

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS DECISION GUIDE



U.S. FOREST SERVICE GUIDELINES

“... except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act...”

– The Wilderness Act, 1964

Introduction

The four federal agencies that manage the National Wilderness Preservation System each have unique missions, regulations, and policies regarding administrative actions and the 'prohibited uses' listed in Section 4(c) of The Wilderness Act of 1964. This section provides information and guidelines to assist in using the Minimum Requirements Decision Guide (MRDG) for wilderness on the national forests.

Forest Service Guidelines for Use of the MRDG

Use of the MRDG is not currently required by law or agency policy (FSM 2320). However, use of the MRDG or a similar minimum requirements analysis (MRA) process was strongly recommended by the chief in a 2000 memo.

The MRDG is designed for use when making a determination that one of the 'prohibited uses', listed in Section 4(c) of the Act, is the minimum necessary requirement. If NEPA analysis is warranted the MRDG can serve to identify the proposed action and add depth to the analysis. If a NEPA analysis is not necessary, but approval by a Line Officer is required, the MRDG can serve as documentation of that approval. (See the NEPA Analysis Decision Process section near the end of these guidelines for more information.)

The MRDG could be used as part of a minimum requirement analysis process to assist in making decisions regarding administrative actions in wilderness that do not involve the use of motorized equipment, mechanical transport, structures, etc. however, many of the questions on the MRDG Worksheets may not apply. A minimum requirements analysis process may also be applied as a programmatic concept when developing emergency plans for search

and rescue, law enforcement, or fire management, or a specific process. By incorporating the minimum requirements principle from the wilderness Act into the planning phase it is possible to establish guidelines and clarify responsibility and authority without complicating an emergency situation. The MRDG should never be used as a substitute for a LAC type planning process or when public involvement and determination of indicators, standards, guidelines, and monitoring needs are required.

The processes and authorities for approval of administrative actions in wilderness vary by region within the Forest Service. Check with your Regional Wilderness Program Manager for assistance in determining which actions require analysis and documentation or a NEPA analysis and decision, and to determine which Line Officer has authority to make the decision.

Applying the Minimum Requirements Analysis Process

Determining the Minimum Requirement

The determination that an administrative action is necessary in wilderness and the selection of the minimum method or tool to be used is made within the constraints of law and agency policy. Once a determination has been made that action is necessary, Forest Service policy sets conditions under which exceptions to the prohibited uses (motorized equipment, mechanical transport, etc.) may be considered and guidelines for when the exceptions should be applied. The policy leaves room for interpretation and requires a thorough analysis of the need for action and alternatives for taking action to avoid using the minimum requirements decision process to justify the use of a generally prohibited piece of equipment due to the need to get the job done in a safe and efficient manner.

Safety

Safety is always the primary concern and the need to provide for the safety of all involved in the administrative action will not be compromised regardless of which alternative is selected as the minimum tool. If skills are lacking in order to accomplish the job with traditional tools than it is Forest Service policy to acquire those skills (FSM 2326.03). Public safety during project implementation will also be achieved but this should not be confused with a perceived need to provide for a higher degree of safety for wilderness visitors than is necessary. Visitors to wilderness assume a level of risk from natural conditions and events and managers have no mandate to manipulate wilderness conditions for this reason.

Cost and Efficiency

The efficiency of how administrative actions in wilderness are accomplished is always a factor that needs to be considered by managers and line officers. Time and funding is limited and there is a temptation to utilize motorized equipment to increase production and get more work done with limited resources. Forest Service policy does not allow managers to base a decision to approve a generally prohibited use solely on a rationale that the method or tool is quicker, cheaper and easier (FSM 2320.6). Instead we are challenged to make the best decision based on benefits to the wilderness resource (social, biological, and physical) and preservation of the wilderness character and values (FSM 2320.3) within reasonable constraints so that the expenditure of funds and personnel time is efficient and the project can be accomplished in a feasible timeframe.

Alternative Comparison Criteria

After a determination is made that an administrative action is necessary in wilderness (Step 1), alternative methods are identified and compared (Step 2). The comparison of alternatives should consider the potential effects to wilderness in terms of protection of the wilderness resource, preservation of wilderness character, and also how implementation of the alternative conforms to agency policy guidelines.

The Alternative Comparison Criteria found in the MRDG Instructions and Worksheets is provided to help guide comparison of alternatives and insure that the intent of agency policy is met. Not all elements of the Alternative Comparison Criteria will apply to all types of administrative actions being considered. Analysis of more complex actions will require a more detailed description of the effects of implementing each alternative.

A format for displaying effects is contained in the MRDG Worksheets. Two Optional Formats for comparing alternatives and displaying the effects of the alternatives are provided at the end of this document for optional use. Check the Forest Service regional wilderness websites for additional alternative formats.

