

# Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

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# ROS

- **WHAT** is it?
- **HOW** was it developed
- **WHY** should you care?
- **HOW** do you use it?

# WHAT IS IT? (ROS 101)

ROS is

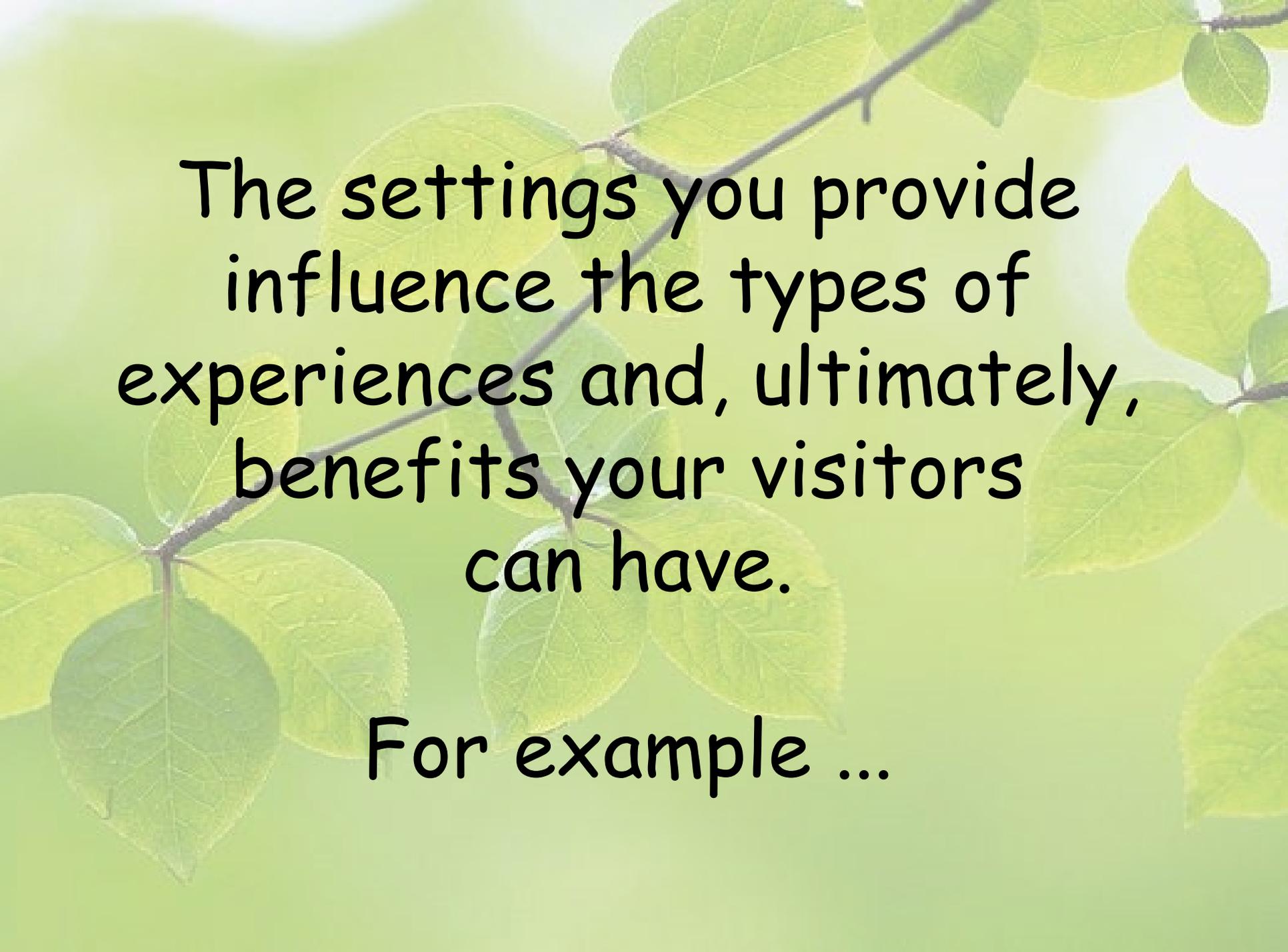
- a classification tool developed back in the 70's to classify and monitor existing and desired recreation settings.
- the primary tool for providing recreation input to Forest planning

# The premise ...

Activity + Setting = Experience

- Visitors engage in an **activity**
- You provide the **setting**
- The end products (outcomes) are **experiences and benefits**

By managing for certain setting characteristics, you will provide specific recreation experience opportunities and beneficial outcomes.

