

# Research Natural Areas Nez Perce - Clearwater NF



# What is a Research Natural Area?

## ● Federal Committee on Ecological Reserves (1977):

- “A physical or biological unit in which *current natural conditions are maintained insofar as possible*. These conditions are ordinarily achieved by allowing natural physical and biological processes to prevail *without human intervention*. However, under unusual circumstances, deliberate manipulation may be utilized to maintain the unique feature that the RNA was established to protect.”

A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows a topographic map of a river valley. The map features contour lines, a river channel, and various land use patterns. The colors range from light green to brown, indicating different elevations and terrain types.

# Research Natural Areas - Objectives

- Maintain a wide spectrum of “high quality” representative areas
- Preserve and maintain genetic diversity
- Protect against human-caused environmental disruptions
- Reference areas for the study of natural ecological processes
- Provide onsite and extension educational activities
- Baseline areas for measuring long-term ecological changes
- Control areas for comparing results from manipulative research
- Monitor effects of resource management techniques and practices



# USDA Forest Service Research Natural Areas

**Code of Federal Regulations – 36 CFR 251.23**  
[31 Federal Register 5072 – March 29, 1966]

“... the Chief shall establish a series of research natural areas, sufficient in number and size to illustrate adequately or typify for research or education purposes, *the important forest and range types in each forest region, as well as other plant communities that have special or unique characteristics of scientific interest and importance.* Research Natural Areas will be retained in a virgin or unmodified condition *except where measures are required to maintain a plant community which the area is intended to represent.*”



# RNA Designation and Management

- Administrative (agency) vs. congressional designation
- RNAs are co-managed by the National Forest System (NFS) and FS Research...
  - Regional Foresters, with the concurrence of Research Station Directors, designate all new RNAs
  - All management plans and research activities within RNAs are coordinated between NFS and Research

