

**Forest Service Manual  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Manual 2300 – Recreation, Wilderness, And Related Resource Management  
Chapter 2370 - Special Recreation Designations**

**Amendment:** 2300-2021-3

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**Approved by:** Tina Johna Terrell, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

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**Responsible Staff:**

**Last Change:** 2300-2021-2 to FSM 2320

**Superseded Document(s):** 2370, Amendment 2300-90-1, June 1, 1990

**Digest:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

**2371.03(7.):** Deletes reference to Wilderness Management Handbook 2309.19.

**2371.1:** Deletes reference to the obsolete FSH 2309.11, Recreation Information Management Handbook.

**2371.8:** Deletes reference to Wilderness Management Handbook 2309.19 and refers to the Boundary Management Handbook 5609.11.

**2372.1:** Deletes reference to the obsolete FSH 2309.11, Recreation Information Management Handbook.S

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**Forest Service Manual 2300 – Recreation, Wilderness, And Related Resource Management**

**Chapter 2370 - Special Recreation Designations**

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Certain limited areas of National Forest System lands not designated as wilderness and containing outstanding examples of plant and animal communities, geological features, scenic grandeur, or other special attributes merit special management. These areas are designated by law, or may be designated administratively, as special areas. Areas so designated are managed to emphasize recreational and other specific related values. Other uses are permitted in the areas to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated. The law or order designating each area provides specific objectives and guidelines for management of each area.

This chapter provides overall direction for managing special areas. See FSM 2320 for management direction of designated wilderness. See FSM 4060 for management direction regarding Research Natural Areas and Experimental Forest and Ranges.

## 2371 - Areas Designated by Law

### 2371.01 - Authority

The authority for the administration of those special areas established by law within the National Forests is found in the principal acts from 1897 to the present that authorize multiple-use management (FSM 1021), in each act designating a special area, and in 36 CFR 219 and 261. See exhibit 1 for the specific acts designating special management areas.

### Exhibit 1

#### LAWS ESTABLISHING SPECIAL RECREATION MANAGEMENT AREAS

##### NATIONAL RECREATION AREAS

AREA NAME	LAW
Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks	16 U.S.C. 460p
Whiskeytown-Shasta Trinity	16 U.S.C. 460q
Mount Rodgers	16 U.S.C. 460r
Flaming Gorge	16 U.S.C. 460v
Oregon Dunes	16 U.S.C. 460z
Sawtooth	16 U.S.C. 460aa
Hells Canyon	16 U.S.C. 460gg
Arapaho	16 U.S.C. 460jj
Rattlesnake	16 U.S.C. 460ll
White Rocks	16 U.S.C. 460nn
Mount Baker	16 U.S.C. 460pp
Allegheny	16 U.S.C. 460qq

##### NATIONAL MONUMENTS

AREA NAME	LAW
Admiralty Island	16 U.S.C. 431 note
Misty Fiords	16 U.S.C. 431 note
Mount St. Helens	16 U.S.C. 431 note

##### NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS

Mono Basin	16 U.S.C. 543
North Cascades Scenic Highway	Sec. 8(a) P.L. 98-339 not codified

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**Exhibit 1--continued**

**NATIONAL SCENIC RESEARCH AREAS**

Cascade Head	16 U.S.C. 541
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**NATIONAL MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREAS**

Lake Tahoe	Sec. 1, 2, 3, P.L. 96-586 not coded
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Lee Metcalf	Sec. 2(c) P.L. 98-140 not coded
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Oregon Cascade	16 U.S.C. 460oo
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Antone Bench	Sec. 306(a) P.L. 98-428 not coded
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### **2371.02 - Objectives**

Each law cited states the specific management objectives for the area. General objectives for managing special areas established by law are to:

1. Provide a showcase for National Forest management standards.
2. Provide for public enjoyment of the area for outdoor recreation or other benefits.
3. Protect the special values and attributes of the area (that is, scenic, cultural, historic, wilderness, wildlife, or other values) that contribute to public enjoyment.
4. Manage for any other resource values present in the area, in a manner that does not impair the public recreation values or the special attributes of the area.

