RARE II

Final Environmental Statement

Roadless Area Review and Evaluation

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FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT
78-04

ROADLESS AREA REVIEW AND EVALUATION
RARE II

Lead Agency : United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Responsible Official : Bob Bergland
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Washington, D. C.

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Abstract : This environmental statement describes a series of alternative approaches for allocating 62,036,904 acres of roadless National Forest System land inventoried by the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, RARE II. A proposed course of action has been identified following analysis of approaches described in that draft environmental statement and public comment received in response to the draft. The proposal recommends 15,088,838 acres be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System, 36,151,558 acres are allocated to nonwilderness uses, and 10,796,508 acres are placed in the further planning category for all uses. This statement discusses effects of implementing various alternatives and describes the process and rationale employed in selecting the proposed course of action. Legislation to designate roadless areas recommended for wilderness will be forwarded to the 96th Congress for action. Activities that threaten wilderness quality of these areas will be prohibited unless permitted by law or prior right. Areas allocated to nonwilderness use will be available for resource development and utilization as permitted by existing or future management plans. Roadless areas allocated to further planning will be managed in their current undeveloped state until land management plans or specific project plans, meeting NEPA requirements, are completed. Exceptions may be permitted for vital energy needs such as oil and gas exploration and leasing.

SUMMARY

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78-04

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RARE II

This is both an administrative and a legislative action.

Responsible Agency	:	United States Department of Agriculture Washington, D. C.
Responsible Official	:	Bob Bergland Secretary of Agriculture Washington, D. C.
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Date of Transmission to EPA and the Public	Draft :	June 15, 1978
	Final :	January 4, 1979

I. RARE II is a comprehensive process, instituted in June 1977, to identify roadless and undeveloped land areas in the National Forest System and to determine their general uses for both wilderness and other resource management and development. The RARE II process identified 2,919 roadless areas encompassing 62 million acres in National Forests and National Grasslands in 38 States and Puerto Rico. The process led to recommendations or allocations of each of these areas to wilderness, for multiple uses other than wilderness (hereinafter referred to as nonwilderness), or as needing further planning for all uses including wilderness. The nonwilderness category includes different mixes of multiple uses other than wilderness, including but not limited to those permitting campground and other recreation site development, timber harvest, intensive range management, and road construction on the one hand, and relatively primitive wildlife habitat, watershed, and vegetation manipulation on the other. The specific multiple use direction is established and periodically updated in land and resource management plans.

Extensive as this project of public land allocation has been, it is still part of the broad planning direction for all Forest Service activities laid out by Congress in the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

The roadless area inventory phase of the RARE II process was completed in the Fall of 1977 after massive involvement of the public. The public was asked to suggest additions to or deletions from an inventory of roadless areas, and to suggest criteria which should be used to evaluate those areas for wilderness and nonwilderness use. More than 50,000 persons responded with comments and suggestions.

Based on this response and other resource information, a draft environmental statement was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and issued to the public on June 15, 1978. It included a series of alternatives for allocation of the inventoried areas, and the public was asked to comment on three things: 1) What individual areas should be allocated to wilderness, nonwilderness, or further planning, and why; 2) what approaches should be used by the Department in reaching a decision on allocating the total roadless areas inventory; and 3) what decision criteria should be used in developing a proposed course of action. The public response exceeded expectations. More than 264,000 replies from almost 360,000 people were received. That response, as well as existing laws and regulations was used to help develop the proposed action described in the RARE II Final Environmental Statement.

The Final Environmental Statement recommends 15,088,838 acres in 624 identified roadless areas for wilderness classification. It allocates 36,151,558 acres, contained in 1,981 areas, for nonwilderness and 10,796,508 acres in 314 roadless areas for further planning. A listing within each State Appendix shows the proposed allocation of each inventoried roadless area. The proposed action was selected through an evaluation of 10 alternatives displayed in the draft environmental statement. It is different from any of the 10, but is built from a combination of two of those alternatives modified in response to the public comment and decision criteria.

The primary goal of RARE II has been to select appropriate roadless areas to help round out the National Forest System's share of a quality National Wilderness Preservation System and, at the same time, maintain opportunities to get the fullest possible environmentally sound use from other multiple use resources and values. The RARE II process has carefully evaluated physical, biological, social, and economic impacts and tradeoffs involved in development of the proposed action.

