

Chapter 4. Suitability

Introduction to Suitability

The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs are suitable, or appropriate, for a variety of uses. The broad use categories on the following pages are not intended to be all inclusive. Other uses, projects, or activities may be proposed during the life of the plan.

Land use specifically excluded by law, regulation, or policy; or that would result in substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land; or that is incompatible with the desired conditions for the relevant portion of the analysis area are considered not suitable.

The identification of an area as suitable for various uses is guidance for project and activity decisionmaking and is not a commitment or a final decision approving projects and activities. Uses that are not specifically identified as suitable will be evaluated in terms of the desired conditions. Uses that are neutral to or help move the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs toward the desired conditions may be allowed. Uses that are suitable must also be consistent with other plan decisions and other laws and regulations.

Forestwide suitability calculations (acres suitable versus not suitable) can be found in appendix B of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs “Programmatic Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Land Management Plan” (Forest Service, 2012a). Specifics about suitability of areas are analyzed at the project or activity level and are subject to laws, regulations, and plan guidance. Areas that are not suitable are those where a use is not compatible with desired conditions. However, this does not mean that the use cannot occur. Conversely, areas identified as suitable, when analyzed at the project or activity level, may not be able to support that use.

The suitability determinations (plan decisions) are summarized below and displayed in tables 5 through 11. The information outside of these tables are not plan decisions but are provided for background. Plan decisions and other content for forestwide direction (chapter 2) and management areas (chapter 3) should also be consulted.

Livestock Grazing Suitability

Livestock grazing is defined as foraging by permitted livestock, including cattle, horse, and sheep. Provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule require that the capability and suitability for producing forage for grazing animals on NFS lands be determined. Capability is the potential of an area of land to produce resources, supply goods and services. Capability depends upon current conditions and site conditions such as climate, slope, landform, soils, and geology. Suitability is the appropriateness of applying certain resource management practices to a particular area of land, in consideration of relevant social, economic, and ecological factors. A unit of land may be suitable for a variety of individual or combined management practices. Table 5 identifies areas as suitable or not suitable for livestock grazing.

Table 1. Suitability of livestock grazing on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Management Area	Livestock Grazing	
	Suitable	Not Suitable ¹
General Forest	X	
Community-Forest Intermix	X	

Management Area	Livestock Grazing	
	Suitable	Not Suitable ¹
High Use Developed Recreation Area	X	
Energy Corridor	X	
Wild Horse Territory	X	
Wildlife Quiet Area	X	
Natural Landscape	X	
Recommended Research Natural Area		X
Research Natural Area		X
Primitive Area	X	
Recommended Wilderness	X	
Wilderness	X	
Other Areas		
Active and vacant grazing allotments	X	
Current National Forest System land not in a grazing allotment		X
Black River Conservation Area		X

¹ Areas that are not suitable for livestock grazing may occur in allotments or pastures but are not counted toward grazing capacity.

Special Uses Suitability

Table 6 identifies select special use categories that are suitable or not suitable on certain areas of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs. Energy corridors are linear strips of land identified for the present or future location of a utility right-of-way (e.g., above or below-ground electric transmission line, gas pipeline). [Other energy developments](#) include the infrastructure associated with the provision or transport of energy (e.g., dam, biomass power generation, wind turbines, solar panels). Communications sites are National Forest System lands used for telecommunications services as identified in appendix C.

Table 2. Suitability of select special uses on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Management Area	Energy Corridor		Other Energy Development		Communications Site	
	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable
General Forest	X		X		X	
Community-Forest Intermix	X		X		X	
High Use Developed Recreation Area		X		X	X	
Energy Corridor	X		X		X	
Wild Horse Territory	X		X		X	
Wildlife Quiet Area		X ¹		X		X

Management Area	Energy Corridor		Other Energy Development		Communications Site	
	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable
Natural Landscape		X		X		X
Recommended Research Natural Area		X		X		X
Research Natural Area		X		X		X
Primitive Area		X		X		X
Recommended Wilderness		X		X		X
Wilderness		X		X		X
Other Areas						
Areas with natural appearing landscapes where human activities do not stand out (high scenic integrity) or natural landscapes where generally only ecological changes occur (very high scenic integrity)		X		X		X
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river		X		X		X
Sacred sites or American Indian traditional cultural properties		X		X		X

¹ Existing energy corridors that cross wildlife quiet areas are considered suitable.

