



R2 Minimum Recreation Site Monitoring Protocol

Recreation Site Monitoring Procedures for Element 6 of the
Chief's 10 Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge

Updated: 8/1/2009

Introduction

The objective for developing this R2 Minimum Recreation Site Monitoring Protocol (known as Rapid Assessment) is to provide a consistent process for monitoring of recreation sites in all 46 R2 wildernesses. Due to differences in ecosystems and other parameters, not all sites will have all indicators (i.e. trees on site). Additionally, managers may choose to continue with existing monitoring protocol (such as Modified-Cole). However, it is recommended that all units conduct Rapid Assessment census survey as a base core data and then gather additional data as directed by Forest Plan standards.

R2 Protocol Standards

1. Census survey of likely sites, including trace sites.
2. Likely locations in the entire wilderness must be visited (95%)
3. Partial credit can be obtained for a census of a portion of the wilderness.
4. Data no older than 5 years is recommended.
5. Data for each site must include: (a) location (GPS coordinates) (b) digital photograph of campsite; (c) campsite condition; and (d) presence/absence of administrative structures.

R2 Strike Team Protocol

1. Strike Team will arrive on first day in FS uniform and meet with the Line Officer before field survey.
2. To avoid excessive public contact time, the field inventory work will **NOT** be done in FS uniform. Strike Team will wear RAT PACK t-shirt instead.
3. Home unit will provide local wilderness ranger to work with Strike Team.
4. Wilderness Ranger will verify 'most likely' map with Strike Team.
5. Strike Team will complete JHA, have radio communication and SPOT unit.

Pre-Work for inventorying campsites

1. Read Cole's Research papers on Min. Protocol.
2. Review Forest Plan direction for wilderness campsite standards
3. Review past inventory data and location of existing campsites.
4. Prepare a monitoring plan or strategy to achieve survey of likely sites.
5. If possible, prepare "most likely" campsite map.

Protocol for inventorying campsites

1. Identify campsites; 3-digit wilderness number, 4-digit trail number or drainage number and 3-digit campsite number. Other formats may be used as long as they start with the 3-digit wilderness number. For example, drainage may be used instead of four digit trail number.
2. GPS site using UTM and NAD83.

3. Take digital photograph of site. Take azimuth reading and pace to site. Make accurate track notes so that someone can find your photo-point in the future..
4. Evaluate site, 0-8. 0= trace site with sign of evidence of past use (old fire ring).
5. If necessary, midpoints (1/2 point rating) can be used, example groundcover loss 2.5. (Do not use beyond mid-point, i.e 2.7 or 6.2).

Procedures for assessing campsite condition

1. Access groundcover disturbance of main campsite.
2. Access severe damage to trees and roots, including associated trees nearby.
3. Size of disturbed area (including satellite tent pads and stock-holding areas).
4. Document administrative structures. i.e. those structures that FS created.
5. Sites with no trees get a 0.
6. Read over Cole's "special situation" and document if your rating is based on it.

Using this protocol, assign the campsite an overall impact rating between 1 and 8 (0 if trace site). This is the sum of the groundcover disturbance rating (1-4), the tree damage rating (0-2) and the disturbed area rating (0-2). **It should take no more than three to five minutes to assign a rating.**

Special R2 Situations

1. Krumholtz: Damage to krumholtz trees are rated, no matter the height or DBH or severity. For example, one axe cut mark in a krumholtz tree gets a rating, no matter the size. R2 has assigned krumholtz a special situation that needs higher rating than other trees.

Procedures for wildernesses with established campsite monitoring protocols

Some wildernesses units already have impact assessment procedures that are well established evaluation methodology. These procedures are appropriate and adequate for getting credit for Element #6 if they record (a) location; (b) campsite condition and severe tree damage; and (c) presence/absence of administrative structures and meet the other standards described above. However, it must be a census survey of 95% of likely campsites.

Recommended Additional Procedures

We strongly recommend that this minimum protocol be supplemented with additional data that is both more comprehensive and more precise; IF YOUR FOREST PLAN DIRECTION dictates specific data requirements. The Rapid Assessment minimum protocol does not provide information sufficient to be used to meet all Forest Plan requirements. For example, it doesn't assess change over time on individual sites, unless the amount of change is substantial. Nor does it document all the significant types of impact occurring on campsites. Just keep in mind that more data takes more time!

For additional information go to: Recreation Site Monitoring Toolbox on www.wilderness.net. Scroll to the following URL:

<http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=toolboxes&sec=recsitemonitor>.

All toolboxes are products of the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center.