The RARE II proposed action for allocation of National Forest System land to wilderness takes into consideration its relationship to the entire National Wilderness Preservation System. The Wilderness System, containing lands administered by the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and Fish and Wildlife Service, now totals 19 million acres of Congressionally-designated wilderness. A total 15.2 million acres of this total is in 110 units within the National Forest System. In addition, the Administration has endorsed proposals for an additional 22.9 million acres of wilderness from lands administered by the three agencies, including 3.3 million acres in the National Forest System. These were not included in the RARE II Inventory.

II. Alternatives considered in the RARE II Final Environmental Statement are:

Alternative A - No other action than that presently being followed in land and resource management planning would take place, with activities continuing as if RARE II did not exist.

Alternative B - All roadless areas are allocated to nonwilderness uses.

Alternative C - Emphasis is on high resource outputs, but consideration is given areas rated high in wilderness attributes.

Alternative D - Emphasis is given areas with high wilderness attributes, but any of those areas with significant resource production potential are placed in the further planning category.

Alternative E - Emphasis is on achieving an established minimum level representation of landform, ecosystem, associated wildlife, and accessibility characteristics in the Wilderness System.

Alternative F - Emphasis is on achieving an established moderate-level of the same characteristics as Alternative E in the Wilderness System.

Alternative G - Emphasis is on achieving an established high-level of the same characteristics as Alternative E in the Wilderness System.

Alternative H - Emphasis is on allocation of roadless areas on the basis of regional and local needs, as perceived by the Forest Service.

Alternative I - Emphasis is on adding areas with the highest wilderness attributes to the Wilderness System, with secondary consideration being given to areas of high resource production potential.

Alternative J - All roadless areas are recommended for wilderness.

Proposed Action - A combination of Alternatives C and I modified in response to public comment received on the draft environmental statement, existing laws and regulations, identified public needs, and professional judgment by Department of Agriculture decisionmakers.

III. The potential physical, biological, social, and economic effects of the allocations proposed by each alternative as well as the proposed action are quantified and evaluated to the degree feasible at this level of planning. The potential effects are difficult to quantify in the RARE II process because the nonwilderness classification does not determine how a specific roadless area will be managed. When an area is allocated to nonwilderness use, it does not become available for uncontrolled development. Rather, the entry, development, and use of the area is controlled by existing laws, rules, and regulations. And no nonwilderness resource development activities can take place in an area until it is covered by a resource management plan. Subordinate plans more fully quantify and evaluate such affects.

The primary effects of carrying out RARE II alternatives or the proposed action are social and economic as they relate to wilderness and nonwilderness allocations. If a roadless area is recommended for wilderness, the wilderness values will be preserved at the expense of some other values which won't be realized. If an area is allocated to nonwilderness uses, some or many of the wilderness values may be foregone. Each alternative and the proposed action would, if carried out, result in a primary effect on balance of commodity and noncommodity uses from roadless areas. These results could affect employment, quality of life and other factors at local, regional and national levels.

Allocation of roadless areas to further planning would not have immediate primary or secondary effects. Secondary effects are those caused by activities permitted as a result of an allocation. Roadless areas placed in this category still would have to be evaluated for a full range of uses, including wilderness, during development under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process of intensive land management or project plans. The primary and secondary effects would be evaluated through an environmental statement.

The immediate, short-term effects of the proposed action in the RARE II Final Environmental Statement are as follows:

- Roadless areas allocated to wilderness will be proposed to the 96th Congress for legislative action. In recommended areas, no activities which might alter wilderness qualities of the land will be allowed, unless permitted by law or prior right. Entry for development purposes will be prohibited.

- Areas allocated to nonwilderness will become available on April 15, 1979, for multiple resource use activities other than wilderness. Entry for nonwilderness type activities and development will be described and controlled by existing or future land and resource management plans. These plans may permit harvesting and other management activities involving timber.

- Roadless areas allocated to further planning will remain essentially undeveloped until forest land and resource management plans, as prescribed by Section 6 of the National Forest Management Act, or other specific project plans meeting NEPA requirements are completed. Exploration and leasing for oil, gas, and energy minerals will be permitted under rigid stipulations as described in this Final Environmental Statement. No harvesting of timber will be allowed from these areas other than for emergency reasons, but standing timber on commercial forest land in the areas will be used to determine potential yield.

