

INTRODUCTION TO THE WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PLAN HANDBOOK

August 11, 2004

A Wilderness Stewardship Plan (may also be titled Wilderness Management Plan) guides the preservation, management, and use of the park's wilderness to ensure that wilderness is unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. Policy directs that the plan will "identify desired future conditions, as well as establish indicators, standards, conditions, and thresholds beyond which management actions will be taken to reduce human impacts to wilderness resources". Policy also requires that management plans be completed for all National Park Service (NPS) wilderness areas.

How to use this handbook:

This handbook was developed by the National Wilderness Steering Committee as a tool for helping park staff to write their park's Wilderness Stewardship Plans and attendant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) compliance documents. It is best used as a guide to help in what can be a time consuming and difficult task. While it is not intended to dictate an exact format, if the format of the handbook and the compliance process are followed, the result should be an acceptable plan and EIS or EA.

Developing a comprehensive plan, which includes a collaborative public process, is one of the most important considerations in preserving an enduring wilderness resource. Such a plan provides for the accountability, consistency and continuity of the park's wilderness stewardship program. This also means that the park has a plan that clearly identifies the values and characteristics of the wilderness resource and explains to park managers, and the general public, the different management practices that will be allowed to occur in wilderness as opposed to other areas of the park. Further, the plan describes what activities are appropriate in wilderness, how the park intends to preserve and monitor wilderness resources and their values, and how the concept of minimum requirement will be applied to administrative activities that have the potential to affect wilderness character.

A park's wilderness plan can take any format as long as it meets NPS planning and compliance requirements described in the Program Standards for Park Planning (May 2004), DO #2 on Park Planning, and DO #12 and Handbook: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making (2001). While this handbook will help you meet NEPA planning requirements it also allows for considerable flexibility in developing a plan that reflects individual park needs.

The planning process integrates the development of a Wilderness Stewardship Plan as part of an EIS or EA. The steps in this process are the public scoping process to determine the scope and significance of issues to be addressed, the preparation of a draft EIS or EA for public comment, and the preparation of a final EIS or EA and

documentation of the decision in a Record of Decision (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (EA). The alternative identified for implementation in the ROD or FONSI can be extracted from the final environmental document and reorganized into a separate document for more effective use as an implementation tool. This product is considered the final wilderness management plan.

Director's Order #41 for wilderness suggests that an Interdisciplinary Team be formed at the park to ensure that an effective, collaborative approach to public involvement, issue identification, alternative development and issue/impacts analysis is employed throughout the process. An ID Team composed of park managers and technical experts, including natural and cultural resource specialists, is an invaluable asset in wilderness planning and formation of such a group is strongly recommended (note that DO #41 requires inclusion of cultural resource expertise). The DO is also a good reference to use to insure that Wilderness Stewardship Plans have included all the pertinent sections required.

Handbook Organization:

This handbook has two distinct but closely related functional layers. The first layer, Level I, provides the basic format or outline for a Wilderness Stewardship Plan EIS/EA. The second layer, Level II, contains guidance, instructions and hints for each section of the Level I outline that will explain what to include and how the sections relate to one another. In the future, a third layer, Level III, will be developed and made available (probably as a web-linked database) for the purpose of providing examples from existing wilderness plans that illustrate a reasonable range of options and strategies. Currently there are so few completed wilderness management plans that tried and true examples are rare.

Planning and Compliance Requirements

Wilderness planning is an integral part of the National Park Service planning framework. Wilderness plans are generally considered program level plans that provide a linkage between the desired conditions set out in the GMP and the specific detailed actions that are spelled out in park strategic plans and implementation plans. It is important that the wilderness stewardship plan tier from the park's GMP and be closely coordinated with other approved plans. Depending on the issues involved, special circumstances and status of other plans a park's Wilderness Stewardship Plan can be in the form of a GMP amendment, a program plan or an implementation (action) plan.

Most often a wilderness plan can be developed using an EA process and format. However, where highly controversial issues or the potential for significant impacts exist an EIS may be necessary. Some wilderness management plans in the NPS are approached as GMP amendments and by policy require an EIS process and format. For example, Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plans in Alaska require an EIS, and when completed, will serve as GMP amendments and/or program or implementation plans for backcountry and wilderness.

What has been presented in the Level I outline is an EIS format. Although it is anticipated that most plans will be prepared with an Environmental Assessment, there is little difference between the formats of an EA and an EIS. The outline should be equally useful for either level of environmental compliance. Your process, rather than the outline, will reflect the required differences in compliance.

The preparation of a wilderness plan is a process that will involve stakeholders, partners and staff in a comprehensive planning process. The resulting plan should provide a solid foundation for management and preservation of the unique wilderness resource in your unit.

WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PLAN HANDBOOK
LEVEL I – WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PLAN EIS/EA OUTLINE
August 11, 2004

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WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PLAN HANDBOOK
LEVEL II GUIDANCE:
WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PLAN EIS/EA DETAILS
August 11, 2004

Summary

The purpose of this section is to provide an executive summary of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA). It should serve as an overview of the document summarizing the purpose and need, the alternatives, the affected environment, and the impacts of the alternatives.

Table of Contents

1.0 Purpose and Need for the Plan

The chapter will help define the range of alternatives by clearly articulating the purpose and goals for this document. It can be organized in several different ways, either by combining the “Purpose and Need” and the “Objectives” sections or writing them separately (as shown here). Note that it may be difficult to write these statements separately without some overlap. Within this chapter, you may want to add a section that describes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and how the wilderness stewardship plan will be derived from the EIS/EA.

1.1 Introduction and Significance

Include a brief introduction that will orient the reader to the document. State whether the document will be an EIS or an EA. State whether it will be a General Management Plan (GMP) amendment or an implementation plan. Briefly define the extent or area of land covered by the plan—how much of the park will be included in the planning effort, how much wilderness is designated, recommended, potential, suitable wilderness, etc. Will the plan cover areas of park backcountry as well as wilderness? Include a brief description of the park and the wilderness including some basic facts (enabling legislation date(s), acreages, etc.). The reader should be able to understand where the park and wilderness areas are located, who the neighbors are, and the regional context for the planning effort (i.e., other wilderness areas within the region, other non-wilderness recreation lands, etc.). Address what the purpose(s) of the wilderness are. Include a map of the park’s regional location and a map of the wilderness area.

The “significance” portion of this section should describe the exceptional resources and values for which the wilderness was established and why those resources and values are nationally or regionally significant or unique. Describe how those resources and values contribute to the wilderness purpose(s).

1.2 Purpose and Need

The “Purpose and Need” should detail the reasons the plan is being prepared and outline the problems and challenges for the management and stewardship of the wilderness. It should provide an adequate explanation as to why the park is writing a wilderness stewardship plan. This section should be a discussion and explanation of the on-the-ground purposes for the plan, not a summary of NEPA requirements. There will be some purposes that stem from law, purpose and significance statements, policy or previous planning efforts, but there should also be some specific results that the park feels are critical to achieve if the plan is to be considered successful. A good description of the purpose and needs section of the plan will pave the way for developing the range of alternatives later in the planning process.

This section will identify why the park needs to take action at this time and the goals that the park intends to fulfill by taking action. It can summarize the issues for which a decision is needed in order for this plan to be successful. Discuss and explain why the existing conditions need to be changed, problems that need to be remedied, decisions that need to be made, and/or policies/mandates, etc. which need to be implemented. The decisions to be made may include broad reaching ones (such as the appropriate types and levels of management or facilities development within management zones) or may be site-specific actions needed to resolve issues in order to achieve desired conditions. Goals for the plan should be outcomes of the plan, not the process for getting there. The issues that were generated during public scoping are also applicable in this section. However, the issues that the public identifies will be considered as “add-ons,” i.e., the NPS should be able to articulate the “needs” without public input.

1.3 Objectives

Goals and objectives are key elements of a wilderness plan as they establish and provide the direction for the park’s wilderness management program. Wilderness goals and objectives flow from law, policies, the park and wilderness’ enabling legislations, general management plan objectives, resource management plan strategies, public input, etc. Goals and objectives articulate the ends towards which your efforts will be directed. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between goals and objectives. Goals are usually broader and farther reaching, while objectives are more specific with measurable outcomes. Although some parks may choose to develop an overall goal or multiple goals in addition to objectives, some may not. Do whatever is most effective for managing your wilderness.