The background of the slide features a soft-focus image of green leaves and branches, creating a natural and fresh aesthetic. The text is centered and written in a large, black, sans-serif font.

The settings you provide  
influence the types of  
experiences and, ultimately,  
benefits your visitors  
can have.

For example ...



These people are enjoying the same activity, but very different experiences due to the setting in which the activity occurs.



# There are 6 main ROS classes



Primitive



Semi-Primitive  
Non-motorized



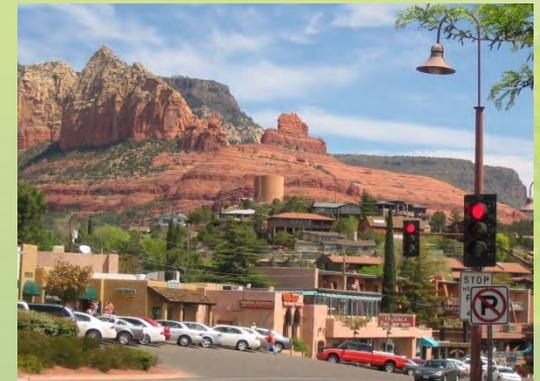
Semi-Primitive  
Motorized



Roaded Natural



Rural



Urban

# Setting attributes that define the 6 ROS classes:

## Physical

- Type of access
- Remoteness: distance from the nearest road, access point, or development
- Size: minimum acreages for P (5,000 acres) and SP (2,500 acres) settings

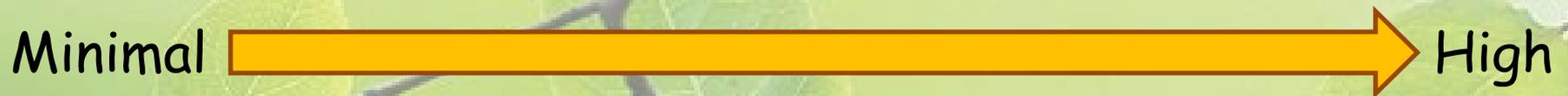
## Social

- User density: number of people encountered

## Managerial

- Visitor management: regulations, information, interpretation
- Facilities and site management: level of development
- Naturalness: evidence of visitor impacts and/or management activities: roads, timber harvest, mining, etc.

ROS classes are arranged along a continuum, as are the individual criteria



Level of access, management, facilities, and social encounters



Level of remoteness

**Access** - Includes the type of transportation used and the level of access provided.

Examples from the two ends of the spectrum ...

Primitive - a trail, typically not well marked and at times difficult to find. Limited to non-motorized travel.



Urban - well delineated, typically asphalt, roads. Accommodates vehicular use (public & commercial vehicles)



# Remoteness - Distance from the nearest road, access point or development.

Primitive settings are at least 3 miles from roads

Semi-primitive non-motorized settings are  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 miles from roads



Semi-primitive motorized settings are within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of *primitive* roads

Roaded natural settings are within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of *better than primitive* roads

# Social Encounters ... How many other people will you run into?

In Primitive settings, you won't see many other people.

As you move toward the Urban end of the spectrum, you'll see many other people.



