

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Management of the National Forest System

The National Forest System (NFS) consists of 154 National Forests and 19 National Grasslands. Their lands contribute to watershed protection and streamflow stability. They provide timber and grazing, and a variety of recreational and wilderness experiences. They offer habitat for numerous species of fish and wildlife. National Forest System lands are developed and managed so their renewable surface resources will provide continuous long term yields of products and services for local, state, regional, and national economies. A continuous challenge in managing the National Forest System is that of obtaining an effective mix of outputs pursuant to the several authorizing acts of Congress which, together with annual appropriations, comprise the framework for Forest Service programs and activities.

Involved in this land management decisionmaking process is the allocation of specific lands to a particular use or uses. Such allocations require, 1) the best available resource data and other information, including the views of citizens and special interest groups, other Federal agencies, and States, and 2) the synthesis and evaluation of such data and information utilizing professional, administrative judgments as to how best to meet statutory goals and directives and achieve the interests and expectations of the American people. Basically, this is multiple-use management.

Concepts of multiple-use have in some sense been guiding principles for management of the National Forests, almost since the original reservations of the 1890s. But management today requires continual annual planning as well as periodic assessments and long-range program formulation. These planning efforts go forward under many statutory directives including the 1897 Organic Act, the more recent Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. As a result of these planning processes, some or parts of the National Forests and National Grasslands are being studied continuously to determine specific management that will best serve multiple-use sustained-yield objectives and will encourage wise resource uses and optimum product outputs, including wilderness designations, to meet the identified needs and articulated desires of the American people.

The decisionmaking process leading to multiple use management is designed to permit reasonable choices from among possible alternatives with an awareness of the consequences of such choices. The ultimate management decisions relating to one or a combination of uses involves professional, discretionary judgments by those responsible for selecting reasonable management plans, consistent with general public interests. Typical of this level of decisionmaking is the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, RARE II, begun in 1977 at the initiative of the Department of Agriculture.

As is indicated in this environmental statement, the purpose of RARE II has been to bring together relevant data and information as a basis for decisions on allocation of roadless areas to either wilderness uses or to multiple uses other than wilderness. Clearly, major decisions are involved in this process that may have significant effects on balance and availability of commodity outputs and the resultant social and economic environment and with potential to impact physical and biological resources. With respect to allocation of lands to wilderness uses, the Forest Service, aware of the complex choices involved and cognizant of the importance of wilderness preservation, has pioneered in designating particular areas for such uses long before the Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964. The continuing land management planning process, of which RARE II is only a part, provides the basis for administrative decisions allocating lands to particular uses or combinations of uses. These administrative decisions reflect the best professional judgments and the most reliable data and information available to the Forest Service.