1.4 Previous Planning Direction, Regulation, and Policy

This section is intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the administrative factors (laws, policies, special regulations, plans, etc.) that directly apply to the wilderness resource. These will provide the foundation for developing the management actions you will be proposing in your plan. You should briefly explain uses (e.g., mines, inholdings, grazing rights, and other non-conforming uses) that are allowed by valid

authorities, but may conflict with the public's general understanding of how wilderness areas are to be managed. Consider the outline topics below and include those that apply to your park. You may have other topics to add.

Be as brief as possible and either summarize the pertinent sections of applicable laws or provide a short quote from the law. Don't include entire laws or policy statements here. (These documents may be attached as appendices if needed as background information for the plan.)

1.4.1 Enabling Legislation Summary

Reference or include the park's mission/purpose and significance or Foundation Statement (see Park Program Planning Standards, 2004) and summarize the reasons the wilderness was established as it is described in the enabling wilderness legislation. You can put the entire legislation in the appendix if you feel this will be useful.

1.4.2 Other Statutes Affecting the Park Wilderness

You only need to identify specific legislation that has a direct effect on the wilderness resource. The point is to inform the reader about the existence of these statutes and perhaps the specific section that will affect wilderness, not to recite the entire law. For Alaska parks, explain the rights authorized by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) as these apply to your specific park. This may guide a considerable part of the wilderness stewardship plan.

You may also wish to reference or include any wilderness management direction from your general management plan or strategic plan in this section (or in Section 1.5.2.). Any sections describing park purpose, significance, and enabling legislation should specifically reference these sections of the GMP, and if repeated, they should be exact replications of those sections.

1.4.3 Other Jurisdictional Influences

If other federal, state, or county agencies have any jurisdictional authority within the wilderness, briefly identify who these agencies are and the nature of this authority. If no other agencies have such an authority, skip this section. For example, does the local sheriff have the authority to conduct search and rescue operations within the park? Are you under a U.S. Coast Guard or military air operations zone? Are there any Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with other entities that affect wilderness management?

1.4.4 Reference to NPS Management Policies/Director's Order #41

Generally, reference the existence of these documents only. You do not need to repeat all applicable sections of Management Policies and Director's Order #41 in the wilderness

plan. The point of this section is to inform the reader that these documents exist and have a direct affect on how the NPS is to administer and preserve wilderness.

1.4.5 Other Pre-Existing Factors Affecting the Park's Wilderness

If there are conditions or situations that affect the park wilderness which were not addressed above, briefly describe these conditions here. Remember, however, that these conditions must be based on a valid legal authority. Do not attempt to justify past illegal (unauthorized) practices. The established right of an individual or group to conduct specific authorized activities within the wilderness needs to be clearly recognized and articulated including what the individual permittee can and cannot do in exercising their right within the wilderness.

1.4.5.1 Inholdings and Retained Rights

Describe the number and type of inholdings or retained rights that are preexisting and/or authorized by legislation that established the park or wilderness. Any special provisions legally providing for the exercise of these rights should be explained.

1.4.5.2 Mining Claims

List the claims or interests and their specific locations. Give any history of use or development of the claims or rights. When was the validity exam completed, or if not, what is the status of the claims? Has there been a plan of operation applied for or filed? If a plan of operation was filed and approved, explain in this section any motorized uses within wilderness or any special access provisions that are authorized as conditions of the plan. Also describe all actions that have been authorized and taken to extinguish the mineral rights within the wilderness.

1.4.5.3 Grazing Permits

Describe the authority that mandates or allows any valid, existing grazing leases. For each lease, describe the number of livestock involved, the annual grazing period, and any terms of the permit such as equipment left in the wilderness, motorized access, etc. Clearly demonstrate the specific authority for motorized vehicles or equipment. Describe monitoring of the leases and conditions for renewal.

1.4.5.4 Native American Rights

Describe any specific rights and/or privileges authorized for Native Americans within the wilderness. Explain any prior agreements requiring renewal or management. If the uses or rights were not specifically authorized for this wilderness but there are uses requested or required under broader authorities, list those uses and their authorities and why and how they will be allowed to occur in wilderness. This may, for example, involve access to areas of the park for the performance of traditional religious ceremonies.

1.4.5.5 Rights of Way

Describe any legal right of way that exists in wilderness and any legally mandated activities within the right of way.

1.4.5.6 Other Existing Rights

In this section describe private parcels, cabins, airstrips, etc. which are preexisting and under a management agreement. You may wish to map these locations.

1.5 Coordination with Other Plans and Programs

The wilderness program is to be developed in careful coordination with other park management programs and initiatives. This section will describe that coordination.

1.5.1 Previous Wilderness/Backcountry Plans and Planning Efforts

Briefly describe the history of any backcountry or wilderness planning that has taken place in the park, including any associated NEPA analysis. List previous backcountry or wilderness plans along with approval dates and the current plan (if any) the park is using to manage the wilderness.

1.5.2 Other Plans and Programs

Discuss the relationship of the wilderness plan to other existing plans, especially the general management plan and the park's strategic plan. Include a discussion of the management direction for wilderness within the GMP and/or strategic plan here (or in Section 1.4.2.). List other plans or programs that have the potential to affect the administration and preservation of the wilderness (Livestock Management Plan, River Use Management Plan, Fire Management Plan, etc.) and how these relate to the wilderness plan. Summarize how the park is going to consider any potential impacts to wilderness described in these plans (and vice versa).

1.6 Issues and Impact Topics

This section will describe the issues and impact topics selected based on in-house and public scoping. For our purposes, an issue is the statement describing the general relationship between an action and a resource and an impact topic is the "heading" for that issue. For example, an issue might be that building a trail would disrupt wildlife migration and the impact topic would then be "wildlife migration." The issues and impact topics should be quite specific. Describe only those resources that may be impacted if the proposed action or the alternatives are implemented. The topics listed in the Level I outline are only broad, suggested categories (e.g., wilderness character, natural resources, cultural resources, socio-economic environment) and are not intended to dictate or limit your selection of impact topics. If impacts are not anticipated for a particular topic, you should list that topic in the following section (1.7.) of the document.

You need not describe them further in this section. (See Director’s Order #12, Section 2.5, for more details on describing issues and impact topics.) The order in which the impact topics appear here should be repeated in Chapters 3.0 and 4.0.

1.7 Issues and Impact Topics Considered and Dismissed

If there are certain issues or impact topics identified by the public or the planning team that will not be affected or for some reason will not be addressed in this plan, they should be briefly described here along with the reason(s) that they are being dismissed. This is also the section where you can describe the concerns the wilderness stewardship plan will not address because they are outside the scope of the planning process (e.g., renegotiating existing grazing rights, building new roads, etc.).

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

The purpose of Chapter 2.0 is to describe the proposal and alternatives. It includes a discussion of the range of reasonable alternatives, any proposed mitigation measures, and a summary of impacts for each alternative.

Development of Alternatives: Throughout the planning process, alternative approaches to fulfilling the need for the plan often arise. Alternative approaches sometimes originate internally from the planning team and park staff or externally from stakeholders and individuals during public scoping. These alternative approaches or alternative visions should be captured as alternatives to the team’s proposed action or within the proposed action.

It is important that alternatives not be contrived, i.e., alternatives should not follow the “Goldilocks Syndrome” of one alternative being “too hot” and another “too cold” with the preferred alternative being “just right.” You should ensure that you cover a range of reasonable alternatives. Also, alternatives should satisfy purposes and needs identified early in the planning process and should be implementable. If, as sometimes happens, no real alternatives arise during scoping and planning, “no action” may be the only real alternative to the proposed action.

Each alternative also needs to have an underlying cohesive rationale or philosophy. Without a unifying concept, an alternative cannot be easily explained to the public and defended, may be subject to the criticism of being arbitrary, and will likely not aid managers in making decisions to resolve unanticipated issues and problems that arise once the planning effort is complete.

If you have more than two alternatives, you should summarize the differences of the alternatives in a matrix or chart at the end of this chapter.

Pathways: It is useful to be able to map and describe the alternative actions based on a zoning system. The park has considerable leeway in identifying and describing appropriate zones to be used and in determining the total number of zones needed to

effectively manage the park’s wilderness resource. Where possible, these zones should tier from or be consistent with, a park’s General Management Plan. In some cases, especially where the GMP is lacking or is no longer current, the Wilderness Stewardship Plan may be done as a GMP amendment. Some parks may determine that only one or two zones are appropriate for their park while others may determine that multiple zones are the best way to meet the wilderness objectives.

There are two basic ways to address the “zoning” issue within the wilderness plan EIS/EA. The methods are described here as Pathway 1 and Pathway 2.

