

APPENDIX F

RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

ROS and its Role in Forest Plan Revision

What is ROS?

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) consists of a classification system in which components of recreation settings and facilities—such as access, developed sites, activities, and experiences—are organized and arranged along a continuum or spectrum. The continuum ranges from very primitive settings and experiences to highly concentrated, urbanized ones. Each class is defined in terms of its specific combination of activities, setting, facilities, and experience opportunities.

The ROS provides a framework for defining the types of outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences that the public might desire, as well as the mix of the spectrum that a given National Forest might be able to provide. It also provides a context and tool for estimating and describing recreation resources as well as effects to those resources from alternative management strategies and actions.

Applications in Forest Plan Revision

ROS is utilized in the Forest Plan to provide a framework for:

- a) Providing a management context that ensures the maintenance or enhancement of recreation settings and of meeting public expectations for recreation experiences.
- b) Reflecting the overall resource management strategy, as expressed by MPC assignments, within each management area in a recreation opportunity context.
- c) Providing a meaningful context for the expression of recreation management strategy and direction at both the Forest-wide and management area levels. The application of the adopted ROS strategy is illustrated in Figure F-1, below.
- d) Analyzing trade-offs of available recreation opportunities in effects analysis.
- e) Comparing alternatives relative to the mix of recreation opportunities provided.
- f) Monitoring outputs in terms of providing recreation opportunities.
- g) Estimating recreation supply.

ROS Class Descriptions

The following descriptions of ROS classes were developed as a supplement to the ROS Users Guide, which contains more detailed information for most of these classes. The *ROS Users Guide* (USDA Forest Service, undated), contains a detailed description of the classes, overall concepts, and describes an inventory methodology. Specific ROS-related guidance for structure and improvement design can also be found in *The Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands* (USDA Forest Service, 2001). This guide should be consulted when designing any type of structure or improvement on National Forest System lands.

Primitive

These areas provide for primitive recreation opportunities in unroaded and non-motorized settings. Unmodified natural and natural-appearing settings dominate the physical environment. In that these areas are generally larger than 5,000 acres, they offer opportunities for solitude, remoteness, and risk, with no on-site controls or restrictions evident after entry. Encounters with other users, and signs of other users, are minimal. Prescribed fire could be used to attain a variety of resource objectives. Generally, snowmobile, ATV, and other OHV uses are inconsistent with this ROS class.

In relatively rare cases, a motorized use may be present within areas classified as Primitive. This may occur as a result of uses authorized by legislation, administrative or emergency use of motorized vehicles, a setting inconsistency, or as an anomaly whose effects are extremely limited.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized

These areas provide for non-motorized recreation opportunities in unroaded and non-motorized settings. A natural-appearing setting dominates the physical environment, with only subtle or minor evidence of human-caused modifications. In that these areas are generally larger than 2,500 acres, they offer opportunities for solitude, remoteness, and risk, with a minimum of on-site controls and restrictions. Other user encounters should be generally low, with low levels of the sights and sounds of other users.

Management to control undesirable effects of insects, disease, and other pests, as well as management actions designed to maintain or improve the long-term health of the ecosystem, could occur. Prescribed fire could be used to attain a variety of resource objectives. Generally, snowmobile, ATV, and other OHV uses are inconsistent with this ROS class.

In relatively rare cases, a motorized use may be present within areas classified as semi-primitive non-motorized. This may occur as a result of administrative or emergency use of motorized vehicles, a setting inconsistency, or as an anomaly whose effects are extremely limited.

A number of setting inconsistencies may be present during winter periods in this classification. These inconsistencies consist mainly of roads or road prisms, minor structures and developed recreation features, and intermediate timber harvests whose presence becomes far less obvious during winter snow cover. Access during these periods usually shifts dramatically to skis and snowshoes, contributing to more primitive experiences.

Summer/winter shifts between this class and Semi-Primitive Motorized can also occur as a result of different travel management regulations. For example, areas where cross-country motorized travel is prohibited during the summer may be open to snowmobile use during winter periods.

Semi-Primitive Motorized

These areas provide for motorized recreation opportunities in semi-primitive settings. In areas seen from travelways, a natural-appearing setting dominates the outdoor physical environment, with only subtle or minor evidence of human-caused modifications. Other areas could have moderately dominant alterations. In that these areas are generally larger than 2,500 acres, they offer opportunities for solitude, remoteness, and risk, with little on-site controls and restrictions. Other user encounters should be generally low; however, the sounds of other users may be evident due to motorized uses.

A range of management activities that are consistent with semi-primitive settings may occur in these areas that support a wide range of other resource objectives. Prescribed fire could be used to attain a variety of resource objectives.

Motorized and non-motorized trails are the primary means of recreational user access within the area. Generally, existing roads within this class would be either inappropriate for or closed to passenger type vehicles. Non-motorized recreation opportunities may be present but these experiences are likely to be influenced by motorized uses in the area. Cross-country snowmobile use may occur on adequate snow depth in accordance with the current travel management plan or map and travel amendments. There may be areas or trails, within this ROS class, where motorized use is prohibited or restricted to enhance recreation experiences or to protect public safety or resources.