### **2371.03 - Policy**

1. Manage each special area as an integral part of the National Forest System with emphasis on the primary values and resources as directed by the law that established the area.
2. Manage values or resources not emphasized or prohibited in the law in a manner that complements or enhances the primary values of the area and is compatible with overall National Forest management objectives.
3. Manage each special area as a showcase to demonstrate National Forest management standards for programs, service, and facilities.
4. Except for portions of special areas designated as wilderness, provide interpretive services to enhance visitor enjoyment of the area.
5. Manage each special area as a separate unit of National Forest land in harmony with the other units as outlined in the forest plan.
6. Incorporate management direction in the forest plan or prepare a comprehensive management plan if directed by the law for each area, that gives specific management direction for all resource values within the area.
7. Where wilderness and special area designation overlap, follow wilderness management direction (FSM 2320).

#### **2371.04 - Responsibilities**

##### **2371.04a - Secretary of Agriculture**

The Secretary shall appoint advisory board members and officers when authorized by specific legislation.

##### **2371.04b - Chief**

The Chief shall:

1. Nominate authorized advisory board candidates to the Secretary.
2. Report advisory board activities to the Secretary.
3. Approve each area's legal boundary description and map and transmit them to Congress.
4. Review and approve any regulations needed to implement the laws for each special area for publication in the Federal Register.

##### **2371.04c - Regional Forester**

Each Regional Forester with jurisdiction over a special area shall:

1. Prepare regulations necessary to implement the law for each special area and present them to the Chief for approval. This responsibility may not be redelegated.
2. Prepare policy that integrates national objectives with direction given in the governing statute and its legislative history for each special area. This responsibility may not be redelegated.
3. Approve management direction for each area in Forest Plans and/or comprehensive management plans.
4. Recommend authorized advisory board candidates to the Chief for consideration.
5. Act as the Secretary's representative in all dealings with a special area advisory board.
6. Prepare the official map and legal boundary description.

##### **2371.04d - Forest Supervisor**

The Forest Supervisor shall:



1. Manage the area according to National and Regional direction and the management plan for each area.
2. Prepare and recommend the forest plan prescriptions and comprehensive management plan (if the law requires one) for each area.
3. Approve or disapprove all management actions in the area not reserved by the Regional Forester. This responsibility may be redelegated.

#### **2371.04e - District Ranger or Monument Manager**

The District Ranger or Monument Manager shall implement the management direction for the area.

#### **2371.05 - Definitions**

1. National Recreation Areas. Areas that have outstanding combinations of outdoor recreation opportunities, aesthetic attractions, and proximity to potential users. They may also have cultural, historical, archaeological, pastoral, wilderness, scientific, wildlife, and other values contributing to public enjoyment.
2. National Monuments. Areas of unique ecological, geologic, historical, prehistorical, cultural, and scientific interest.
3. National Scenic Areas. Areas that contain outstanding scenic characteristics, recreational values, and geologic, ecologic, and cultural resources.
4. National Scenic Research Areas. Areas that contain outstanding scenic values for research, scientific, and recreational purposes.
5. National Management Emphasis Areas. All other areas that contain unique or outstanding physical features and that contain specific physical, cultural, or political characteristics receiving specific emphasis in the legislation.

#### **2371.1 - Inventory**

Keep a current list of special areas designated by law in the Recreation Information Management System (RIM) Form FS-2300-3, RIM Directory - Information for National Forest Recreation Sites.

#### **2371.2 - Planning - Integration With Forest Plan**

Special area management direction is prepared according to the law designating the area and as part of the forest planning process (36 CFR 219 and FSM 1922 and FSM 1950).

Implementation of the plan is accomplished through implementation schedules that include projects and activities designed to achieve and comply with the management direction established for the special area.