Pathway 1: Under this pathway, the first step is to create a written description of one or more wilderness zones (the number depends on how many you feel are necessary to effectively manage the wilderness). For each zone, define the desired conditions, guidelines, indicators, and standards. These zone descriptions remain fixed across all alternatives. The second step is to allocate the zones to the park land base in order to reflect different overall “visions” or “concepts” of the alternatives. Consequently, you will have one set of written zone descriptions that remains the same for each alternative, but you will have a different map for each alternative showing the different allocations of the zones. In other words, to create your alternatives, ask yourself what types of zone descriptions are appropriate and useful for managing the wilderness under all alternatives. Then for each alternative, decide exactly where you should apply the zones.

Pathway 2: Under this pathway, the first step is to divide the wilderness land base into logical units that encompass relatively homogeneous areas. These unit boundaries remain fixed across all alternatives. The second step is to describe how each unit is managed—in other words, define the desired future conditions, guidelines, indicators, and standards. These become the zone descriptions, and they will vary among alternatives in order to reflect the different overall “visions” or “concepts” of the alternatives. Consequently, you will have one map showing the same unit boundaries for all alternatives, but the actual zone descriptions for the units will change from one alternative to the next. In other words, to create your alternatives, prepare a unit boundary map for the park that makes sense for managing the wilderness and applies under *all* alternatives. Then, for each individual alternative, describe exactly how these units should be managed in terms of desired conditions, guidelines, indicators, and standards (i.e., what are the zone descriptions for each unit).

PATHWAY #	ZONE DESCRIPTIONS (Sections 2.2.2., 2.3.2., etc.)	DISTRIBUTION OF THE ZONES ON THE MAP/ON THE GROUND (Sections 2.2.3., 2.3.3., etc.)
Pathway 1	Do not vary by alternative	Vary by alternative
Pathway 2	Vary by alternative	Do not vary by alternative

In both pathways, the differences among alternatives should be clearly articulated in ways that will be apparent to decision makers, stakeholders, and the public. The alternatives should be described in a parallel fashion using a similar outline for each alternative with similar maps and graphics.

2.1 No Action

This alternative describes the current wilderness management direction and situation. In keeping with the Director's Order #12 Handbook, the "no action" alternative should be identified as the first alternative in your plan EIS/EA. You should describe the no action alternative using the same format and topics as the other action alternatives as much as possible so that the baseline described will help in comparing consequences of impacts of the other alternatives. If continuing the current management would violate laws or policies, it should be noted in this section.

2.1.1 Description of the Alternative

This section is used to provide a guiding context or philosophy for an alternative (i.e., the "theme" of the alternative). Under "No Action," this section simply says "no action."

2.1.2 Zone Descriptions (Existing)

If the park had any preexisting zones described in a GMP or previous wilderness plan, then those would be described here. For more detail, see Section 2.2.2.

2.1.3 Map and Zone Allocations (Existing)

See Section 2.2.3.

2.1.4 Other Management Actions Not Attributable to Zoning

See Section 2.2.4.

2.2 Proposed Action

2.2.1 Description of the Alternative

This section is used to provide a guiding context or philosophy for an alternative (i.e., the "theme" of the alternative). Examples might include "Day-use Emphasis Alternative" or "Maximum Resource Protection Alternative." If a park only ends up with a proposed action and no alternatives other than "no action," a thematic description is probably not needed.

2.2.2 Zone Descriptions

The identification of management zones within the park wilderness is perhaps the most important and most confusing part of the wilderness stewardship plan EIS/EA (see Pathways 1 and 2 methods in Section 2.0 "Proposed Action and Alternatives" above). The basic purpose of establishing management zones is to limit the spread of human-induced impacts and to provide direction to achieve the desired condition defined in the

Wilderness Act as much as administratively feasible. Because levels of recreational use lead to impacts and because NPS administered wilderness is accessible for recreation, such zones provide the framework for establishing standards that specify how much change from natural conditions will be acceptable, given the presence of recreation.

Since most wilderness areas are not homogenous in their opportunity for solitude and degree of naturalness, zoning is also a way of preserving the spectrum of recreational opportunities and resource conditions in a given wilderness and helps prevent the most pristine areas of a wilderness from degrading towards more impacted areas.

You do not have to divide your wilderness into more than one zone if you feel this is unnecessary, i.e., the park may exist as one single management zone. All land and water in a wilderness should be categorized into a zone. An area should be included in only one zone because no area can be managed more than one way at a time. However, if your planning team decides that an area should be managed differently in different seasons, the area could be placed in different seasonal zones.

Keep in mind that all wilderness zones must comply with NPS policy for managing wilderness and need to reflect the distinction between wilderness resources and other backcountry resources. According to policy, zoning should not be used to establish “buffer” or “sacrifice” areas within any wilderness area. It is also important to remember that management zoning is a prescriptive process that specifies desired conditions. Zoning for existing conditions is done only when the goal of management and the planning team is to maintain the status quo.

There are several planning processes that can be referenced to aid in developing zone descriptions and applying zoning for the development of alternatives. The NPS Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) process and the USFS Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process are two of them. It is very important to look at these complete documents to fully understand terms and processes that are only briefly discussed here.

2.2.2.1 Zone A

Zones need to be described in the plan EIS/EA in a way that shows how one zone is clearly distinguished from another. Zone descriptions give readers an understanding of what the condition of the wilderness resource in this zone will be as well as what activities will or will not be allowed. This is done through the establishment of desired conditions, guidelines, indicators, and standards for each zone.

Within each zone, desired conditions are described. Guidelines provide qualitative direction about how we are going to manage to achieve the desired condition. Indicators are chosen which will be monitored to determine if the conditions described for the zone are being met. For each indicator, there will be a limit on how much change is acceptable in the zone before a management action will be taken. This limit on change sets the quantifiable standard for the indicator being monitored.

Zones can be labeled with a word or term such as “natural,” “pristine,” etc. or can be labeled I, II, III or A, B, C. By using a more objective sounding number or letter rather than a subjective word, some confusion or emotional attachments to a particular zone can often be avoided. Under Sections 2.2.2.1.1. and 2.2.2.1.2. below, you will describe your first zone.

2.2.2.1.1 Desired Conditions

Qualitatively describe the desired wilderness values (visitor experience) and natural resource conditions that you would like to achieve in each zone. For wilderness experience, you should address social and managerial elements. For natural resource conditions, address the allowable impacts of human use on the environment. This can be done in relatively general terms. You do not have to use the two headings below, but it may help you describe the desired conditions. This would be the place to insert the traditional LAC “opportunity class” descriptions if you are using them.

- a) Wilderness Values**
- b) Natural Resource Conditions**

In establishing desired conditions, we must agree, explicitly, to some compromising of resources and values. The LAC and VERP processes are designed to help you deal with conditions that are less than natural, or somewhat trammled, so access for recreation may still be allowed. (Please also see the discussion of zoning, and the LAC process described in Chapter 9 of *Wilderness Management* by Hendee, et. al)

2.2.2.1.2 Guidelines, Indicators, and Standards

For many parks, this section represents the nuts and bolts of how the approved wilderness plan will be implemented on the ground. This section presents the guidelines and/or indicators and standards that establish how the wilderness will be managed to meet the wilderness goals and objectives. Guidelines, indicators, and standards may be presented for a variety of topics such as campfires, group size, and commercial use. (See Appendix A for “Action Topics List.”)

Guidelines: Management zones are usually described in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Guidelines are qualitative direction for managing the wilderness where thresholds for acceptable conditions are not easily quantified or where it may be undesirable to establish indicators, e.g., monitoring the indicator is too costly or inaccurate. Guidelines can be presented as criteria to consider in future decision making or as specific direction to follow to help achieve the desired conditions. Guidelines are used when there is a need to articulate what is expected behavior or natural conditions in the zones and specific indicators and standards will not be established for all elements that need to be described.

Indicators: Indicators are specialized variables that singly or in combination reflect the condition of the wilderness. They are the specific elements of zones that are

measured/monitored to assess the existing resource, visitor experience, and managerial conditions. Generally, indicators fall into three categories: resource indicators—those that measure the condition of natural and/or cultural resources; social indicators—those that measure wilderness experiences; managerial indicators—those that measure the impacts of agency management actions on visitors or resources.

Indicators should 1) be capable of being measured cost-effectively and with acceptable levels of accuracy, 2) reflect a direct relationship to the desired condition, 3) be related to user concerns/problems, and 4) be responsive to management control. Often, more than one indicator is required to reflect the overall condition of a wilderness element. A single indicator may also be reflective of more than one condition. Keep in mind that indicators do not have to be established for all zone elements. Select only the indicators that are necessary for monitoring your chosen conditions.

