare and would be authorized only to protect and improve management of the wilderness resource. | The area would provide protection for wildlife and wildlife habitat. Wildlife habitat improvements could occur. Habitat fragmentation would be reduced because of minimal activities, but some short-term displacement could occur. | Vegetation treatments may result in a greater mosaic of habitat types and associated species diversity. Opportunities to restore and/or manipulate habitat would be available. There could be some wildlife harassment from motorized use. Fragmentation and loss of habitat from road construction may occur with increased activities. | | | |
| Aquatic Restoration | Natural processes would primarily affect aquatic species and their habitat. Motorized and mechanized travel and many management activities would not be allowed. Natural events and climatic variation would influence sedimentation, riparian vegetation, and nutrient cycles. Opportunities to do riparian area restoration may be precluded. | Effects would be similar to those described for wilderness designation. However, riparian area restoration/improvements, including streamside vegetation manipulation or direct habitat improvement of a stream, could be allowed. | Natural processes that affect aquatic habitats would be interrupted to a degree commensurate with activities. Motorized uses, road construction, and other land-disturbing activities may increase sedimentation and potentially adversely affect riparian habitat and nutrient cycles. However, the use of BMPs would mitigate most effects. | | | |

| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| | WILDERNESS | NONWILDERNESS | |
| | | LANDS WITH ROADLESS CHARACTER | NONWILDERNESS |
| | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values |
| Vegetation | Natural ecological succession would be allowed to continue and, over time, restore ecological conditions. Levels of insect infestation and disease could reach endemic levels as ecological systems move toward their historic ranges of variability. Dispersal of non-native plants would generally be limited to trail systems and river corridors. Plant diversity would be slow to change, but would move towards a dominance of mature trees and late successional habitats. | The effects would be similar to wilderness designation. However, activities could be allowed to restore ecological conditions or wildlife habitats. Ecological restoration could occur more rapidly than through natural processes alone. | Natural ecological succession could be interrupted by activities associated with other resource management objectives. Incidents of insects and disease would still occur, but would be more aggressively prevented or managed through vegetation treatment practices. The ability to detect and treat infestations would be greater than in wilderness and thus infestations could be prevented or contained earlier. Plant diversity would depend on the management objectives for the area. |
| Insects and Disease | Forest stands would be more likely to be over-mature and provide areas suitable for insect and disease outbreaks. Insect or disease control would not be permitted unless necessary to prevent unacceptable damage to resources on adjacent lands or unnatural loss to the wilderness resource from exotic pests. When necessary, control measures would have the least adverse effect on wilderness. | Response to insect and disease outbreaks would be more direct and rapid. A range of control and treatment options would allow more flexibility in containing outbreaks. | Response to insect and disease outbreaks would be more direct and rapid. A range of control and treatment options would allow more flexibility in containing outbreaks. |
| Non-Native Species | Non-native plants may be treated by grubbing or with chemicals when they threaten lands outside wilderness or when they are spreading within the wilderness, provided there are no serious adverse impacts on wilderness values. | Effects would be similar to those described for wilderness designation. Motorized or mechanized equipment may be used. | All options to address non-native plants would be available, including no treatment, hand pulling, herbicides, and biological control. Motorized and mechanized equipment can be used. |

| | | | | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|----------------------|---|---|--|----------------|--|--|
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| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values | | | |
| Recreation | Recreation use is managed to minimize the evidence of human use and provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Only primitive, non-mechanized access and recreation activities are permitted. Only those facilities required for the safety of users and protection of wilderness resources are provided. The use of mechanized tools for trail construction and maintenance would be restricted. In many cases, wilderness designation has elevated an area's visibility to the public, increasing its popularity and recreation use. Increased use can result in increased damage to trails and other resources, as well as reduced opportunities for solitude and other wilderness values. | Recreation use would be managed to minimize the evidence of human use. Public access would be limited to non-motorized uses and current activities and practices could continue to the extent that they do not adversely affect the roadless character. Mechanized tools could be used for trail maintenance. | Activities can reduce the primitive or semi-primitive recreational character through altered recreation settings, experiences, and access. The sights and sounds of human presence are usually increased by activities. Recreationists seeking a primitive or semi-primitive experience would choose not to visit such an area. Activities may also provide greater recreational access and more motorized and mechanized recreation experiences would be available. | | | |
| Visual Quality | Visual quality would be protected because ground-disturbing activities would be extremely limited. The Scenic Integrity Objective would be Very High. The long-term scenic characteristics would be representative of how the landscape would appear if relatively unaffected by human activity. | Visual quality would be maintained, but there could be some short-term changes, especially from restoration treatments. The Scenic Integrity Objective would be High to Very High. | The Scenic Integrity Objective would range from Low to High. There would be a greater potential for landscapes to show obvious signs of human activities. Scenic Integrity Objectives would constrain or modify activities to mitigate adverse effects to scenic resources, especially in areas seen from major recreation facilities and Scenic Byways. | | | |
| Cultural Resources | Cultural resources are already protected by law. Exclusion of ground-disturbing activities lessens threats to known and unidentified cultural resources. Fewer sites or resources may be identified. | Cultural resources are already protected by law. Project-level inventories may increase identification of previously unknown sites or resources. Mitigation measures would be applied at the project level. | Cultural resources are already protected by law. Project-level inventories associated with ground disturbing and other activities may increase identification of previously unknown sites or resources. Mitigation measures would be applied at the project level. | | | |

| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| | WILDERNESS | NONWILDERNESS | |
| | | LANDS WITH ROADLESS CHARACTER | NONWILDERNESS |
| | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values |
| Special Use Authorizations | Structures and other developments would be limited to those actually needed for management, protection, and use of the wilderness for the purposes for which the wilderness was established. | Special use authorizations would be allowed, subject to suitability. | Special use authorizations would be allowed, subject to suitability. |
| Range | Grazing allotments and developments would be managed under the Congressional Grazing Guidelines and allotment management plans. | Grazing allotments would continue to be managed under current allotment management plans, laws, policies, and regulations. | Grazing allotments would continue to be managed under current allotment management plans, laws, policies, and regulations. |
| Forest Products | Wilderness would be removed from the suitable timber base. No timber sales or fuelwood cutting would be permitted. Only fuelwood collection incidental to recreation would be allowed. | Management would focus on maintaining the roadless character. Some restoration of ecological conditions could occur. Non-commercial forest products could be a byproduct of the restoration treatments. | Timber production may be allowed, subject to suitability, law, policy, and regulation. Forest products, commercial and non-commercial, could be a byproduct of the restoration treatments. |
| Minerals | The area would be withdrawn from further mineral entry and leasing. Mineral development is possible in areas with valid existing rights. Consistent with the valid existing rights, operating plans would incorporate reasonable terms and conditions for the protection of the wilderness character, and provide for restoration as near as practicable of the disturbed lands promptly upon abandonment of operations. | Area would be open to mineral entry and leasing. Mechanized equipment and motorized access may be used. However, these activities and the reclamation of all disturbed lands are typically designed to minimize and mitigate impacts to the roadless character. Operating plans should incorporate reasonable terms and conditions for the protection of the roadless character and for the restoration of the disturbed lands. | These lands would be open to oil, gas, geothermal, and mineral development except where specifically withdrawn or restricted for other purposes. Although a full range of activities and methods may be allowed and employed, developments and activities would be mitigated to reduce adverse impacts to other resources. |
| Special Designations | Wilderness designation would increase the number and diversity of areas within the Southwestern Region and the National Wilderness Preservation System. There would be no effects to other special designations - the most restrictive management would apply. | The opportunity to recommend additional wilderness within the Southwestern Region would be foregone at this time. There would be no effects to other special designations. Any restrictions associated with other special designations could affect restoration activities. | The opportunity to recommend additional wilderness within the Southwestern Region would be foregone at this time. There would be no effects to other special designations. Any restrictions associated with other special designations could affect management activities. |

| | | | | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|-----------------------|--|--|
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| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values | | | |
| Fire | Wilderness designation does not preclude the use of planned or unplanned ignitions to accomplish specific resource objectives. Mechanical treatments and timber harvest would not be allowed, which may increase the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires. Suppression actions would be guided by Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST). | The risk of uncharacteristic wildfires would be reduced because of the opportunity for ecosystem restoration activities. Planned or unplanned ignitions to accomplish specific resource objectives would be primary management approaches. Suppression actions would not be restricted. Tactics available for wildfire suppression would probably be less limited than wilderness, but the emphasis would be towards maintaining the roadless character. MIST should be used. | The risk of uncharacteristic wildfires would be reduced because of the opportunities to treat mechanically and harvest timber. The full range of suppression tactics and management approaches would be available for use. | | | |
| SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS | | | | | | |
| | Local population numbers, income, or employment would generally not be affected. | Local population numbers, income, or employment would not be affected. | Local population numbers, income, or employment would not be affected unless major mineral activity occurs. | | | |
| | Costs related to the maintenance of range facilities could increase because of limitations on methods. | There could be some increased costs associated with the construction and maintenance of range facilities. | There would be no increased costs associated with the construction and maintenance of range facilities. | | | |
| | Timber production revenues would be foregone, if any commercial stands are suitable and harvestable. | Timber production revenues would be foregone, if any commercial stands are suitable and harvestable. | Revenues and jobs from timber production could increase, if any commercial stands are suitable and harvestable. | | | |
| | Local lifestyles would not be affected unless major mineral activity occurs. | Local lifestyles would not be affected unless major mineral activity occurs. | Local lifestyles would not be affected unless major mineral activity occurs. | | | |
| | Revenues associated with mineral development would be foregone, because the lands would be withdrawn from mineral entry. | Revenues could be generated, if minerals are found and developed. | Revenues could be generated, if minerals are found and developed. | | | |

| | | | | RECOMMENDATION | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| | | WILDERNESS | NONWILDERNESS | | | |
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| MANAGEMENT DIRECTION | Manage to protect and maintain wilderness characteristics | Manage to protect and conserve the roadless character of lands identified in RARE II | Manage for multiple use, ecosystem restoration, and social and economic values | | | |
| | Wilderness is recognized as contributing to healthy economies and healthy lifestyles. Direct benefits are derived from recreational use and as a “quality-of-life” factor to attract new businesses and residents. The wilderness characteristics/values that attract visitors to the area would be maintained. | The area would contribute to healthy economies and healthy lifestyles. The wilderness characteristics/values that attract visitors to wilderness would be maintained. | Management activities would contribute to local lifestyles and healthy economies. The wilderness characteristics/values that attract visitors to wilderness would be affected. | | | |
| | Ecosystem services (natural processes such as the air and water purification functions of undisturbed lands) would be protected and maintained, | Ecosystem services (natural processes such as the air and water purification functions of undisturbed lands) would be maintained, | Ecosystem services could be decreased with increased activities. | | | |
| | Opportunities for primitive recreation and public awareness of the values associated with wilderness, including spiritual and natural qualities, would be increased. | Opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation would be maintained. | Opportunities for primitive recreation would decrease. Opportunities for semi-primitive and more developed recreation could increase. | | | |

