

Roadless Area Characteristics

(as defined by the 2001 Roadless Rule)

- **High-quality or undistributed soil, water or air:** These three key resources are the foundation upon which other resource values and outputs depend. Healthy watersheds provide clean water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses; help maintain abundant and healthy fish and wildlife populations; and are the basis for many forms of outdoor recreation.
- **Sources of public drinking water:** National forests contain watersheds that are important sources of public drinking water. Careful management of these watersheds is crucial in maintaining the flow of clean water to a growing population.
- **Diversity of plant and animal communities:** Roadless areas are more likely than areas with roads to support greater ecosystem health, including a diversity of native and desired non-native plant and animal communities due to the absence of disturbances caused by roads and accompanying activities. Inventoried roadless areas also conserve native biodiversity by serving as a bulwark against the spread of non-native invasive species.
- **Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species and for those species dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land:** Roadless areas function as biological strongholds and refuges for many species, including terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species. Many of the nation's species currently listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act and those listed by the Forest Service as sensitive, have habitat within roadless areas.
- **Primitive, semi-primitive motorized, and semi-primitive non-motorized:** These recreation classes of dispersed recreation often provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing and cross-country skiing. Although areas with these recreation opportunities may have many wilderness-like attributes, they often allow the use of mountain bikes and other mechanized means of travel, in contrast to designate wilderness areas. Primitive, semi-primitive motorized, and semi-primitive non-motorized areas can also take pressure off heavily used wilderness areas by providing additional solitude and dispersed recreation opportunities.
- **Reference landscapes:** The body of knowledge about the effects of management activities over long periods of time and on large landscapes is very limited. Reference landscapes can provide comparison areas for evaluation and monitoring. These areas provide a natural setting that may be useful as a comparison to study the effects of more intensely managed areas.
- **Natural-appearing landscapes with high scenic quality:** High-quality scenery, especially scenery with natural-appearing landscapes, is a primary reason that people choose to recreate. Quality scenery contributes directly to real estate values in neighboring communities and residential areas.
- **Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites:** Roadless areas may contain traditional cultural properties and sacred sites. Traditional cultural properties are places, sites, structures, districts, or objects that are historically significant in the beliefs, customs, and practices of a community. Sacred sites are places that are determined sacred by virtue of their established religious significance to or ceremonial use by an Indian religion. Federal agencies are to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and are to avoid adversely affecting traditional cultural properties and sacred sites when practicable.
- **Other locally unique characteristics:** Roadless areas may contain locally unique areas.