

9/4/24

Camille Howes
Revision of Forest Plan

RECEIVED

SEP - 4 2024

GILA NATIONAL FOREST

Objection Reviewing Officer

333 Broadway Blvd. SE

Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Mr. Michiko Martin and Camille Howes (copy delivered ^{mailed to} to 3005 E. Camino del Bosque) ^{Hand}

After reading the outdated 1986 Gila Forest Plan to give myself a starting point to compare the 2024/2025 revision plan. There is new mention of Climate Change and the pressure it will put on the forest also it is mentioned to push for riparian area, springs and watershed restoration and enhancement. Understanding budget and staffing are always a roadblock to progress, let's put those aside.

On a personal note of disclaimer, having worked for the National Park Service and State of California in Natural Resource Management and Habitat Restoration there is background experience on my part. I was a "boots of the ground" member of the New Mexico Wild inventory team helping to collect data and documentation photos of approximately 750,000 acres of forest land surrounding the Gila, Aldo Leopold, and Blue Range Wilderness over a period of 4 years for the Forest Service to use. Our team used the strict guidelines for what and how to document what we observed both natural and man-made.

Then moving forward to be a member of the public on the Forest Planning Team attending 15 sessions, field trips and being able to share input along the way since 2015. After reading the whole proposed Gila Forest Plan my #233 comments were included for review. Now that the final draft is coming to light here come more comments from me this time after skimming the whole plan and reading most of the responses from public comment, I am focusing only on potential recommended wilderness expansion and not the whole plan.

So many people have expressed to me the reason they moved to Grant County is because of the Forest and Wilderness. They hike, camp, backpack, and horseback ride; love the trails and joined groups to help clear and maintain these trails. Instead of excluding areas of potential recommended wilderness to accommodate bike riders, perhaps the FS could look at forest trails in different areas that could be looped for bikes, electric bikes, day hikers and horse riders.

To state that because an area burnt it will no longer be considered for inclusion for potential recommended wilderness, in my opinion, is unacceptable. The land will heal itself as it has in the past and will in the future. The FS Plan states mechanical treatments are necessary – on the other hand it also states, on a case-by-case basis mechanical equipment maybe authorized in wilderness. Comment 56 pg. 537 DEIS A-397 says mechanized equipment can be authorized on

a case-by-case basis. Thus, the use of mechanical treatment is ok case by case and should not rule out potential additional recommended forest acreage for wilderness. It will take another year for all the powers that be, Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, President of the United States to look at all the acreage to consider and make decisions on what to include, before the recommended acreage goes to Congress.

2024 being the 100th Anniversary of the 1st designated wilderness and what better way to celebrate than to increase as much as possible the recommended acreage within that very wilderness!

My hope is that the Forest SERVICE will look to the future and move out of the past, to keep as much land as possible to remain untrammelled by man not only for the surrounding counties but for the health of the planet. Keep as much acreage as possible included in wilderness, as human population increases these places of outstanding geology, solitude, clean air, fresh water, native vegetation, vast New Mexico vistas, peacefulness and dark skies become ever more important. Be forward thinking, protect and expand the wilderness, it is a very special place, move to save it.

So here are my two "Boots on the Ground" recommendations. I have included the maps because I know it is cumbersome and time consuming to go back and forth quickly. The segments I wish to include for recommended additional wilderness are immediately adjoining existing wilderness, ranked as Outstanding, High or Moderately High and are outlined in Black on the included maps.

Proposal 1:

W4: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 12,458 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

WSB1: High, Manageable-YES, 43,998 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

SB1: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 41,063 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wild.

B14: High, Manageable-YES, 5,380 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B1a: High, Manageable-YES, 5,741 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B1b: High, Manageable-YES, 265 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B1c: High, Manageable-Yes, 78 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B10: High, Manageable-Yes, 15,909 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

WB1: High, Manageable-Yes, 27,335 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

W2b: Moderate High, Manageable-Yes, 2,088 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wild.

S1: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 48,067 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

WB2: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 4,437 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

G3d: Moderate High, acres? Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

G1: Outstanding, Manageable-Yes, 20,525 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

RG4: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 21,591 acres. Next to G1 adjacent to Gila Wild.

RG2: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 61,067 acres. Next to RG4 adjacent to Gila Wilderness and close to the Blue Range Wilderness.

QR1: High, Manageable-YES, 41,047 acres. Ranking of 14.7 almost Outstanding.

RG1: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 22,089 acres. Adjacent to Blue Range Wilderness.

QG1: High, Manageable-YES, 8,685 acres. Next to RG1 adjacent to Blue Range Wild.

Q11: High, Manageable-Yes, 5,728 acres. Next to QG1 & RG1 adjacent to Blue Range W.

PROPOSAL 1: Aldo Leopold Wilderness potential recommended acres = 154,315

Gila Wilderness potential recommended acres = 155,687

QR1 potential recommended acres = 41,047

Blue Range Wilderness potential recommended acres = 36,502

PROPOSAL 2: (maps printed in order of forest plan) Includes Outstanding, High, Moderate High and Moderate.

Q11: High, Manageable-YES, 5,689 acres. Adjacent to Apache Sitgreaves National Forest.

QG1: High, Manageable-YES, 7,609 acres. Adjacent to Q11 & Apache Sitgreaves NF.

QG2: Moderate, Manageable-Yes, 4,404 acres. Adjacent to QG1, Q11 & RG1 & A.S.NF.

These acres would add to the Blue Range Wilderness.

QR1: High, Manageable-Yes, 36,691 acres. Adjacent to QR2, moderate.

R10a: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 536 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

R10b: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 657 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

RG1: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 21,895 acres. Adjacent to Blue Range Wilderness.

RG2: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 43,383 acres. Near Blue Range Wilderness.

RG4: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 20,398 acres. Adjacent to RG2. Adjacent to G1 which is adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

G1: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 16,848 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness, Adjacent to RG4 and G3d.

G3: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 1,095 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

G9: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 2,856 acres. Adjacent to Blue Range Wilderness.

G10: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 3,709 acres. Adjacent to Blue Range Wilderness and Blue Range Primitive Area.

G11: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 2,827 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

G12: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 2,223 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

B1a: High, Manageable-YES, 5,741 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B1b: High, Manageable-YES, 229 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B1c: High, Manageable-YES, 48 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B9: This is confusing, Alt 4 includes 11,909 acres. Manageable-YES. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness & B1c. Trails going through are not a problem. The cherry stemmed roads are left out of the boundaries so no problem. The private properties are to the east of the boundaries so no problem. Nice there are two valuable creeks.

B10: High, Manageable-YES, 15,181 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness & B9.

B11: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 15,181 acres (same as B10??). Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

B14: High, Manageable-YES, 4,546 acres, Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

SB1: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 39,150 acres.

S1: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 46,437 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

S2: Outstanding, Gila Middle Box, Manageable-Yes, 24,523 acres. Not printed because it would be stand alone. Although it will have Gila River Wild & Scenic standing once the Bill is passed. Also valuable as a wildlife corridor for Gila River access.

S6a: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 447 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

S6b: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 4,558 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

S6d: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 1,040 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

SW1: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 128 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

W1c: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 691 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

W3: Moderate High, Manageable-YES, 3,389 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wild.

W4: Outstanding, Manageable-YES, 12,459 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wild.

W7: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 642 acres. Critical Habitat, Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

Wb1: High, Manageable-YES, 26,852 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

Wb2: High, Manageable-YES, 4,443 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

Wb4: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 13,682 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

Wb6: Moderate, Manageable-YES, 4,252 acres. Adjacent to Gila Wilderness.

WSB1: High, Manageable-YES, 42,878 acres. Adjacent to Aldo Leopold Wilderness & W4.

B1a, B1c, B9, B10, B11, W3, W4, WB1, WSB1 were involved in the 2022 Black Fire.
“While the scenery may have changed in some locations, its value has not been reduced because the area and severity of burned landscape is consistent with the fire regime after a lightning-caused fire.”

PROPOSAL 2: Aldo Leopold Wilderness potential recommended acres= 138,413

Gila Wilderness potential recommended acres= 120,904

Blue Range Wilderness potential recommended acres= 89,545

QR1 acres= 36,691

SB1 acres= 39,150

S2 acres= 36,691

“Executive Order 14072 Strengthening the National Forest, home to cherished expanses of mature and Old Growth Forests on Federal lands. Forests provide clean air and water, sustain the plant and animal life fundamental to combating the global climate and biodiversity crisis. Deploy climate smart forestry practice and nature-based solutions to improve the resilience of our lands, waters, wildlife in the face of increasing disturbances and chronic stress arising from climate impacts.”

Forest Service needs to protect the Old Growth and Mature Forests not cut them down for timber harvest especially in the desert Southwest. There are very few areas where it is economically feasible to harvest timber around the Gila Forest. This was covered in the FS Planning Field Trip. The idea of not including areas for potential wilderness because of timber harvest is ridiculous, the terrain is so rugged and mountainous the cost for a small amount of harvestable timber would be exorbitant. It will be challenging for Forest Service staff to be forward thinking about climate change and to not fall back on outdated policy practices. I noticed that some of the data quoted was from the Northwest US. The Southwest is a whole different ballgame with different tree species, rainfall amounts, temperature fluctuations, substrate, plants, and animals. There are additional stresses being put on the Forest and Staff as population increases, trash left behind, campfires not put out, encroachment, ATV use has increased exponentially.

This is your chance to expand wilderness acreage and protect the land from motorized vehicles. Help reduce the effects of climate change and the ever-increasing pressures placed against the forest ecosystems. The planet needs more wilderness not less. This is the 100th year anniversary of the 1st designated wilderness right here in Southwest New Mexico. Help celebrate this milestone by increasing the wilderness as much as possible.

The lack of staffing issue in Arizona is not a valid reason to throw out areas of recommendation connected to the Blue Range Wilderness and Apache-Sitgreaves NF. Pointing fingers across the AZ & NM boundaries where one side is waiting for the other to make a commitment is not how to step into the future. Decisions for the health and protection of the forest are what matter.

Aspen Mountain needs another look at, I was a part of the survey team, there is only a rough dirt road, leading to a gate closing the road, it is another mile to walk to the top.

Taylor Creek is another area that needs a closer look. It is a very beautiful, lush area with several cultural sites and as much acreage as possible should be included for recommendation.

Yes, grazing is a way of life for some people. There are 109 permit holders. Out of the 3.3 million forest acres, 2.6 million acres are managed for grazing. I am assuming most people that graze cattle in this area also have a horse or two to help manage the cattle. Horses are better to use than a vehicle, they tread more lightly on the land and don't create roads off of the Travel Management Plan. Using horses to maintain fence lines and round up cattle means less air pollution, less noise, less extensive over land travel especially steep slopes and hard to get to places. The question arises out of the 109 permittees how many use horses instead of vehicles to check & maintain fence lines and service water tanks? When was the last time all the allotments were checked by the FS grazing manager? A-65 Literature cited in response to comment is old data from 2008 Svejcar et al. and not relevant to here. Carbon Fluxes on North American rangeland is very different than Forest grazing allotments in the desert southwest.

A-24 & A-25 Under comments of Alternatives in general. The preference is Alternative #5 over all other alternatives stating it is in the best interest of people, animals and plants because it contains more recommendations or proposals for special designations, which are protective in nature and consistent with emergency response plan. Emergency response plan is needed due to predicted climate change and related biodiversity loss.

A-26 – A-38 Alternative #5 Best available science based data provided by botanical experts associated with the Gila Native Plant Society and as recommended in the Rare Plant Conservation Strategy. I am unaware if during this planning process the Gila Forest had a botanist on staff or just a biologist. Plants have not been given adequate attention in the past some of these rare plants grow nowhere else and species have yet to be discovered. Side note: 2 weeks ago a moth discovered on Signal Peak is the 1st recorded in NM.

Goal of the Revised Forest Plan?

1. Move toward a shared vision for the Future of our public lands.
I would like to have more wilderness!
2. Plan provides strategic guidance to manage cultural and Natural Resources on the forest balance multiple uses, connect people to their land and heritage, restore ecosystems, and watersheds and adapt to climate change.
Exactly what defines Wilderness and I would like to have more Wilderness included.
3. Provide strategic, program level guidance of Gila's resources and uses for 10-15 years.
Perfect, let's save the Gila Resources by increasing the Gila and Aldo and Blue Range Wilderness areas.

How Will the Revised Plan differ from the 1986 forest plan?

Based on the 2021 Planning Rule the plan will:

1. Have a stronger focus on outcomes rather than outputs.
I would like to see more details here. What outcomes from which programs?
Restoration of Springs, Creeks, and watersheds? More critical habitat set aside.
Larger botanical areas? More trails maintained. The outcome of hiring more Law Enforcement would benefit the outcome of the Travel Management Plan.
Decommissioning the closed roads would enhance the scenery and the outcome would be stopping people from driving vehicles on closed roads. Keep in mind people that come to visit from other states do not have a copy of the Travel Management plan. Unless there is a sign or barrier, they have no clue it is a closed or decommissioned area. Habitat Restoration signs are helpful.
2. Base management actions on best available science and local knowledge
Use best available science, not old data. I have local knowledge; I live in the Gila Forest of the Burro Mountains. I pass on my knowledge to the Forest Service but rarely are actions taken and outcomes resulting. I often hear the excuse of having no budget or being understaffed.
3. Have the ability to adapt to changing conditions and stressors overtime.
What ability is needed to be able to adapt to what conditions and stressors?
4. Use enhanced public participation.
So many questions here, are volunteers needed? For what projects? How do you see the public participating?

G1, G12, RG4 = Mineral Creek to Sandy Point = the Grand Enchantment Trail

Needs For Change Statement: Plan direction for Connectivity.

More connection between the Gila and Blue Range Wilderness creates habitat connectivity and wildlife corridor.

There seems to be a roadblock to recommending some areas for wilderness because roads are closed but not decommissioned. What is the hold up to have these closed roads decommissioned and restoration to occur? Some of the old roads I helped survey on the wilderness team had large trees, grasses and plants growing up on them.

