

APPENDIX D

RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

What is the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)?

Nationally the Forest Service uses a system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to inventory and classify National Forest System lands. The range of recreational experiences, opportunities, and settings available on a given area of land is classified through the ROS. Classifications include: Primitive, Semiprimitive-Motorized, Semiprimitive Nonmotorized, Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban. The Forest Service typically plans and manages for recreational experiences through the application of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). The ROS is a framework for inventorying, planning, and managing the recreational experience and setting.

The public perceives recreation as more than just camping, fishing, and hiking. Research has shown that people choose a specific setting for each of these activities in order to realize a desired set of experiences. For example, hiking on a natural-surfaced trail in a remote setting with few facilities may offer some visitors a sense of solitude, challenge, and self-reliance. In contrast, a hard-surfaced, interpretive, loop trail in an area with facilities and amenities may offer more comfort, security, and social opportunities for other visitors. Maintaining a spectrum of these classes is very important to provide people with choices.

Midewin is unique

Midewin is the largest single public land holding in the Chicagoland area. The public anticipates extensive opportunities to recreate in what they perceive to be a large open and natural setting. However, at 15,000+ acres, Midewin is much smaller than a typical national forest which averages 1-2 million acres, and most of Midewin will need extensive restoration and cleanup before it is ready and open for general public use. Forest Service standard definitions for wilderness and primitive lands do not apply to Midewin primarily due to size limitations. However, as Midewin is near a large metropolitan population, with no other public lands of similar magnitude nearby, Midewin may offer a feeling of remoteness in something other than the Primitive (ROS) areas, as restoration progress, and recreation opportunities are developed.

Because the smaller size and open landscape of Midewin is so different from the typical national forest, it would be very difficult to apply the all the standard ROS classes to Midewin. Therefore, the overriding concepts and principles of the existing framework provided the foundation for tailoring three ROS classes to the uniqueness of Midewin: Rural, Roaded Natural, and Semi Primitive. The three classes are categorized by factors such as the physical setting, social

experience, level of development, management controls, access, and activities specific to its ROS class. The ROS classes represent a desired future condition and will function as guidelines to assist in site specific planning. Refer to the ROS matrix, for a more detailed overview of the three ROS classes proposed for Midewin. Following, is a brief description of each of the three classes.

1. Rural

This ROS class represents Midewin's highest level of development, social interaction, and evidence of human influences within the most modified physical setting. New facilities are in harmony with the natural environment and automobile and road access would be acceptable in these areas. Hunting would not be allowed due to the concentration of people. The visitor would likely experience a high feeling of safety with low opportunity for challenge. An example of an area that might fall within this ROS class would be a visitor center or primary access area.

2. Roaded Natural

This ROS class represents a moderate level of development and moderate to high social interaction within a modified physical setting that is not dominated by evidence of humans. New facilities are minimal, subtle and in harmony with the natural environment. The environment may be modified but would appear natural. Automobile and road access would be acceptable in these areas. The visitor would likely experience a moderate-high feeling of safety with relatively low opportunities for challenge. An example of an area that might fall within this ROS class might be a bicycle or equestrian trail system.

3. Semi- Primitive

This ROS class represent an area with the lowest level of development, highest opportunity for solitude, and the greatest opportunity to escape from the sights and sounds of humans. The environment would appear natural. New facility development would be minimal and rarely noticeable. Only foot traffic would be permitted in these areas. The visitor would likely experience a moderate-high feeling of self-reliance with moderate opportunities for challenge. An example of an area that might fall within this ROS class might be a hiking trail or natural area with no trails.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Setting Indicators	RURAL	ROADED NATURAL	SEMI-PRIMITIVE
1 Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. High feeling of safety. b. Many opportunities for facilitated discovery. c. High social interaction. d. Opportunity for solitude unlikely, low feeling of escape from sights and sounds of humans e. Low opportunity for challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Moderate - high feeling of safety. b. Some opportunities for facilitated discovery. c. Moderate-high social interaction. d. Low opportunities for solitude, low - feeling of escape from sights and sounds of human. e. Low opportunity for challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Moderate - high feeling of self-reliance. b. Discovery is mainly dependent on self, but some opportunities for facilitated discovery may exist. c. Low – moderate social interaction. d. Medium - high opportunity for solitude; moderate feeling of escape from sights and sounds of humans. e. Moderate opportunities for challenge.
2 Physical Setting (remoteness, size, and evidence of humans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Highest level of development. New facilities may be somewhat abundant and visible, but in harmony with the natural environment. b. Evidence of human influence on the landscape is abundant (buildings, roads, farmlands, plantings). c. Noticeably modified environment interspersed with a natural-appearing landscape. d. Adjacent to and/or easy access to/from internal and external roads. e. No minimum or maximum acreage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Moderate level of development. New facility development is minimal, subtle and in harmony with the natural environment. b. Evidence of human influence on the landscape is present, primarily from external land uses. c. Noticeably modified environment within primarily natural-appearing landscape. d. May be adjacent to external roads, adjacent to or including internal roads. e. No minimum or maximum acreage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lowest level of development. New facility development is very minimal and in harmony with the natural environment. b. Evidence of humans influence on the landscape is primarily historic abandoned structures and does not detract from a natural experience. c. Predominantly natural appearing environment. d. At least ¼ mile from nearest internal auto road and Internal Transportation System; at least 1/2 mile from nearest external public road and railroad; 1/8 mile from bike, equestrian and multi-use trails. e. Minimum of 640 acres.
3 Social Encounters (user density, contact)	High probability of frequent social encounters; high probability of encountering large groups.	Moderate probability of frequent social encounters; moderate probability of encountering large groups.	Low-moderate probability of frequent social encounters; low probability of encountering large groups.
4 Managerial Control (restrictions)	Regimentation and controls are obvious and numerous and largely in harmony with the natural environment.	On-site regimentation and controls are noticeable but harmonize with the natural environment.	On-site regimentation and controls present but subtle.
5 Motorized Administrative Access	Yes	Yes	Yes, but limited
6 Automobile/Road Access	Yes	Yes	No
7 Shuttle or Tram	Yes	Yes	No

8	Trail Access	Non-motorized	Non-motorized	Foot traffic only
9	Interpretation	Guided and self-guided interpretation with wayside exhibits; Primary interpretive facilities and programs (visitor center complex).	Guided and self-guided interpretation with wayside exhibits; secondary interpretive facilities and/or programs.	Guided and self-guided interpretation with limited wayside exhibits.
10	Natural Resource Management Activities	a. Integrated Pest Management b. Prescribed fire c. Seed production d. Restoration e. Row crops and hay. f. Livestock grazing for habitat management only g. Motorized mechanical controls	a. Integrated Pest Management b. Prescribed fire c. Seed production d. Restoration e. Row crops and hay f. Livestock grazing for habitat management only g. Motorized mechanical controls	a. Integrated Pest Management b. Prescribed fire c. No seed production areas d. Restoration e. No row crops, limited hay f. Livestock grazing for habitat management only g. Motorized mechanical controls restricted