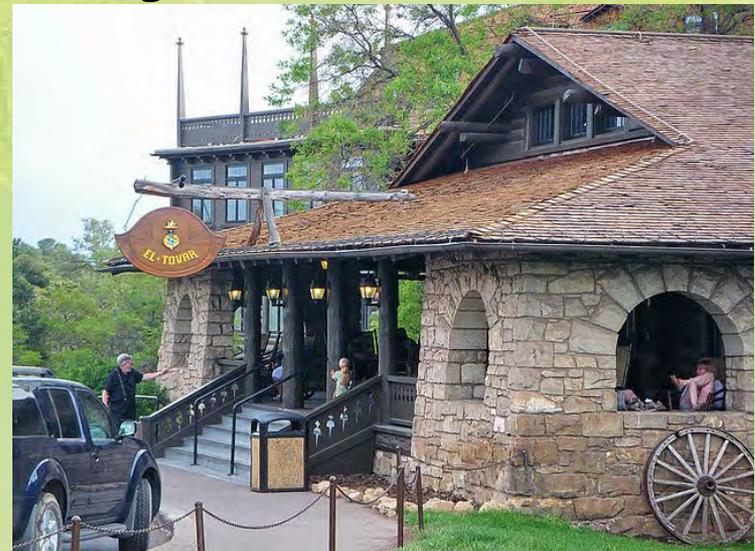
# Level of Management, Regulation, and Information

Looking at the two ends of the ROS spectrum:

Primitive settings have no (or extremely little) evidence of management or human alteration.



Rural and urban settings are dominated by man-made features and evidence of management.



By changing one or more of these setting conditions ... you change the type of setting and ultimately the type of recreation experience of those using the setting.

ROS is more than identifying zones on a map, it's a different way of thinking about recreation - it's an outcomes-based approach

The KEY is to ...

understand what the *existing settings* are and what the *desired settings* are so that your actions either maintain what you have (if existing and desired are the same) or narrow the gap between existing and desired.

# Why use ROS?

From a visitor's perspective ...

## ROS links people

- Where can I go?
- What type(s) of transportation can I use?
- What will the area look like?
- What types of activities can I engage in?
- How many other people will I run into?
- How much development and amenities will be present?
- What type of experience can I expect to have?

**with the landscape.**

# Why use ROS?

From a manager's perspective ...

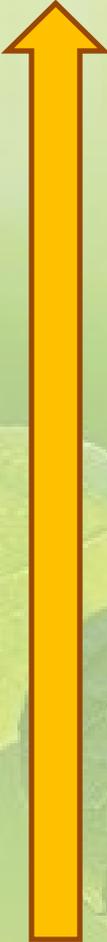
**ROS informs decisions ...**

- What recreation opportunities do we currently provide?
- How will our projects affect those opportunities?
- Are we meeting public demand?
- Are recreation objectives consistent with other management objectives in the same area?
- What opportunities do we want to provide in the future?

