

GMUG Roadless Inventory - History

What is RARE II and why is it relevant to this process?

RARE II stands for Roadless Area Review and Evaluation. The II indicates that it was the second attempt at the process. RARE II was initiated in response to the Wilderness Act of 1964. This effort required the Forest Service to evaluate all roadless or undeveloped lands for possible inclusion into the wilderness system. RARE II was initiated in 1977 and the Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 1979. The EIS/ROD was overturned by federal court rulings. Subsequently, the agency developed regulations that required the evaluation of individual roadless areas during the forest planning process.

The GMUG National Forest identified 43 roadless units totaling approximately 1.5 million acres. In 1980 approximately 400,000 acres were designated as Wilderness as part of the Colorado Wilderness Act. The remaining lands were reviewed during the development of the first GMUG Forest Plan that was completed in 1983. Lands not recommended for Wilderness were made available for multiple uses, such as (but not limited to) grazing, timber harvest, oil and gas exploration, and motorized recreation.

Between 1983 and 1991, under the guidance of the Forest Plan, roads were constructed, timber was harvested, and motorized recreation trail systems were established within the remaining RARE II areas on the GMUG. Then, in 1991, as a result of the court decision, *California v Block*, FS policy required projects in areas inventoried as roadless to be evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) adding more intensive and complicated analysis to project planning of roadless lands.

In 1993, Congress designated an additional 50,000 acres of RARE II lands as Wilderness and another 75,000 acres received special management designations.

Disposition and History of RARE II Acres – GMUG National Forest		
Year	Acres	Description
1977	1,530,700	RARE II acreage evaluated for Wilderness ¹
1980	412,418	Acres designated Wilderness – Public Law 96-560 ²
1993	52,495	Acres designated Wilderness – Public Law 103-77 ³
1993	28,665	Acres designated as Area – Public Law 103-77 ³
1993	43,900	Acres designated as Fossil Ridge RMA – P.L. 103-77 ³
2001 Roadless Rule	1,088,855	RARE II acres remaining without a Congressional designation ⁴
2005	855,100	Acres included in the Draft 2005 Roadless Inventory ⁴

¹Source: RARE II FEIS, acres planimeter calculated

²Source: USDA Land Areas of the National Forest System, Sept 1982

³Source: USDA Land Areas of the National Forest System, Sept 2004

⁴Source: GIS calculated Acres

What is the Clinton Rule and how did it affect the GMUG?

In January of 2001, while the GMUG was initiating Forest Plan Revision to update their roadless inventory, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, known as the ‘Roadless Rule’ was published. The Roadless Rule established **nationwide prohibitions** generally limiting, with some exceptions, timber harvest, road construction and road reconstruction within roadless areas of the National Forest System. The GMUG had been directed to apply the RARE II inventory areas of 1979, approximately 1.1million acres, to the Roadless Rule prohibitions because the new inventory had not been fully completed with comprehensive public review and comment.

On July 14, 2004, the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming issued a permanent injunction and set aside the Roadless Rule. On May 5, 2005, the Secretary of Agriculture announced the final State Petitions Rule which replaced the 2001 Roadless Rule.

What is the GMUG 2005 Roadless Inventory and how was it developed?

As a part of Forest Plan Revision, the GMUG has updated its inventory of roadless/undeveloped lands now referred to as the “Draft 2005 Roadless Inventory”. This inventory is based on the existing conditions of the land. One of the objectives for evaluating roadless areas is to provide Congress with recommendations for wilderness. Therefore, roadless units, once identified, are further evaluated for characteristics and qualities that make them a suitable addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Using guidance from the Forest Service interim directives, the Draft 2005 Roadless Inventory was developed as follows:

Roadless Inventory = The “inventory” is primarily a mechanical exercise that identifies lands greater than 5000 acres without roads or significant alterations on the land. Lands less than 5000 acres are considered where they are contiguous with existing wilderness or other roadless lands. Some boundary adjustments to eliminate illogical “necks and noses” were made to the inventory.

Lands NOT included within the 2005 Roadless Inventory:

- Classified Roads buffered 300’ either side of center line.
- Lands altered by vegetation treatments such as plantations, timber harvest, and chainings.
- Non-National Forest System Lands such as private inholdings
- Lands containing utility corridors such as gas pipelines
- Lands containing water transmission ditches and/or water developments

Lands included within the 2005 Roadless Inventory:

- Lands containing motorized or mechanized trails.

GMUG – Roadless Information Sheet

- Lands with evidence of unclassified roads, that likely require decommissioning and reclamation.
- Lands with evidence of historic mining activities.
- Lands containing livestock fences and stockpounds.
- Lands with existing and pending oil and gas leases where development has not yet occurred.

Definitions:

Classified Road = a road within the National Forest System lands that are determined to be needed for long-term motorized access for passenger vehicle greater than 50 inches in width. A Classified Road can be an “Administrative Road.”

Administrative Road = a road within the National Forest System lands that is available for resource management needs but closed to public use. Examples of Administrative roads can include, roads built for oil and gas exploration, roads built to remove timber, roads that access water developments, roads built to access private inholdings.

Unclassified Road = a road on National Forest System lands that are not managed as part of the forest transportation system, such as unplanned roads, abandoned travelways and off-road vehicle tracks and those roads that were once under permit or other authorization and were not decommissioned upon the termination of the authorization (e.g temporary road).

Roadless Quick Fact Sheet

- Only Congress can designate Wilderness.
- The Forest Service can only recommend to Congress lands that meet the intent of the Wilderness Act.
- The roadless inventory is only an identification of the character of the land. How to manage those lands is determined in the Forest Plan which establishes desired conditions, suitable uses, and other management guidance for these and other forest lands.
- The forest planning process requires forests to reevaluate their roadless inventory during plan revision.
- Inclusion of lands within the inventory does not pre-determine the appropriate management guidance for the area.
- A primary purpose of the roadless inventory is to identify lands suitable for wilderness recommendation.
- By definition, classified roads do not exist within a roadless area. Roads intruding into an inventory unit are generally buffered out by 300 feet.
- A classified road is a road within the National Forest System lands that is determined to be needed for long-term motor vehicle access.
- Motorized, mechanized trails and unclassified roads can, and do, exist within roadless areas.
- Lands with existing and pending oil and gas leases can be a part of the roadless inventory if development of those leases has not yet occurred.
- The future management of roadless areas, whether determined through the Forest Plan Revision or the State petitioning process, can vary from active multiple-use management to maintaining wilderness potential.
- Inventoried roadless areas require a higher level of environmental analysis (NEPA) for any project that may substantially alter the undeveloped character of the land.
- The “Clinton Rule” aka 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule set prohibitions on new road construction (both classified and temporary roads), road reconstruction and timber harvest. It did not alter existing use of roads and trails nor prohibit new trail construction for motorized or non-motorized use.
- The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule was permanently enjoined on July 14, 2004, and replaced by the State Petition Rule on May 5, 2005