IV. Consultation with others, including the public, was extensive and was a major factor in developing the proposed action displayed in the Final Environmental Statement.

Public briefings were conducted shortly after filing the draft environmental statement to explain the RARE II process and answer questions concerning alternative approaches displayed in the draft. In addition, the public was invited to review resource and other data made available at all Forest Service field offices and to visit individual roadless areas to obtain first-hand knowledge before commenting on the environmental statement. Congressional staffs, Federal and State agencies, national organizations and others were kept informed on the developing process.

As mentioned earlier, public response on the draft environmental statement totaled 264,093 inputs (letters, reports, petitions, resolutions, coupons, response forms, etc.), carrying 359,414 signatures. Most response, as expected, was focused on preference for allocation of specific roadless areas and reasons for that preference. A significant volume of comment, however, was also received on alternative approaches and decision criteria.

On alternative approaches, the public response expressed favor for emphasis on economic values and jobs, timber production, and accessibility as reasons for allocating roadless areas to the nonwilderness category. The most frequent reasons given by those proposing allocations to wilderness were emphasis on scenery, maximizing diversity of characteristics in the Wilderness System, and provision of high quality additions to the Wilderness System. Volume of response supporting factors for allocation of roadless areas to nonwilderness exceeded response supporting wilderness allocation by a margin of approximately 3 to 1. A combination of alternatives C and I thus appeared to best meet public preference stated for the alternative approaches. This combination became the starting point for development of the proposed action. It is described in the Final Environmental Statement as the "analysis base."

Decision criteria were applied to this analysis base as the next step in building the proposed course of action. Based on public response and professional evaluation of that response, all seven criteria published in the draft statement, along with several other criteria frequently suggested by public response, were used. The public supported all seven primary criteria, but to varying degrees. This public ranking of the importance of criteria, and Agency evaluation of the priorities, set the pattern for the sequence in which the criteria were applied. For example, great public support was expressed for meeting program goals prepared by the Agency as a requirement of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA), for avoiding adverse impacts on commodity values and dependent communities, and for avoiding adverse impacts on national issues and needs such as energy production. These criteria more heavily supported by the public were applied as late steps in the analysis process and, therefore, had more influence on the proposed action than the criteria applied earlier. Following are the 10 steps used in developing the proposed action:

Step 1. The analysis base (combination of Alternatives C and I) was modified by allocating to specific categories (wilderness, nonwilderness, further planning) those roadless areas supported by at least 71 percent of the public response for specific allocations.

Step 2. Regional Foresters reviewed allocations to determine if they were appropriate, based on their perception of public agreement. Adjustments were made where compelling reasons for modifications existed and were fully documented.

Step 3. Adjustments were made to insure that enough areas were included in the wilderness category to meet the predetermined mid-level target for accessibility/distribution and low-level targets for landform, ecosystem, and wilderness associated wildlife characteristics.

Step 4. National Grassland roadless areas were withdrawn from the wilderness category unless they were the only areas available to meet any of the four characteristic targets listed in Step 3.

Step 5. Adjustments were made to insure roadless areas with high wilderness attribute ratings (based on application of the Wilderness Attribute Rating System) were proposed for wilderness or allocated to further planning.

Step 6. Roadless areas with proven, producing, or high potential mineral and energy resources were moved to nonwilderness or further planning to insure their potential was not foreclosed. Areas remaining in wilderness that would adversely impact local employment and community stability were moved to the nonwilderness category.

Step 7. Adjustments were made to insure that mid-level program goals in the RPA Program for both wilderness and nonwilderness uses could be met.

Step 8. The six supplemental decision criteria suggested by the public response were then considered, along with judgment by Forest Service decisionmakers, to insure that allocations resulting from the process to this point were appropriate. Local, regional and national issues influenced this judgment. Any adjustments made were documented as to rationale.

Step 9. Thus adjusted by the eight previous steps, the analysis base was evaluated, along with the 10 alternative approaches in the draft environmental statement, against the decision criteria. The purpose was to determine whether or not the adjusted base best met the criteria used in decisionmaking.