**... and makes recreation management more meaningful**

# A Common FS Phenomenon ...

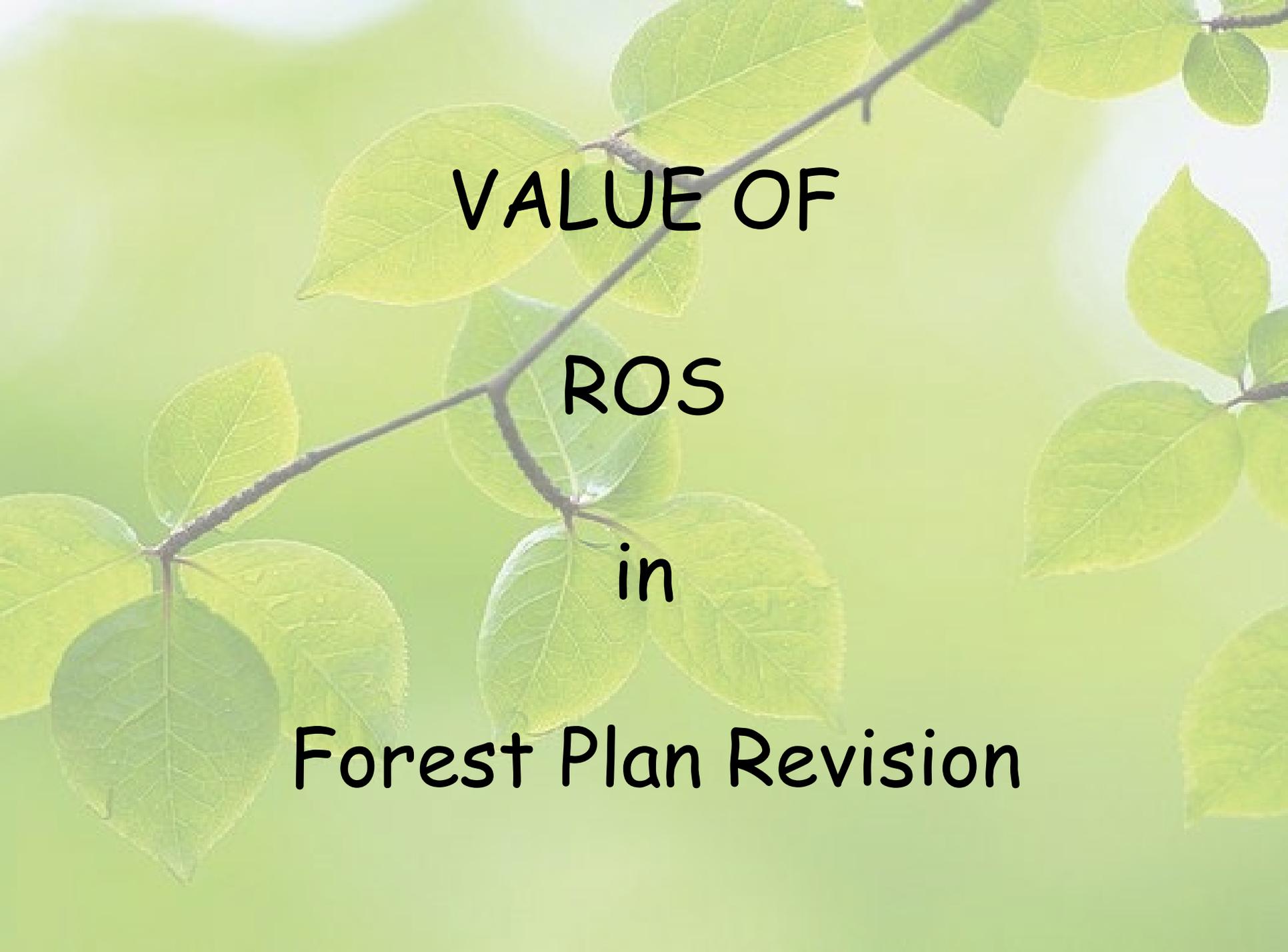
## Development Creep

- 
- Improvements to an access road (either through maintenance practices or reconstruction) have:
    - increased use
    - changed the types of uses/activities
    - changed the traditional user group of an area

**Change from SPM to RN.**

- The incremental hardening and development of a popular dispersed area:
  - first the campsites are hardened
  - then some fire rings are installed
  - then some tables are put in
  - then a toilet
  - then ... a development level 4 or 5 campground in what was once a SPM setting.