The Wilderness Act and Minimum Requirements

There are two mandates of the Wilderness Act that typically guide and constrain the minimum requirements analysis. The first is the over-riding goal to preserve wilderness character. The four qualities of wilderness character (untrammled, natural, undeveloped, and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation) are used as the primary screening criteria to determine if an action is necessary and, if so, what the minimum activity is.

Section 2a and 4b – Preservation of Wilderness Character

2(a) “...and these shall 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, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character,...”

4(b) “Except as otherwise provided in this Act, each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its wilderness character.”

The second mandate is the statement on activities, known as the prohibited uses, which are not allowed except when they are the minimum requirement for administering the wilderness area for wilderness purposes.

Section 4c – Prohibited Uses

“...and except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.”

The Wilderness Act contains special provisions that may authorize a type of activity but often require a determination of what, if anything, constitutes the minimum necessary action. The special provisions described in Section 4 and 5 of The Wilderness Act (i.e. grazing, mining,

water developments, access to non-federal land, etc.) generate a need to consider the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport but are not a blanket approval. They still require an assessment of need and also a determination of the minimum necessary method, tool, structure, installation, etc. so that wilderness values are protected. The following is a summary of direction from Section 4 and 5 of The Wilderness Act:

- Section 4d(1) describes the continued use of motor boats and aircraft subject to restrictions that need to be determined and taking actions to control fire, insects and disease as may be necessary.
- Section 4d(2) allows for mineral prospecting if it is done in a manner compatible with preservation of the wilderness environment.
- Section 4d(3) allows for reasonable stipulations on mining for the protection of wilderness character.
- Section 4d(4) provides for the continuation of pre-existing grazing subject to reasonable regulations as deemed necessary and the subsequent Congressional Grazing Guidelines describe use of a rule of 'practical necessity and reasonableness' in determining the need for support facilities and motorized equipment or mechanical transport in wilderness.
- Section 4d(6) allows for commercial services if they are necessary and proper for realizing the recreation or other wilderness purposes of the area.
- Section 5a allows grants rights to private land owners and states for access to lands within wilderness as may be necessary for adequate access.

Based on the language of the Act described above and the overall purpose of the Act to designate lands that are to remain free from the threats of “expanding civilization and growing mechanization”, it is apparent that a minimum requirements analysis and decision *process* should be applied to all administrative actions that propose to implement one of the ‘prohibited uses’ (motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, mechanical transport, landing of aircraft, temporary roads, structures and installations) being considered for wilderness. Other actions, such as management of invasive species, visitor use, fish and wildlife, research, and monitoring, should be assessed to determine if they are necessary and if so, how they can be implemented with the least impact on wilderness character. The minimum requirements concepts and process can be integrated into both the programmatic and project specific planning levels.

Subsequent Wilderness Legislation

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the terms and conditions for designation and management of wilderness on the national forests. All subsequent legislation designating wilderness adopts the direction from The Wilderness Act of 1964 but may also contain additional special provisions or exceptions for management of a particular area. Typically these special provisions allow for consideration of activities or the Section 4c Prohibited uses but do not mandate their approval and a minimum requirements analysis should still be done.

Regulations

Regulations currently in effect for all national forest wildernesses are listed below. Additional regulations and Forest Orders (not listed here) may be established for individual wilderness areas.

36 CFR 261.16

The following are prohibited in a National Forest Wilderness:

- (a) Possessing or using a motor vehicle, motorboat or motorized equipment except as authorized by Federal Law or regulation.
- (b) Possessing or using a hang glider or bicycle.
- (c) Landing of aircraft, or dropping or picking up of any material, supplies, or person by means of aircraft, including a helicopter.

36 CFR 293.6

Except as provided in the Wilderness Act, subsequent legislation establishing a particular Wilderness unit, or Secs. 294.2(b), 294.2(c), and 294.2(e), paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section, and Secs. 293.7, 293.8, and 293.12 through 293.16, inclusive, and subject to existing rights, there shall be in National Forest Wilderness no commercial enterprises; no temporary or permanent roads; no aircraft landing strips; no heliports or helispots, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, motorboats, or other forms of mechanical transport; no landing of aircraft; no dropping of materials, supplies, or persons from aircraft; no structures or installations; and no cutting of trees for non-wilderness purposes.

Definitions

Mechanical Transport and Motorized Equipment:

36 CFR 293.6

- (a) Mechanical transport, as herein used, shall include any contrivance which travels over ground, snow, or water on wheels, tracks, skids, or by floatation and is propelled by a nonliving power source contained or carried on or within the device.
- (b) Motorized equipment, as herein used, shall include any machine activated by a nonliving power source, except that small battery-powered, hand-carried devices such as flashlights, shavers, and Geiger counters are not classed as motorized equipment.