### The Wilderness System

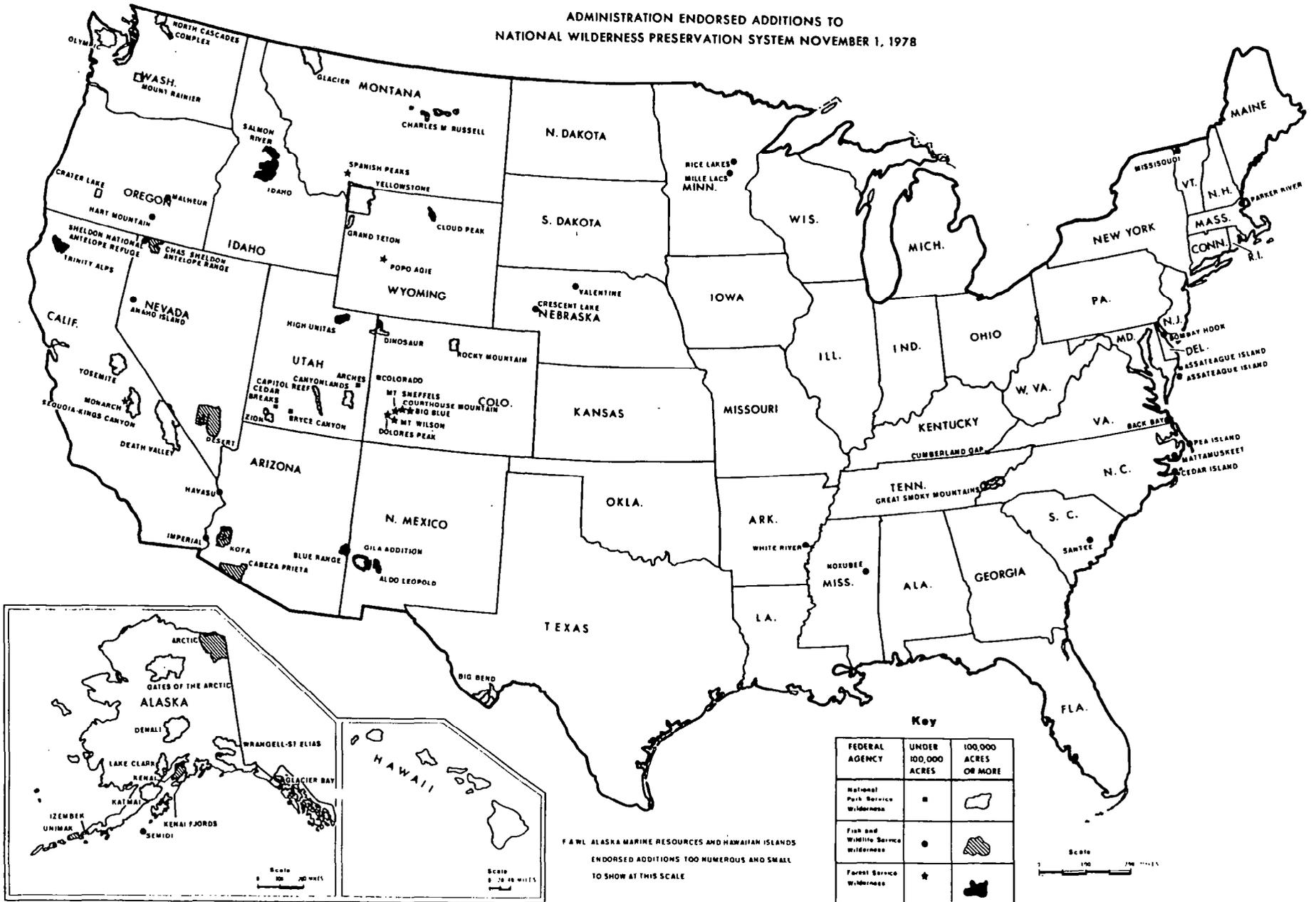
The concept of leaving areas of National Forests in their natural, wilderness state emerged in the early 1920s. Initially, the idea of declaring wilderness areas was intriguing but not readily accepted. The perseverance of a few individuals paid off when, in 1924, the District Forester in charge of Arizona and New Mexico (today called the Regional Forester) utilized his administrative authority to classify a part of the Gila National Forest as the Nation's first wilderness area.

The wilderness idea was born, resulting in the beginning of the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) as it exists today. Additions to the system brought the acreage administratively set aside as wild and wilderness to more than 9 million acres by the time the Wilderness Act became law in 1964. This Act formalized the concepts of wilderness developed over the preceding 40 years. It gave only the Congress authority to add areas to the NWPS. The 1964 Wilderness Act declared it to be the policy of Congress "to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." Congress could designate Federally owned lands as wilderness to be "administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. . . ." The act states that wilderness is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Wilderness is further defined in the Act as "an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence . . . 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 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practical 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."

The National Wilderness Preservation System, as of November 1, 1978, consists of 187 areas classified as Wilderness totaling more than 19 million acres. Areas are found in National Forests, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and on public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. (Maps on the following pages identify components of the NWPS and potential additions that are Administration-endorsed.)



