

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. Acquired lands are evaluated for suitability (chapter 4) prior to being allocated to appropriate uses.

An identification of an area as suitable for a particular use does not mean that the use will occur over the entire area. Likewise, identifying that a particular use is not suitable in a management area does not mean that the use will not occur in specific areas. The identification of an area as suitable for various uses is guidance for project and activity decision-making and is not a resource commitment or final decision approving projects and activities. Final decisions on resource commitments are made at the project level. The final decision to authorize livestock grazing would be made at a project (allotment) level.

Forestwide suitability calculations (acres suitable versus not suitable) can be found in appendix B of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs “Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the 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 6 through 11. The information outside of these tables is not a plan decision but is 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, horses, and sheep. Provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule require that the capability and suitability for producing forage for grazing animals on National Forest System (NFS) lands be determined.

Capability is the potential of an area of land to produce resources and supply goods and services. Capability depends upon current conditions and site conditions such as climate variability, slope, landform, soils, and geology. Capability was determined in the 1980s during the first round of forest planning by compiling data from the most recent individual grazing allotment analyses. Landscape scale conditions have not changed significantly since this evaluation.

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. Suitable rangeland is determined based on compatibility with desired conditions and objectives in the plan area. Lands within the plan area are not identified as suitable for a certain use if that use is prohibited by law, regulation, or policy; would result in substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land or renewable resources; or if the use is incompatible with the desired conditions for the relevant portion of the plan area. A unit of land may be suitable for a variety of individual or combined management practices. Table 6 identifies areas as suitable or not suitable for livestock grazing.

Table 6. Suitability of livestock grazing on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

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

^a Areas that are not suitable for livestock grazing may occur within allotment boundaries but do not contribute to the overall grazing capacity of the allotment.

Special Uses Suitability

Table 7 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 7. Suitability of select special uses on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Management Area	Energy Corridor Suitable	Energy Corridor Not Suitable	Other Energy Development Suitable	Other Energy Development Not Suitable	Communications Site Suitable	Communications Site Not Suitable
General Forest	X		X		X	
Community-Forest Intermix	X		X		X	
High Use Developed Recreation Area		X		X	X	

Management Area	Energy Corridor Suitable	Energy Corridor Not Suitable	Other Energy Development Suitable	Other Energy Development Not Suitable	Communications Site Suitable	Communications Site Not Suitable
Energy Corridor	X		X		X	
Wild Horse Territory	X		X		X	
Wildlife Quiet Area		X ^a		X		X
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 corridors		X		X		X
Sacred sites or American Indian traditional cultural properties		X		X		X

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

Lands Suitable for Timber Production

The National Forest Management Act requires that 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 2014, of the more than 2 million 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 grasslands on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs are encroached by woody species. Cutting trees would help restore these grasslands.

Table 8 identifies areas of the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs that are suitable or not suitable for timber production and tree cutting.

Table 8. Suitability of lands for timber production and tree cutting

Management Area	Timber Production Suitable	Timber Production Not Suitable	Tree Cutting Suitable	Tree Cutting 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 ^b
Research Natural Area		X		X ^b
Primitive Area		X		X ^c
Recommended Wilderness		X		X
Wilderness		X		X ^c
Areas with soil condition rating of unsuited/inherently unstable		X		X
Other Areas				
Lands not cost efficient in meeting timber production objectives		X	X	
Grasslands, woodlands, interior chaparral, and riparian forested PNVs		X	X	
Communications sites		X	X	
Developed recreation and administrative sites		X	X	
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river corridors		X	X ^d	
MSO protected activity centers		X	X	

^a 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.

- ^b Tree cutting for research purposes is allowed.
- ^c 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).
- ^d Tree cutting is not suitable in segments 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 9 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

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 (36 CFR § 212). 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. Travel management planning is not a static process. Based on public input, monitoring, and site-specific analysis, the MVUM could be adjusted. The annual reissuing of the MVUM would reflect any changes made through the NEPA process. Use inconsistent with those designations, and inconsistent with this plan, would be prohibited.

Table 9. Suitability of motorized travel on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Area	Motorized Travel Suitable	Motorized Travel 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 ^a)		X

^a Per the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR § 212 Subpart B), the following vehicles and uses are exempted: (a) aircraft; (b) watercraft; (c) over-snow vehicles¹; (d) limited administrative use by the Forest Service; (e) use of any fire,

¹ Use by over-snow vehicles is governed by Subpart C of the Travel Management Rule, which states that “use by over-snow vehicles on National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails and in areas on National Forest lands may be allowed, restricted,

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 10 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 motorized trails** are roads and motorized 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; 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 10. 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		X		X		X		X

or prohibited.

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
Area								
Primitive Area		X		X		X		X
Recommended Wilderness		X		X		X		X
Wilderness		X		X		X		X
Other Areas								
Meadows, wetlands, riparian areas, and along stream bottoms		X		X		X		X
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river corridors		X	X ^a		X ^a		X ^a	
Areas with high concentration of significant archaeological or historic sites		X ^b		X ^c		X ^c	X	
Sacred sites or American Indian traditional cultural properties		X		X		X		X

^a New NFS roads and NFS motorized trails are not suitable in segments classified as wild (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 82.51).

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

^c Exceptions may be made where construction or rerouting of a NFS road or motorized trail will protect and/or reduce impacts to cultural resource values.

Recreation Suitability

Table 11 displays areas that are suitable or not suitable for future consideration of projects or activities involving mechanized travel or nonmotorized travel.

Mechanized travel (mechanical transport) 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 11. Suitability for mechanized and nonmotorized travel on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs

Management Area	Mechanized Travel Suitable	Mechanized Travel Not Suitable	Nonmotorized Travel ^a \ Suitable	Nonmotorized Travel ^a 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, wetlands, riparian areas, and along stream bottoms		X	X	
Eligible or suitable wild and scenic river corridors	X ^b		X	

^a Does not include mechanized travel.

^b Mechanized travel is not suitable in segments classified as wild.