**Change from SPM to RN.**



VALUE OF

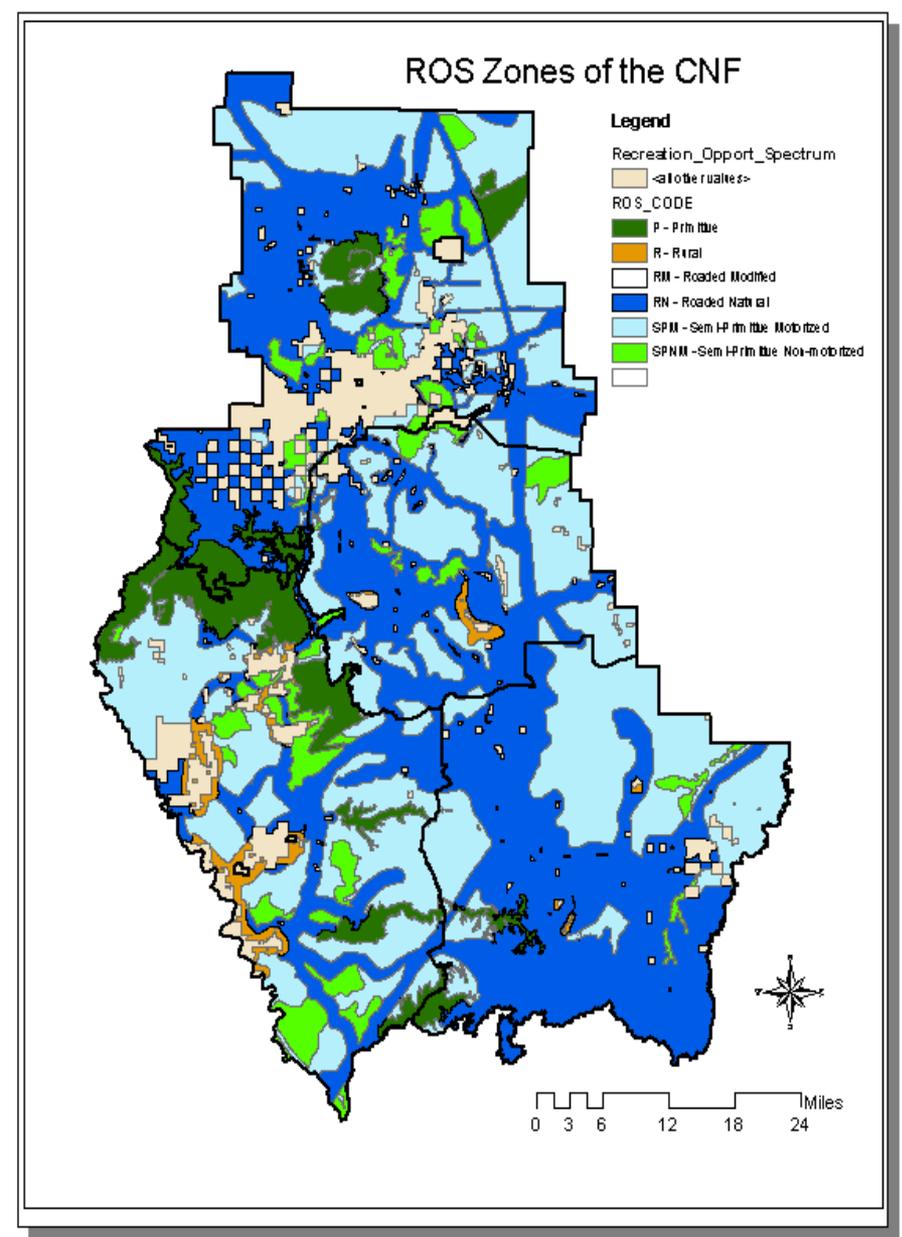
ROS

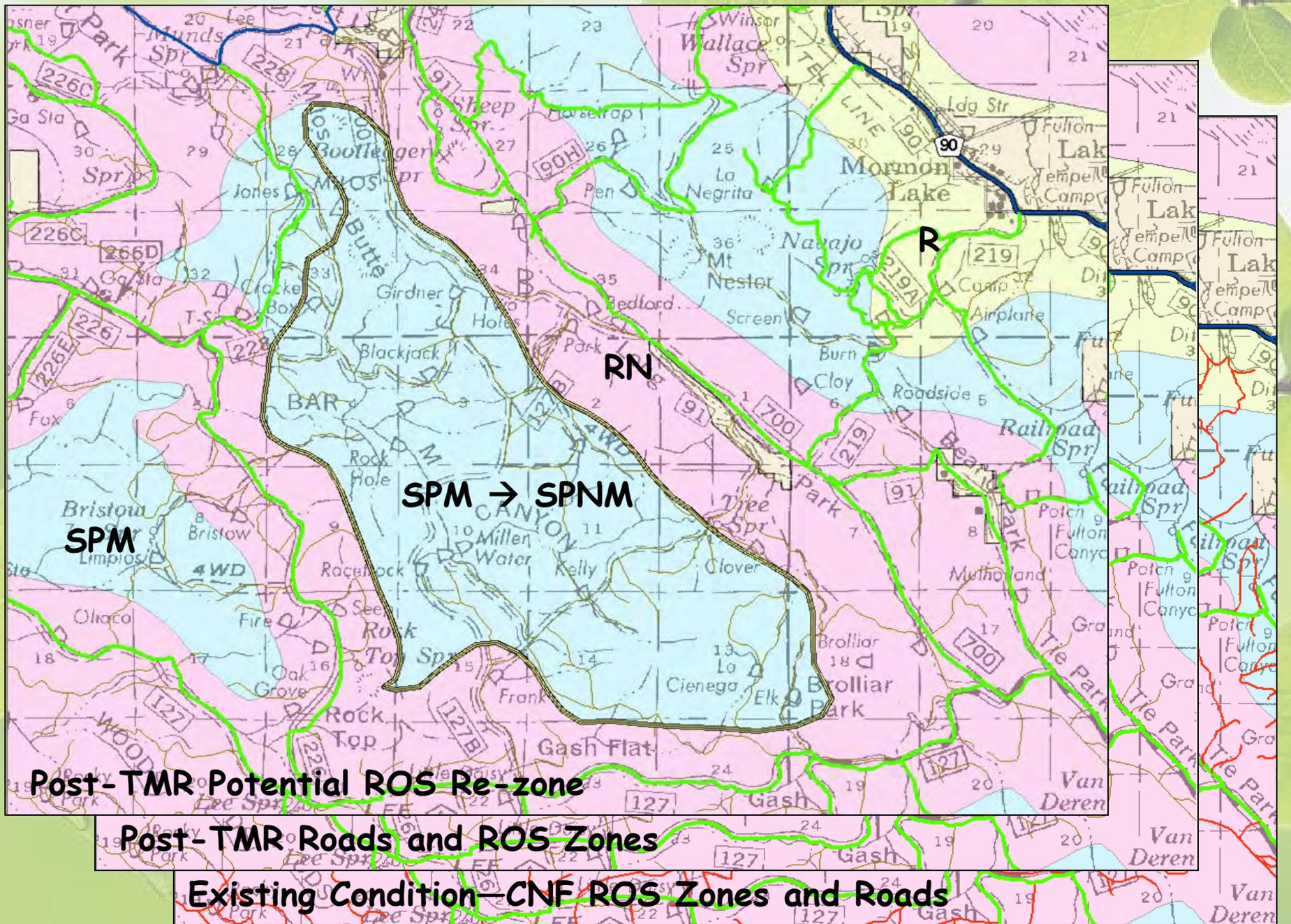
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Forest Plan Revision

# ROS can contribute on several levels:

- at a minimum, it provides baseline data on what you have now
- helps you display the effects of planning options on future recreation opportunities
- will be very useful in writing desired conditions so that people understand and can visualize them
- can be used to anticipate effects on more than just recreation.