Appendix A: Wilderness Evaluation Process

The following is summarized from Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70. This process is used by the Forest Service to determine whether there are areas that could be recommended for wilderness designation by Congress. The process includes three steps: an inventory of potential wilderness areas, an evaluation of the potential wilderness areas, and a determination if a recommendation will be pursued for any potential wilderness areas.

Inventory of Potential Wilderness Areas

The first step in the evaluation of potential wilderness is to identify and inventory all areas within National Forest System Lands that satisfy the definition of wilderness found in the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Areas identified through this process are called potential wilderness areas. This inventory of potential wilderness is not a land designation. It is completed with the express purpose of identifying all lands that meet the criteria for being evaluated for wilderness suitability and possible recommendation to Congress for wilderness designation.

The inventory of areas relies on local knowledge and judgment regarding unique, site-specific conditions of each area being considered. The boundaries of areas for the potential wilderness inventory should facilitate easy on-the-ground identification.

Inventory Criteria

Areas qualify for inclusion in the potential wilderness inventory if they meet the statutory definition of wilderness and meet either criteria 1 and 3 or criteria 2 and 3 below.

1. Areas contain 5,000 acres or more.
2. Areas contain less than 5,000 acres, but meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. Can be preserved due to physical terrain and natural conditions.
 - b. Self-contained ecosystems, such as an island, that can be effectively managed as a separate unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
 - c. Contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, Administration-endorsed wilderness, or potential wilderness in other Federal ownership, regardless of their size.
3. Areas do not contain forest roads (36 CFR 212.1) or other permanently authorized roads, except as permitted in areas east of the 100th meridian (sec. 71.12).

Areas may be included in the potential wilderness inventory even though they include the types of areas or features listed in FSH 1909.12, 71.11.

On the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs, GIS was used to identify those areas that met the inventory criteria. Site-specific information was gathered from Ranger District (District) personnel to provide background information, identify features not shown in GIS, and determine where the Region 3 criteria on roaded areas, fingers, and extrusions should be applied.

Evaluation of Potential Wilderness Areas

An area recommended for wilderness must meet the tests of capability, availability, and need. In addition to the inherent wilderness quality it possesses, an area must provide opportunities and experiences that are dependent upon or enhanced by a wilderness environment. The ability of the Forest Service to manage the area as wilderness is also considered.

Capability

The capability of a potential wilderness is the degree to which an area contains the basic characteristics that make it suitable for wilderness recommendation without regard to its availability for or need as wilderness. The following characteristics are considered in evaluating a potential wilderness area:

1. Natural - an area is substantially free from the effects of modern civilization and generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.
2. Undeveloped - the degree to which an area is without permanent improvements or human habitation.
3. Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation - the capability of the area to provide solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation. This includes a wide range of experiential opportunities. Solitude is the opportunity to experience isolation from sights, sounds, and the presence of others from developments and evidence of humans.
4. Special Features and Values - an area is capable of providing other values such as those with ecologic, geologic, scientific, educational, scenic, historical, or cultural significance.
5. Manageability - the ability to manage an area as wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act and how boundaries affect manageability of an area.

Responses to the capability questions were drafted at the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs Supervisors Office and reviewed by District personnel. Any changes were incorporated into the capability evaluation.

If an area is found to not be capable of being wilderness (a rating of Low), it is not carried forward into the Availability Evaluation.

Availability

Areas determined to meet wilderness capability requirements are considered potentially available for wilderness designation. The determination of availability is conditioned by the value of and need for the wilderness resource compared to the value of and need for other resources. Other resource potential including current use and potential future use is analyzed for the various resources involved.

Constraints and encumbrances on lands may also govern the availability of lands for wilderness. The degree of Forest Service control over the surface and subsurface of the area is also considered. The Forest Service should have sufficient control to prevent development of incompatible uses that would negatively affect wilderness character and potential.

Responses to the availability questions were drafted by at the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs Supervisors Office and reviewed by District personnel. Any changes were incorporated into the availability evaluation.

Need

The need for an area to be designated as wilderness is determined through an analysis on a regional basis by evaluating such factors as the geographic distribution of areas and representation of landforms and ecosystems to which it contributes to the overall National Wilderness Preservation System. This need is demonstrated through a public involvement process, including public input to the evaluation report.

A set of GIS models, information papers, and analyses were provided by the Southwestern Regional Office. This information was synthesized at the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs Supervisors

Office and reviewed by District personnel. Any changes were incorporated into the need evaluation.