I have to say 72,000 acre (54,000 Aldo, 16,000 Gila, 2,000Blue) recommendation for wilderness leaves me wondering why there are not more acres included. I was looking closely at the adjacent acreage to the Gila, Aldo & Blue Range wilderness areas. My hope is that the Aldo Leopold Wilderness recommendation would be closer to 150,000 acres and the Gila Wilderness recommendation would be closer to 150,000 acres and the Blue Range Wilderness recommendation closer to 36,000 acres. There were

1,219,019 acres to choose from with 100 polygons and at least 50 of those were contiguous to existing wilderness areas.

This leaves me feeling like there is more effort put into excluding acreage than to include acreage since 1986. WOW! This shows a lack of using the best most recent survey data and photos for documentation of how valuable a resource additional wilderness is. No one knows where lightning will strike so do not exclude areas because of fire risk.

I feel sorry for the forest, with staff changing so frequently, there is no consistency.

Before I forget. I would like to include a special thank you to Jenny Natharius "Nessa" National Forest Staff. She has moved on now but has put so much time and effort into this plan sorting through the 27,000 comments in an efficient way. I know she put her heart and soul into the planning and was a consistent staff person through the planning process. She should be very proud of her work.

There is a typo in response to comments page A-64. Paragraph #1 & 3 repeats the sentence. "There is conflicting science on how..... DEIS and FEIS."

Carol A. Martin (assigned prior comment # 233, 231, 23 & 718.3871

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Carol A. Martin

8/29/24

There is a push to protect Old Growth stands in National Forests this also might be a consideration for more wilderness acreage recommendation into the future.

Proposal 1

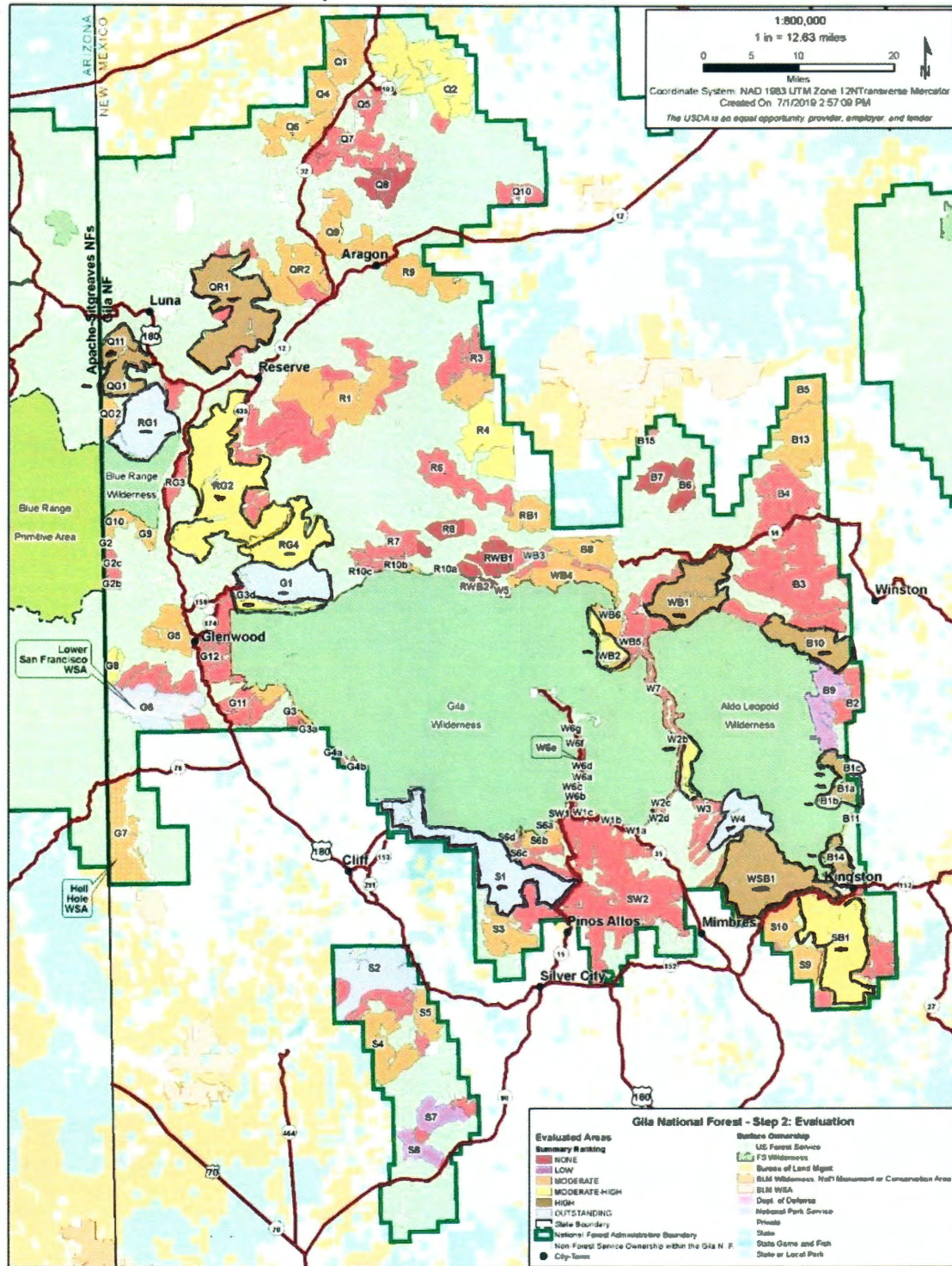


Figure H-2. Gila National Forest – Step 2: Evaluation

Table H-2 displays the results from the evaluation step.

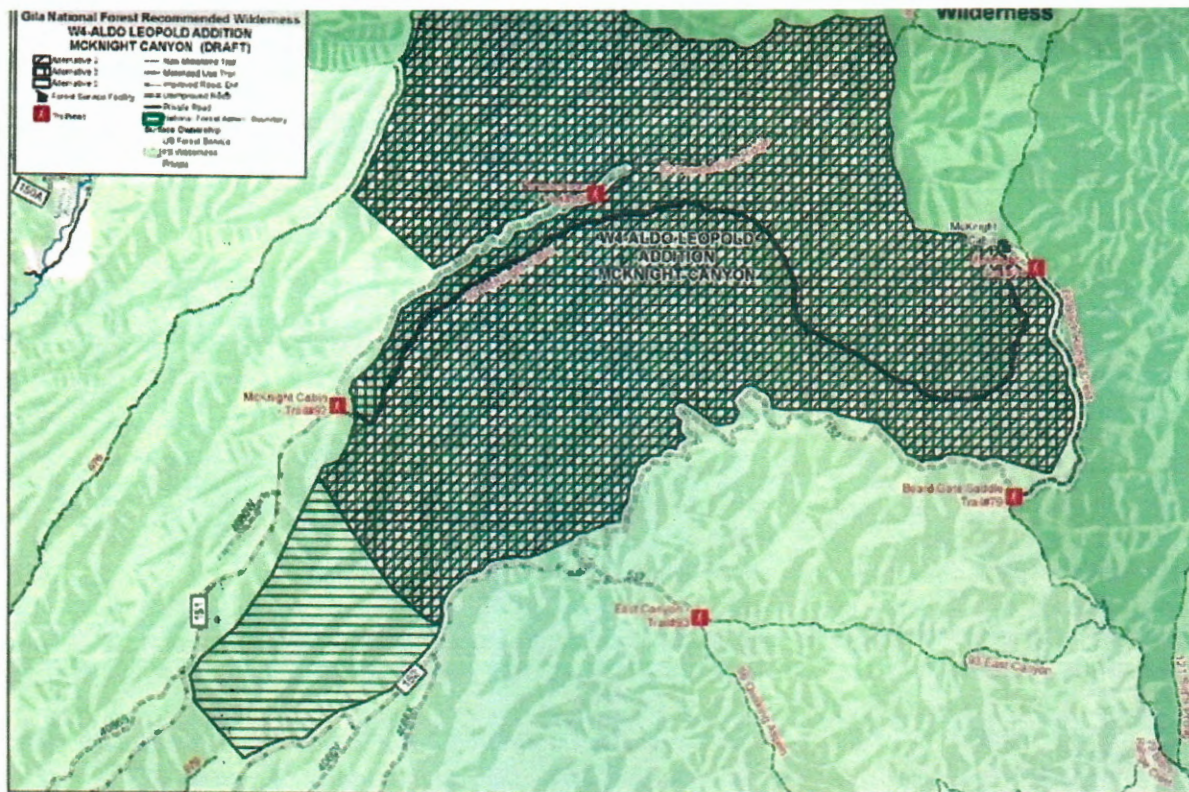


Figure H-63. Recommended wilderness by alternative for W4 – Aldo Leopold Addition McKnight Canyon

*Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan, Volume 3
Appendix H. Documentation of the Wilderness Process*

W4 – Aldo Leopold Addition McKnight Canyon

This area is located along the southwestern boundary of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness area in the southcentral portion of the Wilderness Ranger District in Grant County, New Mexico. Alternative 2 recommends an 11,094-acre area, alternative 3 an 11,050-acre area, and alternative 5 a 12,459-acre area based on alternative-specific criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-63.

This area of the forest that receives little visitation outside of hunting seasons. The terrain is variable, with ridges, mesa tops, steep slopes and deep canyons. Vegetation communities are dominated by pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending upon elevation and slope aspect. There are several trailheads and trails providing access. It is almost entirely inventoried roadless area being managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred or is likely to occur in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Mimbres/Powderhorn/Sapillo grazing allotment. There are outstanding opportunities for solitude, outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, and high opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Evidence of modern land management activity is nearly non-existent. Improvements are very few, are not concentrated, do not appear modern and contribute to the historical character and cultural context.

Table H-61. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the W4 – Aldo Leopold Addition McKnight Canyon

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	OUTSTANDING	8.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (SOLITUDE) HIGH (RECREATION)	8
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	NONE	0
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	OUTSTANDING	16.3

Alternative W4	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside Fire Perimeter
2	11,094	6%	19%	51%	24%
3	11,050	6%	19%	52%	23%
5	12,459	5%	18%	54%	26%

This area experienced the most high and moderate severity of all the impacted areas. In the woodlands, ponderosa pine-oak, and wetter mixed conifer vegetation communities, these severities would be expected under natural fire regimes. In some woodland areas, these severities may not have been expected historically, but have helped the woodland areas move toward the desired conditions described in the revised plan and enhanced apparent naturalness (see Upland Vegetation Fire Ecology and Fuels Pinyon Juniper Woodland and Pinyon Juniper Grass and Juniper Grass Woodlands in volume I of the environmental impact statement). The ponderosa pine forest without a significant evergreen oak component likely experienced fire severities outside the natural fire regime. Low severity fire is typical for this vegetation type. High and moderate severities are not. The dry mixed conifer discussion for B10-Aldo Leopold Addition Northeast applies here since the area experienced a substantial amount of high and moderate severity in this vegetation type. The riparian zones in this area experience burn severity like those discussed for B9-Aldo Leopold Addition East. The largest severity patch occurred in the headwaters of McKnight Canyon, in vegetation communities that evolved with stand-replacement fire, and in vegetation communities where the information supporting our understanding of natural fire regimes doesn't include all the relevant site characteristics that drive fire. Overall, it is difficult to conclude that the Black Fire substantially reduced apparent naturalness of the area from the time of the evaluation.

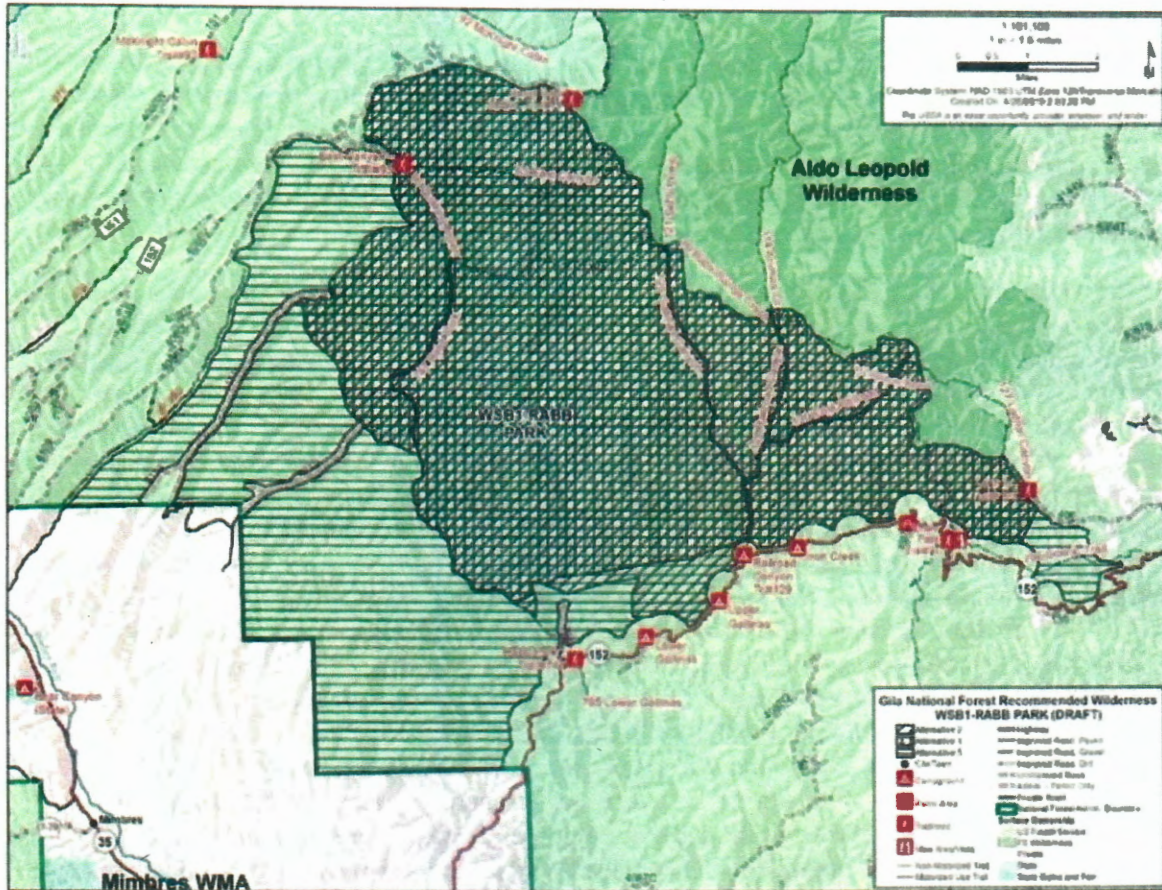


Figure H-69. Recommended wilderness by alternative for WSB1 – Rabb Park

2022 Black Fire Changed Circumstances Analysis

The human-caused 2022 Black Fire impacted nine areas analyzed as part of one or more alternative. This subsection serves to describe changes to the characteristics that made each of these areas suitable for wilderness recommendation. Fire-related changes could impact apparent naturalness if fire effects are outside what would be expected under the fire regimes for specific vegetation communities. Fires could also impact other features of value such as cultural sites. However, because other features of value are not required to be present for an area to be suitable, changes to these values will not impact the area's suitability for recommendation.