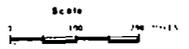
ADMINISTRATION ENDORSED ADDITIONS TO  
NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM NOVEMBER 1, 1978



**Key**

FEDERAL AGENCY	UNDER 100,000 ACRES	100,000 ACRES OR MORE
National Park Service Wilderness	■	□
Fish and Wildlife Service Wilderness	●	▨
Forest Service Wilderness	★	■

F & W L ALASKA MARINE RESOURCES AND HAWAIIAN ISLANDS  
ENDORSED ADDITIONS TOO NUMEROUS AND SMALL  
TO SHOW AT THIS SCALE



The Forest Service administers 110 wildernesses totaling more than 15.2 million acres. Seventeen other areas have been studied and endorsed by the Administration to be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System. These areas total slightly more than 3.3 million acres which, if approved by Congressional action, would result in 127 areas and almost 18.5 million acres administered by the Forest Service.

Within the National Park System, there are currently 25 areas classified as wilderness, totaling about 3 million acres. Agency study of the remaining undeveloped areas is essentially complete with proposals pending action by Congress. The potential National Park Wilderness Program, if all endorsed areas are classified, would result in a total of 48 wilderness areas containing slightly more than 15.7 million acres. There are additional areas not yet studied that could raise this acreage slightly.

Congress has designated 52 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System with approximately 771,000 acres as wilderness. An additional 33 areas containing 7.2 million acres have been endorsed by the President and are pending before Congress. Several large areas are still under study and may result in significant increases.

Three wildernesses located primarily on National Forest land contain approximately 12,000 acres of public domain land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau, in total, administers about 450 million acres with perhaps over 120 million acres being roadless or undeveloped. These areas will be studied for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System as required by Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

If all pending Administration-endorsed areas are added, the NWPS would consist of 260 areas containing 41.9 million acres. The National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service have or will have essentially achieved their total potential when action on those roadless areas currently being reviewed is completed. This leaves the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management as the major sources of additional Federal lands that have potential for wilderness classification.

State and local governments also have the opportunity to set aside areas of land to be preserved in their natural state and managed as wilderness. Nine States have established wilderness systems within their boundaries. For the purpose of RARE II, State systems are considered the equivalent of Federal wilderness if the standards for designation and management are as rigid as Federal standards. In addition, for State designation to be considered meeting Federal standards, legislative action is required rather than administrative decisions or designations. California, with two areas, totaling 97,000 acres, and New York, with 16 areas totaling approximately one million acres, are the only States that meet the standards. Eighteen other States have established legislation or already designated areas that do not meet the Federal standards but do preserve areas of land in a natural condition.

#### Roadless Areas Review and Evaluation

The Wilderness Act of 1964 required the Forest Service to study the suitability of 34 existing primitive areas for wilderness designation. But other roadless and undeveloped areas within the National Forest System also could be considered for

possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The first Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) effort was initiated in 1972 to accomplish this. It was designed to identify those roadless, undeveloped areas that appeared to be the best candidates for inclusion in the NWPS. The process resulted in the selection in October 1973 of 274 wilderness study areas containing approximately 12.3 million acres. The selections were made from a total inventory of 1,449 areas containing 56 million acres.

The Forest Service has continued to consider roadless areas not selected for wilderness study for their wilderness potential as part of its land management planning program. The original review of roadless areas and continuation of the planning process has contributed to resolution of the roadless area question. While this normal process would most likely have resulted in a substantial number of areas being designated wilderness, it was felt that a more concerted effort was desirable, among other reasons, to speed up determinations, to permit a more comprehensive approach to identification of appropriate areas, and to encourage a more systematic review and evaluation of the remaining roadless areas. Thus, RARE II was undertaken.

Important lessons identified by assessing RARE I experiences have contributed to the form and content of RARE II. First, in retrospect it seems clear that roadless areas might better be reviewed in terms of larger integral units rather than in smaller parts. Boundary definitions of study units thus are important. Second, selection criteria require refinement so as to minimize the possibility of excluding or overlooking particular undeveloped areas. Finally, especially in the context of Public Law 93-622, earlier concentration on Western forest lands would most appropriately be supplemented by careful examination of Eastern National Forest lands and of all National Grasslands.