Documentation of Potential Wilderness Areas

Draft wilderness evaluation reports were developed for each potential wilderness; each report includes summaries of the capability, availability, and need assessments. The draft reports were made available for public comment in June 2009. Public comments were incorporated and information on the potential effects of wilderness and nonwilderness recommendations was added to the final evaluation reports. The effects of nonwilderness recommendation may be split to reflect nonwilderness, lands with roadless character, or primitive area categories.

Appendix B: Capability Evaluation Worksheet

Capability Characteristics

Natural

1. Presence of non-native species.

High - Non-native species are not evident.

Medium - Non-native species are evident in isolated spots.

Low - Non-native species are common or scattered throughout the area.

Rating: High - Mullein, a non-native plant, is found along south and east boundary roads, but there are no GIS records of the plant within the potential wilderness. Musk thistle, also a non-native plant, has been found southwest of the area. Other non-native species may be present, but no surveys have specifically been conducted in the area.

2. Rivers within the potential wilderness are in free-flowing condition.

High - Rivers within the area are considered free-flowing.

Medium - Some rivers have impoundments or other issues that affect their free-flowing character.

Low - Rivers within the potential wilderness are seasonal or heavily impacted by impoundments.

Rating: Medium - A series of gabions was built along Stone Creek, along the eastern boundary, for watershed protection. Most of these structures are no longer functional and no longer affect the free-flowing character of the creek.

3. Quality of night-sky as affected by light pollution.

High - The night sky is clear with little to no interference from light pollution.

Medium - Some stars are visible and there is moderate degradation from light pollution.

Low - Few stars are visible at night and the presence of light pollution is evident.

Rating: High - There are no nearby population centers and the lights from Nutrioso and Alpine are not visible from the area.

4. Presence of pollutants that degrade water.

High - All rivers/streams have been sampled and there are no water quality issues.

Medium - There are no known water quality issues within the area but the not all rivers/streams have been sampled.

Low - There are rivers within the area that are listed on the State Impaired Waters List (303d).

Rating: Medium - Stone and Bob Thomas Creeks are the only perennial streams. Most of the remaining drainages are intermittent. None of the streams have been sampled. There are no known water quality issues.

5. Area provides elements of biological diversity and naturalness including unique habitats, TES or rare plants and wildlife.

High - Has critical or unique habitats and diverse ecological conditions.

Medium - Has a mix of habitats and ecological conditions.

Low - Has limited ecological conditions and habitats.

Rating: High - The potential wilderness would supplement the existing biological diversity and naturalness of Escudilla Wilderness. Additional areas of montane/subalpine grasslands, wetland/cienega riparian areas, and cottonwood-willow riparian, spruce-fir, ponderosa pine, wet mixed conifer, and dry mixed conifer forests increase the vegetation diversity. The potential wilderness addition supports Mexican spotted owl and northern goshawk.

6. Area contains a variety of natural resources including a variety of tree species and structures, intermingled grasslands or meadows, numerous recreation opportunities, diversity of wildlife habitats, and wildlife, etc.

High - Diverse amount of natural resources.

Medium - Mixed amount of natural resources.

Low - Limited amount of natural resource diversity.

Rating: High - The area supplements the existing variety of natural resources found in Escudilla Wilderness. The additional forest and grassland types add to vegetation and wildlife habitat diversity. Additional wilderness recreation opportunities would be available that could reduce pressure on the existing wilderness trails.

Undeveloped

7. Area has current or past evidence of human activity.

High - Little or no evidence of human activity.

Medium - Unnoticeable or unobjectionable human activity.

Low - Obvious evidence of human activity.

Rating: High - There is little evidence of human activity within the area, mostly fences. There are no developed trails in the potential wilderness.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

8. Area provides physically and mentally challenging recreation opportunities that promote adventure and self-reliance.

High - Most of the area provides challenging recreation opportunities.

Medium - Some parts of the area have the potential for challenging recreation opportunities.

Low - Few parts of the area can provide challenging recreation opportunities.

Rating: High - When considered with the adjoining Escudilla Wilderness, the potential wilderness would enhance the challenging recreation opportunities in the wilderness.

9. Opportunity to experience solitude and isolation from human activities while recreating in the area.

High - Significant feeling of being alone or remote from civilization.

Medium - Feeling of being alone is possible but signs of civilization are likely.

Low - Little opportunity of feeling alone.

Rating: High - When considered with the adjoining Escudilla Wilderness, the potential wilderness would enhance the opportunities for solitude in the wilderness.

10. Opportunity to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation such as backpacking, kayaking, hunting, fishing, etc.

High - There are many opportunities for engaging in primitive recreation.

Medium - There are some opportunities for engaging in primitive recreation.

Low - There are few to no opportunities to engage in primitive recreation.

Rating: Medium - There are opportunities for hunting, cross-county hiking, and viewing scenery and wildlife. These opportunities complement the existing opportunities in Escudilla Wilderness.

Special Features and Values

11. Area contains outstanding or distinct features like rock formations, panoramic views, etc.

High - Many distinct features or few but exceptional features.

Medium - Some distinct features.

Low - One or no distinct features.

Rating: Low - There are no distinct features in this potential wilderness.

12. Area has potential for scientific research, environmental education, or historic/cultural opportunities.

High - Good potential for two or more types of these opportunities.