FSM 2320.6

Mechanical Transport. Any contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, or air, having moving parts, that provides a mechanical advantage to the user, and that is powered by a living or nonliving power source. This includes, but is not limited to, sailboats, hang gliders, parachutes, bicycles, game carriers, carts, and wagons. It does not include wheelchairs when used as necessary medical appliances. It also does not include skis, snowshoes, rafts, canoes, sleds, travois, or similar primitive devices without moving parts.

Motorized Equipment. Machines that use a motor, engine, or other nonliving power sources. This includes, but is not limited to, such machines as chain saws, aircraft, snowmobiles, generators, motor boats, and motor vehicles. It does not include small battery or gas powered handcarried devices such as shavers, wristwatches, flashlights, cameras, stoves, or other similar small equipment.

Permanent Improvements and Temporary Structures

FSM 2320.6

Permanent Improvement. A structural or nonstructural improvement that is to remain at a particular location for more than one field season. Permanent improvements include such items as trails, toilet buildings, cabins, fences, tent frames, fire grills, and instrumentation stations.

Temporary Structure. Any structure that is easy to dismantle, that could be removed completely from a site between periods of actual use, and that must be removed at the end of each season of use if the non-use period is greater than 30 days

Authority for Approval

Use of Motorized Equipment , Mechanical Transport, Structures and Installations in Wilderness

Forest Service Policy (shown below) describes the authority for approval of emergency and non-emergency use of motorized equipment, mechanical transport, and the other prohibited uses. In addition, some Forest Service regions have delegated authority beyond what is described in the Forest Service Manual. Check with the Regional Wilderness Program Manager in your region.

Chief

2324.04a

2. Replacement of Forest Service facilities at administrative sites and construction of buildings for cooperating agencies that have responsibilities within National Forest wilderness.
3. Extending or widening of existing airfields and construction of new airfields.
4. Construction and maintenance of heliports away from existing administrative sites.

FSM 2323.04b

4. Final environmental statements or proposals for new water-resource developments.
5. Reconstruction of any structure for water control or use, except as provided in FSM 2323.04a.
6. Weather modification proposals or activities or installations resulting in weather modification that affects wilderness.

FSM 2326.04

The Chief is responsible for approving any use of motor vehicles and motorized equipment, except where the authority has been delegated to the Regional Forester and the Forest Supervisor.

Regional Forester

2324.04b - Regional Forester

3. Approving construction of new fire lookouts.
4. Determining if it is in the public interest to continue use of installations or structures that existed under valid special-use permits or easements when the wilderness was designated.
5. Approving special-use permits for access to valid occupancies and private lands when such use involves construction, reconstruction, or restoration of roads, or other substantial surface disturbance.
5. Approving construction of nonemergency helispots.

2323.04c

Unless specifically reserved to the President (FSM 2323.04a) or the Chief (FSM 2323.04b) or assigned to the Forest Supervisor (FSM 2323.04d) or the District Ranger (FSM 2323.04e), the Regional Forester is responsible for approving all measures that implement FSM direction on the use of other resources in wilderness. Specific responsibilities include but are not limited to:

8. Approving the practice of dropping fish from aircraft, if deemed necessary, in cases where such practice was established before the area became part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
12. Stabilizing or restoring and subsequently maintaining structures with cultural resources values.

FSM 2326.04

1. Transport and supply by aircraft, air drop, motor boat, or mechanical transport for situations that meet the conditions under items 2, 4, or 5, in FSM 2326.1.
2. Hand-portable motorized equipment for needs that meet conditions listed under item 5 of FSM 2326.1.
3. Motorized ground equipment not designed for personnel transport and of a type or size that is controlled from a position afoot.
4. Use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, and mechanical transport for situations involving established livestock grazing operations (FSM 2204 and 2323.2), and transport of wildlife or fish when nonmotorized means are not feasible (FSM 2323.3).
5. Use of motorized equipment specifically allowed by individual wilderness acts subsequent to the Wilderness Act.

The Forest Supervisor approves the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport under conditions described in section 2326.1, item 1 or 3. However, the Regional Forester shall approve the use of tractors for fire suppression.

Forest Supervisor

2326.04:

The Forest Supervisor approves the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport under conditions described in section 2326.1, item 1 or 3.

2324.04c - Forest Supervisor

1. Reconstruction of existing fire lookouts.
2. Construction of helispots for wildfire suppression and emergencies.
4. Special-use permits for access to valid occupancies and private lands, except those involving construction, reconstruction, or restoration of roads or where other substantial surface disturbance is essential.