Step 10. Regional Foresters, the Chief of the Forest Service and his staff, and Department of Agriculture representatives met as a group, assured quality control for all segments of the process results to date, and finalized the allocation of RARE II inventoried roadless areas, based on their perceptions of local, regional, and national needs and interests. The result of this decisionmaking step was the proposed action displayed in the Final Environmental Statement.

The structured decisionmaking process was tailored to respond to the public input and to meet the public's need for both wilderness and nonwilderness. The process showed the proposed action was, indeed, the most satisfactory approach for allocating the RARE II inventoried roadless areas in the context of those goals. The proposal ranked highest when evaluated with alternatives against decision criteria. It was developed in response to public comment. It provided the framework to meet the need for more quality wilderness, while offering a continuous, substantial flow of nonwilderness values. And, finally, it improved opportunities for distribution and increased diversity of wildernesses in the System.

Throughout the RARE II process, the Department was in oral and written communication with agencies, organizations, and individuals too numerous to mention. All were considered. Following is a list of Federal agencies, State governments, and National organizations from which written comment was received during the formal review period.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army
Delaware River Basin Commission
Department of Commerce
Department of Energy
Department of the Interior

Department of Transportation
Environmental Protection Agency
Ohio River Basin Commission
Soil Conservation Service

STATE GOVERNMENTS

Alabama
Arizona
California
Idaho
Illinois
Michigan
Montana
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Mexico
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oregon
Puerto Rico
South Carolina
South Dakota
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Washington
Wyoming

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Association of Petroleum Geologists
American Land Development Association
American Mining Congress
American Motorcyclist Association
American Plywood Association
Association of American State Geologists
Chamber of Commerce of the United States
Discover America Travel Organization
Friends of the Earth
Independent Petroleum Association of America
International Snowmobile Industry Association
Interstate Natural Gas Association of America
Izaak Walton League of America
Motorcycle Industry Council
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Manufacturers
National Audubon Society
National Campers and Hikers Association
National Forest Products Association

National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association
National Speleological Society
National Ski Areas Association
National Wildlife Federation
National Wooden Box Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Sierra Club
Society for Range Management
Society of American Foresters
Rocky Mountain Oil and Gas Association
United 4 Wheel Drive Association
United States Ski Association
Western Regional Council
Western Timber Association
Western Wood Products Association
The Wilderness Society

This Summary contains highlights of a very intensive decisionmaking process displayed in the RARE II Final Environmental Statement. If you have need for further information or if you wish to review the Final Environmental Statement, copies in a limited number are available from the office of the Responsible Official (Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland) and from National Forest Regional Offices across the Nation. These Forest Service offices and the State or geographic areas within their jurisdictions are as follows:

National Headquarters
Forest Service, USDA
12th & Independence Ave. S.W.
P.O. Box 2417
Washington, D.C. 20013

Northern Region (R-1) Federal Building Missoula, Montana 59807	Northern Idaho Montana North Dakota
Rocky Mountain Region (R-2) 11177 West 8th Avenue P.O. Box 25127 Lakewood, Colorado 80225	Central Plains States (South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas) Colorado Wyoming
Southwestern Region (R-3) Federal Building 517 Gold Avenue, S.W. Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102	Arizona New Mexico
Intermountain Region (R-4) 324 25th Street Ogden, Utah 84401	Southern Idaho Nevada Utah
California Region (R-5) 630 Sansome Street San Francisco, California 94111	California

Pacific Northwest Region (R-6) 319 S. W. Pine Street P.O. Box 3623 Portland, Oregon 97208	Oregon Washington
Southern Region (R-8 1720 Peachtree Road, N.W. Atlanta, Georgia 30309	Gulf Coast States and Puerto Rico (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas) Ozark and Ouachita Highlands States (Arkansas, Oklahoma) Southern Appalachian and Atlantic Coast States (Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia)
Eastern Region (R-9) 633 West Wisconsin Avenue Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203	Lake States (Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin) Midland States (Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio) New England and Northern Appalachian States (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia)
Alaska Region (R-10) Federal Office Building P.O. Box 1628 Juneau, Alaska 99802	Alaska

Specific information on individual roadless areas may be obtained by contacting the RARE II Coordinator at the Regional Office or the Forest Supervisor's Office nearest the area in question.

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