



Wilderness Character Questions and Answers

Integrating Wilderness Character with Land Management Planning Efforts, Session 3, Wednesday, May 02, 2012

1. Are stakeholders/general public included in defining the "wilderness character" of an area or just unit staff?

The black and white answer is no. This is an internal process with no environmental impacts and there is no NEPA requirement to include the public. However, an individual unit's staff may decide to include stakeholders in this process. The intent is to really understand what the wilderness character in a particular place is. If involving selected members of the public or stakeholders helps to do that, it is recommended to include them.

2. In the Death Valley map, why was the data for trails considered under the solitude quality rather than the undeveloped quality?

Trails are "agency-provided facilities" for recreation. The Death Valley Map generally followed Keeping It Wild, which defines all such developments for recreational purposes as degrading the solitude quality.

3. Could you discuss how the guidance provided in House Report 95-540 and 98-40 that suggest agencies have large latitude when considering fire management including pre-suppression tactics?

House Report 95-540 is a report that accompanied H.R. 3454 which became PL 95-237 (Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978) and specifically addressed the concerns of members of the 95th Congress relating to fire management and the protection of adjacent property and watersheds in two specific wilderness areas in California: Santa Lucia and Ventana. The concerns stated in the report resulted in including special language in the designation of these two areas. In a nutshell, the language directs the Forest Service to include in their management plans for these areas authorization to "...take whatever appropriate actions are necessary for fire prevention and water shed protection including, but not limited to, acceptable fire pre-suppression and fire suppression measures and techniques." See the attached section at the end of this document from PL 95-237 that specifically addresses fire management for the Santa Lucia and Ventana Wilderness areas in California.

House Report 98-40 is a report that accompanied H.R. 1437 which became PL 98-425 (California Wilderness Act of 1984) and specifically addressed the concerns of members of the 98th Congress relating to "...the arid climate, high seasonal temperatures and buildup of fuel that exists in so many California roadless areas, especially in Southern California, fire management is

a key concern of many...” The concerns stated in the report resulted in the reiteration of the fire provision from Section 4(d)(1) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 in the current law. The language included in Section 103(b)(2) of the California Wilderness Act of 1984 is as follows: “(2) as provided in subsection 4(d)(1) of the Wilderness Act, the Secretary concerned may take such measures as are necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases, subject to such conditions as he deems desirable;”

It appears that both of these reports are specific to Forest Service wilderness areas in California and don't have direct relation to other wilderness areas beyond what Section 4(d)(1) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 states. Remember, Congressional reports may shed light on what Congress was considering at the time, but it is the language that is included in the law that counts as law.

4. Did you do a minimum requirements analysis as well as the NEPA document for the prescribed fire project? Also, did you factor in climate change affecting wildfires in the effect on wilderness character?

The prescribed fire project used in the case study was an “edited down” version of a project that is actually being proposed in a Forest Service wilderness study area. Linda states that, yes, a minimum requirements analysis and NEPA document, if required, is being conducted in the actual project proposal. Linda emphasized that these analyses should be done in the assessment stage of a project proposal.

Concerning the question about climate change, Lisa states the following:

“Climate change is being addressed in EA I believe in conjunction with fire behavior section. The EA is expected to be available in June. Here is link to website where information will be posted.”
<http://gacc.nifc.gov/egbc/dispatch/wy-tdc/projects.html>

(c) certain lands in and adjacent to the Los Padres National Forest, California, which comprise about twenty-one thousand two hundred and fifty acres, are generally depicted on a map entitled "Santa Lucia Wilderness Area—Proposed", and shall be known as the Santa Lucia Wilderness: *Provided*, That the tract identified on said map as "Wilderness Reserve" is designated as wilderness, subject only to the removal of the existing and temporary nonconforming improvement, at which time the Secretary of Agriculture (hereinafter referred to as the "Secretary") is directed to publish notice thereof in the Federal Register. Pending such notice, and subject only to the maintenance of the existing nonconforming improvement, said tract shall be managed as wilderness in accordance with section 5 of this Act. In order to guarantee the continued viability of the Santa Lucia watershed and to insure the continued health and safety of the communities serviced by such watershed, the management plan for the Santa Lucia area to be prepared following designation as wilderness shall authorize the Forest Service to take whatever appropriate actions are necessary for fire prevention and watershed protection including, but not limited to, acceptable fire presuppression and fire suppression measures and techniques. Any special provisions contained in the management plan for the Santa Lucia Wilderness area shall be incorporated in the planning for the Los Padres National Forest: *Provided*, That the Forest Service is authorized to continue fire presuppression, fire suppression measures and techniques, and watershed maintenance pending completion of the management plan for the Santa Lucia area;

(d) certain lands in the Los Padres National Forest, California, which comprise about sixty-one thousand acres, are generally depicted on a map entitled "Ventana Wilderness Additions—Proposed", and which are hereby incorporated in, and shall be deemed to be a part of, the Ventana Wilderness as designated by Public Law 91-58. In order to guarantee the continued viability of the Ventana watershed and to insure the continued health and safety of the communities serviced by such watershed, the management plan for the Ventana area to be prepared following designation as wilderness shall authorize the Forest Service to take whatever appropriate actions are necessary for fire prevention and watershed protection including, but not limited to, acceptable fire presuppression and fire suppression measures and techniques. Any special provisions contained in the management plan for the Ventana Wilderness area shall be incorporated in the planning for the Los Padres National Forest.