**Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts**

***Evaluation Criteria Definition Matrix and Comment Form***

The Cibola National Forest plan revision interdisciplinary team developed draft questions and measures to address each of the five wilderness characteristic criteria listed in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70- Wilderness. These are to be used to evaluate the Phase 2 Inventory areas for wilderness characteristics, and are outlined below.

Please use this form to comment on individual areas from the Phase 2 Inventory maps. Please use one form for each individual identification area, and note its identification number and location. If your comment is not addressed in the “considerations” column of each criterion, please include additional information in the “other” narrative section.

You can also comment using the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool available at this website: <https://my.usgs.gov/ppgis/studio/launch/39829>. Please consider the evaluation criteria below when inputting comments on the online mapping tool.

**Inventory Identification Number/Location:**

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| **D2 5K8 Mt. Taylor** |

**Criterion 1- Apparent naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.**

**Question 1a. What is the composition of plant and animal communities?** The purpose of this question is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural**.**

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| * **Considerations** | **Narrative** |
| * How are concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals distributed across the land? | **There are a number of areas where invasive plants have been previously documented.** |
| * Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | **No Comment.** |

**Question 1b. What is the extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?**

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| Considerations | Narrative |
| Extent that current vegetation species composition and structure has changed from historical conditions (pre-EuroAmerican settlement).[[1]](#footnote-1) | There are clear cut conditions in the Water Canyon area to contain the Spruce beetle from the 1960’s and drill pads in the bottom of the canyon from the 1970’s. |
| Vegetation restoration treatments (e.g. thinning) or timber harvest areas and distribution across the land (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated). This also includes associated railroad beds, skid trails, and logging decks of timber harvest areas. | There is evidence of Old Growth Logging in the past in most areas. Most of the trails are old logging roads. Many of the snowmobile trails and ski trails on entire west side are old logging roads. |
| Does the forest appear natural (consider elements, including but not limited to, vegetation, wildlife, soil, air, etc.)? | The entire bottom of Water Canyon was clear cut to control the Spruce Beetle. |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | **No Comment.** |

##### **Question 1c. What is the extent to which improvements[[2]](#footnote-2) included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?**

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| Considerations | Narrative | |
| Appearance of airstrips, heliports, and/or landing zones. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation). | | No Comment. | |
| Appearance and density of maintenance level 1 roads[[3]](#footnote-3) measured by road length per sq. mile, and spatial distribution (broadly interspersed vs. concentrated), occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels. | | Many motorized trails are present. Not noted on the current travel management plan but clearly in use. | |
| Appearance and density of unauthorized routes (includes decommissioned, temporary, and user created routes per sq. mile) and distribution (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated, occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels. | | **All but one canyon has present roads or appearance of roads, trails or corridors.** | |
| Miles of fencing or pipeline per square mile. | | There is a fence line that is Substantial Noticeable on the south-west face of Mt. Taylor. Note attached photo is taken from 6.5 miles away. | |
| Appearance of areas of mining activity that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory.[[4]](#footnote-4) Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation) | | As reported before there is mining activity in the bottom of Water Canyon. Cased wells and disturbed land around these well. | |
| Appearance of range or wildlife improvements that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation). | | **No comment** | |
| Appearance of watershed treatment areas (such as contouring, diking, channeling) that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation). | | **No comment** | |
| Extent to which the improvements cause the appearance to depart from apparent naturalness to the area as a whole (Consider improvements listed above as well as water tanks, aviation crash locations, wreckage sites, locations of cemeteries or gravesites, bombing or ordinance locations, and viewshed analysis for proposed developments) | | There is view shed disruption by the large array of windmills to the east of Mt. Taylor. There is train noise on a very calm morning disrupting the solitude. On Saturday nights the Uranium Capital Raceway can be heard on the West face of Mt. Taylor. | |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | | No Comment. | |

**Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.** Note: The word “or” means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.

**Question 2a.** **Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor’s opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.**

Note: Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area.

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |
| Describe the general topography of the area in context of sight, sound, and screening. Can a traveler see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area? Is the area quiet and free from motorized noise? | There is train noise on a very calm morning disrupting the solitude. Windmills to the east. This area will be extremely hard to enforce the solitude. Traditional snowmobile use. ATV trails and other activities will violate the solitude. |
| Proximity to area of recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, non- Forest Service roads, and/or activities that impact opportunities for solitude. Consider effects of the area’s adjacent, cherry-stemmed roads.[[5]](#footnote-5) | This area was on the 1985 Forest Service Plan as a Winter Motorized Activity area. In years when snow is present the entire west face is utilized for over the snow activities. Non-motorized and motorized. |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | No comment |

**Question 2b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor’s ability to feel a part of nature.**

Note: Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature. This question also relates to miles of fence information from Criterion 1, Question 1c, due to the potential for miles of fence to restrict unconfined recreation opportunities.

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Describe the types of primitive recreation activities in the area. | This polygon presents a very limited area to engage primitive activities. The area which is suited for these activities less than 5000 acres and represents only a small area to the south of Water Canyon and east of Mt. Taylor. |

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| Percent of area with a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class. [[6]](#footnote-6) | Less than 20% of this area would be qualified. |

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| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | Base on the section alone, the area does not fit the criterion to be designated. |

**Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.**

There are no stand-alone areas less than 5,000 acres on either the initial inventory or Phase 2 inventory maps. Those who offer such areas for evaluation please identify and describe how it is of sufficient size to make its preservation or use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

**Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.**

Note: These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

**Question 4a. Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems?**

Note: Rare in this context is defined as local or regional.