2323.04d

1. Construction and installation of improvements or facilities necessary for the protection of the wilderness resource in accordance with the forest plan direction.
2. Removal of nonconforming uses, developments, or facilities not under permit.
8. Routine maintenance on any existing water use or water-control structure as long as this maintenance does not change the structure's location, size, or type, or increase the storage capacity of a reservoir.

District Ranger

1. The construction and installation of simple and temporary structures, including corrals, but excluding cabins, for outfitter and guide pack stock operations in accordance with forest plan direction.
2. Maintenance or replacement of existing signs, instruments, and other minor improvements.

Objectives and Policy

Listed below are excerpts from FSM 2320 that relate to minimum requirements decisions. The direction from these references helps form the criteria for deciding whether administrative action is necessary and, if so, determining what the minimum tool is.

FSM 2320.02 – Objectives

Maintain wilderness in such a manner that ecosystems are unaffected by human manipulation and influences so that plants and animals develop and respond to natural forces.

Minimize the impact of those kinds of uses and activities generally prohibited by the Wilderness Act, but specifically excepted by the Act or subsequent legislation.

Protect and perpetuate wilderness character and public values including, but not limited to, opportunities for scientific study, education, solitude, physical and mental challenge and stimulation, inspiration, and primitive recreation experiences.

Gather information and carry out research in a manner compatible with preserving the wilderness environment to increase understanding of wilderness ecology, wilderness uses, management opportunities, and visitor behavior.

FSM 2320.3 – Policy

Where there are alternatives among management decisions, wilderness values shall dominate over all other considerations except where limited by the Wilderness Act, subsequent legislation, or regulations.

Manage the use of other resources in wilderness in a manner compatible with wilderness resource management objectives.

In wildernesses where the establishing legislation permits resource uses and activities that are nonconforming exceptions to the definition of wilderness as described in the Wilderness Act, manage these nonconforming uses and activities in such a manner as to minimize their effect on the wilderness resource.

Cease uses and activities and remove existing structures not essential to the administration, protection, or management of wilderness for wilderness purposes or not provided for in the establishing legislation.

Use interdisciplinary skills in planning for wilderness use and administration.

Gather necessary information and carry out research programs in a manner that is compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment.

FSM 2320.6 – The Wilderness Management Model and the Wilderness Act

Where a choice must be made between wilderness values and visitor or any other activity, preserving the wilderness resource is the overriding value. Economy, convenience, commercial value, and comfort are not standards of management or use of wilderness.

Because uses and values on each area vary, management and administration must be tailored to each area. Even so, all wilderness areas are part of one National Wilderness Preservation System and their management must be consistent with the Wilderness Act and their establishing legislation.

FSM 2326.02 – Objectives

1. Accomplish management activities with nonmotorized equipment and nonmechanical transport of supplies and personnel.
2. Exclude the sight, sound, and other tangible evidence of motorized equipment or mechanical transport within wilderness except where they are needed and justified.

FSM 2326.03 – Policy

1. Ensure that Forest Service employees acquire and maintain necessary skills for primitive travel by foot, horse, canoe, or other nonmechanical means and the use of hand tools. For definitions see FSM 2320.6.

2. Do not approve the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport unless justified as described in 2326.1. For procedures and examples see FSH 2309.19. For definitions see FSM 2320.5.

3. Discourage flights over wilderness within 2,000 feet of the ground surface, except in emergencies or for essential military missions. (The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has agreed to and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has posted, for the FAA, a 2,000 foot over terrain flight advisory on appropriate aeronautical charts. Specific legislative provisions regarding overflight pertain to certain wildernesses.) Cooperate with the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, military authorities, and with local pilots to promote compliance with the 2,000 foot limit, to keep aeronautical charts current, and to reduce low level flight.

FSM 2326.1 – Policy

Specify, for each wilderness, the places and circumstances in which motorized equipment, mechanical transport, or aircraft are necessary for protection and administration of the wilderness and its resources in the forest plan.

The Line Officer approving the use of motorized equipment, aircraft, or mechanical transport shall specify what uses of that equipment are suitable and will have the least lasting impact to the wilderness resource. Schedule use of this equipment to minimize impact on wilderness visitors.

Conditions for Approval of Motorized Equipment and Mechanical Transport

FSM 2326.1 - Conditions Under Which Use May Be Approved.