**2371.21 - Policy**

1. Identify each special area designated by law as a separate management area in the forest plan.
2. Management direction for each special area must be stated in the forest plan as management area prescriptions, or in a separate management plan if the law directs the preparation of a separate plan. Prescriptions shall meet legislative direction for the area.
3. The special area component of a forest plan or other management plan shall include, as a minimum, the following:
  - a. Management direction in accordance with 36 CFR 219 and 36 CFR 292.
  - b. Display of the relationships and coordination between the unique values and recreation role of the area with other resources and activities present in the area, as well as activities outside that affect management of the area. Resources and other elements to be addressed include: forest cover, forage, federally listed threatened and endangered flora or fauna, fish and wildlife, domestic livestock, soil and water (including weather modification), minerals, historical and cultural resources, fire, insects and diseases, air quality, landownership, other agency use, signing, communication, and research.
  - c. A description of the recreation experiences to be provided.
  - d. A list of necessary recreation facilities (including roads and trails), commercial public services, and land that needs to be acquired in fee or partial interest to meet recreation objectives and protect the areas resources.
  - e. Monitoring requirements for determining whether prescriptions, standards, and guidelines are met.
4. Individual special area management plans completed prior to the writing of the Forest plan should be incorporated as an entity into the Forest plan if they:
  - a. Have been prepared according to the environmental analysis process (FSM 1950).
  - b. Are current and valid.
  - c. Are appropriately referenced and discussed in the Forest plan.

d. Provide at least the same level of direction as would be found in the completed Forest plan.

5. Management direction shall be consistent for each area that occurs in more than one State, Region, or National Forest.

6. In some instances, the law designating a special area requires preparation of an area management plan.

These specified plans are integrated into the forest plan when completed before the Forest planning process. If a plan is required subsequent to adoption of the forest plan, the required plan should not duplicate information contained in the forest plan. It should ultimately be appended to the Forest plan.

### **2371.22 - Implementation Schedules**

Implementation schedules should be prepared to ensure that direction and objectives established in the forest plan are met (FSM 1922.5). They include coordination of the work done on all resources and activities within each special area and are normally revised annually.

Implementation schedules contain:

1. Specific action needed to follow forest plan direction and accomplish forest plan objectives.
2. General priorities for action items.
3. Unit or individual responsibilities.
4. Target dates for completion of the actions.

### **2371.23 - Revision of Management Direction**

If special area management direction in the forest plan is found to be inadequate, the plan should be amended following the procedure outlined in 36 CFR 219.10(f), FSM 1920, and FSM 1950. If lack of direction is identified but change is not warranted during the planning period, the concern should be noted and dealt with in the next revision of the plan. Establishment of new management direction requires appropriate public involvement and conformance with both the forest planning and environmental analysis processes (FSM 1922 and FSM 1950).

### **2371.3 - Advisory Boards**

Line officers shall meet regularly with established special area advisory boards. Prepare information and notices on advisory board meetings and actions as directed in FSM 1350.

#### **2371.4 - Occupancy and Public Use**

Provide for public use and enjoyment of each special area up to the level that will ensure protection of the special values for which the area was established. Allow other occupancy and public use of each area to the extent that neither interferes with the primary values of the area as described in the Act, its legislative history or National Forest management standards.

#### **2371.5 - Land Acquisition**

Acquire fee title or partial interest in lands, identified in the forest plan as necessary to protect the unique values of an area, as directed by the law establishing the area and policy in FSM 5400.

#### **2371.6 - Recreation Facilities**

Facilities should demonstrate National Forest System standards in both construction and maintenance. Do not develop new standards for each area. Operate facilities at full service standards.

Design facilities to complement the unique character of the area and to identify it as a Forest Service - administered national special management area. Coordinate facility design, maintenance, and use with the interpretive program. Use similar architectural elements. Signs may display a unique area logo. See FSM 2320 for direction on wilderness area signs and facilities.