Standards are quantitative thresholds established for the indicators that define the acceptable conditions for each zone. Standards are very different from objectives or desired conditions in that they identify the limits of the acceptable condition rather than a condition to strive for. Standards are set by understanding the context of the situation, the social and biophysical consequences, the costs of meeting them and by using public expertise and preferences. Such public dialogue creates understanding and support for specific standards.

Conditions will be monitored to identify whether acceptable conditions currently exist or where standards have been exceeded. Management actions would be taken in areas where the actual conditions do not meet the established standards to restore them to acceptable levels. Example: If measurements show that either of the two social indicators, “number of group encounters” or “number of campsites within sight or sound of each other,” fails to meet the established standards, management action must be taken to bring the conditions back within the standard. Trends are also monitored using these standards, and management should begin to take action as soon as the condition is trending downward even though it is still above the standard.

Action Topics: The wilderness stewardship plan EIS/EA presents alternative actions that are proposed for implementation upon plan approval. Many of the actions are in the form of guidelines, indicators, and standards that make up the zone descriptions and define the acceptable conditions for each zone. The proposed actions often cover an array of topics—from climbing to trail maintenance. Addressing these actions in the plan under specific topic/subject headings provides a logical organization to the document. A list of potential action topics that you may wish to cover in the plan EIS/EA has been provided in Appendix A. Appendix A also provides guidance for developing the topics and suggested elements that you might include under each.

The categories of actions in Appendix A are ones commonly addressed in many national park wilderness areas. They are not, however, meant to be a definitive list that must appear in your plan. You may find that within your wilderness no guidelines, indicators, or standards need to be proposed for some of the topics. There might also be proposed

actions for your wilderness that do not easily fit under any of the topics listed, and additional subject headings can be added.

When creating your wilderness plan, there are two main approaches for developing the actions described within the “Action Topics List.” One is to present criteria in the plan that the park will use to evaluate actions in the future (i.e., to determine if the actions would be acceptable or not). The second approach is to develop the criteria, utilize it to develop a proposed action, and place the product in the plan EIS/EA for the public to review. For example, in the “Trails and Trailhead Management” section, you could (1) “. . . describe the park’s specific criteria for evaluating whether existing river crossings should remain,” or you could (2) “. . . list the specific river crossing structures proposed for removal or retention.” Following plan EIS/EA approval, additional environmental review may still be required for actions developed using the first approach. Environmental review for actions developed using the second approach would be completed within the plan EIS/EA.

A number of questions need to be considered when determining which of these two approaches is the best to take for an action. Is there a need to maintain flexibility for implementing that action in the future? Would it complicate the EIS/EA too much to include the proposal at this point? Does it meet purpose and need? Is there enough information to make that decision? Is it a connected action that needs to be evaluated jointly with other actions? Is the issue one that may arise in the future and therefore having criteria in the plan would be extremely helpful for guiding future decisions (e.g., emerging technologies and how this applies to the need for ranger stations)? Note, too, that for some action topics, NPS Management Policies and Director’s Order #41 already provide criteria for decision making and it does not need to be reiterated here. However, a park may want to develop more specific criteria based on policy to be able to make consistent, solid decisions applicable to their specific conditions.

Proposed actions can vary by zone or by alternative. In contrast, some proposed actions may be the same for all zones or for all alternatives. As a result, there are three different locations where the action topic proposals can be utilized within the EIS/EA.

- If the proposal for a particular action topic varies by zone, it should be placed in the “Zone Descriptions” (Sections 2.1.2. and 2.2.2., etc.).
- If the proposal for a particular action topic doesn’t relate to zone descriptions but varies by alternative, it can be placed under “Other Management Actions Not Attributable to Zoning” (Sections 2.1.4., 2.2.4., etc.) An example of this is a standard for campfires based on particular areas not tied to the zones: Alternative A, no campfires at Lakes Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie; Alternative B, no campfires at Lakes Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, and Echo.
- If the proposal for a particular action topic is the same for all alternatives and doesn’t vary by zone, it can be placed in Section 2.4., “Management Actions Applicable to All Alternatives except the No Action Alternative.” An example of this is a standard

for no campfires above 9,000 feet in all alternatives (and zones). This proposal is based on ecological considerations, not management zone considerations.

Sometimes it makes more sense to place all proposals related to the action topics within the “Zone Descriptions” even if they are the same for all alternatives or all zones. It may be easier for the reader to comprehend the alternative with all actions related to one topic found together in the zone descriptions rather than placed in several different places in Chapter 2.0. A disadvantage of this is that the exact same guidelines, indicators, and standards would need to be repeated under every zone description.

An example of how the Level I outline can be expanded to address guidelines, indicators, and standards by action topic is provided below. Action topics have been assigned to one of three broad themes: Resource Management Actions, Visitor Experience Actions, and Managerial Management Actions. This particular example shows how you might structure “Wilderness Quality” action topics for Zone A within Section 2.2.2.1.2.b) “Visitor Experience Management Actions.” For some parks, combining (i) Guidelines and (ii) Indicators and Standards into one section might be more effective than what is shown. Keep in mind that this outline segment would be repeated for each zone.

b) Visitor Experience Management Actions

i. Wilderness Quality

(1) Action Topic A (e.g., Solitude)

(i) Guidelines

(ii) Indicators and Standards

(2) Action Topic B-Z (Repeat as in Action Topic A above)

Minimum Requirement (as applied to preparation of your plan): The minimum requirement concept is applicable to all actions and activities within a park’s wilderness. Thus, it is applicable to all actions being proposed within the plan EIS/EA.

In some cases, only the first step of the minimum requirement decision process will be completed for a proposed action during plan EIS/EA development and results stated in the plan (Step 1: Is the proposed action appropriate or necessary for administration of the area as wilderness, and will there be no significant impact to wilderness resources and character as a result). The second step is then conducted for a proposed action after the plan is approved, i.e., during plan implementation (Step 2: What are the tools or techniques needed to ensure that overall impacts to wilderness resources and character are minimized). Again, remember this would require additional compliance. Parks may also complete both steps for a proposed action during plan EIS/EA development and present them within the document for review (similar to the two approaches discussed in the “Action Topics” section).

Many wilderness management activities are routine or repetitious. It may therefore be helpful to go through both steps of the minimum requirement decision process for these programmatic activities and include them as part of the wilderness plan EIS/EA. They should be listed under the applicable action topic in the “Guidelines, Indicators, and

Standards” section of the plan EIS/EA and analyzed under the Environmental Consequences chapter. These actions would therefore not require any additional minimum requirement analysis following plan approval. This approach allows public input through an environmental assessment of these actions. It also, however, reduces flexibility for changing the selected minimum tool(s) during the life of the existing plan.

2.2.2.2 Zone B

See Section 2.2.2.1. Be sure to adapt the Level I outline numbering system for the number of zones you have.

2.2.2.3 Matrix Summarizing Differences among Zones

Readers may become confused when trying to understand the differences among various zones identified in the plan EIS/EA. To aid understanding and accentuate the differences among zones, a matrix is often used which allows readers to see a summary of all zone descriptions on one or two pages. This provides for an easy comparison and simplifies the process of understanding the differences and similarities between the zones.

2.2.3 Map and Zone Allocations

This is usually the page that readers turn to first in a wilderness plan EIS/EA for the simple reason that they want to know what the agency has planned for their favorite places within the wilderness. Include a map to illustrate the zone allocations being proposed for each alternative. The map must be of sufficient scale and detail to allow readers to know in which proposed zone each trail, camp area, and attraction site would be placed and, thus, how it would be managed. The allocations should also be described in acres or percentage of the wilderness covered by each zone. This is the place to describe the width of any linear zone such as “200 feet from the center line of a trail.”

2.2.4 Other Management Actions Not Attributable to Zoning

If you choose to use this section, actions that are being proposed for implementation that are not dependent on zoning (e.g., “no stock camping above 8,000 feet”) are described here. Note that although these actions do not vary between zones, they could vary between alternatives.

As an option, you can choose to address these actions repetitively under all of the zone descriptions instead of in this section. This may organize the material more logically for the reader.

2.3 Alternative A

(Repeat II.B. “Proposed Action” outline for Alternatives A-Z)

The alternatives for the plan EIS/EA should all follow the same format. There should be development of whatever number of alternatives is required for proper analysis.