# History of U.S. Forest Service Research Natural Areas

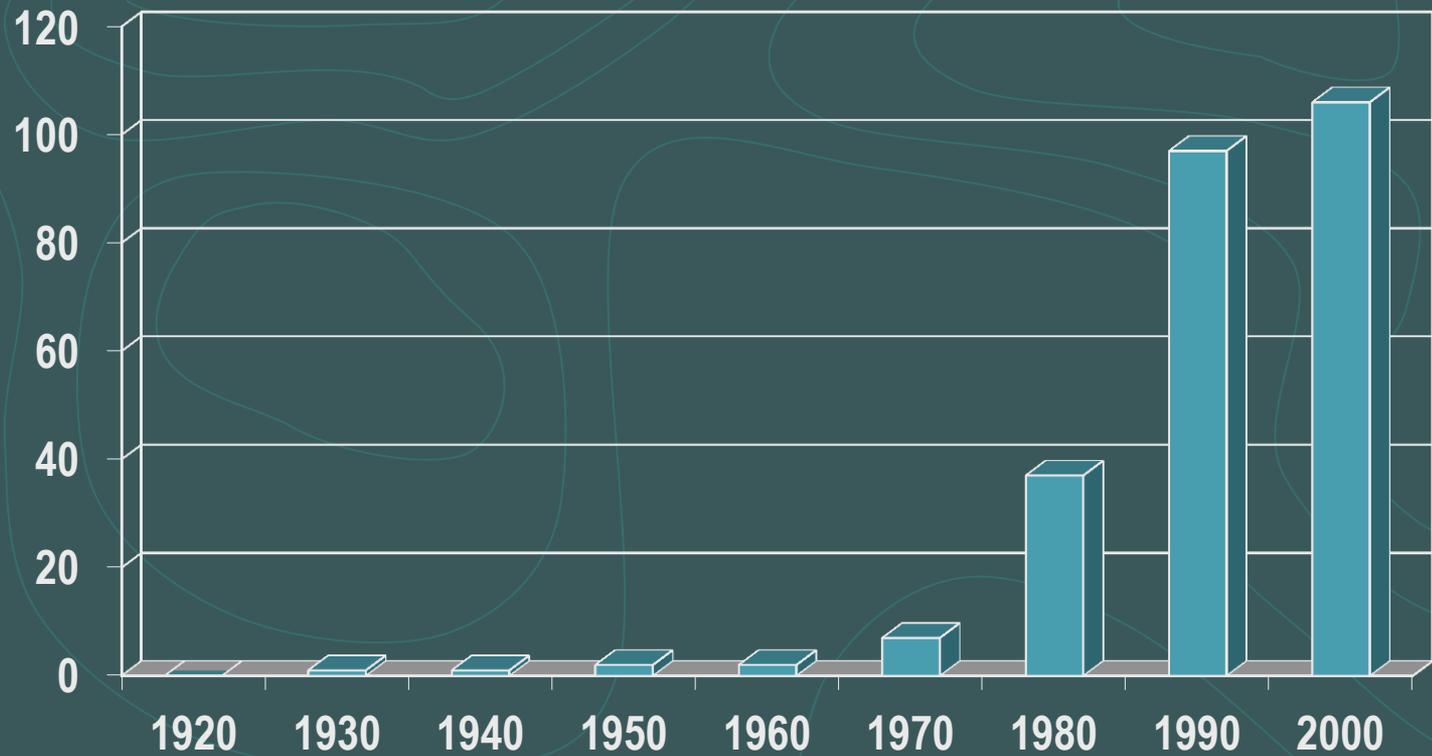


- **1927** – Forest Service set aside the first natural area on federal lands: Santa Catalina Natural Area, Coronado National Forest, AZ

# Research Natural Area Establishment by Decade

## Cumulative Totals

### Region 1, USDA Forest Service, 1920-2012



A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows a topographic map of the forest area, with contour lines and a yellow line indicating a road or boundary.

# RNAs on the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forest

- 19 designated RNAs in the unit (10 on Clearwater, 9 on the Nez Perce)
- 35,791 total acres (9,923 on Clearwater, 25,868 on Nez Perce)
- 200 to 7,055 acres in size
- RNAs in Roadless/Wilderness: 17
- RNAs not in Roadless/Wilderness: 4
- Two currently proposed, needing designation
- 9 designated in 1980s; 10 designated in 1990s



# RNA Network Direction

- **1983 -- Northern Region Planning Guide** – established RNA or targets, for each National Forest
- **1996 -- Northern Region Status and Needs Assessment** – recommended additional targets
- **2000 -- Representativeness Assessment of Research Natural Areas on National Forest System Lands in Idaho**
- **“Opportunistic” target selection**



# RNA Selection:

RNA targets *may* include:

1. A large, diverse ecosystem
2. A specific plant community type (e.g., SAF forest cover types, or regional habitat type classifications of various authors)
3. A narrowly defined habitat
4. Unusual occurrences of rare species
5. High-quality examples of aquatic and terrestrial habitats

A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows a topographic map of a forest area. The map features contour lines, a network of roads, and a yellow line that likely represents a trail or a specific management boundary. The terrain appears to be hilly or mountainous.

# USDA Forest Service Research Natural Areas

**FSM 4063.03**

**[November 4, 2005]**

“The selection and establishment of Research Natural Areas within the National Forest System primarily emerges from continuing land resource management planning and associated environmental analyses. ***Forest plans shall include analysis of, and recommendations for, the establishment of proposed Research Natural Areas.*** Where proposals to establish Research Natural Areas arise outside of the forest planning process, the affected Forest Supervisor shall prepare... a forest plan amendment...”

# Steep Lakes RNA



# Aquarius RNA



# No Business RNA



# Grave Peak RNA



# Fenn Mountain RNA (proposed)



# Dutch Creek RNA



# Sneakfoot RNA



# RNA Designation Priorities

- *Tsuga mertensiana*/*Clintonia uniflora* (high)
- *Abies grandis*/*Taxus brevifolia* (high)
- *Pseudotsuga menziesii*/*Vaccinium cespitosum* (high)
  
- 11 moderate priorities
- 6 low priorities – seek to find in existing RNAs
  
- Others based on rare species, unique habitats.

# Potential RNAs

