

III. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria were established for analysis and subsequent evaluation of alternative approaches developed during the RARE II process. Some of the criteria were based on legislation, some relate to executive orders and regulations developed in response to legislation, and others were a result of obligations and policies established through previous planning efforts and decisions. Criteria were utilized during two phases of the RARE II planning effort; first, while developing a range of alternative approaches, and second, when evaluating options and developing a proposed course of action.

During the first phase, alternative approaches for allocation of roadless areas were developed using a series of criteria, characteristics, and other factors. Resource outputs levels were one criterion used for allocating roadless areas to either wilderness, nonwilderness, or further planning in the alternatives. Outputs were established at specific levels by the Forest Service, reflecting their best professional evaluation for identification of roadless areas with high or very high resource values. Output levels used or amount of acceptable change permitted in determining roadless areas allocations may appear to have been arbitrarily selected but, in fact represent a realistic establishment of acceptable resource tradeoffs to provide various alternative approaches.

Other characteristics used to develop alternative approaches include guidelines established by the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act, characteristics identified by the Wilderness Act, and two distinct sets of factors the public identified as important in deciding the disposition of roadless areas. These sets of factors represent the response of over 50,000 people who commented on the initial RARE II inventory effort during the summer of 1977. Factors were of two general types. The first set describes characteristics the public feels the National Wilderness Preservation System should contain, with landform, ecosystem, wildlife, and accessibility being identified. The second set relates to costs or impacts to consider when proposing wilderness designation, such as impacts on timber, energy, and mineral resources, effects on motorized or intensive recreation use, and the impact on wildlife management programs.

The 1964 Wilderness Act defined wilderness as having natural integrity, opportunities for solitude or a primitive recreation experience. In addition, an area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values. To utilize components of the Wilderness Act as evaluation criteria, a system was developed that assigned a numerical rating for each of the above mentioned attributes within roadless areas. It is called the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS). The system utilized four distinct factors identified in the Wilderness Act--naturalness, apparent naturalness, opportunity for solitude, and opportunity for a primitive recreation experience--and assigned a numerical rating from one to seven depending on the degree of naturalness or opportunity, exhibited. A seven rating indicates the highest degree of naturalness or the most opportunity. The four factors rated were combined to give a potential WARS range from four to twenty-eight. Recognizing that many roadless areas could achieve the same numerical value, supplementary factors of ecological, scenic, geological, and cultural values also mentioned in the Wilderness Act were rated in a similar manner. These scores were utilized in tie-breaking but were not included in the combined WARS.

Numerical WARS scores were utilized as criteria in development of various alternative approaches for allocation of roadless areas. Rating was done by an interdisciplinary team of Forest Service professionals to insure the most objective evaluation possible. In many instances, representatives from various special interest groups and/or concerned citizens were involved in developing and checking assigned rating. WARS is most accurate and appropriately applied only within each Forest Service Region. It is not meant to compare wilderness attributes of a roadless area in the Rocky Mountains with an area in New England or the Pacific Northwest. Its use in preparation of alternative approaches displayed in the RARE II Environmental Statement has been confined to developing intraRegional lists of roadless areas recommended for wilderness. The rating system and individual worksheets may be reviewed at offices of the Forest Supervisor and Regional Forester who administer the specific roadless area.

Rating criteria also were required to evaluate mineral and energy potential of the roadless areas. Forest Service geologists and mining engineers, after evaluating mineral data obtained from Department of Energy, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Mines, comparable State sources, and from industry, developed a Mineral Potential Numerical Rating System for each of six commodity categories. The six categories are: (1) Hardrock minerals or those non-energy minerals that are a part of USGS/ Bureau of Mines minerals of compelling domestic significance list, (2) oil and gas, (3) uranium, (4) coal, (5) geothermal resources, and (6) low value bulk materials such as sand, gravel, rock, etc. A numerical rating for any one or all of the commodity categories was assigned to each inventoried roadless area. Ratings have been entered into the data base for each roadless area at the Regional level and were used to assist with development and evaluation of the proposed action.

Numerical ratings assigned to any one mineral or energy group range from 0-100. A rating of 100 is assigned to areas containing a producing mine or well; an oil, gas, or geothermal well capable of production; or a mineral deposit where production is imminent. A rating of 81-99 indicates areas of high potential; 41-80 moderate potential; and below 41 indicates low potential. Ratings preceded by a negative indicate areas where there is insufficient data currently available to rate the area.

The criteria described above were used in development of alternative approaches displayed in this environmental statement. It is recognized there are other numerical values for resource outputs or additional constraints that could be used in the generation of alternative approaches. These represent the best professional judgment of the Forest Service in preparing a range of feasible options. Public comment on the criteria and various approaches was invited and used to begin the decisionmaking process leading to development of the proposed action.

The second phase of the RARE II evaluation process used decision criteria to evaluate alternative approaches and develop a proposed course of action. These criteria were initially published in the draft environmental statement as a proposed list. Public comment was invited to help identify important factors to be used in decisionmaking. Reaction to the decision criteria is summarized in appendix U. In addition to supporting seven decision criteria published in the draft statement, the public also identified six additional criteria that should be used in reaching a decision. The amount of public comment on these additional criteria is also displayed in Appendix U.

Based on public response and Agency evaluation of that response, the seven criteria published in the draft were used, along with additional criteria suggested frequently by the public, in development and further evaluation of the proposed action. Public response supported use of each of the seven primary criteria, but to varying degrees. The relative importance indicated by public response and Agency evaluation of the priority was recognized by the sequence in which criteria was used in development and evaluation of the proposed action. The following relative order of importance, beginning with the most important criteria, was established to guide the decisionmaking process:

1. Avoid foreclosing Forest Service potential to meet the roadless areas share of 1975 RPA program goals.
2. Reduce adverse impacts of commodity values foregone and avoid displacement of dependent communities.
3. Utilize national issues such as energy independence, housing starts, inflation, balance of payments, etc. in developing the decision.
4. Assure high quality roadless areas are proposed to be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System by using the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS).
5. Allocate National Grassland roadless areas to wilderness only when needed to meet a specific diversity (characteristic) target.
6. Assure diversity of the National Wilderness Preservation System by improving representations of landform, ecosystem, wilderness associated wildlife, and accessibility/distribution characteristics.
7. Utilize general public agreement for allocation of individual roadless areas to wilderness, to nonwilderness, or to further planning.

The following supplemental criteria, while not perceived to be as important as primary criteria, were employed in the decision making process. Supplemental criteria are listed by degree of importance as identified by public response.

1. Consider the existing Wilderness System and the degree to which other Federal lands can contribute to a well-rounded system.
2. Consider existing wilderness study areas from RARE I for either wilderness or further planning allocations.
3. Consider roadless areas with high potential for organized snow related recreation for nonwilderness allocations.
4. Consider development opportunity costs when allocating roadless areas to both wilderness and nonwilderness uses.
5. Give consideration for wilderness to those roadless areas adjacent to existing wildernesses, proposed wilderness, or other protected lands.

6. Boundaries should be manageable and sound ecologically. Recommend areas of sufficient size to be manageable as wilderness.

The process for utilizing these decision criteria in development of the proposed action is described more fully in the next section of this statement. The criteria also are applied in Section VI, Evaluation of Alternatives.