2.3.1 Description of the Alternative

2.3.2 Zone Descriptions

If the zone descriptions do not change between alternatives (Pathway 1), you may simply refer the reader back to Section 2.2.2. instead of repeating the zone descriptions under every alternative. In Pathway 2, the zone descriptions do change and would be described here for Alternative A (repeat outline elements).

2.3.3 Map and Zone Allocations

2.3.4 Other Management Actions Not Attributable to Zoning

2.4 Management Actions Applicable to All Alternatives except the No Action Alternative

(See attached “Action Topics List” for items you might want to consider for this section.)

The purpose of this section is to address those management actions that remain constant regardless of the alternative (except the “No Action” alternative). Instead of describing the actions here, you may choose to describe them repetitively in each alternative. It may be clearer to the reader to find all actions related to one alternative in one location.

2.4.1 NPS Administrative Requirements

2.4.1.1 NPS Administration of 4(c) Exceptions

Briefly describe the Wilderness Act’s Section 4(c) exceptions. If you propose to continue previously established administrative uses that 1) are 4(c) exceptions; 2) have already gone through a minimum requirement decision process; 3) you wish public comment on; and 4) are common to all alternatives, then describe them in this section. However, it is preferable to address these under the Action Topics in Sections 2.4.2.-2.4.5. below because it puts these actions into context with similar applications.

2.4.1.2 Minimum Requirement Process

The purpose of this section is to identify what process the park will use to determine “minimum requirement” and specify under what circumstances the process will be applied. An effective “minimum requirement” procedure is one of the most important elements of your wilderness stewardship plan. The “Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center Minimum Requirement Decision Guide” is an example of a format that has received extensive interagency review and may serve your needs well. You may, however, develop or adopt whatever minimum requirement decision process is most appropriate for your park, as long as it complies with policy.

You should put your minimum requirement decision process in this section only if you want it to go out for public review. Keep in mind that you will therefore need to analyze

the effects of it in Chapter 4.0 “Environmental Consequences.” You are not required by NEPA to analyze the MRP, and therefore, you may wish to place it in the Appendix for reference only or, if it is short enough, in the “Affected Environment” section.

2.4.1.3 Wilderness Plan Implementation and Responsibilities

This section provides an overview of how the park will implement the approved wilderness stewardship plan. It generally outlines staff responsibilities, describes the park’s wilderness steering committee (if you have one), and describes the wilderness plan implementation cycle, i.e., (1) monitor conditions, (2) compare conditions with standards, (3) take management actions to maintain and restore wilderness conditions, and (4) repeat the three steps. This section is not generally analyzed in Chapter 4.0 no matter where it is located.

You may want to describe guidance for each implementation step in more detail. You could identify how and how often the park will monitor the indicators selected in the final approved plan to determine the resource, visitor experience, and managerial conditions.

Describe the approach the park will use to compare conditions with standards (e.g., an annual “State of the Wilderness” report). Describe the system that will be put in place to determine what management actions will be selected and how this will fit in the park’s funding and priority-setting procedures and work plan development.

2.4.2 Resource Management Actions

2.4.2.1 Natural Resources

2.4.2.2 Cultural Resources

2.4.3 Visitor Experience Management Actions

2.4.3.1 Wilderness Quality

2.4.3.2 Visitor Activities

2.4.4 Managerial Management Actions

2.4.4.1 Administrative Actions

2.4.4.2 Administrative/Management Facilities

2.4.5 Other Actions Common to All Alternatives

2.5 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

(Reference DO and Handbook #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making, Parts 2.7 D and 4.5 Part E. 9)

The identification of the environmentally preferred alternative must be included as a separate heading at the end of the alternatives section of your document. You must identify in the draft EIS/EA which of the alternatives you have described as the “environmentally preferred alternative” so the public has an opportunity to review and comment on it. The “environmentally preferred alternative” is, hopefully, also the “Preferred Alternative” in your compliance document, but this may not always be the case. The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and the objectives of the wilderness

stewardship plan itself. This means the environmentally preferred alternative is the one which causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and which best protects, reserves, and enhances natural and cultural resources. You must also explain why the alternative you have identified is the environmentally preferred alternative.

2.6 Alternatives Considered But Dismissed

(Reference DO and Handbook #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making, Parts 2.7 B and 4.5 E. 6)

The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) has defined “reasonable alternatives” to mean those that are economically and technically feasible and show evidence of common sense. This allows the park to eliminate from further consideration alternatives that could not be implemented if they were chosen or that do not resolve the need for the proposed action(s) and fulfill the stated purpose of the wilderness stewardship plan. EISs and EAs should include a section discussing those alternatives that were considered but rejected and briefly explain the reasons for the elimination.

Careful! While you should never generate “strawman” alternatives, the CEQ also cautions that agencies should not pare the list of alternatives down to only those that are cheap, easy, or simply the park’s favorite way of doing business. Additionally, some alternatives may be eliminated as the NEPA process progresses. For instance, if initial impact analysis shows that a technically or economically feasible alternative would have profound adverse environmental impacts, it should be eliminated as “environmentally unfeasible.”

2.7 Summary and Comparison of Alternatives and Impacts

(Reference DO and Handbook #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making, Part 4.5, E. 10)

Your plan EIS/EA should include a summary that compares and summarizes:

- the degree to which each alternative meets the purpose, need, and objectives of the plan
- the important features of each alternative
- the impacts of each alternative, including a determination of potential improvement to park resources (this is a specific requirement of an EIS and EA)
- a description of how each alternative achieves the requirements of Section 101 and 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (a required element in an EIS)

The easiest way to present this information is through the use of a matrix, or chart, which provides the reader with a clear comparison of each alternative.

3.0 Affected Environment

This chapter describes the existing natural and human components of the environment that will be affected by the implementation of any of the alternatives. In NEPA, “affected environment” means resources expected to experience environmental impacts. Therefore, you should not bother with drawing analysis boundaries or collecting data to describe resources that are not likely to be affected by the alternatives (DO #12, Sections 2.8 and 5.4E).

Describe only those resources that may experience or cause impacts if the proposal or alternatives are implemented. If specific resources would not be affected, you would list them in the issues discussion in Section 1.7., “Topics Considered and Dismissed” (DO #12, Sections 2.0 and 4.0, and Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ), Section 1502.15). In an EIS, it is mandatory that you consider a number of topics such as wetlands/floodplains, prime agricultural lands, sacred sites, etc. If these are not affected, they also would be addressed in Section 1.7. (See DO #12, Section 4.5 F.2 (a-m)).

The topics addressed in this section should be in a similar format/order as those listed in Sections 1.6., “Issues and Impact Topics,” and 4.0, “Environmental Consequences.”

3.1 Introduction

Describe what will be discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Vicinity Description

This section should describe the park’s location in more specific terms: how visitors get to the park area from regional urban highways, how they get from airports to local hub/gateway communities, and how they get to specific park districts or units, special natural or cultural features and trailheads, etc.

3.3 Regional Perspective

Describe regional land ownership, nearby wilderness areas or protected areas, other public lands, military lands, military operating areas, tribal lands, adjacent industrial or suburban developments, ecosystems, waterways, transportation/utility easements, etc. Maps may be useful, but you do not need to put any here if there is already an adequate one in Chapter 1.0.

3.4 Wilderness Character (or Impact Topic 1)

This is a critical but often understated section in a wilderness plan. The purpose of this section is to provide a general descriptive assessment of the existing wilderness character of the unit(s) being considered in the plan EIS/EA based upon key definitions and phrases in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Key phrases include “primeval character and influence,” “natural condition,” “untrammelled,” “opportunities for solitude,” etc. and are found in

Section 2(c) of the Act. For example, ask yourself if this area “generally appear[s] to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature” and is “the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.” This should be a clear objective description of existing conditions and the characteristics of wilderness that may be affected by implementation of the management strategies developed in the plan EIS/EA. In contrast, the zone descriptions are a prescription of what ought to be (the standard to attain). An overview summary could be developed here followed by specific statements that should naturally fall into one of the two following sections.

3.4.1 Naturalness

What is the current condition of the wilderness in terms of disturbed and natural conditions? In a descriptive style, you should objectively describe the existing condition and appearance of the unit resulting from the past interplay of social, natural, and managerial factors. Emphasize the ecosystem processes, the untrammled nature of the area, and the effects of human influences on the land and water. For instance, you could consider wild rivers, impoundments, guzzlers, radio towers, airstrips, grazing impacts, soil compaction/erosion, constructed trails, bridges, facilities, signage, exotic/introduced species, natural sounds, previous resource extraction (e.g., logging), the interplay of natural disturbance (e.g., effects of fire, floods, insect infestations, etc.), air or water quality issues, etc.

