

Template for Estimating Numerical Visitor Capacity

The following template can be used to help apply the concepts of visitor capacity estimation. When selecting indicators and thresholds it is best to start with the forest plan or wilderness plan. (Thresholds may be called standards in forest plans.) If no indicators and thresholds exist in the forest plan or if there are other important issues not addressed in the plan, use professional judgment and stakeholder input to identify the most significant existing and potential threats to wilderness character and then identify thresholds that can easily be measured, potentially by partners and volunteers.

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Note - Please refer to the Defining Thresholds, Process Summary and Examples (Appendix C) sections of Guide to Numerical Visitor Capacity in Wilderness, found in the Visitor Use management Toolbox, for information useful for filling out this guide.

This template will need to be reduced or expanded as needed to match the number of indicators, zones, and analysis areas in a particular wilderness. The blanks will expand as necessary as you enter your response.

Step 1: Establish Thresholds

Identify the indicators or attributes of wilderness character at risk from impacts of visitor use and the thresholds that are applicable to visitor capacity estimation that will address management objectives for the wilderness.

Note – For many wilderness areas the threshold will vary by zone.

Partial list of possible indicators:

Issue of Concern: Crowding

Indicators:

- Number of group encounters per day
- Number of occupied campsites per night
- Presence of social trails in Trail-less Zone

Issue of Concern: Campsite Condition or Density

Indicators:

- Total area of campsite disturbance in any 5 acres
- Number of campsites per square mile
- Number of campsites per square mile in poor condition

Issue of Concern: Adverse effects to biophysical conditions

Indicators:

Acres of habitat loss due to recreation per square mile

- Amount of erosion or degradation of water quality
- Number of incidents of vandalism or removal of cultural resources

Summarize in a table as follows. Zones may not be necessary in small wildernesses. Use as many indicators and thresholds as needed here. There need not be a different threshold for each zone. But each zone must have at least one threshold that makes it different from other zones.

Indicator	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3
Indicator #1	Threshold #1	Threshold #2	Threshold #3
Indicator #2	Threshold #1	Threshold #2	Threshold #3
Indicator #3	Threshold #1	Threshold #2	Threshold #3
Indicator #4	Threshold #1	Threshold #2	Threshold #3

Steps 2 and 3: Define Analysis Areas and Estimate Visitor Capacities for Each Analysis Area

Map analysis areas, areas that can be analyzed and managed as individual units and assign each analysis area to a zone. This results in the assignment of a particular set of thresholds to each analysis area in each zone.

For each threshold, use monitoring data, research, logic and interdisciplinary professional judgment to estimate the maximum amount of use each area can accommodate without exceeding the threshold.

Note – First, list the analysis areas or zones and the thresholds that apply from Step 2. Then determine the maximum level of use. Finally, select the Limiting Factor or the threshold that has the most restrictive limit on visitor use for the analysis area or zone. For any threshold that will clearly not be the limiting factor, it is sufficient to note that the threshold is not limiting and to not estimate a precise maximum amount of use

Analysis Area/Zone Identifier: _____

Threshold #1: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Threshold #2: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Threshold #3: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Limiting Factor for Analysis Area/Zone: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Analysis Area/Zone Identifier: _____

Threshold #1: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Threshold #2: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Threshold #3: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Limiting Factor for Analysis Area/Zone: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Analysis Area/Zone Identifier:

Threshold #1: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Threshold #2: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Threshold #3: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

Limiting Factor for Analysis Area/Zone: _____

Maximum level of use: _____

List as many analysis areas/zones and thresholds as needed here.

Step 4: Convert and Aggregate Use Measures for Visitor Capacity

List the capacity estimates (maximum level of use) for each analysis area or zone identified in Step 3 and sum them to estimate the numerical visitor capacity for the entire wilderness. If necessary, reduce the total wilderness capacity to account for some areas not being used to capacity.

Note – The summed estimate may be needed for programmatic planning purposes. Capacity estimates by analysis area or zone will be more useful for implementing management actions and monitoring. Some limiting factors may have to be multiplied by a factor such as number of acres or days in a season to arrive at an aggregate visitor capacity estimation and/or converted to PAOTs or RVDs, etc. as needed.

Analysis Area/Zone _____ Visitor Capacity: _____

Analysis Area/Zone _____ Visitor Capacity: _____
Analysis Area/Zone _____ Visitor Capacity: _____

Theoretical Total Wilderness Area Visitor Capacity: _____
(*sum the capacities for individual analysis areas*)

Actual Wilderness Area Visitor Capacity: _____
(*if necessary, reduce total capacity to account for some areas not being used to their capacity*)