The impacted areas include: B10-Aldo Leopold Addition Northeast, B1a-Aldo Leopold Seco Addition, B1c-Aldo Leopold Seco Addition, B9-Aldo Leopold Addition East, B11-Aldo Leopold Addition Southeast, W3-Aldo Leopold Addition West, W4-Aldo Leopold Addition McKnight Canyon, WB1-Taylor Creek, and WSB1-Rabb Park. Monitoring Trends in Burn Severity data are not yet available for the Black Fire; therefore, this analysis relies on data from Rapid Assessment of Vegetation Condition After Wildfire data. While this analysis may reach conclusions that no substantial loss of apparent naturalness occurred in a given area, we want to acknowledge that some undesirable post-fire watershed effects from an exceptionally active monsoon season have occurred. Downslope and downstream values have been negatively impacted. In no way do we intend to minimize those values or those impacts. In the following subsections, the amount of each area by severity class is displayed and discussed in terms of the impacts to apparent naturalness and other features of values where they are or were present.

of the Wilderness Ranger District and northeast portion of the Silver City Ranger District. It shares a boundary with the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. It is north of New Mexico State Highway 152 where it passes through Gallinas Canyon and Emery Pass in Grant County. Alternative 2 recommends a 27,002-acre area, alternative 3 a 25,984-acre area, and alternative 5 a 42,878-acre area with boundary adjustments based on alternative-specific criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-69.

The highly variable terrain ranges from moderate to very challenging with steep slopes, long ridgelines and deep canyons. It supports vegetation communities ranging from pinyon-juniper woodlands to ponderosa pine-oak and mixed conifer forests, depending upon elevation and slope aspect. Many non-motorized trails provide access to and through the area including East Canyon #93, Quaking Aspen #86, Rabb Park #747, Gallinas Canyon #129, Black Range Crest #79, Railroad Canyon #128, East Railroad Canyon #130, and Hillsboro Bypass #412. The Hillsboro Peak Lookout is just northeast of the area which is partially within inventoried roadless area managed to preserve roadless characteristics. There is an area between the inventoried roadless areas and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness that would have been identified as inventoried roadless area if it were not for a mapping error that has since been corrected. At the time the roadless inventory was done, the agencies datasets showed this area as being within the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. Very little management activity has occurred and is unlikely to occur in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Mimbres/Powderhorn/Sapillo, East Canyon, Noonday, Sheppard, and Gallinas grazing allotments. The area has prehistoric and historical cultural significance, including the Hillsboro site, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These resources are considered other features of value. Modern land management activity is only noticeable in some locations, primarily closer to the highway at the area boundaries. There are few improvements, and they are generally not concentrated and do not appear modern, detracting very little from apparent naturalness. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low and there are very good opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the types and pursuits of primitive and unconfined recreation and there is good trail access to facilitate those activities. Access is blocked along some of the western boundary by private lands.

Table H-67. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the WSB1 – Rabb Park

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (RECREATION) HIGH (SOLITUDE)	8
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	15

*Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan, Volume 3
Appendix H. Documentation of the Wilderness Process*

WSB1 – Rabb Park

Alternative	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside Fire Perimeter
2	27,002	<1%	2%	23%	75%
3	25,984	<1%	2%	23%	75%
5	42,878	<1%	3%	18%	79%

There was very little moderate or high burn severity in this area and the impacts to wilderness characteristics are like those described for B1a-Aldo Leopold Seco Addition.

Step Four: Recommendation

SB1 – Sawyer Peak

This area in the Black Range Mountains lies south of New Mexico State Highway 152 in the Silver City Ranger District and includes portions of Grant and Sierra Counties. Alternative 3 recommends a 21,007-acre area, alternative 4 a 23,353-acre area, and alternative 5 a 39,150-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-47.

The predominantly steep and rugged terrain supports pinyon-juniper woodland and ponderosa pine or mixed conifer, driven by elevation and slope aspect. Parts of the area were heavily impacted by the 2013 Silver Fire. It is almost entirely within inventoried roadless area, managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and is unlikely to occur in the future, largely due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Gallinas, Cold/Hot Springs, Berenda, and Carrizo grazing allotments. There is a low density of improvements, with some providing a limited contribution to the historical character and cultural context of the area. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, there is a low likelihood of encountering other visitors and there are excellent opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the types and pursuit of primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities with some trails providing access.

Table H-45. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the SB1 – Sawyer Peak

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5.7
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (SOLITUDE) HIGH (RECREATION)	8
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	NONE	0
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	MODERATE/HIGH	13.7

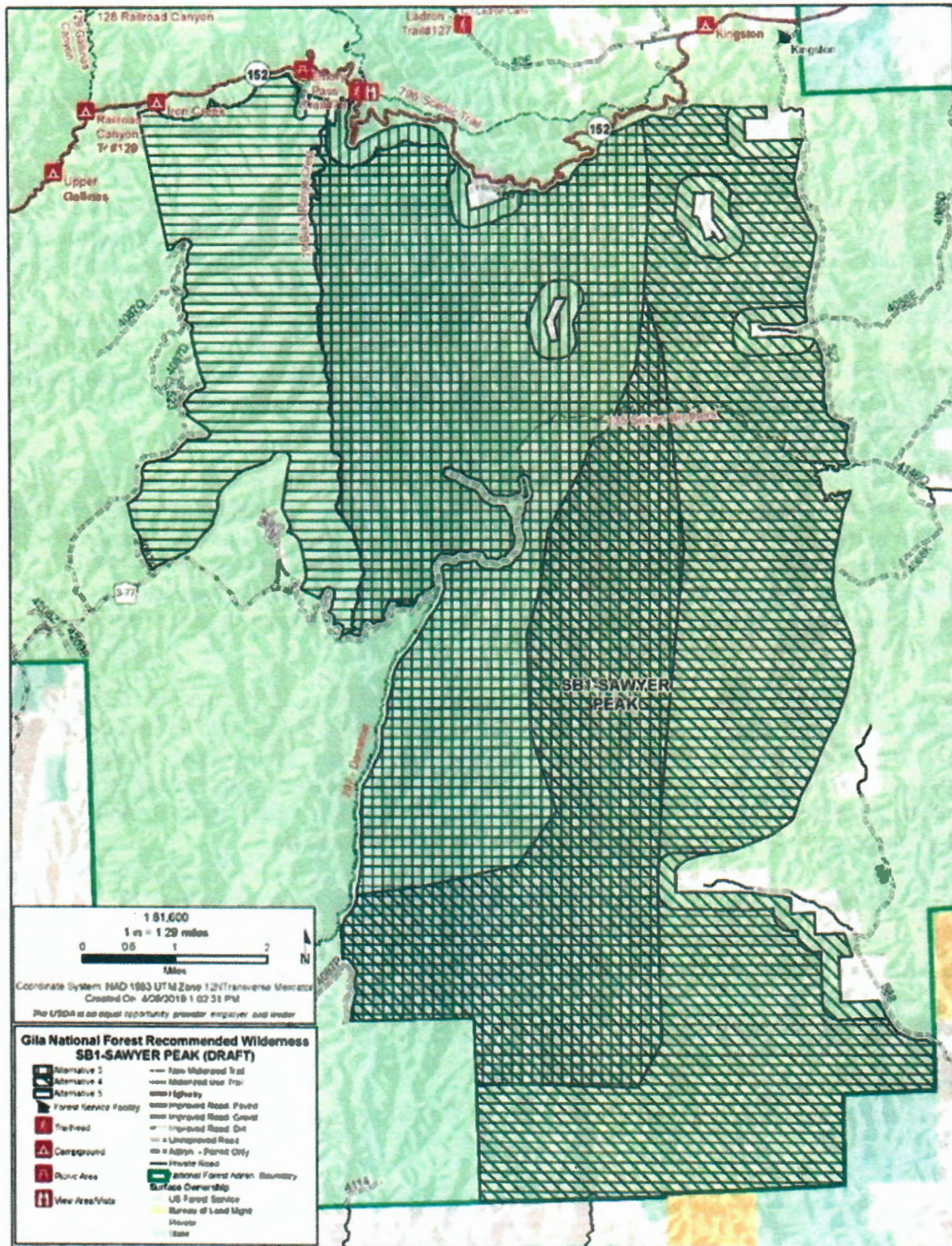


Figure H-47. Recommended wilderness by alternative for SB1 – Sawyer Peak

B14 – Aldo Leopold Addition Carbonate Creek

This area contiguous to the Aldo Leopold Wilderness in the east-central portion of the Black Range Ranger District within Sierra County, New Mexico. Alternative 2 recommends a 2,819-acre area, alternative 3 a 3,592-acre area, and alternative 5 a 4,546-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-46

The area's rugged, mountainous terrain supports pinyon-juniper woodland and ponderosa pine or mixed conifer, driven by elevation and slope aspect. Less than half of the area is within inventoried roadless area and managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Parts of the area have seen mining activity in the past. There are private property inholdings and some prospecting activity, as well as private property and active mining adjacent to the area. However, very little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Kingston grazing allotment. There is minor evidence of modern land management activity, mostly in locations close to the outside boundary. Improvements are few, not substantially noticeable, and not concentrated in any location. There are some constructed earthen tanks providing livestock water and old roadbeds, but there is not a lot of range fencing. The area does not see much visitation and there are very good opportunities for solitude. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are even better, with lots of trail access and excellent views.

Table H-44. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the B14 – Aldo Leopold Addition Carbonate Creek

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (RECREATION) HIGH (SOLITUDE)	8
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	NONE	0
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14

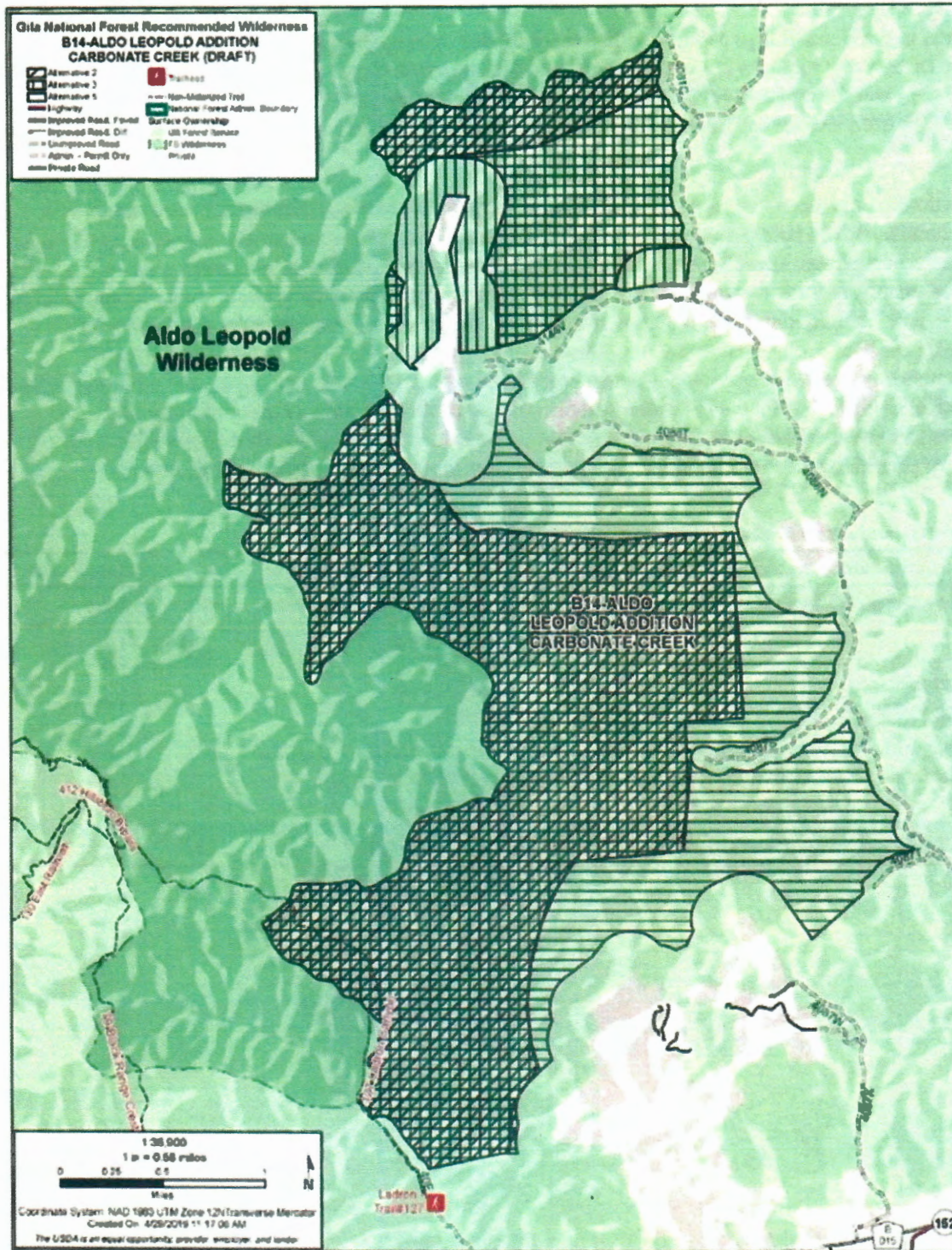


Figure H-46. Recommended wilderness by alternative for B14 – Aldo Leopold Addition Carbonate Creek

Figure H-37. Recommended wilderness by alternative for B1a – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Mexico. It extends from Aldo Leopold Wilderness boundary in the west, to the forest boundary in the east. Alternative 2 recommends a 4,724-acre area, alternative 3 recommends 517-acre area, alternative 4 recommends 4,031-acre area, and alternative 5 a 5,741-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-37.