3.4.2 Wilderness Experience

The purpose of this section is to describe the types of visitor opportunities that currently exist across the wilderness. Does a recreational visitor have “. . . outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”? For instance, you could consider human-caused noises, party encounter rates, view sheds, flight-seeing corridors, camping opportunities, managerial infrastructure, administrative activities, litter, wildlife encounters, etc. This description will be driven by the existing conditions included in the previous section but should, as objectively as possible, focus on the human awareness of the surrounding wilderness landscape.

3.5 Natural Resources (or Impact Topic 2)

Identify and describe the status (i.e., population, distribution, health, level of knowledge) of any natural resources that may be affected by implementation of any of the alternatives.

3.6 Cultural Resources (or Impact Topic 3)

Identify and describe the status (i.e., number, distribution, condition, level of knowledge) of any cultural resources that may be affected by implementation of any of the alternatives.

3.7 Socio-Economic Environment (or Impact Topic 4)

Describe only those socio-economic factors that may be affected by choosing “no action” or the other alternatives being considered. It will be a challenge to separate potential impacts to socio-economic aspects of the park unit as a whole from those impacted by decisions for the wilderness area. The following are some of the many possible topics that might be addressed.

3.7.1 Visitor Use Patterns and Trends

3.7.2 Existing Facilities

3.7.3 Inholdings, Retained Rights, Rights-of-Ways

3.7.4 Native American Rights

3.7.5 Business/Economic Activities Related to Wilderness

(Reference DO and Handbook #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making, Part 4.5 E.7)

If you feel that the implementation of any of the alternatives in your plan EIS/EA has the capacity to significantly impact the socio-economic environment of the region surrounding the park, you might want to consider doing a cost-benefit analysis to assist in final decision making. The entire analysis can be placed in the appendix or it can be summarized and referenced in the body of the EIS/EA. You may want to include the costs of each alternative in the alternatives chapter.

4.0 Environmental Consequences

The role of NPS NEPA documents is to fairly, objectively, and candidly display the projected impacts of each alternative. The public, as well as the decision maker, should get a clear picture of how well you can predict an impact. Both EAs and EISs should routinely inform the public when data is lacking, models are error prone, or insufficient research or experience is available for predicting impacts accurately.

Whereas issues and impact topics describe the impact relationship between actions and resources, impact analysis predicts the magnitude and extent of that relationship. The context, duration, and intensity of impacts should be defined and quantified as much as possible. The analysis here (whether an EIS or EA format) must adequately discuss direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed action. Beneficial impacts must also be analyzed.

NPS guidance on conservation planning and NEPA emphasizes the need for clear statements of objectivity, context, mitigation, methodologies employed, regulations/policies that apply, cumulative impacts, sustainability and conclusions reached for each impact topic. (DO #12, Sections 2.9, 4.5 G, and 5.4 F)

The assessment of impacts to wilderness resources is based upon the definitions of wilderness included in the Wilderness Act and the requirements of NPS Management

Policies, Chapter 6, “Wilderness Preservation and Management,” and DO #41, “Wilderness Preservation and Management.” The impacts of each management action are consequently based upon an evaluation of whether or not the proposed action will enable the park to meet the definitions of wilderness and/or restore impacted areas to conditions that more closely meet the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act.

This chapter of the plan EIS/EA can be organized by impact topic or by alternative. The outline presented here provides an example of presenting the environmental consequences by impact topic under each alternative. You may prefer presenting the environmental consequences by alternative under each impact topic. Whichever organization you choose, address the impact topics in a similar order to those listed in Section 1.6., “Issues and Impact Topics,” and Section 3.0, “Affected Environment.”

4.1 Impacts of No Action

The “Impacts of No Action” is a particularly critical section since it forms an objective evaluation to which the other alternatives are compared. The discussion needs to be clear and focused.

4.1.1 Wilderness Character Impacts (or Impact Topic 1)

4.1.1.1 Methodology for Evaluating Impacts

This is the section where you should briefly summarize the methods used to predict impacts on the wilderness environment. Any assumptions in the evaluation of impacts should be explained clearly. This is the place to explain how data is interpreted. Definition of terms like “minor” and “major” impacts is necessary. This becomes a discussion of impact thresholds (DO #12, Section 4.5 G.7(a)). Impacts to natural resources are based upon the accumulated data from observations and monitoring programs conducted within the park or from similar environments. Additional data is available from studies of specific resource elements. Other assessments may be made from anecdotal information and the historical records of the park.

4.1.1.2 Analysis

Impact thresholds and mitigation measures are briefly explained in an EA and detailed in an EIS. Any direct impacts on wilderness character should be discussed here. Indirect effects can also be discussed here or in a separate “Indirect Effects” section that includes the same order of impact topics. Impacts must be quantified as much as possible and interpreted in terms of their context, duration, and intensity. The reader needs a context (e.g., geographic, temporal) in order to understand the full extent and relative importance of the impact. Established quantitative standards should be used whenever possible. (DO #12, Section 4.5 G)

4.1.1.3 Cumulative Impacts

A discussion of cumulative impacts is important in an EIS/EA and must be included. (DO #12, Sections 2.4(c) and 2.9(c)). The CEQ requires the analysis of cumulative impacts to each resource and for each alternative. The discussion is separate from, but follows the same order of, impact topics as has been used previously. Cumulative impact information may be less exact than information on direct or indirect impacts of the alternatives.

4.1.1.4 Impairment Analysis

A statement of “impairment” is now required for all NPS compliance documents. In managing units of the national park system, the Service may undertake actions that have both beneficial and adverse impacts on park resources and values. However, by the provisions of the laws governing the NPS, the Service is prohibited from taking or authorizing any action that would or is likely to impair park resources or values. Impacts that may constitute an impairment of park resources or values must be evaluated and described in this section. From the facts presented in the EIS (or EA), the Record of Decision (or the Finding of No Significant Impact) must indicate that after a review of the impacts, the alternative selected for implementation will not impair park resources or values (including wilderness resources and values) and will not violate the NPS Organic Act. (Reference DO #55 for more information.)

4.1.1.5 Conclusion

This should serve as a summary of all major findings related to wilderness character impacts including whether or not an impairment of resources or values is likely or would occur based upon the previous analyses. Statements should focus on major impacts but should also speak to less severe impacts as well. No information should appear here that was not covered in one of the previous impact sections. (DO #12, Section 4.5 G.8)

(Repeat Section 4.1.1.1.-4.1.1.5. outline for each impact topic)

4.1.2 Natural Resource Impacts (or Impact Topic 2)

4.1.3 Cultural Resource Impacts (or Impact Topic 3)

4.1.4 Socio-Economic Impacts (or Impact Topic 4)

4.1.5 Short-Term Uses/Long-Term Productivity

(Reference DO #12, Section 4.5 G.8(a)). Sustainability and long-term management are considerations of long-term impact and the effect of foreclosing future options.

Use this section to describe the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity. In other words, are any long-term management possibilities or the productivity of park resources being traded for the immediate use of the wilderness?

4.1.6 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

(Reference DO #12, Section 4.5 G.8(c)). If an action will result in impacts that cannot be fully mitigated or avoided, describe them in this section.

4.1.7 Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

(Reference DO #12, Section 4.5 G.8(b)).

Anytime future options may be foreclosed by selection of an alternative management strategy, it should be described in a NEPA document. Irreversible impacts are those effects that cannot be changed over the long-term or are permanent. An effect on a resource is irreversible if the resource cannot be reclaimed, restored, or otherwise returned to its condition before the disturbance. An irretrievable commitment of resources refers to the effects to resources that once gone cannot be replaced. It is important to meet the intent of NEPA and disclose permanent effects. If serious permanent effects are anticipated, impairment may be the unacceptable result.

4.2 Impacts of Proposed Action

(Repeat Section 4.1.1.-4.1.7 “Impacts of No Action” outline for “Impacts of Proposed Action” and Alternatives A-Z.)

This is where you need to describe the environmental impacts of any alternatives you have considered. Use the same format/outline you used to describe Section 4.1. “Impacts of No Action” above.

5.0 Consultation and Coordination

To the maximum extent possible and/or as required, the NPS will actively seek out and consult with the public including existing and potential visitors, neighbors, people with traditional cultural ties to park lands, scientists and scholars, concessionaires, cooperating associations, special interest groups, other partners, and appropriate government agencies, including the State Historic Preservation Officer, in developing a wilderness or backcountry plan. Be diligent and creative in your efforts to involve the public.