#### **2371.7 - Commercial Public Services**

Normally, most commercial public services will be developed by private enterprises on private land. Commercial services may be allowed under special use permit on National Forest System lands if needed to meet management objectives established for the area (FSM 2720). Coordinate their operations with the interpretive program.

#### **2371.8 - Boundaries and Official Maps**

Prepare legal boundary descriptions and official maps for each area using the boundaries Congress has provided. The Forest Service does not have authority to modify the given boundaries. Follow the same procedures and standards used for wilderness boundary descriptions found in FSH 5609.11, Boundary Management Handbook.

### **2372 - Areas Designated Administratively**

#### **2372.01 - Authority**

The authority for administratively designating, preserving, and managing special areas within National Forests is found in the principal acts from 1897 to the present that authorize multiple-use management and in 36 CFR 294.1.

## **2372.02 - Objective**

To protect and manage for public use and enjoyment, special recreation areas with scenic, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, archaeological, or other special characteristics or unique values.

## **2372.03 - Policy**

1. Designate or recommend administrative designation of special areas with outstanding natural characteristics or unique recreation or cultural values (36 CFR 294.1 and FSM 2372.2).

2. Rescind the designation of areas when the designation is no longer appropriate (FSM 2372.2).

3. Manage each special area as an integral part of the National Forest System with emphasis on its unique values.

4. Manage other values or resources in the area to a level compatible with the area's primary values and overall National Forest management objectives.

5. Include management direction for each area in the forest plan. Amend the forest plan with management area direction for areas established after the forest plan was approved (FSM 2372.2, FSM 1922, and FSM 1950).

## **2372.04 - Responsibilities**

### **2372.04a - Secretary of Agriculture**

The Secretary shall:

1. Designate areas of 100,000 acres or larger under 36 CFR 294.1a.

2. Designate areas 160 acres or larger under 36 CFR 294.1b.

### **2372.04b - Chief**

The Chief shall notify the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of any pending designation of 100,000 acres or larger and of any proposals to withdraw 5,000 acres or more from application of the mining laws.

### **2372.04c - Regional Forester**

The Regional Forester shall:

1. Designate areas less than 100,000 acres under 36 CFR 294.1a.

2. Designate areas less than 160 acres under 36 CFR 294.1b. This authority may be delegated to Forest Supervisors.

3. Approve special area management direction in forest plans.

4. Approve area boundary descriptions and maps.

#### **2372.04d - Forest Supervisor**

The Forest Supervisor shall make all decisions and approve management actions not expressly reserved to the Secretary (FSM 2372.04a), the Chief (FSM 2372.04b), or the Regional Forester (FSM 2372.04c). Specifically, the Forest Supervisor shall:

1. Prepare an area's boundary description and map.

2. Oversee preparation and implementation of an area's management direction.

#### **2372.04e - District Ranger**

The District Ranger shall implement all management direction for the area.

#### **2372.05 - Definitions**

1. Scenic Area. A scenic area is a unit of land with outstanding natural beauty that requires special management to preserve this beauty.

2. Geological Area. A geological area is a unit of land with outstanding formations or unique geological features of the earth's development such as caves, fossils, dikes, cliffs, or faults.

3. Botanical Area. A botanical area is a unit of land that contains plant specimens, plant groups, or plant communities that are significant because of their form, color, occurrence, habitat, location, life history, arrangement, ecology, rarity, or other features.

4. Zoological Area. A zoological area is a unit of land that contains animal specimens, animal groups, or animal communities that are significant because of their occurrence, habitat, location, life history, ecology, rarity, or other features.

5. Paleontological Areas. A paleontological area is a unit of land that contains fossils of plants and animals, shellfish, early vertebrates, coal swamp forests, early reptiles, dinosaurs, and other prehistoric plants or animals.

6. Historical Area. A historical area is a unit of land possessing a significant site or a concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or prehistorically by plan or physical development. Memorial areas are included in this definition.