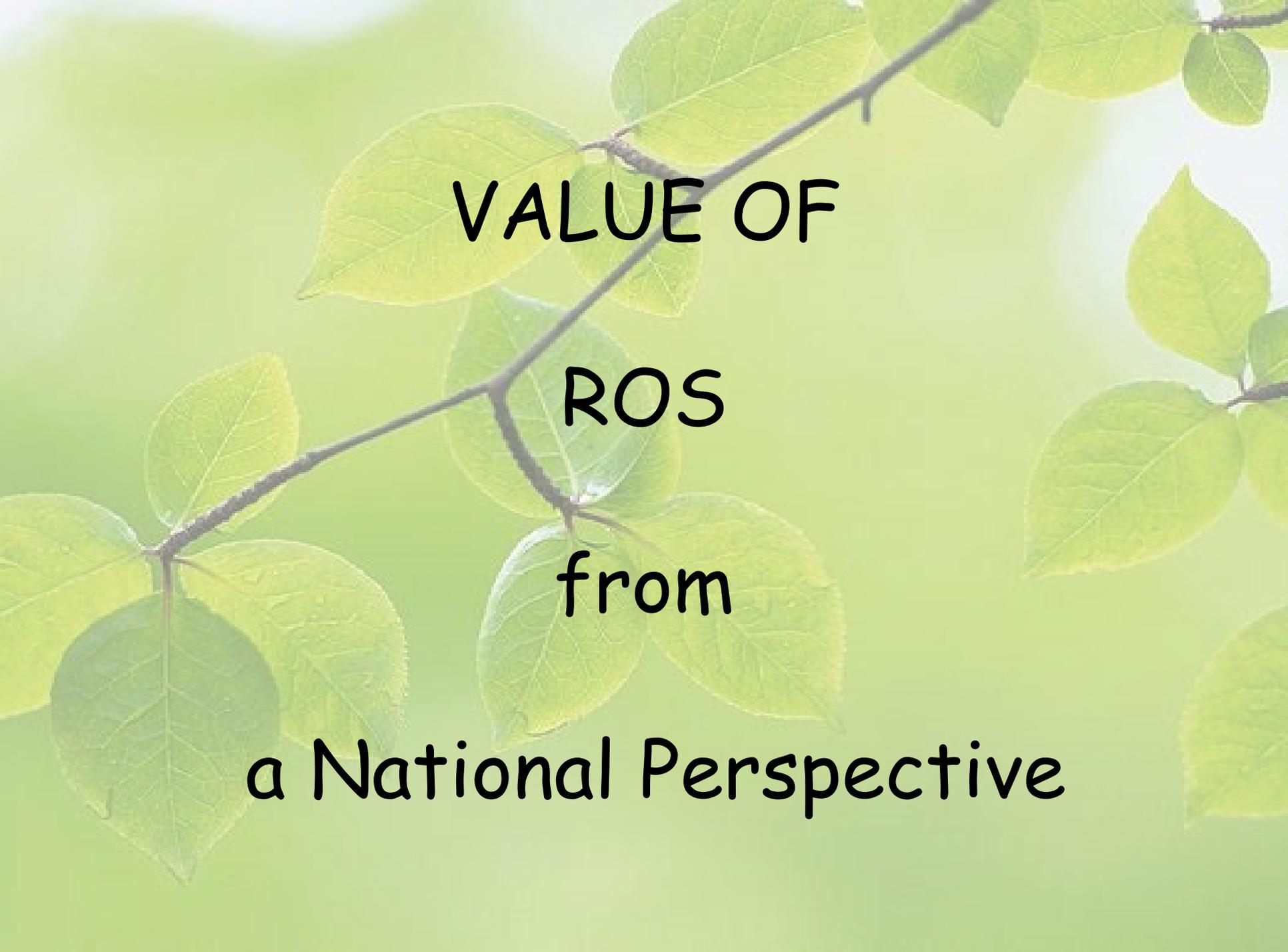




**Post-TMR Potential ROS Re-zone**

**Post-TMR Roads and ROS Zones**

**Existing Condition—CNF ROS Zones and Roads**



VALUE OF

ROS

from

a National Perspective

# National Efforts on Recreation Planning Tools: ROS, GIS, etc.



Floyd A. Thompson, III  
National Program Leader  
AZ R3 Workshop, 10/2010

# Current National Perspective- ROS

- Planning Rule 1982- Recreation Resources as base
- Revising ROS as baseline data with setting indicators, demand analysis, etc. (2010, TEAMS, San Dimas T&D)
- Current Planning Rule 2000 w/1982 regulations now in effect (12.18.2009)
- ROS FSM 2310, exhibit 11 - 1990 ROS still current