The level and degree of public involvement will depend upon the anticipated level of controversy generated by the individual proposed actions in the plan EIS/EA. A variety of methods for public participation may need to be employed based upon your individual situation in order to fully understand and consider the public’s interests. Accordingly, your public involvement program may vary from a relatively simple notification of the availability of the draft EIS/EA (for a formal review period) to a much more formal program of meetings, workshops, hearings, and the other requirements associated with preparing an EIS. It will be helpful to be familiar with the constraints of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) before scheduling any meetings not open to the general public. (DO #12, Section 4.5 H)

Consultation processes may be necessary (i.e., tribal consultation, Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and/or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)) to meet the requirements of other legislation, regulations, or policy.

5.1 History of Public Involvement

For any wilderness or backcountry planning effort, it is strongly suggested that you devise a transparent and collaborative public process ahead of time and then summarize it here. Sometimes a separate public involvement strategy is a useful tool. Any scoping or other important consultations that occurred during the evolution of the proposal, the alternatives, and the EIS/EA should be summarized. For the differences between an EIS and an EA for this section, consult DO #12 and Handbook for more information.

5.2 Description of Consultation

This section should list persons, organizations, and agencies that were contacted for information and/or assisted in identifying important issues, developing alternatives, or analyzing impacts. List the recipients alphabetically and by category. Refer to DO #12, Section 4.5 H.3 for how to prepare and record the list of recipients of the EIS/EA.

5.3 List of Preparers

A list of preparers (and their titles or qualifications) primarily responsible for preparation of the document or significant background papers must be included.

6.0 Bibliography

A bibliography of references cited as well as a glossary of terms, acronyms, and index of keywords should be provided here.

Appendices

Appendices are for amplification or support of critical analyses in the NEPA document or for additional public information. The appendices should contain any additional information needed to expand or clarify elements of the plan EIS/EA that need not be included in the body of the text. Some documents that are referenced in the plan would take up too much space within the document. Examples of this type of material include: a copy of the Wilderness Act, copies of the park and wilderness enabling legislations, copies of other legislation pertinent to wilderness management, the park's legal description for the wilderness boundary, the minimum requirement decision process, bibliographies, and lists of park trails, camp areas, wildlife species, etc.

The choice of appendices to include in your plan EIS/EA also depends upon the types of formal agreements you have in place at your park that are referenced in the EIS/EA or

have a substantial effect on wilderness and backcountry management. Other compliance evaluations required in addition to NEPA (e.g., National Historic Preservation Act Section 106, Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Section 810, etc.) may be included as separate appendices.

APPENDIX A – ACTION TOPICS LIST

This Appendix A is a list of topics that you may wish to include in developing your Wilderness Stewardship Plan EIS/EA. Management actions proposed for your wilderness can be described under the most appropriate topic in the list. These would appear under the zone descriptions (Sections 2.1.2., 2.2.2., etc.) or in Section 2.4. or Sections 2.1.4., 2.2.4., etc. if not zone-related. The action topics list is merely a suggested way of organizing your material. You might discover additional topics that need to be addressed for your particular wilderness (e.g., Integrated Pest Management (IPM), hazardous materials, etc.) or a more effective way to organize the material than what is outlined here. Appendix A also provides guidance for developing the topics and suggested elements that you might include under each.

Management Policies Chapter 6 and DO #41 are good references to use to insure that your wilderness stewardship plan has included all the pertinent sections required by policy. In addition, there are many other sources of information that you can use to help with the development of these topics such as the VERP handbook, the National Wilderness Steering Committee (NWSC) Guidance “White Paper” Number 1: Cultural Resources and Wilderness (April 2002), the *Wilderness Education and Partnership Plan* (June 2002), and the *Wilderness Access Decision Tool*.

Keep in mind that the guidelines, indicators, and standards that you establish for each of these topics define the acceptable conditions within the zones. They prescribe how and how much the park will manage the effects of visitor and management activities on wilderness resources and the visitor’s wilderness experience. The management actions section of the EIS/EA will essentially become the nuts and bolts of your approved Wilderness Stewardship Plan.

Resource Management Actions

Natural Resources

- Ecosystem Integrity
- Wildlife Resources
- Fisheries Resources
- Vegetation Resources
- Soil Resources
- Air Resources
- Aquatic Resources
- Fire Management

Cultural Resources

- Archeological Resources

- Ethnographic Resources
- Historic or Prehistoric Structures
- Cultural Landscapes
- Collections
- Visitor Experience Management Actions
 - Wilderness Quality
 - Solitude
 - Risk and Challenge
 - Natural Sound/Aircraft Overflights
 - Natural Light
 - Visitor Activities
 - Campfires
 - Stock Use
 - Winter Use
 - Access for Persons with Disabilities
 - Hunting and Fishing
 - Climbing, Mountaineering, and Canyoneering
 - Watercraft
 - Bicycles and Other Forms of Mechanical Transport
 - Pets
 - Special Events and Memorializations
 - Emerging Technologies/Uses
- Managerial Management Actions
 - Administrative Actions
 - Emergency Services (SAR, EMS, LE)
 - Group Size
 - Permit, Quota, and Reservation Systems
 - Administration of Scientific Activities
 - Rehabilitation and Revegetation
 - Interpretation and Education
 - Existing Valid Rights
 - Commercial Uses Including Commercial Photography and Filming
 - Administration of Potential, Proposed, Recommended, and Suitable
 - Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas
 - Interagency Coordination and Partnerships
 - Administrative/Management Facilities
 - Trails and Trailhead Management
 - Campsite and Day Use Site Management
 - Signs and Other Route Markings
 - Ranger Stations, Visitor Use Shelters, and Equipment Caches
 - Food Protection Systems
 - Sanitation and Waste Management Facilities
 - Radio Repeaters/Communication Facilities

a) Resource Management Actions

The purpose of the “Resource Management Actions” section is to provide qualitative guidance or quantitative standards for managing visitor use and administrative activities so that resources are protected. In addition, guidance should be given for managing natural and cultural resources in ways that protect wilderness character and the visitor’s wilderness experience. This should include application of the minimum requirement concept to all programs/actions that are described.

i. Natural Resources

(1) Ecosystem Integrity

The topic of ecosystem integrity is extremely broad, but many specific management actions we implement in wilderness can have rippling effects on the system. An ecological system has integrity when it maintains its characteristic compositions, structures, and functions against a background of human disturbance. Protection of ecosystem components, organizations, and processes is a fundamental element of wilderness management. You therefore may want to include this topic in your plan. Guidance provided here for protection of the ecological health of the wilderness may take the form of overall objectives. You may want to state that the components of the biological and physical environment listed separately in the sections below are inherently integrated, and thus the park will consider the interaction of the components when carrying out any actions in wilderness that affect any one element. You may also want to state here the objectives for the inventory and vital signs monitoring program in your park as it relates to wilderness (or under “Administration of Scientific Activities”).

(2) Wildlife Resources

Proposed actions related to wildlife include those for managing human use to protect wildlife and those to protect people from nuisance wildlife. You may want to address human disturbance of wildlife, prevention of problems, special category wildlife, exotic species, native species reintroductions, river use impacts on wildlife, nuisance animals, and special management considerations for species such as grizzly bears. Perhaps you will want to address specific actions such as how animal carcasses along wilderness trails will be handled. Keep in mind that this is the place to provide foundational guidance for managing wildlife within wilderness, which would then be used to develop wilderness-related sections of a Bear Management Plan for example. List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific wildlife monitoring programs. Hunting is better addressed under the “Hunting and Fishing” section.

(3) Fisheries Resources

Use this section to provide guidance related to fisheries management within wilderness. Presence of non-native fish can be addressed and acceptable methods for removal (based on minimum requirement). Objectives might be given for protection and restoration of

native and special category fish. Prevention of impacts on fish caused by human activities (e.g., shoreline erosion) could be addressed. List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific fisheries monitoring programs.

(4) Vegetation Resources

Provide guidance for protecting vegetation from the impacts of visitor and park staff activities and describe the level of change in native vegetation that will be allowed. State where and how much human-caused bare ground is acceptable (e.g., at campsites, day use sites, on social trails, parallel and braided trails). You may find that specific bare ground standards for sites are better placed under “Campsite and Day Use Site Management.”