Allow the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport only for:

1. Emergencies where the situation involves an inescapable urgency and temporary need for speed beyond that available by primitive means. Categories include fire suppression, health and safety, law enforcement involving serious crime or fugitive pursuit, removal of deceased persons, and aircraft accident investigations.
2. Aircraft or motor boat use established before the area was designated as wilderness by the Act of 1964 or subsequent wilderness legislation.
3. Exploration and development of valid existing mineral rights (FSM 2323.7).
4. Access to surrounded State and private lands and valid occupancies (FSM 2326.13).
5. To meet minimum needs for protection and administration of the area as wilderness, only as follows:
 - a. A delivery or application problem necessary to meet wilderness objectives cannot be resolved within reason through the use of nonmotorized methods.
 - b. An essential activity is impossible to accomplish by nonmotorized means because of such factors as time or season limitations, safety, or other material restrictions.
 - c. A necessary and continuing program was established around the use of motorized equipment before the unit became a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and the continued use of motorized equipment is essential to continuation of the program.
 - d. Removal of aircraft wreckage when nonmotorized methods are unsuitable.

Exceptions for Emergencies FSM 2326.1 (1)

Emergency includes fire suppression, health and safety, law enforcement for fugitive pursuit, removal of deceased persons, aircraft accident investigations.

Landing of Aircraft

Prohibited unless determined to be the minimum requirement. See Regulations – 36 CFR 293.6

Temporary Roads

Prohibited unless determined to be the minimum requirement. See Regulations – 36 CFR 293.6

Airdrops

Prohibited unless determined to be the minimum requirement. See Regulations – 36 CFR 293.6

Fish Stocking

2323.34b – Stocking Methods

Stocking shall normally be done by primitive means, however, Regional Foresters may permit dropping of fish from aircraft for those waters where this practice was established before the area was designated a wilderness. Conduct aerial stocking pre-or post-visitor seasons. Landings are prohibited. Specify mitigation for stocking methods in wilderness implementation schedules.

Management of Recreation

2323.13 - Improvements and Nonconforming Facilities and Activities

Provide facilities and improvements only for protection of the wilderness resource. Document and justify conditions for providing facilities and improvements in the forest plan. Install facilities as a last resort only after trying education, other indirect management techniques, or reasonable limitations on use.

2323.13a – Campsites

3. Human Waste Management. As a last resort to protect the wilderness resource pit or vault toilet structures may be used.

2323.13b – Shelters

Except for Alaska, provide no new shelters. Shelters that existed at the time of wilderness designation may be maintained if allowed by specific legislation, or until they require extensive maintenance. Remove them at this time. For administrative facilities see FSM 2324.33.

2323.13d - Boat Docks

Provide no boat docks except where approved for wilderness purposes. Phase out and remove existing docks within ten years of wilderness designation.

2323.13e - Recreation Stock Structures

Construct hitchracks and drift fences to control recreation stock only where they are essential to protect the wilderness resource. Build them with materials and locate them in places that harmonize with the environment.

2323.13f - Transportation System

2. Bridges. Design bridges to minimize the impact on the wilderness. Select locations that minimize the size and complexity of the structure. Provide or replace bridges only:
 - a. When no other route or crossing is reasonably available.
 - b. Where the crossing, during the primary season of public use, cannot be negotiated afoot safely, or cannot be forded by horses safely.
 - c. Where unacceptable bank damage will occur from visitors seeking a crossing.
 - d. Where flood waters frequently destroy or damage less sturdy structures.

2323.13g - Outfitter and Guide Operations

Approve only temporary structures and facilities for outfitter and guide operations necessary to properly meet their public service in a manner compatible with the wilderness environment. These structures shall be located away from main trails, streams, lakes, key interest features, and non-outfitted public use areas. Specify in forest plans, subsequent implementation schedules, or special use permits what improvements are permitted and their locations.

Management of Range

2323.26 - Range Improvements

Conduct an environmental analysis for range improvement construction and/or maintenance and the use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, and mechanical transport (FSM 1950 and FSH 1909.15). List all range improvements in the allotment management plan along with the maintenance schedule.

2323.26a - Structural Range Improvements

Modify permits for the construction of new range improvements or for the replacement of existing range improvements in accordance with FSM 2241.31. Consider the wilderness resource when preparing range improvement construction standards and techniques.

1. Maintenance. Allow permittees to continue to maintain existing necessary range improvements. On a schedule agreed to by the permittee, phase out and remove those improvements determined to be unnecessary. Review existing use and requests for new use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or other forms of mechanical transport, including emergency use, and apply Congressional Grazing Guidelines (sec. 2323.22, ex. 01). Permit the occasional use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or mechanical transport where practical alternatives are not available (FSM 2326).
2. New Improvements. Construction of new range improvements may be approved if they are necessary for resource protection (range and/or wilderness) and for the effective management of these resources. Do not approve construction solely to accommodate increased grazing.
3. Types of Materials. When permitted, ensure that new improvements are constructed of materials that harmonize with the wilderness character of the area. Use natural (native)

materials for improvements unless costs are prohibitive or they do not harmonize with the wilderness.