Medium - Potential for one type of opportunity.

Low - Little or no potential for this type of opportunity.

Rating: Medium - The potential wilderness has opportunities for a variety of scientific research.

13. Area contains unique or rare species of plants and/or animals.

High - Area has several unique or rare plants and/or animals.

Medium - Area has a few unique or rare plants and/or animals.

Low - Area has no unique or rare plants and/or animals.

Rating: Medium - The threatened Mexican spotted owl is found in the southern end of the potential wilderness.

Manageability

14. Ability to manage the area for wilderness character, including distance and influence from outside activities; opportunity to access the area; and resource conflicts or encumbrances.

High - Isolated from areas of activity; controlled or limited access; no encumbrances or resource conflicts.

Medium - Somewhat isolated from areas of activity; adequate access opportunities; some resource conflicts and/or encumbrances.

Low - Areas of activity are nearby; many access opportunities; many resource conflicts and/or encumbrances.

Rating: Medium - While access to the potential wilderness is relatively easy from FR275, a more manageable wilderness boundary would be a positive result. There are no known encumbrances or conflicts.

15. Motorized use within the area.

Yes - Has motorized vehicle use.

No - Does not have any motorized vehicle use.

Rating: **No** - Terrain generally precludes motorized vehicle use in the potential wilderness.

Overall Capability: High

Appendix C: Availability Evaluation Worksheet

The letters below in parenthesis refer to the following required considerations: **a.** recreation, including tourism; **b.** wildlife species, populations, and management needs; **c.** water availability and use; **d.** livestock operations; **e.** timber; **f.** minerals; **g.** cultural resources; **h.** authorized and potential uses; and **i.** management considerations including fire, insects, disease, and presence of non-Federal lands.

Availability Characteristics

1. Areas that are of high value for water yield or on-site storage where installation and maintenance of improvements may be required. **(c)**

High - No impoundment needed.

Medium - Minor improvements will have an effect.

Low - Identified impoundment that will have an effect on wild characteristics.

Rating: **High** - The area is of value for water yield. However, no impoundments are needed.

2. Areas needing management for wildlife or aquatic animals that MIGHT conflict with wilderness management. **(b)**

High - Low management requirements with no motorized equipment required to meet objectives and infrequent entries.

Medium - Management requires helicopters but no motorized equipment on the ground and frequency is generally less than 10 years.

Low - Intense management (motorized equipment, helicopters, chainsaws, broadcast burning) and frequent entries (= or <5 yrs.).

Rating: **High** - Management needs for wildlife or aquatic animals are minimal.

3. Area needing active aquatic restoration activities. **(b)**

High - Properly functioning with no or little restoration activities needed.

Medium - Site-specific improvements needed.

Low - The majority of watershed needs attention.

Rating: **Medium to High** - Site-specific improvements, requiring the use of heavy equipment, are needed along Stone Creek.

4. Area needing active vegetative restoration activities due to specific species survival (such as White Bark Pine restoration) or identifiable fuel reduction activity to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire or known areas of severe insect infestation that will lead to heavy tree mortality. **(e, h, i)**

High - The area needs little vegetative restoration.

Medium - Areas needing high intensity management activities for a short time period (< or = 5 years). These areas could be available for wilderness after those activities are completed (like fuel reduction activities). Some intense restoration work over small areas could be accomplished without conflicting with wilderness management (species conservation work not requiring motorized equipment).

Low - The need for vegetation restoration is a higher priority and requires long-term management and mechanized or motorized equipment.

Rating: **Medium** - Some of the conifer-covered slopes may need to be burned to reduce fuels. This may no longer be necessary post-Wallow Fire. Also, aspen may need to be treated because of high insect activity; the method of treatment is not currently known.

5. Areas having such unique characteristics or natural phenomena that general public access should be developed to facilitate public use and enjoyment. **(a, g)**

High - Does not exist or minimal development will be provided.

Medium - Requires minor development or improvement that does not qualify as a developed recreation site but is a higher development level than is normally found within wilderness.

Low - Has a developed recreation site or features that warrant construction of a developed recreation site.

Rating: **High** - There are no unique characteristics that would require developed public access. Forest roads parallel much of the boundary.

6. Lands committed through contracts, permits or agreements that would be in conflict with wilderness management (some minor permitted uses may be still be allowed). **(d, h, i)**

High - Current authorizations do not conflict with potential wilderness.

Medium - Current authorization(s) but can be terminated or there is long-term authorization or commitment but does not require motorized equipment for access or maintenance.

Low - Currently exists, must be retained (long-term commitments), and requires motorized equipment for access or maintenance.

Rating: **High** - Current authorizations, primarily grazing permits, do not conflict with potential wilderness.

7. Forest Service has sufficient control to prevent development of irresolvable, incompatible use that would lessen wilderness character and potential. **(i)**

High - No inholdings and no non-federal lands adjacent to potential wilderness.

Medium - No inholdings but adjacent lands may be private.

Low - Inholdings exist.

Rating: **High** - There are no inholdings or non-federal lands adjacent to the potential wilderness.

8. Cultural resource sites that may need stabilization are present. Motorized vehicle access to Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) or scared sites is needed. **(g)**

High - No cultural resources stabilization and/or motorized vehicle access needed.