Lands Suitable for Timber Production

The National Forest Management Act requires that National Forest System (NFS) lands be classified as to their suitability for timber production. NFS lands were reserved with the intent of providing goods and services to satisfy public needs over the long term, among these goods is the production of a sustainable supply of forest products. Therefore, some level of regulated forest production is necessary and appropriate from forested lands.

Timber production is the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use. The term “timber production” does not include the production of firewood. On those lands classified as suitable for timber production (also referred to as suitable timberlands), the objective is to manage toward desired conditions, including restoring natural fire regimes, on a planned and regulated basis. Timber production activities contribute to a viable wood products processing industry.

In 2012, out of a total of 2,015,352 acres of NFS land, there are approximately 596,700 acres of NFS land that are suitable for timber production and 1,418,600 acres that are not suitable.

Tree cutting is a broad term which describes the cutting of trees for uses such as safety, firewood, biomass, and small wood products. Materials from these cuts may be made available for sale. Tree cutting may be used to move toward the vegetation desired condition, but a planned and periodic harvest of forest products may be unfeasible and/or regeneration of the stand is not anticipated. For example, many of the grasslands on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs are encroached by woody species. Cutting trees from these areas would help restore the functionality of these grasslands, and by doing so, it would also reduce the availability of trees to cut in the future.

Table 7 identifies areas of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs that are suitable or not suitable for timber production and tree cutting.

Table 3. Suitability of lands for timber production and tree cutting

Management Area	Timber Production		Tree Cutting ¹	
	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable
General Forest	X		X	
Community-Forest Intermix	X		X	
High Use Developed Recreation Area		X	X	
Energy Corridor		X	X	
Wild Horse Territory	X		X	
Wildlife Quiet Area	X		X	
Natural Landscape		X	X	
Recommended Research Natural Area		X		X
Research Natural Area		X		X
Primitive Area		X		X ²
Recommended Wilderness		X		X ³
Wilderness		X		X ²
Other Areas				
Areas with soil condition rating of unsuited/inherently unstable		X		X
Lands not cost efficient in meeting timber production objectives		X	X	
Grasslands, woodlands, interior chaparral, and riparian forested PNVTs		X	X	
Communications sites		X	X	
Developed recreation and administrative sites		X	X	
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river		X	X ⁴	
MSO protected activity centers		X	X	

¹ Suitability refers to areas that are accessible and operable for cutting with motorized or nonmotorized equipment. Most areas are suitable for nonmotorized (e.g., handsaw, axe) tree cutting.

² Trees may be cut in the primitive area or Wilderness Management Areas with nonmotorized equipment (e.g., axe, bucksaw) and primarily for trail maintenance (FSM 2323.13f, 2323.53, 2326).

³ Trees may be cut in the Recommended Wilderness Management Area with motorized (e.g., chain saw) or nonmotorized equipment for trail maintenance.

⁴ Tree cutting is not suitable in sections classified as wild except where needed in association with a primitive recreation experience such as to clear trails (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 82.51).

Motorized Uses Suitability

This section describes the suitability of areas for motorized uses, including motorized travel and new designated motorized areas, roads, trails, or temporary roads intended for motorized vehicles.

Table 8 below displays areas that are suitable and not suitable for motorized travel.

Motorized travel is defined as movement using machines that use a motor, engine, or other nonliving power sources other than a vehicle operated on rails or a wheelchair or mobility device, including one that is battery powered, that is designed solely for the use by a mobility impaired person for locomotion and that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.



Figure 12. A forest user rides along the Saffel Canyon OHV Trail, Springerville Ranger District

This plan provides the framework to guide future changes to the transportation system. Once the final decision of this plan has been made, potential changes to the forests’ transportation system will be evaluated under this framework and through implementation of the Travel Management Rule (73 FR 74689). Upon completion of travel management planning, the associated motor vehicle use map (MVUM) would be printed. The MVUM would display the roads, trails, and areas that are designated for motorized vehicle use. Use inconsistent with those designations, and inconsistent with this plan, would be prohibited.

