

Recreation and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

What types of recreation occur on the Lolo National Forest?

Many people enjoy recreating on the Lolo National Forest. Recreation activities include, but are not limited to, hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, photography, horseback riding, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, off-highway vehicle riding, mountain biking, disc golf, target shooting, mountain skates and skateboards, paintballing, trail running, hang gliding, personal flying craft, swimming, and canoeing. Recreation contributes to social and economic sustainability and provides opportunities to connect people with nature.

What is dispersed recreation?

Dispersed recreation simply refers to the activities that occur in an area of a national forest or grassland with limited or no amenities provided for recreational users (36 CFR § 261.2).



Figure 1—Pack train, Lolo National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Kate Jerman

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, huts, guest lodges, outfitter camps, trail crossings or interpretive pull-outs, trailheads, picnic areas, boat launches, and ski areas.



Figure 2—Big Larch Campground, Lolo National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Kate Jerman

The recreation development scale is used in recreation management and planning to describe the level of development, and includes:

- Scale 1: Sites with minimum modification. Rustic or rudimentary improvements designed for protection of the site rather than comfort of the users.
- Scale 2: Sites with little site modification. Rustic or rudimentary improvements designed primarily for protection of the site rather than the comfort of the users.
- Scale 3: Sites with moderate modification. Facilities about equal for protection of natural site and comfort of users.
- Scale 4: Sites that are heavily modified. Some facilities designed strictly for comfort and convenience of users.
- Scale 5: Sites with a high degree of site modification. Facilities mostly designed for comfort and convenience of users and usually include flush toilets; may include showers, bathhouses, laundry facilities, and electrical hookups.

How will plan revision address recreation?

Providing guidance that supports sustainable recreation and identifying the recreation opportunity spectrum are key elements required by the 2012 planning rule for revised land management plans.

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.

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).

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The recreation opportunity spectrum is a system used to classify recreation opportunities. 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 and little probability of seeing other people. 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 that provide for motorized backcountry motorized on designated routes or in designated areas. Routes are designed for off-highway and high-clearance 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. Routed natural: Natural-appearing areas with nodes and corridors 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 user comfort and convenience. The road system is well defined and can accommodate all forms of transportation.
6. Urban: A substantially developed environment although the background may have natural appearing elements. Urban areas offer visitor comfort and convenience.



Figure 3—Kayaking on the Lolo National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Kate Jerman