Medium - Minor stabilization and/or motorized vehicle access needed.

Low - Extensive stabilization of cultural resources needed or motorized vehicle access required.

Rating: **High** - There are no known sites in the area needing stabilization. Motorized vehicle access to any TCPs or sacred sites is not needed.

9. Mineral potential was evaluated using the *R3 Plan Revision Guidance: Minerals Information Related to the Evaluation of Potential Wilderness and Research Natural Areas*. This guidance uses several databases to consider the presence and status of mining claims, mineral leases, and mineral districts. Based on the information contained in the above databases, and as described in the Background section of this evaluation, there is low mineral potential for this potential wilderness. **(f)**

Rating: **High**

Overall Availability: High

Appendix D: Need Evaluation Worksheet

Additional information for Factors 1, 3, 4, and 6 can be found in the Wilderness Need Evaluation Tables document.

Factor 1 - The location, size, and type of other wildernesses in the general vicinity and their distance from the proposed area. Consider accessibility of areas to population centers and user groups. Public demand for wilderness may increase with proximity to growing population centers.

There are 17 Wilderness areas and 1 primitive area² within a 100-mile radius of PW-03-01-035. The total acreage of these areas is 1,328,441 acres. The Forest Service (FS) manages 12 of these areas, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 6, and the National Park Service (NPS) manages 1.

| Potential Wilderness | Wilderness Area within a 100-mile Radius | Wilderness Acreage | Distance from PW | Managing Agency |
|----------------------|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| PW-03-01-035 | Peloncillo Mountains | 19,244 | 102 | BLM |
| | Santa Teresa | 28,769 | 95 | FS |
| | North Santa Teresa | 5,733 | 91 | BLM |
| | Needle's Eye | 6,277 | 100 | BLM |
| | Fishhooks | 11,400 | 71 | BLM |
| | Gila | 558,549 | 61 | FS |
| | Aldo Leopold | 206,700 | 85 | FS |
| | Bear Wallow | 11,113 | 30 | FS |
| | Blue Range Primitive Area | 179,819 | 26 | FS |
| | Blue Range | 35,815 | 26 | FS |
| | Apache Kid | 44,835 | 98 | FS |
| | Salt River Canyon | 32,035 | 97 | FS |
| | Mount Baldy | 7,627 | 26 | FS |
| | Escudilla | 5,210 | 4 | FS |
| | Withington | 18,973 | 94 | FS |
| | Cebolla | 66,445 | 87 | BLM |
| | West Malpais | 37,839 | 83 | BLM |
| Petrified Forest | 52,058 | 75 | NPS | |
| TOTAL | | 1,328,441 | | |

Existing Wilderness and Primitive Areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

| Wilderness Lands on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs | | |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Type | Number | Acres* |
| Wilderness | 3 | 23,233 |
| Primitive Area | 1 | 180,007 |
| TOTAL | 4 | 203,240 |

* from DEIS for the ASNFs Land Management Plan.

² The Blue Range Primitive Area is the last remaining such area in the United States. It is managed almost like wilderness in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2320.3(11).

The following table summarizes information found in the Wilderness Need Assessment Tables document. Only acres within the listed radius are shown; actual areas may be larger.

| Wilderness within a 100-mile Radius of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs | |
|---|--------------|
| Number | Acres |
| 46 | 2,355,715 |

There are no population centers³ within a 100-mile radius of this potential wilderness.

Rating criteria:

There are significant Wilderness lands (over 2.5 million acres) on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs and within a 100-mile radius of this potential wilderness and the forests. Because demand for wilderness is generally greater near population centers, potential wilderness within a 100- or 130-mile radius of a population center where there are less than 1 million acres of Wilderness within that radius is rated as **Medium**. Potential wilderness within a 100- or 130-mile radius of a population center where there are more than 1 million acres of Wilderness in that radius is rated as **Low**. Potential wilderness more than 100 or 130 air miles from a population center is rated as **Low**.

Rating: **Low**

Factor 2 - Present visitor pressure on other wildernesses, the trends in use, changing patterns of use, population expansion factors, and trends and changes in transportation.

Item 1

Each Federal agency that manages wilderness collects and reports visitor use information differently. The Forest Service reports wilderness use by each national forest, not each wilderness. The National Park Service collects backcountry visitor use only for overnight stays. The Bureau of Land Management reports use for each wilderness.

According to the 2001 National Visitor Use Monitoring study, approximately two percent of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs users visited the three wilderness areas on the forests. This figure is similar to other non-urban forests in the Southwestern Region. More urban forests (Cibola and Coronado NFs) reported approximately 25 percent of their users visited wilderness areas.

Most of the wilderness use on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs is concentrated in the two smaller wilderness areas, Mount Baldy and Escudilla. These areas are each less than 10,000 acres, are easily accessible by motor vehicles, and have limited trail systems. Visitor use in Mount Baldy is considered high with use concentrated on two of the three trails. Visitor use in Escudilla is considered moderate to high with use concentrated on one trail. Encounters with other wilderness visitors in both areas are high. Use in Bear Wallow Wilderness is lighter because it is less accessible and is slightly larger. There are no accurate use figures for the Blue Range Primitive Area, which is managed almost like wilderness.