The terrain is moderately to very steep, complex and rugged. Vegetation communities include a mix pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending on elevation and slope aspect. The excellent scenery and habitat for the federally listed Chiricahua leopard frog in Seco Creek are considered other features of value.

The area is almost entirely within an inventoried roadless area and is managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and is not likely to occur in the future primarily due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing occurred historically but is not currently permitted. It lies within the Animas and Hermosa grazing allotments. There is only minor evidence of modern land management activity near the outside boundaries of the area. This includes a low density of improvements, mostly concentrated in localized areas near the boundaries, some of which impose limitations on apparent naturalness. Opportunities for solitude are high outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons as the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are likewise very good.

Table H-35. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the B1a – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	SUFFICIENT SIZE	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14.3

*Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan, Volume 3
Appendix H. Documentation of the Wilderness Process*

B1a – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Alternative	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside Fire Perimeter
2	4,724	<1%	10%	56%	34%
3	517	<1%	10%	17%	73%
4	4,031	<1%	10%	66%	24%
5	5,741	<1%	9%	52%	39%

There was very little high and moderate severity in this area. The amount and distribution of these severities are generally consistent with natural fire regimes of the affected vegetation types and topography. The Black Fire did not detract from apparent naturalness. Other features of value include scenery and Chiricahua leopard frog habitat. There are likely impacts to Chiricahua leopard frog habitat, either from the fire or from subsequent flooding. However, the habitat remains of value even though habitat loss or alteration may have occurred. Forest staff will continue to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the recovery plan and restore habitat conditions. While the scenery may have changed in some locations, its value has not been reduced because the area and severity of burned landscape is consistent with the fire regime after a lightning-caused fire.

B1c – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Alternative(s)	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside
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future primarily due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing occurred historically but is not currently permitted. It lies within the Animas grazing allotment. There is only minor evidence of modern land management activity near the outside boundaries of the area. This includes a low density of improvements, mostly concentrated in localized areas near the boundaries, some of which impose limitations on apparent naturalness. Opportunities for solitude are high outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons as the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are likewise very good.

Table H-36. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the B1b – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	SUFFICIENT SIZE	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14.3

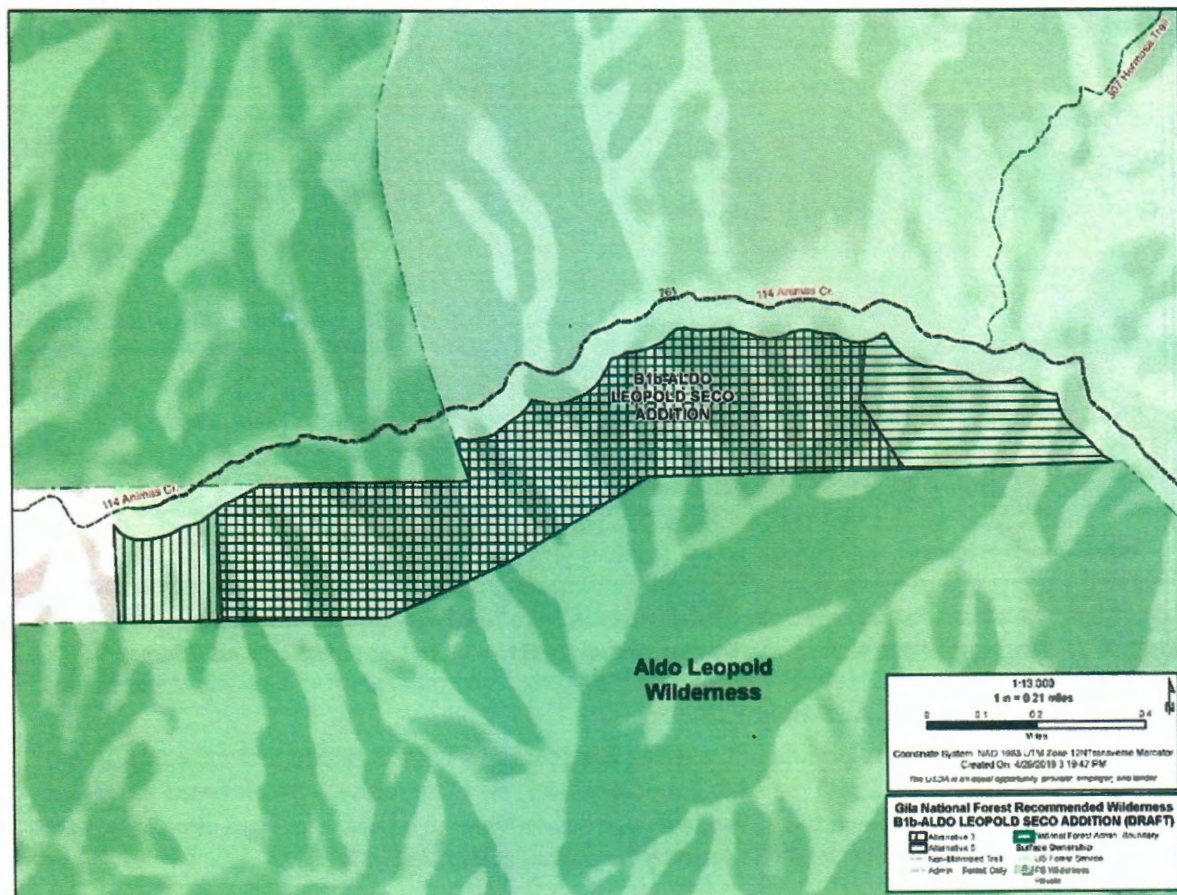


Figure H-38. Recommended wilderness by alternative for B1b – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

B1b – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

This area is in the east-central portion of the Black Range Ranger District within Sierra County, New Mexico. It shares boundaries with the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. Alternative 3 recommends a 208-acre area and alternative 5 recommends a 229-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-38.

The moderate to rugged terrain is vegetated by pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending on elevation and slope aspect. Its excellent scenery is considered another feature of value. A portion of this area is within inventoried roadless area and managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and is not likely to occur in the

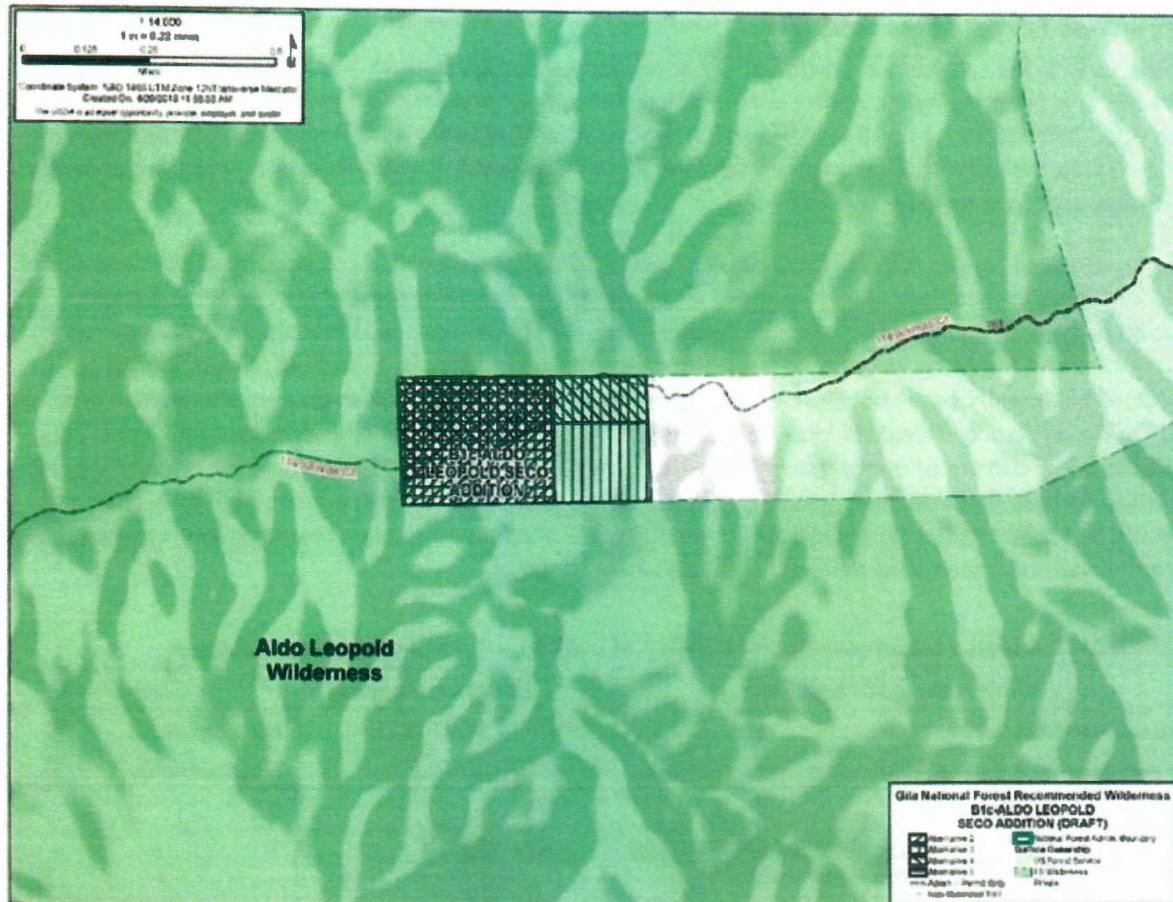


Figure H-39. Recommended wilderness by alternative for B1c – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

B1c – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

This area is in the east-central portion of the Black Range Ranger District within Sierra County, New Mexico. It is bounded by the Aldo Leopold Wilderness on three sides and a private property inholding on one side. Alternatives 2 and 5 recommend a 48-acre area, alternative 3 a 78-acre area, and alternative 4 a 40-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-39.

The moderate to rugged terrain is vegetated by pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending on elevation and slope aspect. Its excellent scenery is considered another feature of value. There is no inventoried roadless area. However, very little management activity has occurred and is not likely to occur in the future primarily due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing occurred historically but is not currently permitted. It lies within the Animas grazing allotment. There is only minor evidence of modern land management activity near the outside boundaries of the area. This includes a low density of improvements, mostly concentrated in localized areas near the boundaries, some of which impose limitations on apparent naturalness. Opportunities for solitude are high outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons as the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are likewise very good.

Table H-37. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the B1c – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	SUFFICIENT SIZE	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14.3

There was very little high and moderate severity in this area. The amount and distribution of these severities are generally consistent with natural fire regimes of the affected vegetation types and topography. The Black Fire did not detract from apparent naturalness. Other features of value include scenery and Chiricahua leopard frog habitat. There are likely impacts to Chiricahua leopard frog habitat, either from the fire or from subsequent flooding. However, the habitat remains of value even though habitat loss or alteration may have occurred. Forest staff will continue to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the recovery plan and restore habitat conditions. While the scenery may have changed in some locations, its value has not been reduced because the area and severity of burned landscape is consistent with the fire regime after a lightning-caused fire.

B1c – Aldo Leopold Seco Addition

Alternative(s)	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside Fire Perimeter
2 and 5	48	0	2%	42%	56%
3	78	0	3%	35%	62%
4	40	0	5%	53%	42%

There was no high and very little moderate severity in this area and the impacts to wilderness characteristics are like those described for B1a-Aldo Leopold Seco Addition.

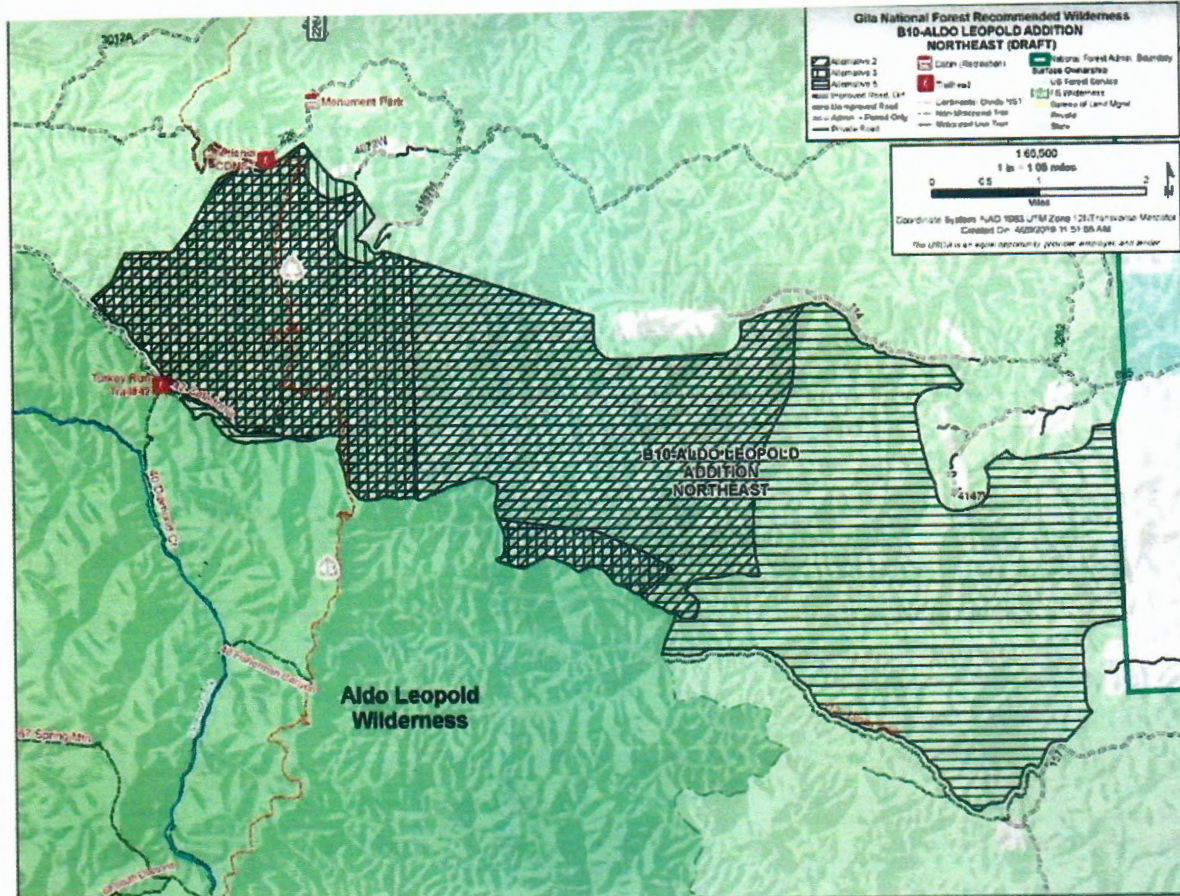


Figure H-43. Recommended wilderness by alternative for B10 – Aldo Leopold Addition Northeast

*Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan, Volume 3
Appendix H. Documentation of the Wilderness Process*

B10 – Aldo Leopold Addition Northeast

Alternative	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside Fire Perimeter
2	8,381	2%	13%	30%	55%
3	4,076	4%	19%	46%	31%
5	15,181	1%	7%	19%	73%

While most of the area experienced low severity or did not burn, there was more high and moderate severity fire than in the three areas previously discussed. While most of the severity occurred in patterns and vegetation types that would be consistent with natural fire regimes, a substantial amount occurred in dry mixed conifer. Dry mixed conifer is believed to have had a predominantly frequent and low severity fire regime. However, there is some uncertainty related to the available information to describe the natural fire regime (see Upland Vegetation, Fire Ecology and Fuels Effects to Mixed Conifer-Frequent Fire in volume I of the environmental impact statement). With this uncertainty, and the relatively patchy nature of severity across the area, a conclusion that a substantial impact to apparent naturalness cannot be drawn. That fire as an active natural process was considered another feature of value in this area supports a conclusion that apparent naturalness remains high. However, high and moderate burn severities likely impacted Mexican spotted owl habitat, another feature of value. Those impacts to Mexican spotted owl habitat would not change the overall evaluation score and the area remains highly suitable for recommendation.

B10 – Aldo Leopold Addition Northeast

This area lies between the north-northeastern boundary of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness and eastern forest boundary in the central portion of the Black Range Ranger District within Sierra County, New Mexico. Alternative 2 recommends an 8,381-acre area, alternative 3 recommends a 4,076-acre area, and alternative 5 recommends a 15,181-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-43.

This is a rugged, mountainous area dissected by drainages. Vegetation communities range from pinyon-juniper woodlands to ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending upon elevation and slope aspect. It contains a section of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and most of it lies within inventoried roadless area, managed to preserve roadless characteristics. In other locations, the area is deeply intruded by cherry stemmed roads and private property inholdings. However, very little management activity has occurred within the area and is not likely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use. The area is part of the South Fork and Palomas grazing allotments. Other features of value include an active fire history and protected activity centers for the Mexican spotted owl. There is limited evidence of modern land management activity, mostly along the area's boundaries and cherry stemmed roads. There are few improvements, but there is a nearby mining complex just outside the boundary. Despite some impacts from cherry stemmed roads and private property inholdings, there are good opportunities for solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation.

Table H-41. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the B10 – Aldo Leopold Addition Northeast

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14.3

WB1 – Taylor Creek

This area is adjacent the northern boundary of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness in the northcentral portion of the Black Range Ranger District in Sierra County, New Mexico. Alternative 2 recommends a 10,012-acre area, alternative 3 a 6,672-acre area, and alternative 5 a 26,852-acre area. Boundaries are adjusted for alternative-specific criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-65.

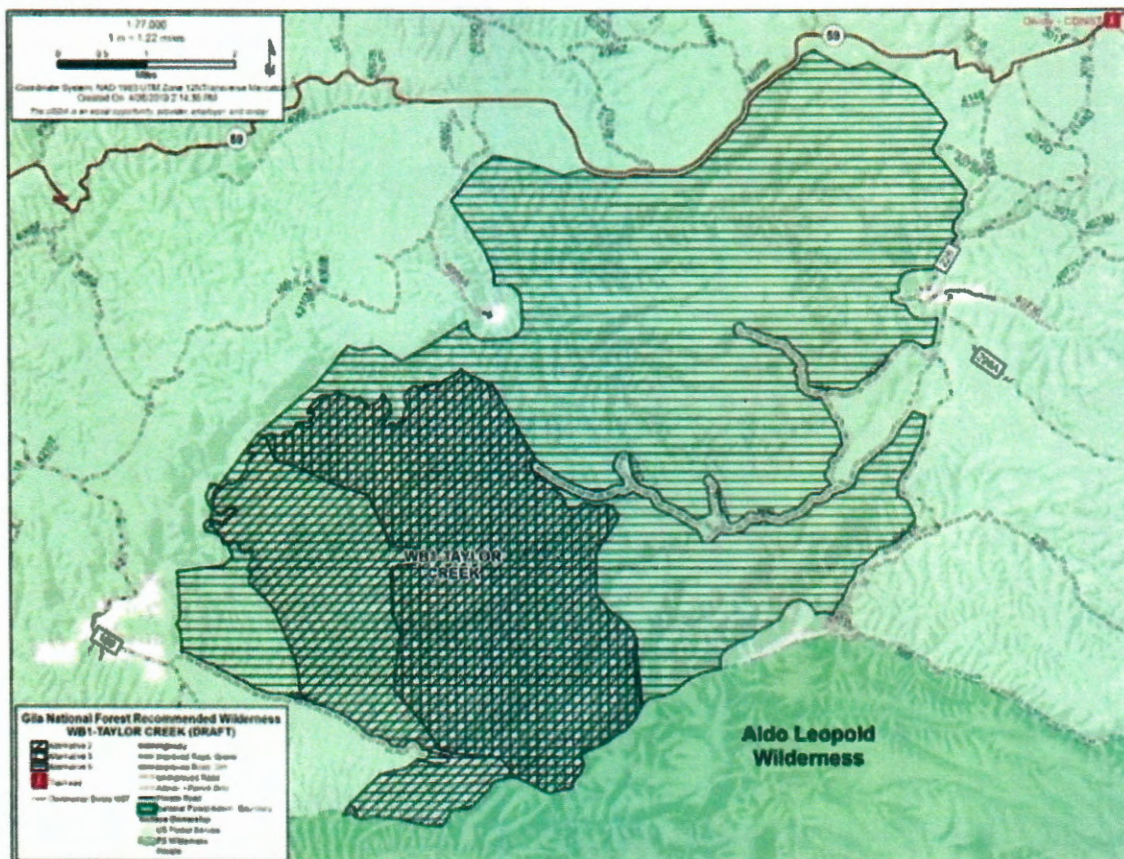
The moderately steep to steep and rugged terrain is dissected by deep canyons and features mesa tops and mountain peak. Vegetation communities include pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending upon elevation and slope aspect. The larger area is almost entirely

inventoried roadless area managed to preserve roadless characteristics. The exceptionally scenic character of the canyon bluffs, geology, expansive views of the Mogollon Mountains and cultural resources that include prehistoric rock shelters and historic mining and military sites are considered other features of value. Permitted grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Taylor Creek grazing allotment.

There is evidence of modern land management activities included past logging and there are populations of noxious weeds in some areas. There are very few improvements, and they are not concentrated or substantially noticeable. Range infrastructure is limited as natural barriers serve livestock management. Opportunities for solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation are high as compared to other areas nearby and elsewhere in the forest.

Table H-63. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the WB1 – Taylor Creek

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	HIGH	3
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	15



WB1 – Taylor Creek

Alternative	Total Recommended Acres	High Severity	Moderate Severity	Low Severity	Unchanged or Outside Fire Perimeter
2	10,012	<1%	6%	60%	34%
3	6,672	<1%	5%	57%	38%
5	26,852	<1%	5%	55%	40%

There was very little moderate or high burn severity in this area and the impacts to wilderness characteristics are like those described for B1a-Aldo Leopold Seco Addition.

S1 – Mogollon Box/Tadpole Ridge

This area in the northern part of the Silver City Ranger District in Grant County, New Mexico. It shares a boundary with the Gila Wilderness. Alternative 3 recommends a 930-acre area, alternative 4 a 4,856-acre area, and alternative 5 a 46,437-acre area. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-48.

Moderately steep to steep and rugged terrain, including deep canyons supports pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine or mixed conifer forests, driven by elevation and slope aspect. The Gila River, Turkey Creek, Mogollon Creek, Bear Creek and Cherry Creek all pass through the larger area. The larger area also contains several trails including Tadpole Ridge #232, Sycamore Canyon #234, Goose Lake #238, and Dorsey Canyon #239. The entire area is within inventoried roadless area, managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and remains unlikely to occur in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Watson Mountain, Brock Canyon, Spar Canyon, Reading Mountain, Bear Creek, and Walnut Creek grazing allotments. Watson Mountain and Brock Canyon have been closed to grazing by National Environmental Policy Act decisions.

The proposed Turkey Creek Research Natural Area, initially proposed in the 1986 plan and retained in alternatives 2 and 5, was digitally mapped here in error. The original documentation depicts the proposed area entirely within the existing Gila Wilderness. This documentation was used to correct the mapping mistake during the plan revision process. Scenic river bluffs, canyons, and rock formations provide habitat for bighorn sheep around the Gila River. Cherry Creek is also particularly scenic and is more accessible than other locations in the area. The larger area also provides important habitat for Mexican spotted owl and several other federally listed species.

Improvements are few, not substantially noticeable or concentrated in specific locations. In some instances, they provide a limited contribution to the historical and cultural context of the area. Areas of past logging and thinning are visible from Tadpole Ridge, north of the inventoried roadless area boundary. Due to its remoteness, limited roaded access and size of the larger area, there are very good opportunities for solitude in most places. System trails provide access to outstanding opportunities for solitude and very good opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Table H-46. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the S1 – Mogollon Box/Tadpole Ridge

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	6
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (SOLITUDE) HIGH (RECREATION)	8
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	HIGH	3
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	OUTSTANDING	17

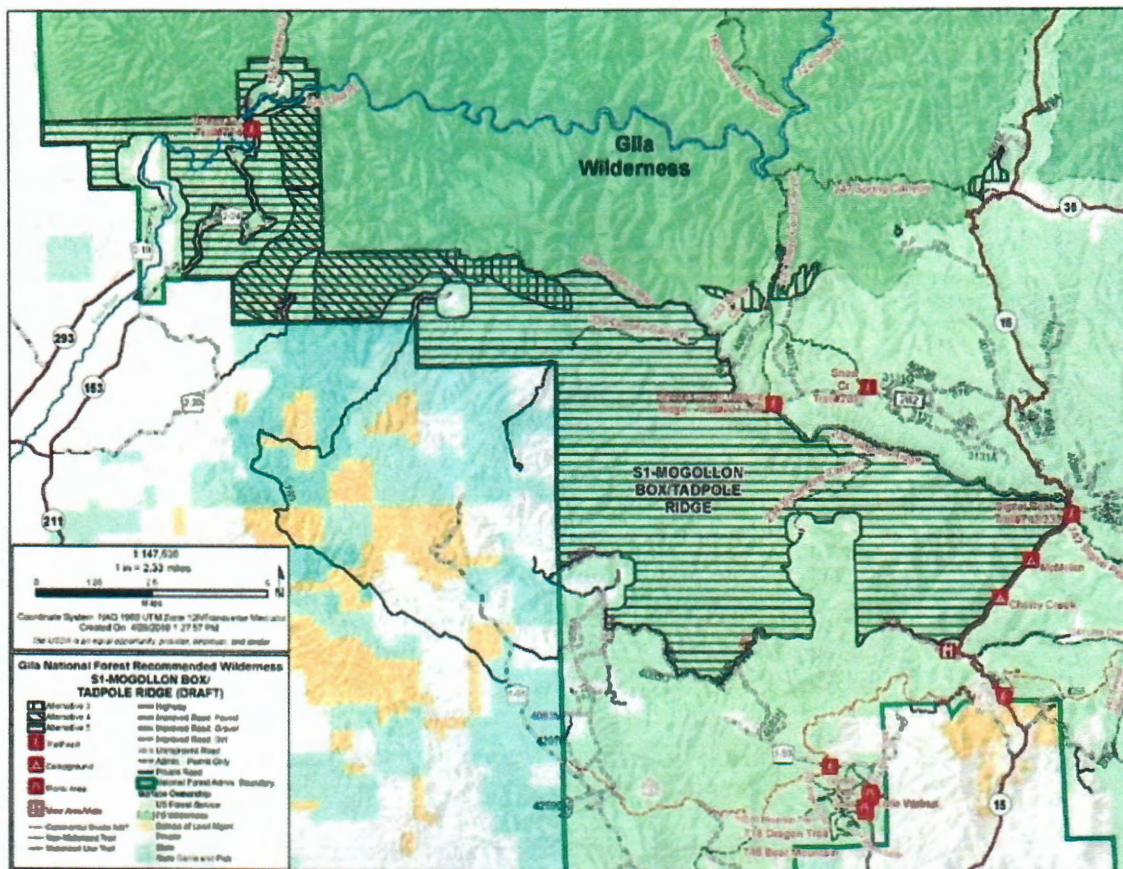


Figure H-48. Recommended wilderness by alternative for S1 – Mogollon Box/Tadpole Ridge

WB2 – Gila Addition East

This area encompasses parts of the Black Range and Wilderness Ranger Districts in Catron County, New Mexico, with the Gila Wilderness forming its western boundary. Alternative 3 recommends a 1,434-acre area, alternative 4 a 4,443-acre area, and alternative 5 a 3,919-acre area with boundary adjustments based on alternative-specific criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-66.