4. Replacement of Existing Improvements. Use the following procedures when considering replacement of an existing range improvement:

- a. Examine whether the range improvement is necessary for livestock grazing operations, resource protection, or protection of wilderness values. Explore other alternatives for meeting these needs.
- b. Ensure that the design, location, and type of materials needed harmonize with natural features of the wilderness.
- c. Consult with permittees in determining what is reasonable for the permittee's livestock grazing operation. Balance the particular wilderness values involved and the cost of material and labor.

Other Developments, Structures, and Installations

2323.43c - New Water Development Structures

Only the President (FSM 2323.04) can approve new water development structures, including water-regulating structures, power installations, transmission conduits, water conservation works, related improvements, and proposals to increase the storage capacity of a reservoir or to replace a reservoir that was not under a valid permit or other authority at the time the unit became wilderness. Range and wildlife waters are not included here. Use provisions in section 2323.2 and section 2323.3 to guide these projects.

Evaluate and recommend actions on proposals for new structures through the National Environmental Policy Act process (FSM 1950). Recommendations for approval must clearly show that public values to be gained exceed those values lost and that the need cannot be met outside wilderness.

2323.43d - Existing Water Development Structures

If needed and in the public interest, or a part of a valid existing right, permit maintenance or reconstruction of existing structures that does not change the location, size, or type, or which would not increase the storage capacity of a reservoir. Structures include reservoirs, ditches, and related facilities for the control or use of water that were under valid special-use permit or other authority when the area involved was incorporated under the Wilderness Act. For approval, see FSM 2323.04.

Do not permit the use of motorized equipment and mechanized transportation for maintenance of water-development structures except where practiced before the area was designated wilderness. See section 2326 for motorized and mechanical use approval responsibilities.

Evaluate each improvement in the forest plan to determine if continued use of the improvement is compatible with the wilderness resource. If the improvement is to remain, describe maintenance needs and methods of accomplishing the work in the wilderness implementation schedule. If not, allow the improvement to deteriorate naturally. In the case of high hazard dams or other large structures where downstream values are jeopardized by imminent failure or loss, breach or remove the structure in a manner that does not have an adverse effect on the downstream values (FSM 2324.3).

2323.44a - Snow Measurement Sites

1. Allow the measurement of snow on existing sites only and only by nonmotorized means. Permit helicopter transport to snow measurement sites in locations where it was an established practice before the Wilderness Act was passed. However, discourage the use of helicopter transport to snow measurement sites.
2. Establish no new snow measurement or climatological data collection sites unless they are part of projects established by the President under provision of section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act.
3. Encourage the transfer of existing wilderness sites to locations outside of wilderness. Use existing sites until snow measurement sites outside of wilderness areas are established and correlations between the wilderness site and the outside site are accomplished. In the interim, automated equipment may be installed at the existing wilderness site to accelerate correlation efforts. Agree in writing to the length of these temporary arrangements before efforts begin. Generally this should not exceed 10 years.
4. Where approved, install only miniaturized and unobtrusive types of snow measurement and climatological monitoring equipment at existing sites. Camouflage equipment to blend with the terrain and vegetation. Where possible, use equipment and antennae that can be removed when not in use.
5. Remove existing shelters used by personnel taking snow measurements from wilderness as soon as possible after establishing adequate correlations between manual snow course measurement and the automated sensing device.
6. Cooperate fully with other Federal or State agencies and other entities collecting snow measurements. Help them to work within the constraints of the Wilderness Act and assist them in data gathering or locating data sites outside of wilderness areas.

Management of Air Resource

2323.62 - Policy

3. Determine the potential impacts of proposed facilities in coordination with State air quality management agencies. Make appropriate recommendations in the permitting process following established Prevention of Significant Deterioration application review procedures for major emission sources. Requests to air quality management agencies for consideration of class II values in the permit process are appropriate (FSM 2120).

2323.74 - Gathering Mineral Information

Ensure that mineral surveys conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines (required by section 4(d)(2) of the Wilderness Act) are conducted as much as practicable without the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport. Approve the use of motorized equipment only under the same conditions specified in Forest Service Administrative Use (FSM 2326).

2323.8 - Management of Cultural and Historic Resources

2323.83 - Studies and Management

Analyze on a case-by-case basis those studies requiring excavation of sites or dismantling of structures. Ensure that they are compatible with wilderness and cultural resource objectives as stated in the forest plan. As a general rule, cabins, shelters, or other structures approaching 50 years of age should be examined for their cultural resource value.

