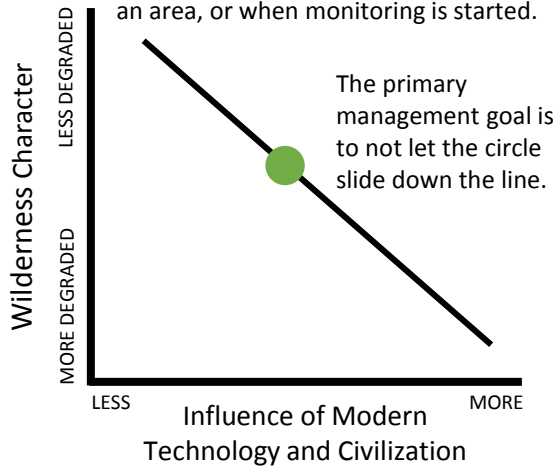


Preserving Wilderness Character in the Forest Service

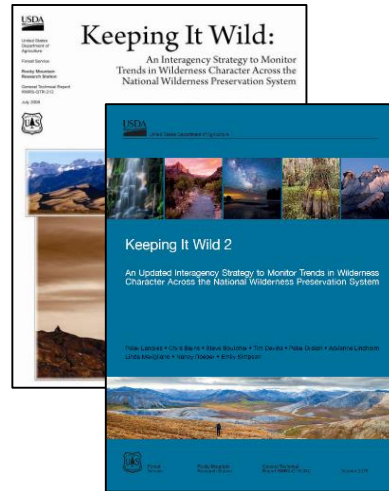
Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, Rocky Mountain Research Station, February 2016

“Preserve wilderness character” is the 1964 Wilderness Act’s primary legal mandate, is FS Wilderness Policy, and applies to all 445 FS wildernesses, ~20% of all NFS land.

The baseline state of wilderness character (green circle) is ideally determined when Congress designates an area, or when monitoring is started.



Interagency guidance on preserving wilderness character, published in 2008 and revised in 2015, was developed over 15 years by 100+ staff, 44 pilot tests, 150+ reviewers and 1000+ review comments.



Monitoring wilderness character:

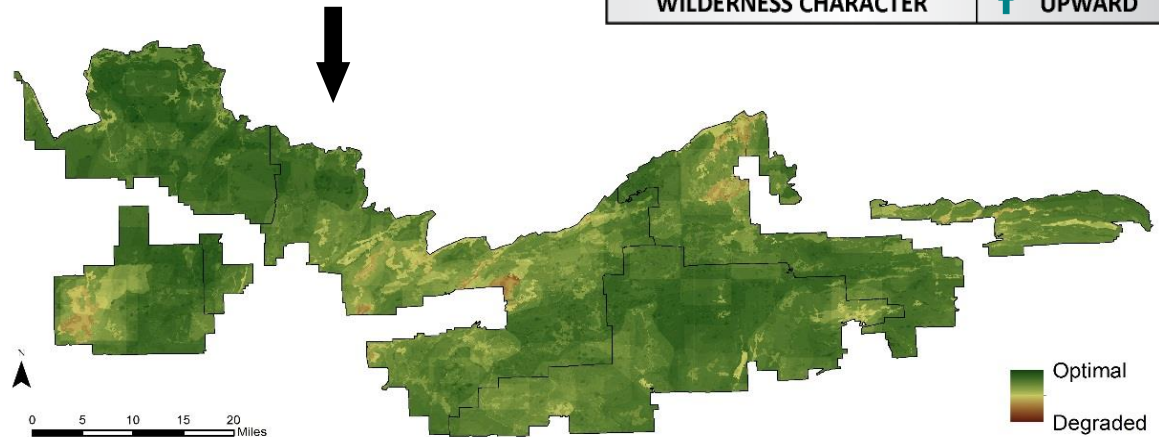
- Shows trend across the entire wilderness.
- Is consistent across the entire FS and with BLM, FWS, and NPS wilderness.
- Reduces forest and district workload by using existing national protocols and data.
- Ties on-the-ground outcomes to agency performance and policy goals, and the legal mandate to preserve wilderness character.

Trends in the Qualities of Wilderness Character

Quality of Wilderness Character	Trend: 2015-2020
Untrammeled	↑ Upward
Natural	↓ Downward
Undeveloped	↑ Upward
Solitude	↕ Offsetting Stable
Other Features	↔ Stable
WILDERNESS CHARACTER	↑ UPWARD

Mapping threats to wilderness character:

- Shows where cumulative effects are occurring with the same framework used in monitoring.
- Aligns with forest plan revisions to analyze overall effects of different plan alternatives on wilderness character.
- Provides a tool to analyze project-level effects on wilderness character.



Map of wilderness character in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, MN (darker green = less degraded, darker brown = more degraded), developed during 2015 and 2016 by the Superior National Forest and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute.