



Forest Plan Revision

Tongass National Forest



Recreation and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Frequently Asked Questions

What types of recreation occur on the Tongass National Forest?

Many people enjoy recreating on the Tongass National Forest. Recreation contributes to social and economic sustainability and provides opportunities to connect people with nature. Recreation activities on the Tongass include, but are not limited to, hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, photography, skiing, snowmachining, exploring forest roads, wildlife viewing, using recreational cabins, beachcombing, kayaking, canoeing, and enjoying the marine environment adjacent to forest lands. These activities can be described as either dispersed or developed recreation.

What is dispersed recreation?

Dispersed recreation simply refers to the activities that occur in an area of a national forest with limited or no amenities provided for recreational users (36 CFR § 261.2). On the Tongass National forest, dispersed recreation includes activities such as camping outside of established campgrounds, fishing, and exploring undeveloped coastal areas.

What is developed recreation?

Developed recreation refers to areas that have been developed for some level of recreation use, and include such areas as campgrounds, cabin rentals,

guest lodges, outfitter camps, trail crossings, interpretive sites, trailheads, picnic areas, and boat launches.



How will plan revision address recreation?

The 2012 planning rule requires that revised land management plans:

1. Provide guidance that supports sustainable recreation
2. Identify recreation opportunities using the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Sustainable recreation

Sustainable recreation is the set of recreation settings and opportunities that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for present

and future generations. The revised plan must provide for sustainable recreation by considering how recreation on the Tongass contributes to or detracts from ecological health, economic vitality, and the social wellbeing of people who live near or recreate on the forest.

Recreation Opportunities

A recreation opportunity is an opportunity to participate in a specific **recreation activity** in a particular **recreation setting** to enjoy desired recreation experiences and other benefits.

Opportunities may include non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and in the air (36 CFR 219.10).

Essentially, recreation opportunities are the activities you like to participate in and the settings or environments you need for that activity.



Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

What are the sights, sounds, and ‘feel’ of the places you like to recreate? The recreation opportunity spectrum is a system used to classify recreation opportunities based on these impressions that different places provide. This system defines six settings of the social, managerial, and physical attributes of a place that provide a distinct set of recreation opportunities. These settings will be identified across the landscape in the revised plan, and include:

1. Primitive: Large, remote, wild, and predominately unmodified landscapes with no motorized activity. These settings are managed for quiet solitude away from roads, people, and development.

2. Semi-primitive nonmotorized: Large, semi-remote, areas that provide for backcountry nonmotorized uses. Rustic facilities are present for the primary purpose of protecting natural resources. These settings are not as remote as primitive, but offer opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance.
3. Semi-primitive motorized: Large, semi-remote areas providing for motorized backcountry travel on designated routes or in designated areas. Routes are designed for off-highway vehicles. This setting offers motorized opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. Rustic facilities are present for the purpose of protecting natural resources or providing portals to more primitive areas.
4. Roaded natural: Natural-appearing areas with areas of development that support higher concentrations of use, user comfort, and social interaction. The road system is well defined and provides access to more primitive areas.
5. Rural: Developed recreation sites and modified natural settings with higher concentrations of use and increased opportunities for group recreation activities and social interactions. Facilities are designed primarily for comfort and convenience. The road system is well defined and accommodates all vehicle types.
6. Urban: A substantially developed environment although the background may have natural appearing elements. Urban areas offer visitor comfort and convenience.

The Forest Service uses the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum both to describe the types of recreational opportunities currently available on the forest, and to determine where different types of future recreational opportunities would be most appropriate.

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<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fseprd1105492>