In some locations during winter, there may be considerable shifts to the Semi-Primitive Motorized class as the snow cover results in the road network being inaccessible to general automobile use. Where these areas are of sufficient size and are open to over-snow vehicles and/or have groomed snowmobile routes, they may function more closely like a Semi-Primitive Motorized area.

Some of the areas that shift from roaded natural or roaded modified during summer to a semi-primitive setting during winter may have a number of setting inconsistencies. These inconsistencies consist mainly of roads or road prisms, minor structures and developed recreation features, and intermediate timber harvests whose presence becomes far less obvious during winter snow cover. Access during these periods usually shifts dramatically to only over-snow vehicles and/or skis and snowshoes, contributing to more semi-primitive experiences.

Summer/winter shifts between this class and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized can also occur as a result of different travel management regulations. For example, areas where cross-country motorized travel is prohibited during the summer may be open to snowmobile use during winter periods.

Roaded Natural

These areas provide for a wide range of recreation activities that are generally focused along the primary and secondary travel routes in a natural-appearing, roaded, motorized setting. Recreation facilities are provided to facilitate recreation use. There may be a moderate to high degree of user interaction, as well as the sights and sounds of other users, depending upon the facilities provided. Seasonal or year-round recreation facilities are provided for user comfort and convenience. Although structures may be designed to accommodate numerous users, they generally convey a rustic theme and blend with the natural landscape. There may be considerable on-site user controls or restrictions. Opportunities for isolation, challenge, or risk are generally not very important, although opportunities for practicing outdoor skills may be important.

Scenic values are often emphasized. Recreation is often only one of many management objectives applied to these areas. A wide range of management activities and objectives may occur, generally being guided by the adopted visual quality objectives. Landscape modifications due to resource management activities, where evident, harmonize with the natural setting. Prescribed fire could be used to attain a variety of resource objectives.

A wide range of recreation facilities may be provided for user convenience and comfort. Developed campgrounds of varying size, complexity, and development scale could occur. There may also be a wide range of facilities and structures to support other Forest uses such as telecommunication facilities, power lines, and administrative sites.

A wide range of transportation routes can occur, from State Highways to native-surfaced, timber access roads. Cross-country snowmobile use may occur on adequate snow depth in accordance with the current travel management plan or map and travel amendments. There may be areas, trails, or roads within this ROS class where motorized use is prohibited or restricted to enhance recreation experiences or to protect public safety or resources.

Roaded Modified

These areas provide for a range of recreation experiences that are consistent with substantially modified, motorized settings in which the sights and sounds of humans are readily evident and the interaction between users can be from low to high. Recreation experiences and opportunities in these areas often depend on vehicular access off the primary routes via secondary roads. Camping experiences are relatively primitive, with few on-site facilities provided, requiring some self-reliance and use of primitive outdoor skills.

Recreation is often only one of many management objectives applied to these areas. Recreation management may be secondary to other resource needs and commodity production, or vegetation restoration may be the dominant emphasis. A wide range of management activities and uses, such as providing commercial wood products, may often take priority, and may result in substantially altered settings over much of the area. Prescribed fire could be used to attain a variety of resource objectives.

There may also be a wide range of facilities and structures to support other Forest uses, such as telecommunication facilities, power lines, and administrative sites. There generally should be few recreation developments in these areas. Basic facilities may be provided in some areas for resource protection. Camping occurs at user defined or dispersed camping locations.

The transportation network primarily consists of unpaved, gravel, or native-surface local or secondary roads. Cross-country snowmobile use may occur on adequate snow depth in accordance with the current travel management plan or map and travel amendments. There may be areas, trails, or roads within this ROS class where motorized use is prohibited or restricted to enhance recreation experiences or to protect public safety or resources.

In some locations during winter, there may be considerable shifts to the Semi-Primitive Motorized class as the snow cover results in the road network being inaccessible to general automobile use. Where these areas are of sufficient size and are open to over-snow vehicles and/or have groomed snowmobile routes, they may function more closely like a Semi-Primitive Motorized area.

Rural

Typically, these areas are characterized by recreation sites that can be utilized by large numbers of people at one time. High quality and quantity recreation use characterize these areas. While natural conditions usually do not dominate the activity centers, scenic values are often a critical element of the landscape seen as middleground and background from such areas. Surrounding scenic values are often a valued resource in the adjacent Forest landscape. The recreation opportunities offered are usually managed, regulated, and numerous but also in harmony with nature.

Numerous recreation facilities may be clustered in these areas. Facilities are designed for user comfort to accommodate large groups and are surrounded by highly intensified motorized use and organized parking. Forms of mass transit are often available to carry people throughout the site. The on-site vegetation is often in a manicured or managed state.

Generally, transportation routes consisting of State and Forest Service paved roadways are the primary means of recreational user access within the area. Trails may also be paved or surfaced in areas of concentrated use. There may be areas, trails, or roads within this ROS class where motorized use is prohibited or restricted to enhance recreation experiences or to protect public safety or resources.

REFERENCES

USDA Forest Service, Undated, *ROS Users Guide*

USDA Forest Service, 2001, *The Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands*, FS-710

Figure F-1. ROS Management Direction Implementation Pathway