Approximately 70 percent of the Arizona visitors to the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs are from the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas. Populations in these areas have increased much faster than in the more rural areas. Visitors from the four counties where the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs are located account for another 20 percent. In general, there has been no to moderate population growth in these counties. Recently, there have been major highway improvements between Phoenix and the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs.

³ Southwestern Region population centers are defined in Factor 2 as Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson, Santa Fe, Taos, and Albuquerque.

It can be assumed that with increasing populations and improved transportation features, wilderness use would continue to increase in those wilderness areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs that are easily accessible to the recreating public.

Item 2

The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs include three designated wilderness areas, the nation's only remaining primitive area, and 322,000 acres of inventoried roadless areas. Users of designated wilderness areas fit a profile similar to other forests' users: 1) they are predominantly male (81 percent), 2) white (91 percent) or Hispanic/Latino (6 percent), 3) between the ages of 31 and 60, and 4) often travel from the Phoenix and Tucson areas. NVUM data suggest that roughly 45,000 wilderness visits were made during fiscal year 2001 although the error rate on this data is very high (± 56 percent) because of the relatively low number of visitors interviewed (Kocis et al. 2002). There are no use figures specific to the Blue Range Primitive Area or the inventoried roadless areas.

Surrounding national forests (Coconino, Coronado, Gila, and Tonto NFs) all have much higher numbers of wilderness visits than the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs. Use on the Coconino, Coronado, and Gila NFs is high, while use on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs and Tonto NF is medium.⁴

Regional Demand for Wilderness

1. Increased demand for additional wilderness in both Arizona and New Mexico should be anticipated based on population growth during the period of 1990 to 2000, which exceeded the national growth rate.
2. Assuming Arizona continues to grow at a rate greatly outpacing the national rate (predicted to be about 3 times the national rate), the number of visits to existing wilderness will continue to increase, and Arizona in particular could benefit from additional wilderness.
3. Demographics related to visitor race and ethnicity will affect the rate of increase in wilderness visits in the Southwestern Region. Even though the faster growing racial/ethnic groups have relatively low participation rates, wilderness use is still expected to increase because of the overall population growth rate.
4. Public demand increases with proximity to six population centers: Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson, Santa Fe, Taos, and Albuquerque. Consider wilderness recommendations within a 100-mile radius of those cities to provide for that demand.
5. Some additional public demand for wilderness in the Southwestern Region will occur from the influx of people moving to communities in the vicinity of the national forests.
6. In terms of geographic distribution of wilderness, the Southwestern Region is underrepresented with five percent fewer wilderness acres as compared with the representation nationally. Additionally, all quadrants in Arizona and New Mexico are underrepresented with the exception of the southwest and southeast quadrants in Arizona. The most underrepresented quadrants are southeast and northwest New Mexico and northeast Arizona, which are at 6 percent or less in the number of wilderness acres (compared with total federal wilderness acres).
7. Desirability of the scenic mountainous settings available in the rural communities within and adjacent to national forests in the Southwestern Region will attract new retirees and others, further contributing to a growth in wilderness visitation.

⁴ This is based on use categories developed by the Forest Service Wilderness Advisory Group, with low use defined as 0 to 10,000 visits, medium as 10,001 to 30,000 visits, and high being greater than 30,000 visits. Total wilderness use for a forest from NVUM was divided by the number of wilderness areas the forest is lead for, to get an average amount of use per wilderness.

Rating criteria:

Based on projected population increases, high use in two of the three wilderness areas on the forests, and the underrepresentation of northeast Arizona in the National Wilderness Preservation System, those potential wilderness areas within a 100- or 130-mile radius of a population center are rated as **High**. All other potential wilderness areas are rated as **Medium**.

Rating: Medium

Factor 3 - The extent to which nonwilderness lands on the NFS unit or other Federal lands are likely to provide opportunities for unconfined outdoor recreation experiences.

The following tables summarize information found in the Wilderness Need Assessment Tables document. Only acres within the listed radius are shown; actual areas may be larger. The Recreation Opportunity System (ROS) acres are for National Forest System lands only. No ROS information is available for the Gila NF. Many of the ROS acres overlap designated Wilderness, the Blue Range Primitive Area, and IRAs.

| Like Wilderness Lands on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs | | |
|--|--------|-----------|
| Type | Number | Acres |
| Inventoried Roadless Area | 17 | 321,949 |
| ROS-Primitive | | 228,954 |
| ROS-Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized | | 452,486 |
| TOTAL ACRES | | 1,003,389 |

| Like Wilderness Lands within a 100-mile Radius of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs | | |
|---|--------|-----------|
| Type | Number | Acres |
| Inventoried Roadless Area | 85 | 1,571,867 |
| BLM Wilderness Study Area | 17 | 279,320 |
| NPS proposed wilderness | 1 | 116,769 |
| ROS-Primitive | | 833,442 |
| ROS-Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized | | 1,697,112 |
| TOTAL ACRES | | 4,498,510 |

Rating criteria:

There are significant nonwilderness lands (over 5.4 million acres) available for unconfined outdoor recreation outside of designated Wilderness and the Blue Range Primitive Area on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs and within a 100-mile radius of the forests. Therefore, all potential wilderness areas are rated as **Low**.