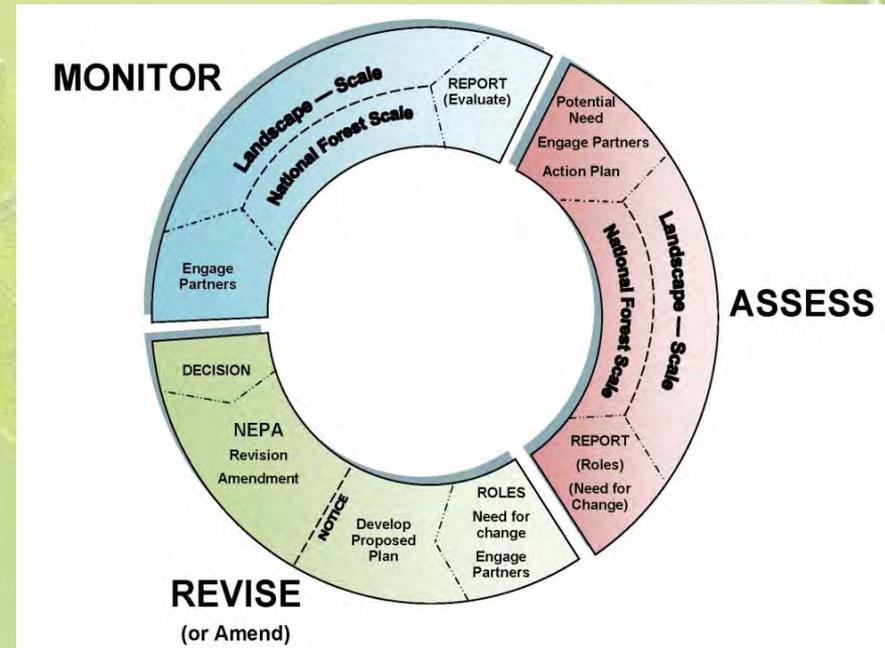
# Why we support ROS Tools in FLMP

- Use ROS concepts for FLMP existing condition
- Use 2003 GIS Protocol as base mapping layer
- Keep ROS Indicators as foundation for monitoring & analysis of effects
- Use ROS descriptors for Dialogue with Public
- Integrate with other tools: INFRA, NVUM, NSRE, SMS



# Possible Concepts in New Rule

- ***\*\*Draft ideas-new plan or plan revision must provide for:***
- Sustainable recreation on the unit, identifying recreational settings and desired scenic landscape character conditions, and considering opportunities and access for a range of uses, including non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water and air.
- Landscape Scale and Ongoing Collaboration Process



# What's Next?? Nationally

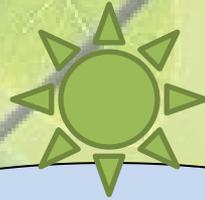
## (RHWR recommended principles - Rule 2011?)

### Recreation management in Forest Plans:

- **Is integral to the FS mission of sustainability.**
- **Enhances the quality of life and well-being for people, and provides opportunities to reconnect with natural and cultural settings.**
- **Management of these settings (ROS) contributes to the essence of place and the vitality of communities.**
- **Establishes direction for a spectrum of recreation activities and services that are compatible with recreation settings and contribute to sustainability goals.**
- **Identifies the social, environmental and economic benefits of allocations for recreation opportunities, including mechanized, motorized, and non-motorized uses.**



# Collaboration on Recreation Management



*Forest Unique  
Roles in Delivering  
Benefits*

Evaluate Roles of Forest ROS settings

Analyze Role in Regional destination area

Cooperate with Recreation & Tourism partners



# ROS in Recreation FLMP Analysis



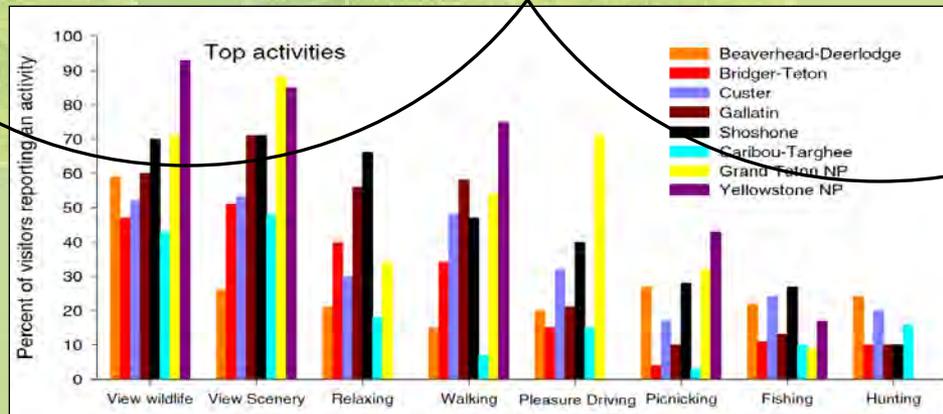
ROS  
Setting Roles  
niche

ROS Current Supply  
Settings & Assets

ROS Existing Demand  
NVUM activities, INFRA

Desired ROS Supply  
New access/new sites

Potential ROS Demand  
NSRE, regional data



**Thank you,  
YOU can make a difference** in shaping  
recreation benefits on National Forest  
System lands



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