Table 4. Suitability of motorized travel on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Area	Motorized Travel	
	Suitable	Not Suitable
On NFS roads, NFS motorized trails, or designated motorized areas	X	
Off of NFS roads, NFS motorized trails, or designated motorized areas (unless exempted ¹)		X

¹ Per the Travel Management Rule (73 FR 74689), the following vehicles and uses are exempted: (a) aircraft; (b) watercraft; (c) over-snow vehicles; (d) limited administrative use by the Forest Service; (e) use of any fire, military, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle for emergency purposes; (f) authorized use of any combat or combat support vehicle for national defense purposes; (g) law enforcement response to violations of law, including pursuit; (h) motor vehicle use that is specifically authorized under a written authorization issued under Federal law or regulations; and (i) use of a road or trail that is authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a State, county, or other local public road authority.

Table 9 displays areas that are suitable and not suitable for future consideration of a new designated motorized area, NFS road, NFS motorized trail, or temporary road construction. A **designated motorized area** is one that has been designated for motor vehicle use. **NFS roads and trails** are roads and trails that the Forest Service determines are necessary for the protection,

administration, and utilization of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources. **NFS motorized trails** are divided into two categories—greater than 50 inches and less than 50 inches—to accommodate a variety of vehicles. **Temporary roads** are roads necessary for emergency operations or are authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization, and they are not a NFS road or trail and not included in a forest transportation atlas. Temporary roads are removed or rehabilitated following completion of the activity for which they were built.

Table 5. Suitability for new designated motorized areas, NFS roads, NFS motorized trails, and temporary road construction on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Management Area	New Designated Motorized Area		NFS Road and NFS Motorized Trail > 50"		NFS Motorized Trail < 50"		Temporary Road	
	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable
General Forest	X		X		X		X	
Community-Forest Intermix	X		X		X		X	
High Use Developed Recreation Area		X	X		X		X	
Energy Corridor		X	X			X	X	
Wild Horse Territory	X		X		X		X	
Wildlife Quiet Area		X		X		X	X	
Natural Landscape		X		X		X	X	
Recommended Research Natural Area		X		X		X		X
Research Natural Area		X		X		X		X
Primitive Area		X		X		X		X
Recommended Wilderness		X		X		X		X
Wilderness		X		X		X		X
Other Areas								
Meadows and along stream bottoms		X		X		X		X

Management Area	New Designated Motorized Area		NFS Road and NFS Motorized Trail > 50"		NFS Motorized Trail < 50"		Temporary Road	
	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river		X	X ¹		X ¹		X ¹	
Areas with high concentration of significant archaeological or historic sites		X ²		X ³		X ³	X	
Sacred sites or American Indian traditional cultural properties		X		X		X		X

¹ New NFS roads or NFS motorized trails are not suitable in sections classified as wild (FSH 1909.2 Chapter 82.51).

² New designated motorized areas are not suitable where site densities make data recovery economically infeasible; or areas with significant sites that include architecture or structures; or there is a high probability to disturb human remains.

³ Exemptions may be made where construction or rerouting of a NFS road or trail will protect and/or reduce impacts to cultural resource values.

Recreation Suitability

Table 10 displays areas that are suitable or not suitable for future consideration of projects or activities involving mechanized travel or nonmotorized travel.

Mechanized travel is defined as movement using any contrivance over land, water, or air, having moving parts, that provides a mechanical advantage to the user and that is powered by a living or nonliving power source. This includes, but is not limited to, sailboats, hang gliders, parachutes, bicycles, game carriers, carts, and wagons. It does not include wheelchairs when used as necessary medical appliances. It also does not include skis, snowshoes, rafts, canoes, sleds, travois, or similar primitive devices without moving parts.

Nonmotorized travel (not including mechanized travel) is defined as movement not relying on machines that use a motor, engine, or other nonliving power source (e.g., walking, canoeing, horseback riding).

Table 6. Suitability of mechanized and nonmotorized travel on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Management Area	Mechanized Travel		Nonmotorized Travel ¹	
	Suitable	Not Suitable	Suitable	Not Suitable
General Forest	X		X	
Community-Forest Intermix	X		X	
High Use Developed Recreation Area	X		X	
Energy Corridor	X		X	
Wild Horse Territory	X		X	
Wildlife Quiet Area	X		X	
Natural Landscape	X		X	
Recommended Research Natural Area		X	X	
Research Natural Area		X	X	
Primitive Area		X	X	
Recommended Wilderness	X		X	
Wilderness		X	X	
Other Areas				
Meadows and along stream bottoms		X	X	
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river	X ²		X	

¹ Not including mechanized travel.

² Mechanized travel is not suitable in sections classified as wild.

