

# Wilderness Evaluation Criteria

## Evaluation of Wilderness Characteristics

### Analysis of Roads

Inventory units must be roadless. Roads were clearly identified and their impact on the naturalness of the area evaluated. If an access route met the road definition, its use and possible long-term need was documented. In order to ensure a consistent identification of “roads” as opposed to an unmaintained vehicle way, the following definition was used:

*“The word ‘roadless’ refers to the absence of roads which have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continuous use. A ‘way’ maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.”*

This language is from the House Committee Report 94-1163, page 17, dated May 15, 1976, which forms part of the legislative history of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The 1978 BLM Wilderness Inventory Handbook further defined certain words and phrases in the road definition and these were also used in this inventory:

**“Improved and maintained”**—Actions taken physically by people to keep the road open to vehicle traffic. “Improved” does not necessarily mean formal construction. “Maintained” does not necessarily mean annual maintenance.

**“Mechanical means”**—Use of hand or power machinery or tools.

**“Relatively regular and continuous use”**—Vehicular use that has occurred and will continue to occur on a relatively regular basis. Examples include access roads for equipment to maintain a stock water tank or other established water sources, access roads to maintained recreation sites or facilities, or access roads to mining claims.

### Analysis of Wilderness Characteristics

The inventory evaluated wilderness characteristics as discussed in Section 2 (c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, which Congress incorporated in FLPMA, Sec. 603 (43 USC 1782). The Wilderness Act states:

*“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”*

Each inventory unit was evaluated for:

**Size**—Determine if the inventory unit, including acres of contiguous lands having wilderness character, “. . . has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.”

**Naturalness**—Determine if the area “. . . generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.” Findings regarding naturalness should be based on the appearance of the area as seen from the ground.

**Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation**—Determine if the area “. . . has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation . . .” The word “or” in this sentence means that an area has to possess only one or the other. It does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, and does not need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre. However, there must be outstanding opportunities somewhere in the unit. When review units are contiguous to WSAs or other agency lands with identified wilderness values, they were considered an extension of the WSA; no additional evaluation of outstanding opportunities was required.

**Supplemental Values**—Determine if the inventory unit contains “. . . ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.” The Wilderness Act states a wilderness “may also contain” these values. Supplemental values are not required for wilderness, but their presence is documented where they exist. A finding that a inventory unit lacks any or all of the supplemental values did not affect the determination of the existence of wilderness character.