Remove those sites or structures that do not qualify for the National Register (FSM 2360) or allow them to deteriorate naturally unless they are:

1. Deemed necessary to support public purposes of wilderness, as set forth in section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act; or,
2. Serve administrative purposes (sec. 4(c) of the Wilderness Act).

Interpretation of cultural resources located in wilderness shall be done outside the wilderness. Verbal interpretive services by qualified wilderness rangers, volunteers, or permitted guides are acceptable.

Regional Foresters may approve stabilization or restoration and subsequent maintenance of such structures if their continued existence is essential to cultural resource management. Do not use motorized equipment for restoration or maintenance unless essential (FSM 2326).

Management of Support Activities

2324.3 - Management of Structures and Improvements

2324.31 - Objective

To limit structures and improvements for administrative purposes or under special-use permit to those actually needed for management, protection, and use of the wilderness for the purposes for which the wilderness was established.

2324.32 - Planning

Document the need for administrative and existing special use permitted improvements in forest plans. Develop removal schedules for those improvements considered unnecessary. Provide an historical evaluation when needed.

Determine the long-term need of the improvement and its location before authorizing substantial maintenance for administrative or permitted improvements.

Consider alternative locations that may be more compatible with the wilderness resource.

2324.33 - Structures and Improvements Needed for Administration

2324.33a - Administrative Sites

Unless otherwise authorized by the Chief, limit existing administrative sites to the existing structures or replace them with similar structures of compatible design. Justify the need for existing stations in forest plans. Do not plan any new stations in wilderness.

2324.33b - Fire Lookouts

(See FSM 5100). Construct or maintain lookouts for fire detection purposes when:

1. They are necessary to achieve wilderness management objectives and where it is not feasible to accomplish such objectives by means more compatible with wilderness values; or
2. They are necessary to protect values outside the wilderness.

The need and disposition of existing lookouts shall be documented in the forest plan. For approvals, see FSM 2324.04.

2324.33c - Fences

Construct permanent corrals and fences for the control of administrative pack and saddle stock only at administrative sites where regular use of the animals is for periods of more than a few days duration. Build and maintain fences with materials compatible to the wilderness environment. Do not build new permanent wire fences. As replacement becomes necessary, remove or replace existing wire fences with fences of compatible materials.

See FSM 2323.26 for livestock fences and 2323.13 for recreation stock facilities.

2324.33d - Airfields

Unless otherwise approved by the Chief, do not locate new airfields, including emergency airstrips, in wilderness. Unless otherwise approved by the Chief, do not extend, widen, or resurface existing airfields. Document decisions about whether or not to permit the continued use of existing airfields for each wilderness in the forest plan. Legislation may mandate that certain airfields remain open. Maintain airfields by nonmotorized methods only. For further direction see FSM 7720 and FSM 7730.

2324.33e - Heliports and Helispots

1. Heliports. Construct and maintain heliports at existing administrative and airfield sites where essential for wilderness purposes. Require justification for continued use of existing heliports or for constructing new ones. Unless otherwise approved by the Chief, do not locate other heliports within any wilderness. Evaluate and document the need for each heliport in the forest plan. Operate only those heliports considered vital to wilderness resource management.
2. Helispots. The Regional Forester may approve the construction of nonemergency individual helispots or systems of helispots. FSM 7720 contains guidelines for location, construction, and use of helispots. Except in emergency situations, evaluate and document the need for helispots in the forest plan.

2324.33f - Signs

1. Use a minimum of signing in wilderness.
2. Do not provide wilderness signs for the convenience of the visitor. Along with accurate maps, and wilderness education materials, provide a minimum number of signs for either the routing or location of the traveler or the protection of the wilderness resource.
3. Conform to the standards and guidelines for wilderness signing in FSM 7160.
4. Do not use interpretive and informational signs.

2324.33g - Communication Structures

Maintain communication structures only as necessary for administration and protection of the wilderness. Evaluate and document the need for communication structures in the forest plan (FSM 7200).

2324.34 - Other Agency Structures

Approve, manage, construct, and maintain structures funded by cooperating agencies on National Forest lands in the same manner as described in section 2324.3. When existing improvements deteriorate to the point that normal maintenance does not keep them usable, analyze the need for such structures. If they are not essential to meet the minimum requirements of wilderness administration, or if they are not essential to a continuing program that was established on the basis of the structure, do not replace them.

Periodically review permits for structures in wilderness to determine whether or not their continued existence is in the public interest. If not, terminate the permits and remove the improvements. Forest plans shall assess and direct the disposition of all such structures.

2324.35 - Structures and Improvements Needed for Special Use Permit Operations

Policy and direction for outfitter and guide operations is in FSM 2323.13. Maintain structures and improvements under other special use permits under the same direction as given for other agencies or as otherwise authorized by law.