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Average modeled species richness value from New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool. | No comment |
| Presence of threatened or endangered species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat (from National Heritage database and other data sets as available). | No comment |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | The area has invasive weeds and shrubs noted in the studies. |

**Question 4b. Are there any outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?**

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Description of any unique geologic features in the area. | The view from Mt. Taylor is breathe taking. But, the peak is not being considered for Wilderness area. |
| Presence of outstanding scenic features within the area or percent of area with distinctive scenic attractiveness class.[[7]](#footnote-7) | Windmills to the east are not natural and create an eye sore. |
| Other (include any additional information related to the question above) | **No comment** |

**Question 4c. Are there historic and cultural resource sites in the area?**

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Presence of structures, dwellings, and other relics of past occupation when they are considered part of the historical and cultural landscape of the area. Also consider potential historical railroad beds/berms associated with timber harvest areas from Criterion 1, Question 1b. | There are no structures in this area. |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | This is a traditional area to harvest forest product and traditional herbs. |

Note: (Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056)).

**Question 4d. Are there any research natural areas?**

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Percent of area that is part of a research natural area. | **No comment** |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | **No comment** |

**Question 4e. Are there any high quality water resources or important watershed features?**

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Miles within the area of eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers | **No comment** |
| Miles within the area of Outstanding Natural Resource Waters | **No comment** |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | **The area is the watershed for downstream. The lack of proper management of timber will result in catastrophic fire damage to the watershed.** |

**Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.**

**Question 5a. Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?**

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| **Considerations** | **Narrative** |

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| Shape and configuration of the area. | | **That is a major issue. There is no reasonable way to manage the access to this area. There are no natural geographic formation to limit the access to the area, making management a real issue. Traditional uses of the area have encouraged uses that will be directly challenged by the wilderness designation. Forest products, recreation and cultural activities have a proven track record that is well documented.** |
| Presence and extent of legally established rights or uses within the area. | | **The appendix A and B used during the evaluation process, which appear to be a local document, may present a legal issue and challenge in the future. Appendix A and B seems to be very arbitrary.** |
| Presence and extent of any specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics. | | No Comment. |
| Presence and extent of non-Federal land in the area | | No Comment. |
| Describe management of adjacent lands. | | No Comment. |
| Describe presence and extent of cultural and traditional uses of the area (e.g. shrines, ceremonial use, etc.) | | **Mt. Taylor is of great cultural significance to many cultures. The entire area is a designated as a Traditional Cultural Property to head off any possible abuse of the area.** |
| Presence and extent of wildland urban interface in the area. Include acres if possible. | | **No Comment** |
| Describe any other management activities or restrictions within in the area (e.g. upcoming management decisions). | | **The entire area is a designated as a Traditional Cultural Property. Plus, it falls under the following:**  **The Antiquities Act of 1906,**  **Endangered Species Act,**  **Clean Air & Water Act,**  **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA),**  **National Historic Preservation Act,**  **1872 Mining Law.**  **Just to mention a few.** |
| Describe existence and extent of motorized uses within the area (trails, routes, special activities). |  |
| Presence and extent of special use permits and authorizations within the area. | **No Comment.** |
| Presence and extent of “cherry stemmed”[[8]](#footnote-8) roads or other linear features. | **The primary road to the bottom of Water Canyon is a natural cherry stemmed road as well as the road to the top of Mt. Taylor. There are really no other options available for these roads other than a cherry stem. The natural lay of the land and property boundaries rules out other options.** |
| Other (Include any additional information related to the question above) | **The Mount Taylor Ranger District area presents the only true economic potential for the county. Tourism and other recreation present a great potential for the area.** |

1. Species composition is the number and proportion of species present. Structure refers to the size, density, and arrangement of plants. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The use of the term “improvements” in this context is taken from the Forest Service Handbook, and means the evidence of past human activities in the area as a whole. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For a glossary of road terminology, please see the *Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts Assessment Report, Vol, II*, page 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Appendix A for Substantially Noticeable criteria used in Phase 2 inventory, and Appendix B for results from the Phase 2 Inventory. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The term “cherry stemmed” road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase 1 Inventory process. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Forest Service’s Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provides a framework which allows administration to manage and users to enjoy a variety of recreation environments. ROS is not a land classification system; it is a management objective, a way of describing and providing a variety of recreation opportunities. A “primitive” ROS class is one typically associated with a largely unmodified environment, a very high probability of solitude, self-reliance, little evidence of people, and no motorized use is permitted. The ROS Inventory Existing Condition maps have been completed for the Forest, and the existing condition of primitive ROS classes is being used as a measure. These maps are only existing condition, and are subject to change based on desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes developed during the interdisciplinary process of Forest Plan Revision. Please refer to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Handbook and Primer for more information: <http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/carrying_capacity/rosfieldguide/ros_primer_and_field_guide.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Forest Service’s Scenery Management System (SMS) provides the framework to effectively inventory, assess, and manage scenic resources. Scenic Attractiveness is a component of the SMS inventory, and is the primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty based on commonly held perceptions of preferred scenery and landscape features. The three scenic attractiveness classes are: Class A-distinctive; Class B-typical; Class C-indistinctive. To determine these classes, the landscape elements of landform, vegetation, rocks, cultural features and water features are mapped using General Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey (GTES) information for the Forest, with District personnel input on areas of the Forest that were not picked up at the GTES scale. The Scenic Attractiveness map is based largely on existing landscape features. Refer to the Forest Service Scenery Management Handbook for more information: <http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/carrying_capacity/landscape_aesthetics_handbook_701_no_append.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The term “cherry stemmed” road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)