

USDA Forest Service Northern Region  
**Monongahela National Forest Recreation Niche**

2/25/2008 Draft Niche Statement (for coming decade)

**Wonderful Wherever You Are**

**The Monongahela NF is West Virginia’s outdoor recreation destination where the mountains wrap themselves around you. In the midst of increasing urbanization in the Mid-Atlantic States, the highlands of the Monongahela are known for solitude, choice and challenge, a place where nature still prevails. Undisturbed landscapes embrace you and create a sense of wildness no matter where you go. Culture and communities welcome visitors and help connect them to the forest.**

**Forest-wide Settings, Special Places, and Values:**

The Monongahela National Forest stretches across the West Virginia highlands and forms the heart of the state's mountain culture. The forest is ecologically diverse, winding through hills and hollows with mountain communities tucked in between. It contains the headwaters of six major river systems and 95% of the state's coldwater fisheries. Due to its elevation and topographic variations, the forest hosts unique plant and animal communities that are found at the northern- or southern-most limit of their ranges. The Monongahela is the largest expanse of public land in the state and its undeveloped nature contributes to the wildness visitors find across the forest and remains a safe and inviting respite from urban pressures.

Corridors and Communities – This is where the forest interfaces and links with the local communities and private lands. Scenic drives along numerous state highways and scenic train rides connect communities within and adjacent to the forest and allow visitors to experience the wilds of winding mountain roads and rails.

General Forest – This setting contains the forest's roaded areas and is relatively undeveloped. Visitors can explore hundreds of miles of roads and access non-motorized trails, including unique rail-trail systems. This setting offers visitors choice of opportunities to roam through the wild hills and hollows of the forest.

Backcountry – This setting includes designated Wilderness and other non-motorized areas. Trail-based recreation opportunities allow visitors to get deeper in the wild under their own power.

**Forest-wide Activities/Opportunities/Experiences:** Viewing natural features, fishing, hiking, camping, hunting (large and small game), and gathering forest products. Visitors can get “off-the-beaten-path” and connect with nature along roads and non-motorized trails throughout the forest. Overnight accommodations are available at forest campgrounds, state parks, private resorts and in local communities. The Monongahela is truly the center of outdoor recreation in the state and the forest works with communities, local governments, private businesses and other agencies to provide outstanding recreation opportunities in a safe and inviting setting.

Corridor and Communities – Driving for pleasure, interp and education, historic sites. Visitors experience high social interaction and facilities have a higher level of amenities.

General Forest – Dispersed camping, mountain biking, non-motorized water. Visitors experience low social interaction along roads and moderate social interaction along trails. Facilities are less developed.

Backcountry – Backpacking, primitive camping, mountain biking (outside Wilderness). Visitors expect low social interaction along trails. Facilities provide access to non-motorized trails and are primitive to rustic.

**Primary Visitors**

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Local        | Communities within and adjacent to the forest and surrounding towns in W.V.     |
| Out-of-state | Visitors from urban areas in D.C. Metro, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio |

Monongahela NF Niche Bridge for Developed Recreation (Draft 2/25/2008)

Niche Emphasis: **Wild, welcoming, solitude, choice, challenge**

*Question #1*

|  |  |  |   |                        |   |                                    |                  |
|--|--|--|---|------------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>SETTING NAMES:</b>  |  | <b>Backcountry</b>   | <b>General Forest</b>   |                        | <b>Corridors and Communities</b>  |                                    |                  |
| <b>SETTING PRIORITY:</b><br>Which setting(s) best support recreation sites?<br><i>Question #2</i>                |  | Low  | Moderate  |                        | High  |                                    |                  |
| <b>SITE FUNCTION AND THEME:</b><br>How sites are designed & managed to best meet the Niche<br><i>Question #3</i> |  | Sites have low development and facilitate access to non-motorized trails.  | Sites have moderate development and facilitate access to fishing and trail-based opportunities.   |                        | Sites accommodate higher densities of visitors and provide higher level of amenities. Hardening of sites to protect the resource and to direct the visitors. Interpretation and Education to orient new visitors and help connect people to nature and history. |                                    |                  |
| <b>KEY ACTIVITIES:</b><br>In support of the Niche for the coming decade<br><i>Question #4</i>                    |  | Primitive camping, hiking, viewing scenery & wildlife, fishing, hunting, backpacking, mountain biking outside Wilderness, gathering forest products. | Dispersed camping (some designated), developed camping along streams and lakes, hiking, train rides, viewing scenery & wildlife, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, non-motorized water, gathering forest products. |                        | Driving for pleasure, train rides, developed camping, hiking, viewing scenery & wildlife, fishing, picnicking, interpretation & education, visiting historic sites.   |                                    |                  |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>  | <b>SITE TYPE AND DEVELOPMENT SCALE</b><br>Needed to provide key activities<br><i>Question #5</i><br>&<br><i>Question #6</i><br>(Sites will be the lowest Dev Scale possible to maintain visitor experience & protect the resource) | <b>Site Type</b>   | <b>Dev Scale</b>  | <b>Site Type</b>       | <b>Dev Scale</b>  | <b>Site Type</b>                   | <b>Dev Scale</b> |
|  |  | Trailheads   | 1-3   | Trailheads             | 2-3   | Trailheads                         | 3-5              |
|  |  | Camping Areas  | 0-2   | Campgrounds + Group CG | 2-3   | Campgrounds + Group CG             | 3-5              |
|  |  |  |   | Camping areas          | 1   | Visitor Centers                    | 4-5              |
|  |  |  |   | Interpretive Sites     | 1-2   | Historic Sites                     | 2-4              |
|  |  |  |   | Fishing Sites          | 2-3   | Interpretation + Observation Sites | 2-5              |
|  |  |  |   |                        |   | Picnic Areas                       | 3-4              |
|  |  |  |   |                        | Fishing Sites   | 3                                  |                  |
| <b>SITE CAPACITY</b><br>Low <50 PAOT<br>Medium 50-100 PAOT<br>High >100 PAOT<br><i>Question #6</i>               |  | Low<br>less than 50 PAOT   | Low-Medium<br>less than 100 PAOT  |                        | Medium - High<br>50 PAOT or more  |                                    |                  |

**Programmatic Strategies:**

The forest works closely with communities, other agencies and partners to ensure quality recreation opportunities throughout the West Virginia highlands. Outfitter-guide permittees and special recreation events help new and underserved visitors connect to the forest. The forest maintains quality recreation experiences through management techniques such as education and enforcement, special recreation permits and capacity studies.