7. Recreational Area. A recreational area is a unit of land that has been administratively designated for particular recreation opportunities or activities such as hiking, rock hounding, recreational mining, photography, or other special activity.

### **2372.1 - Inventory**

Keep a current list of administratively designated special areas in the Recreation Information Management System (RIM), Form FS-2300-3, RIM Directory-Informational for National Forest Recreation Sites.

### **2372.2 - Designation**

Include an analysis of the need and desirability for special areas in the forest plan (FSM 1920 and FSM 1950). If a decision in the forest plan recommends designation, include management direction in the plan or in an amendment to the plan later. Except for those areas approved by the Secretary, approval by the Regional Forester of the forest plan constitutes designation of the area.

If an area is to be designated by the Secretary, submit the request through the Recreation Management Staff, Washington Office, along with the proposed management direction.

Rescind a designation by including an analysis of the rescission in the forest plan. Approval by the Regional Forester of the forest plan rescinds the designation. Recommend rescission of designated areas designated by Secretary through the Recreation Management Staff, Washington Office.

### **2372.3 - Planning - Integration With Forest Plan**

Follow the direction in 2371.2, except legislative direction does not apply. Management direction for administratively designated areas may not need to be as elaborate as larger, more complex national interest areas.

### **2372.4 - Development, Occupancy, and Public Use**

1. Place campgrounds or other overnight recreation developments outside of special areas whenever possible.
2. Locate roads, trails, sanitary facilities, picnic grounds, and parking spaces without disturbing the special features of the established area.
3. Allow no resorts or other high-impact special uses within the area unless needed for public enjoyment of the principal features of the area.

4. Keep developments such as roads, trails, and other facilities to the minimum necessary for public enjoyment of the area.

5. Build no roads or other improvements on or through geological formations unless it is the only alternative to meet management objectives for the area.

6. Encourage public use and enjoyment of each administratively designated special area up to the level that will ensure protection of the special values for which the area was established.

7. Provide interpretive services to enhance visitor's understanding and appreciation of the area's special features.

8. Allow other occupancy and use of the area's resources to the extent they neither interfere with the primary values for which the area was established nor negatively affect the visitor's experience.

#### **2372.5 - Boundaries and Maps**

Prepare an official boundary description and map for each special area. Follow the same procedures and standards used for wilderness boundary descriptions found in FSH 2309.19, Wilderness Management Handbook.

#### **2373 - National Registry of Natural Landmarks**

All or parts of any special recreation designated area may be placed on the National Registry of Natural Landmarks. The registry represents important examples of the Nation's natural history. Use the direction in this section to nominate and protect these areas.

The National Registry is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The Park Service administers the overall program and conducts natural history theme studies. At the request of the Regional Forester, the Park Service conducts onsite evaluation studies of potential sites on National Forest System lands; transmits copies of the evaluation report to the Regional Forester; notifies the Regional Forester when National Forest sites are designated as eligible for registration; and with the final approval of the Regional Forester, designates as eligible and registers eligible National Forest sites through the Secretary of the Interior.

The 1972 Memorandum of Agreement entitled Designation of Natural Landmarks in National Forests (FSM 1531.31b) outlines how the Forest Service cooperates with the Park Service to nominate and protect natural landmarks on the National Registry.



### **2373.01 - Authority**

Authority for the preservation of Natural Landmarks is found in the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (49 Stat. 666, 16 U.S.C. 461).

### **2373.02 - Objectives**

To cooperate with the U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service to:

1. Encourage the preservation of sites illustrating the geological and ecological character of the United States.
2. Enhance the scientific and educational value of sites thus preserved.
3. Foster a greater concern in the conservation of the Nation's natural heritage.

### **2373.03 - Policy**

1. Evaluate significant natural land forms, land or aquatic ecosystems, and geological formations for nomination to the National Registry of Natural Landmarks.
2. Nominate those areas that qualify unless there are important management considerations that preclude nomination.
3. Protect the natural features of the registered areas while managing the areas for planned uses (FSM 2373.4).