This moderately rugged area is dominated by pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, depending upon elevation and slope aspect. The East Fork of the Gila flows through the southern portion of the larger area. Prehistoric and historic sites are considered another feature of value. It is almost entirely within inventoried roadless area and managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Permitted grazing is a historical and ongoing of the area, which is part of the Jordan Mesa grazing allotment. There is very little evidence of modern land management activity and there are very good opportunities for solitude outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are moderate compared to other locations nearby and elsewhere in the forest.

Table H-64. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the WB2 – Gila Addition East

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	SUFFICIENT SIZE	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (SOLITUDE) MODERATE (RECREATION)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	MODERATE	2
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14

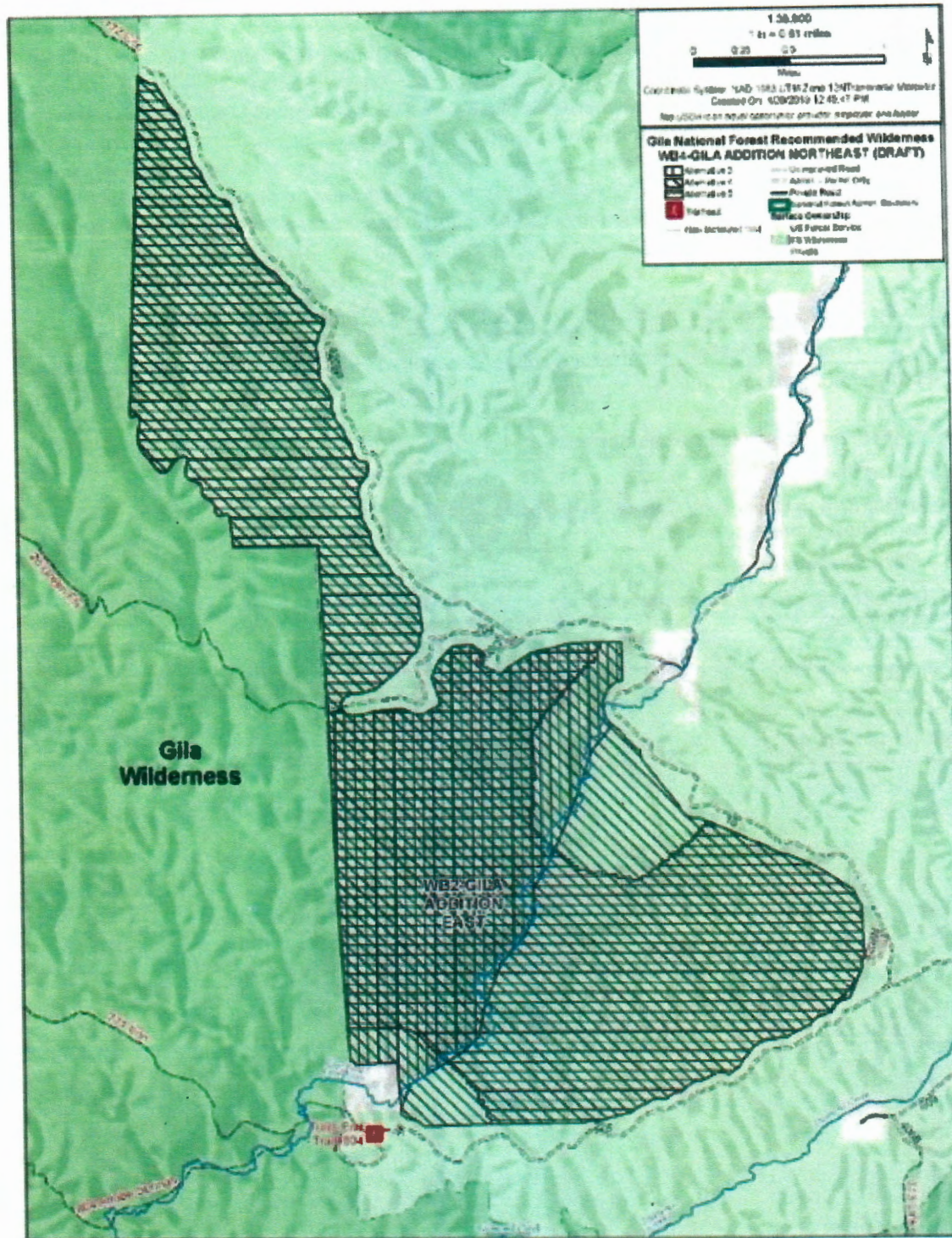


Figure H-66. Recommended wilderness by alternative for WB2 – Gila Addition East

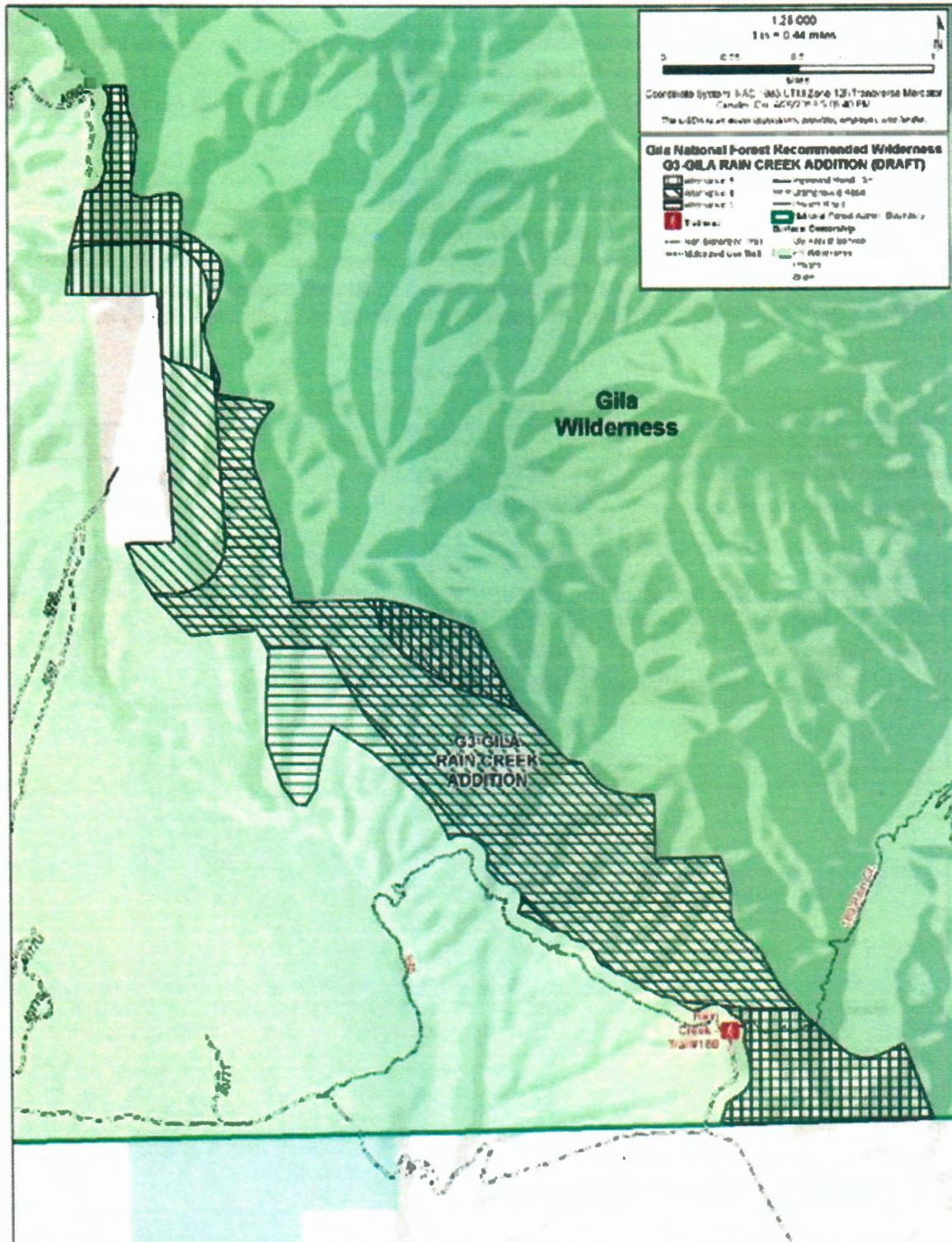


Figure H-28. Recommended wilderness by alternative for G3 – Gila Rain Creek Addition

^{d?}
G3 – Gila Rain Creek Addition

This area is in the central part of the Glenwood Ranger District within Catron County, New Mexico. It is immediately adjacent the western boundary of the Gila Wilderness. Rain Creek and Forest Trail #186 both pass through the area, and Sacaton Cabin is just outside the area boundary to the northwest. A 374-acre area is recommended by alternative 3. Alternative 4 recommends 923 acres and alternative 5 recommends 1,095 acres. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-28.

This small area contains some steep, rugged areas and flat mesa tops. Piñon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine-oak forests are the dominant vegetation communities. Most of the area is within inventoried roadless areas and managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. However, historic vegetation management on the flat mesa tops remains noticeable. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Rain Creek/74 Mountain grazing allotment. The density of improvements is generally low, and they are concentrated in a few locations. The area offers moderate opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation by comparison to areas nearby and elsewhere in the forest.

^{d?}
Table H-26. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the G3 – Gila Rain Creek Addition

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	SUFFICIENT SIZE	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	MODERATE (BOTH)	5
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	NONE	0
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	MODERATE	10.3

Table H-25. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the G1 – Mineral Creek

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	OUTSTANDING	9.3
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (Both)	10
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	OUTSTANDING	4
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	OUTSTANDING	23.3

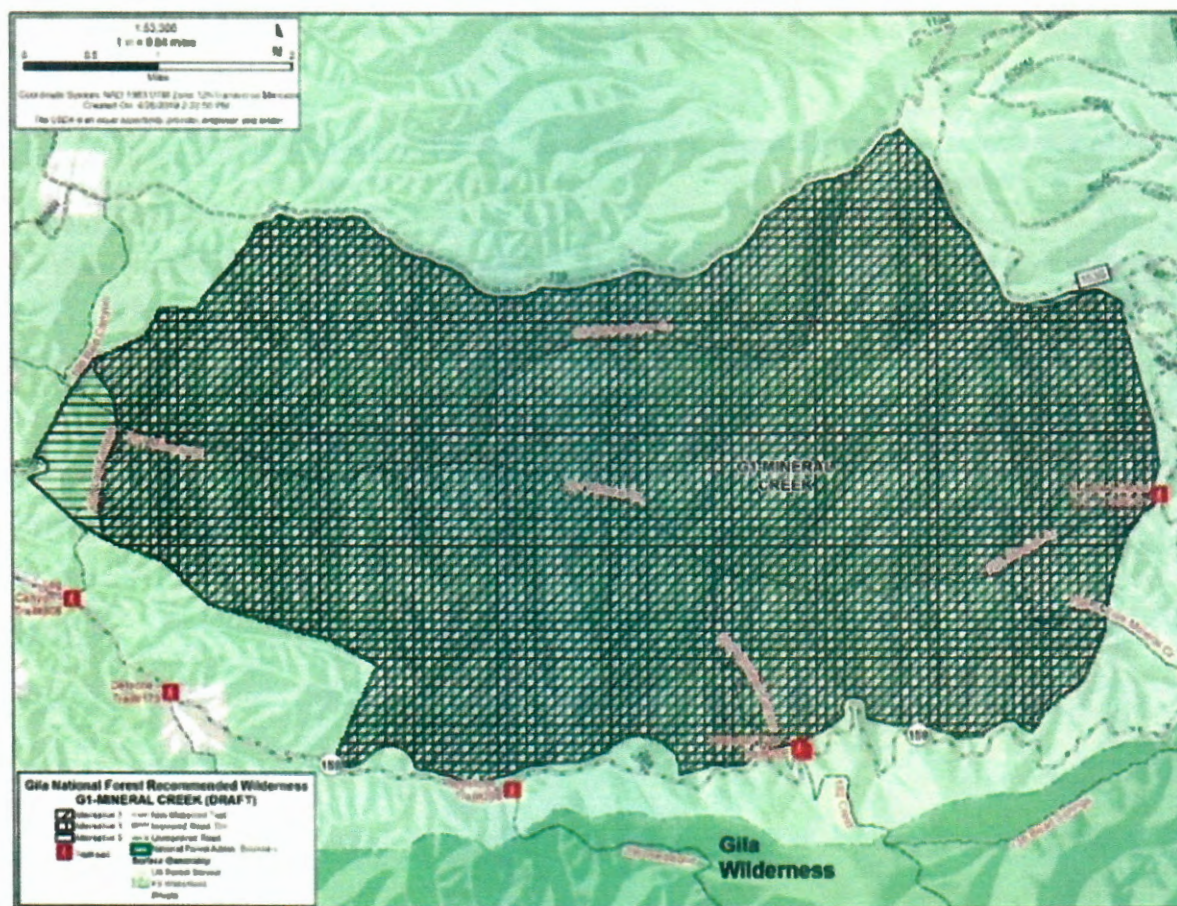


Figure H-27. Recommended wilderness by alternative for G1 – Mineral Creek

Figure H-26. Recommended wilderness by alternative for R24 – North Mogon Mountain

G1 – Mineral Creek

This area is in the northwestern part of the Glenwood Ranger District within Catron County, New Mexico. A 16,538-acre area is recommended by alternative 2. Alternative 3 recommends 16,540 acres and alternative 5 recommends 16,848 acres. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-27

The terrain is steep, complex, and rugged. Piñon-juniper woodlands are the dominant vegetation community with patches of ponderosa pine, aspen, and mixed conifer depending upon elevation and aspect. Much of the area was affected by the 2012 Whitewater Baldy Complex fire. Most of the area is within inventoried roadless areas and managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Copper Creek grazing allotment. There is a lot of visible mining history, outstanding geological features, exceptional scenery, and representation of a wide range of plant communities, all of which are considered other features of value. This area has never been logged and evidence of modern land management is nearly non-existent. Improvements are not substantially noticeable and do not detract from apparent naturalness or contribute significantly to the historical character and cultural context of the area. Improvements include a few broken down historic cabins. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low and there are outstanding opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation. The area also provides environmental education opportunities and is used by a local charter school and the local university.

Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan, Volume 3
Appendix H. Documentation of the Wilderness Process

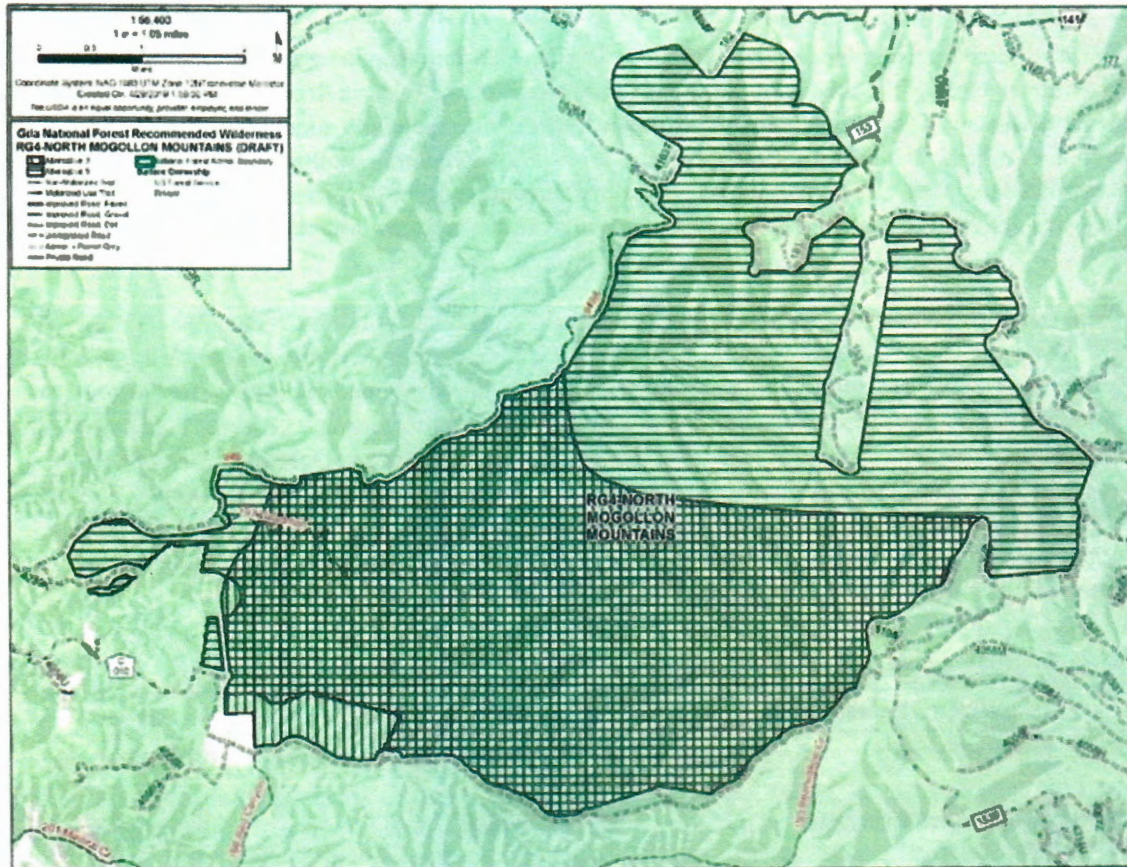


Figure H-26. Recommended wilderness by alternative for RG4 – North Mogollon Mountains

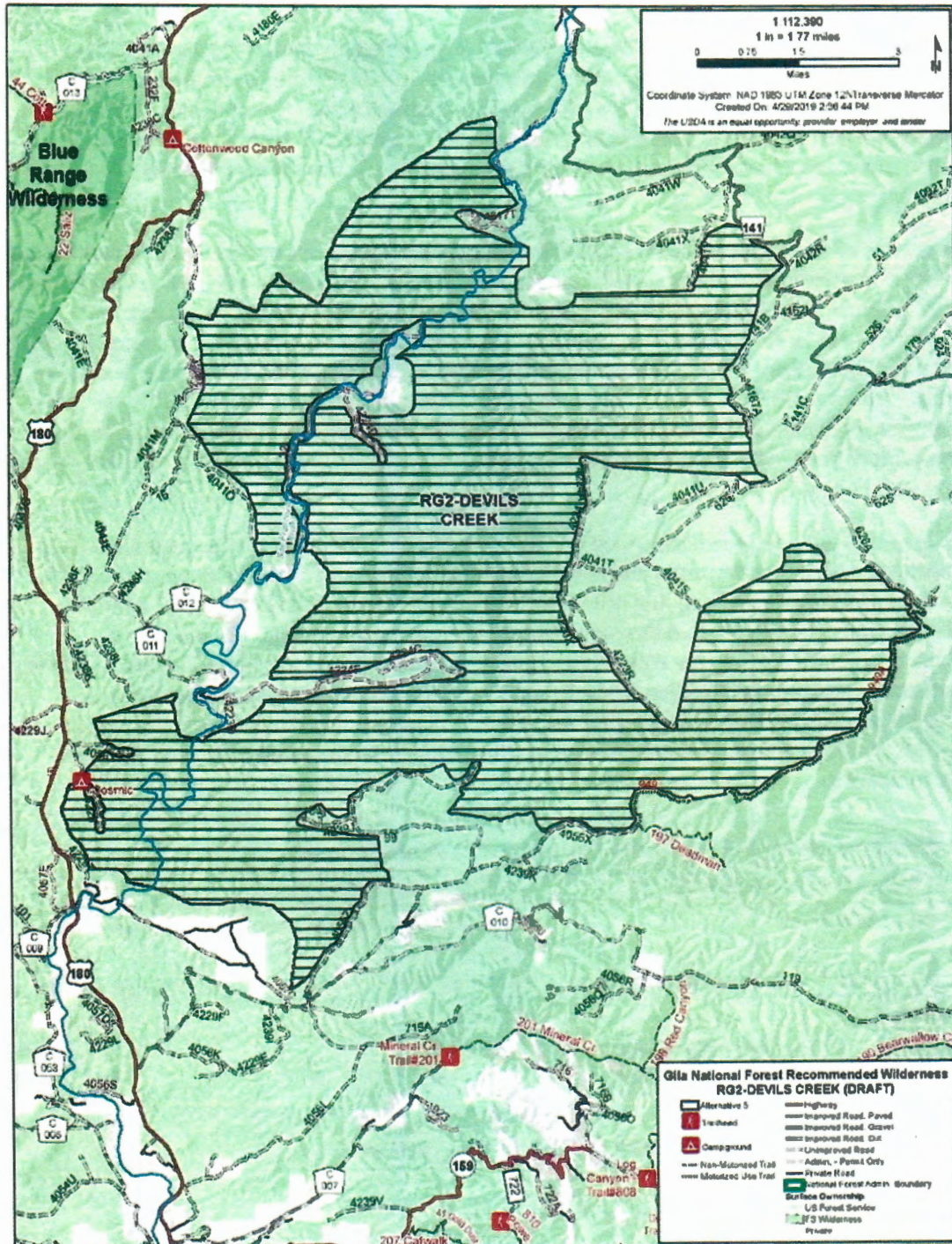
RG4 – North Mogollon Mountains

A 20,398-acre area is recommended by alternative 5. A 11,584-acre area is recommended by alternative 3. Approximately half of the area is in the southwestern part of the Reserve Ranger District, the other half is in the northwestern part of the Glenwood Ranger District with the whole area being within Catron County, New Mexico. It is north-northwest of the Bearwallow Mountain lookout. The Hogan, Claremont, and Waterman cabins are all located outside the area boundaries to the southeast. The evaluation boundary was adjusted to meet the criteria for alternative 5. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-26.

This steep, rugged area contains spruce-fir and mixed conifer forests, with ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper at lower elevations and on warmer, drier sites. It is almost entirely within inventoried roadless areas and is managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Little management activity has occurred or is likely to occur in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Deep Creek and Copper Creek grazing allotments. The density of improvements is generally low but are concentrated and noticeable in a few locations. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low and there are good opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation, which include water-based recreation along Devil's Creek.

Table H-24. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the RG4 – North Mogollon Mountains

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	NONE	0
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	MODERATE/HIGH	12



RG2 – Devil’s Creek

A 43,383-acre area is recommended only by alternative 5. Approximately half of the area is in the southwestern part of the Reserve Ranger District, the other half is in the northwestern part of the Glenwood Ranger District with the whole area being within Catron County, New Mexico. It is west of US 180, west-northwest of Cosmic Campground and generally southeast of the town of Reserve. The evaluation boundary was adjusted to meet the criteria for alternative 5. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-25.

This is a large area of steep, rugged and complex terrain and deeply incised canyons draining into the San Francisco River. It offers scenic views of the river corridor and lies immediately adjacent to the Cosmic Campground International Dark Sky Sanctuary. It is the first International Dark Sky Sanctuary on National Forest System lands. International Dark Sky Sanctuaries are lands possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights. This status would indicate that the Devil’s Creek area possesses similar dark sky characteristics. Views of the San Francisco River corridor and its tributaries, including secluded Saliz Canyon, dark skies and a concentration of prehistoric sites are considered other features of value. Piñon-juniper woodlands are the dominant vegetation community with ponderosa pine and riparian species in canyon bottoms.

Most of the area is inventoried roadless area and is being managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Leggett, Frisco Plaza, Negrito/Yeguas, Kelly, Devil’s Park, Alma, and Deep Creek grazing allotments. The density of improvements is generally low but are concentrated and noticeable in a few locations. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low and there are good opportunities for solitude, especially in the southern portion. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation, which include water-based recreation along the river and its tributaries.

Table H-23. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the RG2 – Devil’s Creek

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	4
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	MODERATE	2
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	MODERATE/HIGH	13



QR1 – Upper Frisco Box

A 36,691-acre area is recommended only by alternative 5. It is in the south-central region of the Quemado Ranger District and crosses boundaries into the north-central portion of the Reserve Ranger District, within Catron County, New Mexico. The town of Reserve is located a few miles to the southeast. It is situated between US Hwy 180 to the west and southwest, and New Mexico State Hwy 12, although neither is close to the boundary at any point. The evaluation boundary was adjusted to meet the criteria for alternative 5. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-15.

This moderately large area contains the Upper Frisco Box, a unique, spectacularly scenic, and physically challenging slot canyon along the San Francisco River. The Upper Frisco Box and the scenic character of the area are considered other features of value. Terrain is variable throughout the area, with some rolling relief, mesa tops, steep slopes and large, deeply incised canyons. Piñon-juniper woodlands dominate the area, with ponderosa pine and mixed conifer in pockets at the higher elevations on the north-facing slopes. There is an extensive system of trails providing access throughout the area, including through the Upper Frisco Box.

The area is mostly within inventoried roadless area and managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Centerfire, Cross V, Laney, and Black Bob grazing allotments. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is extremely low and there are very good opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation.

Table H-13. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the QR1 – Upper Frisco Box

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	4.7
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (BOTH)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	HIGH	3
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	14.7

Gila National Forest
H-59

RG1 – Aspen Mountain

This area is in the northwestern portion of the Glenwood Ranger District within Catron County, New Mexico. It is near the designated Blue Range Wilderness, separated by an open forest system road. A 19,053-acre area is recommended by alternative 2. Alternative 5 recommends 21,895 acres. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-24.

Most of the terrain is steep and rugged, providing several high-quality scenic views. Near Pueblo Park Campground at the south-central boundary, the terrain is gentler. Dramatic views into the Blue Range Wilderness and within RG1-Aspen Mountain itself, and a concentration of prehistoric cultural sites near Pueblo Park are considered other features of value. Vegetation communities include ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, transitioning to pinyon-juniper woodlands at the lower elevations and southerly facing-slopes.

This area is almost entirely within inventoried roadless area and is managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Luna and Leggett grazing allotments. Relative to the size of the area, there are few improvements which are largely range infrastructure. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is low and there are good opportunities for solitude, especially in the western portion. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation.

Table H-22. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the RG1 – Aspen Mountain

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	HIGH	7
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	HIGH (Both)	7
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	MODERATE	2
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	OUTSTANDING	16

QG1 – Nolan North

This area is in the southwestern region of the Quemado Ranger District within Catron County, New Mexico. It is near the Blue River at the edge of the Mogollon Rim. A 6,717-acre area is recommended by alternative 2. A 7,686-acre area is recommended by alternative 3. A 7,609-acre area is recommended by alternative 5. Boundaries were adjusted for each alternative based on their respective criteria. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-13.

This crescent-shaped area is dominated by steep, rugged terrain with deeply incised canyons. Ponderosa pine-oak forests dominate, but there are smaller areas of mixed conifer and at lower elevations pinyon-juniper woodlands. Grassy meadows are scattered throughout the area, including some drainage bottoms. There are several perennial streams with high quality riparian areas. Some of these streams contain dramatic waterfalls during periods of higher water. The area's scenic character, including dramatic terrain, waterfalls and quality riparian areas are considered other features of value.

This area is almost entirely within inventoried roadless area and currently managed to preserve roadless characteristics. QG1-Nolan North is part of a larger inventoried roadless area that crosses state and national forest boundaries. Across the state line on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, the inventoried roadless area is overlapped by a slightly larger area found suitable for wilderness designation, but not recommended, during their plan revision process which was completed in 2015.

Little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. However, there is some evidence of past logging and other vegetation management activities. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Luna grazing allotment. This is a very remote and rarely visited area for most of the year. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is extremely low and there are very good opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation.

Table H-11. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the QG1 – Nolan North

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5.7
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (Solitude) HIGH (Primitive Recreation)	9
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	15.7

Figure H-13. Recommended wilderness by alternative for QG1 – Nolan North

Q11 – Mother Hubbard

A 5,689-acre area is recommended only by alternative 5. It is in the southwestern region of the Quemado Ranger District, within Catron County, New Mexico. It is near the Blue River at the edge of the Mogollon Rim. The western boundary abuts the state line with Arizona and lands managed by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The evaluation boundary was adjusted to meet the criteria for Alternative 5. For detailed boundary locations see Figure H-12.