2324.4 - Research in Wilderness

2324.42 - Policy

3. Review proposals to conduct research in wilderness to ensure that research areas outside wilderness could not provide similar research opportunities. Direct projects that would jeopardize wilderness values to areas outside wilderness.
4. Review research proposals to conduct research in wilderness to ensure that research methods are compatible with wilderness values. Do not allow the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport unless the research is essential to meet minimum requirements for administration of the area as wilderness and cannot be done another way (sec. 4(c) the Wilderness Act). Include specific stipulations in the approval document.

NEPA Analysis – Decision Process

Some administrative actions in wilderness may require a NEPA analysis. Determine the appropriate level of NEPA analysis and documentation based on current agency policy and region or unit requirements. Reference FSM 1950, FSH 1909.15, and national, regional, or forest amendments and supplements for NEPA planning policy and guidelines. The use of Categorical Exclusions for wilderness projects requires special considerations. Check with Region and Forest Wilderness Specialists for the most current direction.

In general, the process for determining the level of NEPA analysis required follows a decision process similar to the one displayed below. The chart can be copied and pasted into a Minimum Requirement Analysis or MRDG for use and reference if needed.

Guiding Questions

1. Is the action authorized by a previously **approved, current, and relevant** NEPA document that includes a minimum requirements analysis?

Answer:	YES:	NO:
Explain:		

If **Yes**, then:

Proceed with action, document approval for those actions requiring use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport from the appropriate line officer.

If **No**, then:



go to next question

2. Is the action of limited scope and duration and qualifies under one of the Secretary of Agriculture exemptions or Chief of the Forest Service exemptions for categorical exclusion **without** a case file? (Note – Check with Region and Forest Wilderness Specialists to determine the current policy regarding use of Categorical Exclusions for wilderness projects.)

Answer:	YES: <input type="checkbox"/>	NO: <input type="checkbox"/>
Explain:		

If **Yes**, then:

Proceed with action, document approval for those actions requiring use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport from the appropriate line officer.

If **No**, then:



go to next question

3. Is the action of limited scope and duration, has no extraordinary circumstances, and qualifies for a Chief of the Forest Service exemptions for categorical exclusion **with** a case file? (Note – Check with Region and Forest Wilderness Specialists to determine the current policy regarding use of Categorical Exclusions for wilderness projects.)

Answer:	YES:	NO:
Explain:		

If **Yes**, then:

Scope interested publics and prepare Decision Memo for the appropriate line officer.

If **No**, then:



go to next question

4. Is the action likely to have significant adverse effects on the wilderness resource or human environment?

Answer:	YES: <input type="checkbox"/>	NO: <input type="checkbox"/>
Explain:		

If **Yes**, then:

Proceed with an EIS and ROD for the appropriate line officer.

If **No**, then:

Scope interested publics and prepare an EA and Decision Notice for the appropriate line officer.

References and Links

The Wilderness Act and subsequent wilderness legislation:

http://nwps.wilderness.net/allpublaws_by_wilderness.cfm

Forest Service Regulations:

http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_03/36cfrv2_03.html

Forest Service Policy:

<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/directives/fsm/2300/>

Forest Service NEPA Manual and Handbook:

<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/directives/fsm/1900/>

<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/directives/fsh/1909.15/>

Optional Formats

Optional Form A - Description of Alternatives

Describe the alternatives. Be specific and provide necessary detail for each alternative. <i>What will be done?</i> <i>How will it be accomplished?</i> <i>Where will the project take place?</i> <i>What methods, tools, and techniques will be used?</i> <i>When will the project take place and necessary time constraints, if any?</i> <i>What are the mitigation measures necessary to protect wilderness character?</i>
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:

Comparison of Effects

Describe the effects in terms of possible protection and/or potential for degradation of the wilderness resource and preservation of the wilderness character.

Biological and physical resource
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:
Social and experiential resource
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:
Heritage and cultural resource
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:

Maintaining Contrast and Unimpaired Character
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:
Special Provisions
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:
Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors and Work Methods
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:

Economic and Time Constraints
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:
Additional, Wilderness-Specific Comparison Criteria
Alt#1:
Alt#2:
Alt#3:
Alt#4:

OPTIONAL FORMAT B - COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Display of Alternatives, Effects and Benefits

Use a +,- or numerical scale (1-5) or other rating system to compare alternatives.

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Biological and physical resource				
Social and experiential resource				
Heritage and cultural resource				
Maintaining Contrast and Unimpaired Character				
Special Provisions				
Safety of visitors, personnel, and contractors, and work methods				
Economic and time constraints				
Additional, Wilderness-specific				