### **2373.04 - Responsibilities**

#### **2373.04a - Regional Forester**

The Regional Forester shall:

1. Report potential sites to the appropriate National Park Service area office.
2. Request onsite evaluation studies by the National Park Service or agree that the Forest Service will conduct the evaluation.
3. Request that the National Park Service designate sites on National Forest land as eligible, register the sites, and remove sites from the Registry, when necessary.
4. Approve overall management direction of registered sites through an appropriate plan.

### **2373.04b - Forest Supervisor**

The Forest Supervisor shall:

1. Conduct onsite evaluations as agreed to by the Regional Forester with the National Park Service.
2. Recommend sites to the Regional Forester for designation and registration as National Natural Landmarks.
3. Protect the natural features of the registered National Natural Landmark.

### **2373.1 - Identification and Nomination**

Potential National Forest landmarks are identified by theme studies conducted by the Park Service, by citizens or scientists through the National Forest planning process, or by Forest Service professionals.

The 1972 Memorandum of Agreement (FSM 1531.31b) outlines the nominating procedures.

### **2373.2 - Natural History Themes**

Consider these themes used by the National Park Service when proposing areas as natural landmarks:

1. Landforms of the Present.
  - a. Plains, plateaus, mesas.
  - b. Cuestas and hogbacks.
  - c. Mountain systems.
  - d. The works of volcanism.
  - e. Hot water phenomena.
  - f. Sculpture of the land.
  - g. Eolian landforms (sand dunes).
  - h. River systems and lakes.
  - i. The works of glaciers.

- j. Seashores, lakeshores, islands.
  - k. Coral islands, reefs, atolls.
  - l. Earthquake phenomena.
  - m. Caves and springs.
  - n. Meteor impact sites.
2. Geological History of the Earth.
- a. Precambrian.
  - b. Cambrian - Early Silurian.
  - c. Late Silurian - Devonian.
  - d. Mississippian - Triassic.
  - e. Permian - Cretaceous.
  - f. Paleocene - Eocene.
  - g. Oligocene - Recent.
3. Land Ecosystems.
- a. Tundra.
  - b. Boreal.
  - c. Pacific forest.
  - d. Dry coniferous forest and woodland.
  - e. Eastern deciduous forest.
  - f. Grassland.
  - g. Chaparral.
  - h. Desert.
  - i. Tropical ecosystems.

4. Aquatic Ecosystems.
  - a. Marine environments.
  - b. Estuaries.
  - c. Streams.
  - d. Underground ecosystems.
  - e. Lakes and ponds.

### **2373.3 - Evaluation Criteria**

Nationally significant areas must possess exceptional value or quality that illustrates or interprets the natural heritage of the Nation. The area must be a true, essentially unspoiled example. Such values may include, but are not limited to:

1. Outstanding geological formations or features significantly illustrating geologic processes.
2. Significant fossil evidence.
3. An ecological community significantly illustrating characteristics of a physiographic province or a biome.
4. A biota or relative stability maintaining itself under prevailing natural conditions, such as a climatic climax community.
5. An ecological community significantly illustrating the process of succession and restoration to natural condition following disruptive change.
6. A habitat supporting a threatened or endangered or restricted species.
7. A relic flora or fauna persisting from an earlier period.
8. A seasonal haven for concentrations of native animals, or a vantage point for observing concentrated populations, such as a constricted migration route.
9. A site containing significant evidence illustrating important scientific discoveries.
10. Examples of the scenic grandeur of our natural heritage.

**2373.4 - Protection**

Conduct an environmental analysis, with appropriate public involvement, on planned management actions within Registered Landmarks to determine possible effects on the natural features of the area (FSM 1950, FSH 1909.15). If adverse effects will occur, pick an alternative action or plan acceptable mitigation. If an alternative or mitigation is not practical or possible, delay the action until the Secretary of the Interior has had sufficient time to act upon a written request to remove the area from the Registry.