This area consists of mostly steep and rugged terrain, including deeply incised canyons. Ponderosa pine-oak forests dominate, but there are smaller areas of mixed conifer and at lower elevations pinyon-juniper woodlands. Grassy meadows are scattered throughout the area, including some drainage bottoms. There are several perennial streams with high quality riparian areas. Some of these streams contain dramatic waterfalls during periods of higher water. The area's scenic character, including dramatic terrain, waterfalls and quality riparian areas are considered other features of value.

Mother Hubbard is separated on its southern boundary from QG1-Nolan North by a motorized trail that follows the bottom of the Dry Blue River drainage. Mother Hubbard is part of a larger inventoried roadless area that crosses state and national forest boundaries. Across the state line on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, the inventoried roadless area is overlapped by a slightly larger area found suitable for wilderness designation, but not recommended, during their plan revision process which was completed in 2015.

Being within an inventoried roadless area, Q11-Mother Hubbard is managed to preserve roadless characteristics. Very little management activity has occurred and is unlikely in the future, mostly due to terrain. Permitted livestock grazing is a historic and ongoing use of the area, which is part of the Luna grazing allotment. For the size of the area, there is relatively little range infrastructure aside from a fence in the northeast portion.

This is a very remote and rarely visited area for most of the year. Outside of hunting and antler gathering seasons, the likelihood of encountering other visitors is extremely low and there are very good opportunities for solitude. There are few limitations to the pursuit of various types of primitive and unconfined recreation.

Table H-10. Evaluated wilderness characteristics of the Q11 – Mother Hubbard

Wilderness Characteristic	Evaluation Ranking	Score
Size if less than 5,000 acres	Not applicable – Greater than 5,000 acres	Not applicable
Manageability to protect wilderness characteristics	MANAGEABLE	Not applicable
Apparent Naturalness	MODERATE	5.7
Solitude or Primitive or Unconfined Recreation (both are ranked, but highest score is counted)	OUTSTANDING (SOLITUDE) HIGH (RECREATION)	9
Step 5 – Other Features of Value	LOW	1
Overall Rank of Wilderness Characteristics	HIGH	15.7

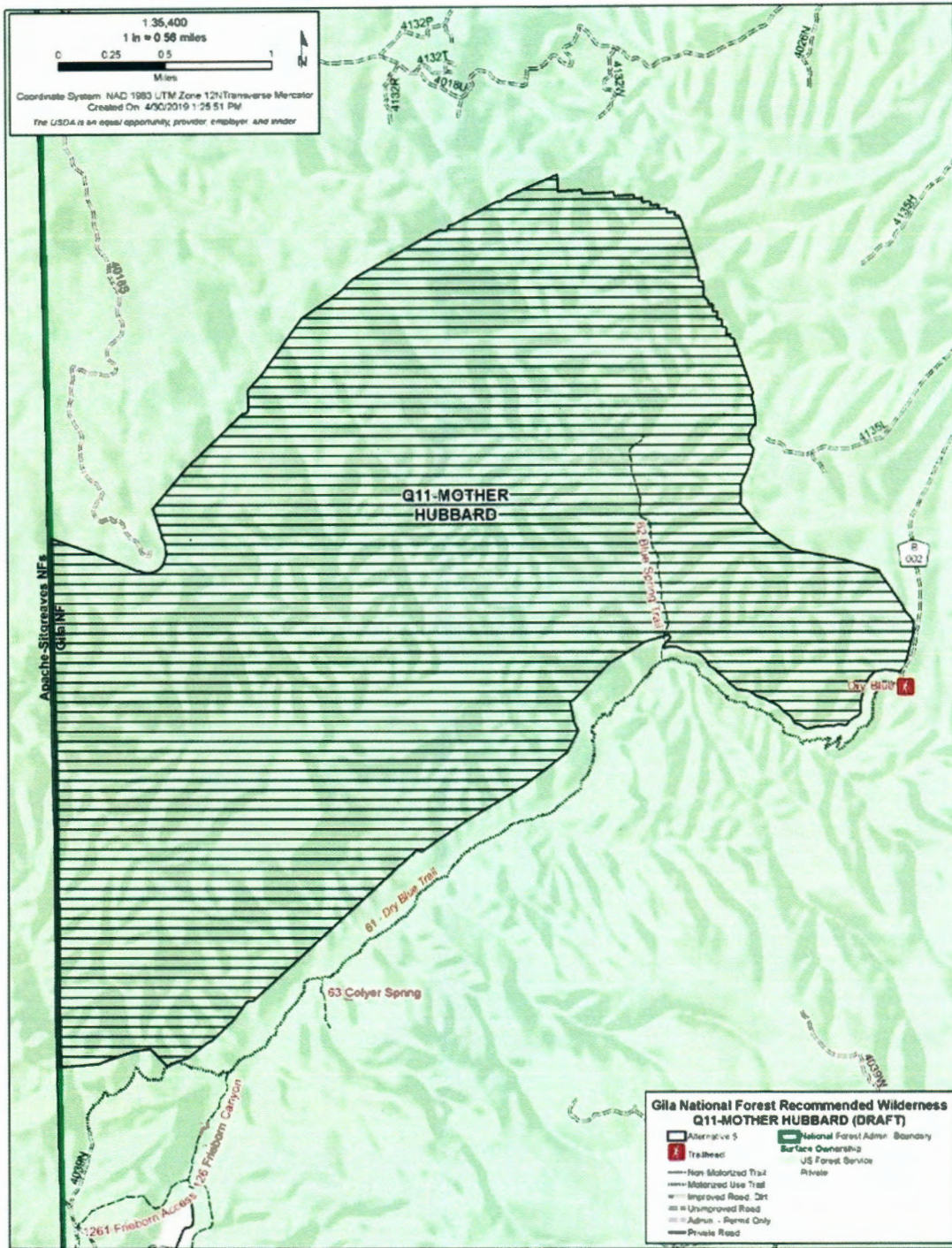


Figure H-12. Recommended wilderness by alternative for Q11 – Mother Hubbard

Proposal 2

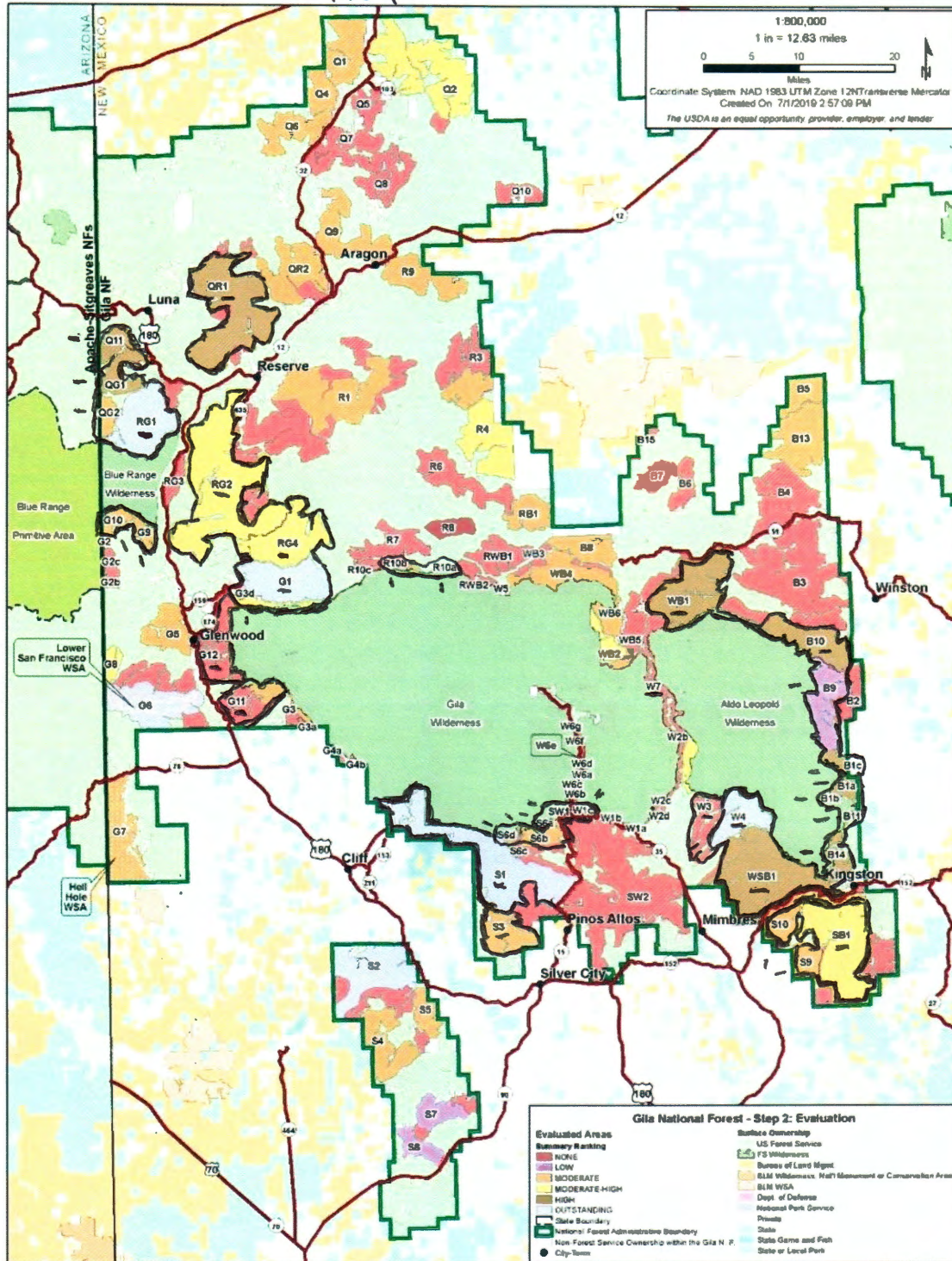


Figure H-2. Gila National Forest – Step 2: Evaluation

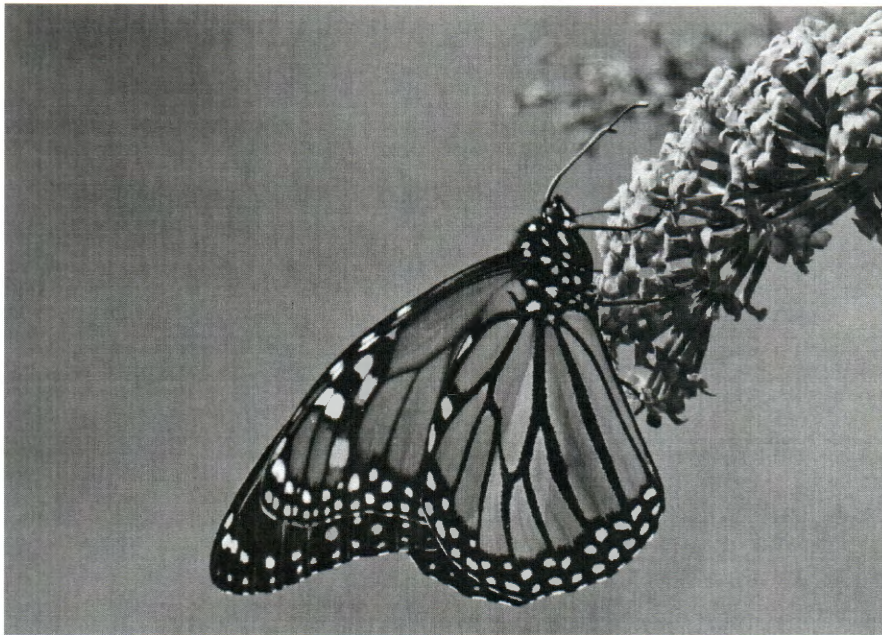
Table H-2 displays the results from the evaluation step.

You are invited to
attend the Gila
River Festival 9/26-29.
People in the community
want to create
Partnerships to
help the Forest Service.

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New Mexico Wild Celebrates Court Victory Against Federal Pesticide-Spraying Program

Posted on August 8, 2024 by Admin



Reconsider the general use of herbicides they should be spot sprayed on each plant not over an entire area.

Federal Court Rejects USDA's Rangeland Pesticide Program, Validating Years of Advocacy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2024

Contact: Sally Paez, (505) 350-0664, sally@nmwild.org

Santa Fe, NM – New Mexico Wild is celebrating the recent federal court decision rejecting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) program for aerial insecticide spraying on millions of acres of western

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solely on reactive pesticide applications, ignoring other pest management techniques. This aligns with New Mexico Wild's advocacy for sustainable and safe pest management approaches, particularly in sensitive resource areas like the Rio Chama watershed. The court also concluded that APHIS failed to analyze the site-specific impacts of insecticide use, including impacts to non-target species and popular recreation sites, or to consider the cumulative impacts of pesticide or herbicide applications on adjacent or nearby plots of land.

"We congratulate the Xerces Society, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Advocates for the West for their successful litigation," said Mark Allison, Executive Director of New Mexico Wild. "This ruling is a win for federal public lands, healthy ecosystems, and watersheds, and validates our collective concerns about APHIS's aerial spraying program and the need for holistic alternatives to pest management."

Since 2023, New Mexico Wild has worked alongside partners including Xerces, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Western Watersheds Project to educate the public about APHIS's grasshopper suppression program and to challenge APHIS's lack of transparency and insufficient environmental review of proposed spraying in New Mexico. Our efforts generated widespread public opposition and contributed to halting planned spraying in the Rio Chama watershed in both 2023 and 2024.

This court decision emphasizes the need for APHIS to reconsider its 'spray-first' approach and to fully evaluate program impacts on pollinators, wildlife, and public health. It underscores the importance of public engagement in decisions affecting our public lands.

New Mexico Wild remains committed to protecting our state's Wilderness, wildlife, and water. We will continue collaborating with partners to advocate for sustainable land management practices that preserve our invaluable landscapes.

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