RARE II is an integral part and acceleration of that portion of the land management planning process dealing with Forest Service administered roadless areas. It is designed to consider the entire National Forest System at one time, minimizing local variations in inventory and allocation of roadless areas. RARE II does not replace the land and resource management planning effort being conducted today. RARE II will be accomplished in context with and will assist the land management planning effort by resolving most of the roadless area allocation questions. In addition, RARE II will provide data to assist in the 1980 update of the program required by the Renewable Resources Planning Act. RPA wilderness targets and land area available to contribute to other targets will be more precisely known upon completion of RARE II.

RARE II began with a Forest Service inventory of roadless, undeveloped areas that met minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act. The criteria defined a roadless area as an area exclusive of improved roads constructed or maintained for travel by means of motorized vehicles intended for highway use. The inventory recognized that areas of land could be included in the Wilderness System even though they may not be entirely free of the imprint of man but are fully capable of providing wilderness benefits to the public. Accordingly, roadless, undeveloped areas could include past timber harvest activities, evidence of old mining, some range improvements, minor recreation sites, water related facilities, etc., if the passage of time or their visibility allowed the area to appear natural. In addition, undeveloped areas in the eastern part of the United States could be included if there was no more than 1/2 mile of improved road per 1,000 acres as long as the road was under Forest Service jurisdiction. Throughout the inventory process, the question of whether or not areas should be wilderness was not a factor. The primary criterion was suitability.

The public was invited to propose additions or deletions to the inventory list and comment on those factors that should be considered in evaluating additions to the Wilderness System. Public input was reviewed and an inventory list of 1,921 roadless areas, encompassing about 62.1 million acres, prepared. It was supplemented by a list of 34 roadless areas allocated to nonwilderness use through the land management planning process, but determined to need an additional review. Both lists were published in the November 18, 1977, Federal Register.

The inventory was updated on February 14 and June 8 prior to issuance of the RARE II Draft Environmental Statement. The total number of roadless areas changed with these updates, due primarily to incorporation of the Tongass National Forest Land Management Plan into the total RARE II process. The plan divided the three roadless areas originally inventoried on the Tongass National Forest into over 700 individual value comparison units for planning purposes. The RARE II inventory has been expanded to reflect the Alaska increase in number of roadless areas. The acreage has also changed due to more precise measurements, identification of native claimed lands, and elimination of areas that were not roadless. The RARE II inventory consisted of 2,686 roadless areas, containing slightly more than 62 million net acres at the time the draft statement was filed. The ten alternatives displayed in the draft and reconstructed in this final statement deal only with these 2,686 areas.

The RARE II inventory has been dynamic until filing of this final environmental statement. Following publication of the list in the November 18, 1977, Federal Register, the public submitted suggestions for both additions and deletions to the inventory. Each challenge to the inventory was carefully reviewed and decisions made regarding their inclusion on an area-by-area basis. These decisions by the Chief of the Forest Service have been appealable to the Secretary of Agriculture under 36 CFR 211.19. The first inventory changes were published in the February 14, 1978, Federal Register. Subsequent amendments were published June 8, October 3 and 19, December 13, 1978 and January 3, 1979. Amendments were made as areas that have been allocated through land management planning processes subsequent to issuance of the RARE II draft statement have been deleted from the inventory. Other changes reflect a recalculation of roadless area acreages and, in some cases, modification of boundaries to delete privately owned lands. Also, during evaluations there were situations where inventoried roadless areas had to be divided into two or more separate areas so that appropriate portions could be allocated to wilderness while portions needed for nonwilderness resource use could be allocated to multiple uses other than wilderness. As a result, there are 2,919 roadless areas containing 62,036,904 acres.

These 2,919 roadless, undeveloped areas of the National Forests and National Grasslands represent the National Forest System opportunity to contribute to the National Wilderness Preservation System. This led to the second part of RARE II or the evaluation phase. The goal of this phase was to decide which areas should be allocated either to wilderness, to multiple uses other than wilderness, or to further planning.

