



Region 10 Wilderness Campsite Definitions and Campsite Inventory Protocols
As agreed upon at the Ketchikan Wilderness Meeting, November 29, 2001
and as modified in May/June 2003 by:

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Defining a site and performing a level 1 assessment:

Existing recreation sites have recognizable boundaries and usually have remnants of recent human use such as litter, fire ring, tree damage, or trampled vegetation. Impacts may be as minimal as a small piece of trash or as extensive as a cabin. They could be a day use or overnight site. They include sites that have known use but show little evidence of impacts (such as sites used by good Leave-No-Trace campers or sites rehabilitated by rangers). Sites older than 50 years would be considered historical or perhaps prehistoric, and may possibly also be a recent recreation site. They are all entered into Infra Wild database as either a level 1, level 2, or level 3 site.

Potential recreation sites are sites that have desirable qualities (level, relatively dry, attractive features) and are located near travel routes. They don't show any evidence of recent use but may attract future use and therefore warrant future visits by field staff. They are not entered into the Infra Wild database but are noted on district maps or GIS layers. If they are desirable LNT sites (contain durable surfaces resistant to impacts, adequate feces disposal nearby, etc...) they may be considered for future inclusion as recreation sites, but if not, use should be strongly discouraged or prohibited.

Entering basic information into the Infra Wild database at Level 1:

Level 1 assessment includes the following categories of information entered into INFRA WILD database for existing campsites:

<u>Mandatory</u>	<u>Optional</u>
VCU number	site name
Site number	site attributes such as type of site or attractive features present
latitude/longitude	

The purpose of level 1 is to establish the baseline number and location of sites in your wilderness, but not to record impacts of human uses at them. Impact ratings are done in a level 2 or 3 assessment.

And remember; if your level 1 assessment site is an unused, pristine site that may someday be used, or a cabin or tent platform you'd like to regularly monitor, you should record these sites on GIS maps outside of the INFRA WILD database. The INFRA WILD database is meant only for existing campsites.

Categorizing basic impacts of human use at existing campsites using Level 2 assessment:

Level 2 assessments measure the basic impacts to a site caused by humans. It is meant as a quick summary of condition and can normally be performed in less than 30 minutes at a site. The following indicators of human impacts are the minimum requirements (see also excel spreadsheet form). You may wish to collect additional information.

Minimum information to collect for Level 2 inventory

1. GPS coordinates
2. Site size (square meters within the outer perimeter of the impacted zone)
3. Fire ring number
4. Structure (s) type and number (rudimentary platform, visqueen shelter, table, bench...) and photos of each
5. Social trails (number of)
6. Number of Trees Damaged (include axe marks, nails, sawn branches, unnatural root exposure, but not historical damage)
7. Trash (0-4 rating with 0=none and 4=widespread)
8. Feces present (yes/no), include only improperly disposed of human or dog feces
9. Impact Level Summary Rating, (1=minimum, 2=moderate, 3=heavy) see below for definitions
10. Locational sketch (quick and easy version)
11. Photos (preferably from fixed points but those points aren't necessarily mapped)

Level 3 assessments quantify your measurements:

Level 3 assessments of sites are for quantifiable results. Outfitter/guide sites often require documentation of impacts for permit enforcement. Campsites where use is expected to increase in the future are worth measuring specifically. Level 3 can also be done on a sample of sites within a wilderness in order to compare specific impacts over time.

The Alaska Region minimum requirements for level 3 assessment include a more quantified version of the level 2 assessment and the addition of a site map and groundcover estimates:

<u>Level 2 indicator</u>	<u>Level 3 indicator that replaces level 2</u>	<u>Level 3 indicator different from Level 2</u>
Site size estimate	Site size measured	Detailed map of site boundary
No. fire rings	No. and combined size of fire rings	Location of ring mapped & size measured
No. trees damaged or cut	No. and types of tree damages	Optional: Location of each tree mapped
No. and photo of structures	same	Location of each structure mapped
No. social trails	No. and condition of trails	Location of each trail mapped and categorized
Trash rating	same	
Human or dog feces present	same	
Impact level summary	same	
Photos (general site)	fixed photo points and directions	Photos of fire ring and vegetative transects
Locational sketch	Detailed and measureable map	Centerpoint and radial transects exactly mapped
None	n/a	Groundcover estimates of site and control area

You may choose to collect additional information in your level 3 assessment, but you should collect the minimums shown above. Be sure to ask yourself how the data will be used and tailor the collection of information to the management need.

Campsite occupancy (number of nights per year) is helpful in relating impacts to human use but it is difficult to obtain reliable information. The use of campsites might be estimated by directly observing the sites on a sample of days each summer. Additional information on use of sites may be taken from guide reports, trail registers, second-hand reports, and observations of people enroute to remote sites.

For more information on performing level 3 inventories contact one of the campsite data managers for their technical guide and instruction packet.

Campsite Boundary Delineation

The site size can be recorded in two categories:

1. The *impacted area* where vegetation or terrain is altered in subtle or obvious ways by people.
2. The *usable space*. This includes not only the impacted area but also additional area within the perimeter of the site which might have been once used for a tent pad or perhaps could be, but shows no recent sign of use or impact.

When you arrive at a site, take stock of the area. Walk around the site and determine, through careful observation, the boundaries of the site. Concerted effort must be made by the crew to not add to the existing impacts (minimize trips into the vegetated areas or uplands). Note areas of absent, flattened, or damaged vegetation and contrast these with areas that remain pristine. Often a tent site will be missing the larger items such sticks or stones, and conversely these things will be laying outside the tent area where they have been thrown. On rare occasions, when an area may be naturally devoid of vegetation, attention to discrete changes in organic litter will be necessary to delineate site boundaries. Gravel beaches that have lost the dune grass cover can be a challenge; previous knowledge of site can be helpful, as can pictures. On some occasions, damage to vegetation will be from animals, evidenced by scat, hair, matted or browsed vegetation, or bear marking trees; do not confuse this with recreational use. Wildlife trails usually enter and exit opposite sides of a site and continue on, whereas the human trails usually are short access routes from one use area to another (i.e. from the kitchen to a tent site, or from beach to tent site). People commonly use already established wildlife trails; use the condition of the wildlife trail outside of the campsite area as the off site control for determining the amount of impact from humans.

The value of campsite monitoring trips can be optimized by timing the work shortly after the high use season, thereby increasing the chance of finding visible impacts.

Impact Level definitions:

1. *Minimal Impacts*: Sign of very light use, a piece of litter, a couple hacked branches, small fire ring (or none), little or no trampled vegetation, trails not obvious
2. *Moderate Impacts*: Vegetation loss becoming noticeable, being used several nights/season, trails apparent, maybe a few trees damaged, established fire ring obvious
3. *Heavy Impacts*: Sites are easily noticeable, extensive veg. loss shows a barren core, obvious trails, fire ring (s) with deep ash deposit, often trashy, small structures often in place.

Litter:	
	0 = None
	1 = A few small pieces of litter and/or up to 30 seconds of clean-up time.
	2 = up to 1.5 minutes of clean-up time.
	3 = moderate amount of litter and/or up to 10 minutes of clean-up time.
	4 = widespread litter, graffiti, and/or more than 10 minutes of clean-up time.

Litter: This evaluation is based upon the amount of time necessary for one person to clean up the site. Keep track of the time required to rehabilitate the site and record the value in the appropriate box. Exclude litter that appears to have washed up on shore and is not related to recreational use of the site.