Rating: Low

Factor 4 - The need to provide a refuge for those species that have demonstrated an inability to survive in less than primitive surroundings or the need for a protected area for other unique scientific values or phenomena.

Forest Planning Species (FPS), as determined for Forest Plan Revision, were reviewed to determine if there were species on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs that require primitive surroundings (natural conditions

and low human disturbance) to survive. The Forest Planning Species list includes 30 mammals, 22 birds, 6 reptiles and amphibians, 13 fish, 12 invertebrates, and 25 plants. This list includes Endangered Species Act endangered, threatened, and candidate species; Southwestern Region sensitive species; and other species of interest. Only the endangered, threatened, candidate, and sensitive species are considered in this evaluation.

Through coordination with the planning wildlife and fisheries staff, it was determined that there are no endangered, threatened, candidate, or sensitive species that require primitive surroundings. However, there are 2 mammals, 7 birds, 6 reptiles and amphibians, 13 fish, 2 invertebrates, and 1 plant that would benefit from primitive surroundings.

Additional information on species that would benefit from primitive surroundings can be found in the Wilderness Need Evaluation Tables document.

Rating criteria:

High - Species or habitat for species that require primitive surroundings are present.

Medium - Species or habitat for species that would benefit from primitive surroundings are present.

Low - Neither species or habitat for species that require or would benefit from primitive surroundings are present.

There are no FPS on the forests that require primitive surroundings. Each potential wilderness has at least one FPS or has habitat for at least one FPS that would benefit from primitive surroundings. Therefore, all areas receive a **Medium** rating.

Rating: **Medium** - There are two FPS and habitat for four additional FPS that would benefit from primitive surroundings.

Factor 5 - Within social and biological limits, management may increase the capacity of established wildernesses to support human use without unacceptable depreciation of the wilderness resource.

There are three Wilderness areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs, all on the Apache NF. Two, Mount Baldy and Escudilla, are less than 10,000 acres, are easily accessible by motor vehicles, and have limited trail systems. Visitor use in Mount Baldy is considered high with use concentrated on two of the three trails. Visitor use in Escudilla is considered moderate to high with use concentrated on one trail. Encounters with other wilderness visitors in both areas are high. For these two areas there are limited management opportunities to accommodate additional use. The third wilderness, Bear Wallow, is slightly larger, is more difficult to access, and has five trails. Visitor use is considered low. Here, additional use could be accommodated without affecting the wilderness.

Rating criteria:

High - Management of all wilderness areas on the forests could not increase capacity without further affecting the wilderness resource.

Medium - Management of one or more wilderness areas on the forests could increase capacity without further affecting the wilderness resource.

Low - Management of all wilderness areas on the forests could increase capacity without affecting the wilderness resource.

Because use in Bear Wallow Wilderness is relatively low, this wilderness could accommodate some increased use without affecting wilderness resources. Therefore, all potential wilderness areas are rated as **Medium**.

Rating: Medium

Factor 6 - An area's ability to provide for preservation of identifiable landform types and ecosystems. Consideration of this factor may include utilization of Edwin A. Hammond's subdivision of landform types and the Bailey-Kuchler ecosystem classification. This approach is helpful from the standpoint of rounding out the National Wilderness Preservation System and may be further subdivided to suit local, subregional, and regional needs.

The Southwestern Regional Office used the process outlined in Loomis and Echohawk (1999)⁵ to determine the underrepresented landforms and ecosystem types in Wilderness within Region 3.

The following underrepresented landforms (ecoregion subsection) are found on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs: Burro Mountains oak-juniper woodland, Coconino Plateau woodland, and White Mountains scarp woodland-coniferous forest.

The following underrepresented ecosystems (PNVTs) are found on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs: cottonwood-willow riparian forest (CWRF), dry mixed conifer forest (DMCF), interior chaparral (IC), Madran pine-oak woodland (MPOW), mixed broadleaf deciduous riparian forest (MBDRF), montane willow riparian forest (MWRF), montane/subalpine grasslands (MSG), spruce-fir forest (SFF), wet mixed conifer forest (WMCF), and wetland/cienega riparian areas (WCRA). The wet mixed conifer forest PNVT is used as a proxy for the aspen forest/woodland ecosystems because most of the aspen on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs is found in this PNVT.

Tables detailing the acres of underrepresented landforms and ecosystems can be found in the Wilderness Need Evaluation Tables document.

Rating criteria:

- High - Underrepresented ecosystems and landforms occur across 67 percent or more of the potential wilderness.
- Medium - Underrepresented ecosystems and landforms occur across 34 to 66 percent of the potential wilderness.
- Low - Underrepresented ecosystems and landforms occur across 33 percent or less of the potential wilderness.

Rating: Medium - Underrepresented ecosystems occur across 53 percent of the potential wilderness. This potential wilderness contains six underrepresented ecosystems: cottonwood-willow riparian forest, dry mixed conifer forest, montane/subalpine grasslands, spruce-fir forest, wet mixed conifer forest, and wetland/cienega riparian areas. There are no underrepresented landforms.

Overall Need: Medium, and is contiguous to Escudilla Wilderness

⁵ Loomis, John and Echohawk, J. Chris. 1999. Using GIS to identify under-represented ecosystems in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the USA. *Environmental Conservation*. 26 (1): 53-58.