The draft environmental statement documented the early phases of the evaluation process and asked the public to comment on a series of ten alternatives. The draft statement consisted of a national overview statement and 20 supplements to it providing site specific information and a State-by-State analysis of impacts. This final environmental statement does not have any supplements. However, the allocation of individual roadless areas and assessment of State-by-State impacts may be found in separate appendices for each State or geographic area following Section VIII of this statement.

The eleven western states plus Alaska and North Dakota are treated in individual appendices. The remainder of the country is grouped into seven geographic areas with an appendix prepared for each group of States. Individual State and geographic area supplements to the draft environmental statement must be referred to for site specific data and further discussion of each State or area. The following map shows the individual States and grouping of eastern States for the alphabetically arranged appendices.



Evaluation of roadless areas on the Tongass National Forest was underway as a part of the Tongass Land Management Plan when RARE II began. The analysis included in the draft environmental statement for that Tongass LMP, issued on June 28, 1978, the subsequent comments received, and evaluations which are a part of the final land management plan for the Tongass, have been used to reach the decisions included in this statement. Inclusion of the Tongass decisions in this statement helps to give the entire National picture in one document. Rationale for the Tongass decisions are amplified in a final environmental statement for the Tongass Land Management Plan to be issued in the next several weeks.

The RARE II Draft Environmental Statement was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and made available to the public on June 15, 1978. Following a 3-1/2 month public review period, the Department of Agriculture used the response received and proceeded with the final phase of RARE II, the proposed allocation of the 2,919 roadless areas. This final statement recommends certain roadless areas for wilderness classification and allocates other areas to nonwilderness uses, or

when unable, defers decisions pending results of further planning at the National Forest level. The environmental effects of these decisions along with the decision making process are displayed in this statement.

The three categories to which all areas are allocated -- wilderness, multiple uses other than wilderness (nonwilderness), and further planning for all uses -- in each alternative and the proposed action mean:

**WILDERNESS.** Roadless areas placed in the wilderness category are to be recommended to Congress for classification. The areas will not be available for timber harvest, road construction, or other activities that reduce the wilderness potential of the area. Entry into the areas for exploration, development, and production of minerals locatable under the 1872 mining laws is currently permitted, however the Administration has recommended that Congress amend the 1872 Mining Laws. Access and other activities requiring land use permits may require modification. Current permitted activities, such as off-road vehicle use or maintenance of range improvements or other existing developments, may continue pending classification. Recommendations regarding mineral leasing will normally be for "no surface occupancy" stipulations.

**NONWILDERNESS.** Roadless areas placed in the nonwilderness category will, consistent with current laws, regulations, and national policy, and within constraints of existing management plans, be available for resource utilization such as logging, intensive grazing, recreation site development, dispersed motorized recreation use, etc. Roadless areas made available for nonwilderness uses will be managed in accordance with existing multiple use or land management plans until such time as plans are revised in accordance with Section 6 of the National Forest Management Act.

**FURTHER PLANNING.** Roadless areas placed in the further planning category will be considered for all uses, including wilderness, during development of land and resource management plans or other specific project plans meeting NEPA requirements. The land management planning process will comply with regulations developed to meet requirements of Section 6 of the National Forest Management Act. Planning for roadless areas placed in this category will be accomplished at the Forest level. The first generation of Forest plans will be completed by the end of 1985; with decisions on most of the areas placed in further planning made during this period. In the interim, development activities such as timber harvest, road construction, and other activities that may reduce wilderness potential of the land will be prohibited. Activities permitted by prior rights, existing law, and other established uses may continue pending final disposition of the area. This allows recreationists and other forest users continued use of motorized equipment within these areas as permitted or controlled by off-road vehicle management plans. Although no harvesting of timber will be allowed from these areas other than for emergency reasons, standing timber on commercial forest land in the areas will be used to determine potential yield. Certain exploration activities for oil and gas resources may occur for information gathering prior to completion of Forest plans.