Provide parameters for administrative use of on-site native materials, i.e., what types can be gathered and how much may be taken without additional compliance. Management of special category vegetation, changes in vegetative composition, exotic plants, collection and consumption of plant material in wilderness can be discussed here. List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific vegetation monitoring programs. Note that the topic “Rehabilitation and Revegetation” has been placed in “Administrative Actions” in this outline, though you may prefer to move it to “Natural Resources.”

(5) Soil Resources

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance for controlling human-caused soil erosion and compaction and if useful to describe how much is acceptable under various circumstances (e.g., at campsites, on trails). List any indicators related to wilderness soils that will be monitored and standards that have been or will be put in place. You may find it more effective to combine soil resources with “Vegetation Resources” above. (If any proposed use of on-site native materials includes rock and soil (in addition to wood), a combined category may be logical.)

(6) Air Resources

If not mentioned previously, state the class of air shed assigned to the park. List objectives for protection of any air quality-related values associated with the wilderness (e.g., vegetation, water quality, cultural landscapes, scenic vistas). You may want to describe how impacts to wilderness air quality from sources such as wildland fire, management prescribed fire and campfires will be minimized or refer to other plans. Keep in mind that guidelines for protection of air quality related to wilderness that are stated in this document can help provide a foundation for protection of wilderness-related values discussed in other plans (e.g., Fire Management Plan). List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific air quality monitoring programs.

(7) Aquatic Resources

You may want to provide objectives for managing aquatic resources in wilderness here including water quality, lakes, rivers and streams, wetlands, and the riparian environment. Discuss water quality degradation from human activities, impacts from human waste and how these will be managed at acceptable levels, and what those acceptable levels are. Consideration for inspections of underground fuel tanks and sewage treatment facilities that could affect wilderness might be included. Guidance for the protection of floodplains and wetlands can be mentioned. You may wish to propose the establishment of wilderness monitoring programs to determine the effects of recreational use and management activities on specific aquatic resources. List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific aquatic resources monitoring programs.

(8) Fire Management

Describe how the fire management program will be carried out so that wilderness character is preserved—objectives might be helpful here. Guidance based on minimum requirement for activities related to detection, suppression, and rehabilitation of impacts from suppression could be described. You might want to describe any specific procedures that will be followed within wilderness areas (and/or backcountry areas covered in this plan) and the specific minimum tools approved for each activity. Parameters for conducting hazard fuel reduction in wilderness could be provided.

This section should include foundational guidance to be used to develop sections of the park's Fire Management Plan that relate to wilderness. If the park's approved Fire Management Plan already addresses fire in wilderness, it can be briefly summarized and referenced. If the fire plan does not adequately address the issue, this section can be written to update the fire plan.

ii. Cultural Resources

(1) Archeological Resources

Use this section to provide guidance for management of archeological resources in wilderness. Management actions may include such things as identification, preservation, stabilization, protection, or data recovery. If an inventory of archeological resources is incomplete, describe how it will be completed. Indicate National Register status of any structure in the park's wilderness areas. You may want to address the management of human use to prevent disturbance or propose the establishment of wilderness monitoring programs to determine the effects of recreation and management activities on archeological resources. List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific archeological resources monitoring programs. Marked and unmarked prehistoric and historic burial areas (cemeteries) and re-interments in wilderness should be covered under the appropriate heading in this section for your park.

(2) Ethnographic Resources

Ethnographic resources are the cultural and natural features of a park that are of traditional significance to traditionally associated peoples. These peoples are the contemporary park neighbors and ethnic or occupational communities that have been associated with a park for two or more generations and whose interests in the park's resources began prior to the park's establishment. There may be ethnographic resources that are wilderness related, and objectives for protecting and managing those resources could be addressed here. Traditional access and use of ethnographic resources in wilderness areas should be considered. Sacred sites, having established religious meaning, could be addressed in this section. The wilderness experience aspects of these traditional associated peoples are often overlooked and could be addressed here or in the "Visitor Experience" section. If an inventory of ethnographic resources is incomplete, describe how it will be completed.

(3) Historic or Prehistoric Structures

Describe here any guidance related to the management of historic or prehistoric structures within wilderness. Objectives might be given for survey, protection, restoration, or use of structures or other management prescriptions that are wilderness specific. Indicate National Register status of any structure in the park's wilderness areas. You may wish to address any issues related to the relationship between management of historic/prehistoric structures and protection of other wilderness values (e.g., removal of trees to protect historic structures from decay). This could be done through specific proposed actions or criteria to consider in decision making. If historic structures are also being used for administrative purposes, cross reference to the facilities section. If the inventory of historic structures is incomplete, describe how it will be completed. List any indicators and standards that are a part of wilderness-specific historic/prehistoric structure monitoring programs. Historic trails can be covered here or in your "Trail and Trails Management" section.

(4) Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes may be identified here with descriptions of existing conditions and use. If cultural landscapes have not been inventoried, describe how this will be completed. Indicate National Register status of any structure in the park's wilderness areas. You may wish to address any issues related to the relationship between management of cultural landscapes and protection of other wilderness values (e.g., protection of exotic species in the cultural landscape). This could be done through specific proposed actions or criteria to consider in decision making. If management actions are planned, they should be addressed in this section. Some view the wilderness designation itself as a cultural landscape, and you may wish to address that idea for your park's wilderness.

(5) Collections

Some items that are a part of the park collection remain *in situ* within the wilderness on the landscape (see above) or as historic furnishings in their original arrangement in a historic structure. Describe how these items will be protected and monitored. If the park already has a Collection Management Plan that addresses collections in wilderness, it can be briefly summarized and referenced. If the CMP does not adequately address the issue, this section can be written to update it. Describe how periodic collection inventories and condition assessments will be conducted.

b) Visitor Experience Management Actions

i. Wilderness Quality

(1) Solitude

The purpose of this section is to describe how the park will meet the Wilderness Act mandate for providing opportunities for solitude and how it will provide visitors with a quality wilderness experience. You could describe how the wilderness experience will be protected by management of the number of people encountered along trails and in campsites. This could be done by describing qualitative objectives. If you establish standards for the number of people encountered on the trail or the number of people allowed to camp within sight or sound of each other, include them here.

(2) Risk and Challenge

This section provides an opportunity to discuss how risk and challenge are inherent in the wilderness experience and the general levels that might be expected within each zone (e.g., higher risk and challenge available in a more pristine zone than a more developed zone). Self-sufficiency and self-reliance are additional elements associated with these topics that could be addressed. You may want to make a general statement about the level of control over risk that the park might take (e.g., the park will not attempt to eliminate or control risks that are part of the wilderness environment). Be careful of your language here from a legal point of view.

(3) Natural Sound/Aircraft Overflights

The purpose of this section is to describe how the park might reduce and mitigate impacts on the natural soundscape, including impacts from aircraft overflights. This may include providing guidance in the plan for working with those responsible (both agencies and non-governmental organizations) on flight routes, minimum/maximum flight altitudes, time of day for flights, mitigation of noise and visual impacts, and education about wilderness values. (More information is found in DO #47 on “Soundscapes.”)

(4) Natural Light

The purpose of this section is to describe how the park might reduce and mitigate impacts to the natural lightscape of the wilderness. This may include guidance in the plan for working with outside entities to reduce human-caused light impacts on wilderness and provide education about the values of natural night skies.

ii. Visitor Activities

(1) Campfires

If no campfires are permitted in your wilderness, briefly state this. If campfires are allowed, outline the criteria used for determining where, when, and how they are acceptable (e.g., by elevation, by amount of dead and down available, by presence of restoration areas, with use of a firepan, etc.). If changes in campfire management are proposed, this would be the place to do it. Note that due to ecological factors, campfire location decisions often will not relate directly to management zone alternatives and thus could be moved to 2.2.4., “Other Management Actions Not Attributable to Zoning.”

(2) Stock Use

If stock users represent an important part of your wilderness use, a separate Livestock Management Plan might be appropriate. If that is the case, this section would provide the overall guidance for describing how stock use and its associated impacts are to be managed within the wilderness. The Livestock Management Plan would provide more detailed direction based upon the foundational guidance contained within the wilderness plan. If the park does not anticipate development of a Livestock Management Plan, this section should include as much detail as is appropriate for managing and mitigating stock use in your wilderness.

Regardless of where specific livestock management is addressed, this section should describe objectives for managing stock use within the wilderness. Topics to discuss here could include protection of plant species, composition and water quality, minimization of exotic species introduction, soil erosion, education of stock users and hikers around stock, and development of a monitoring program.

You may wish to list the types of pack and saddle stock permitted within the wilderness, locations where stock travel and camping are acceptable (these may vary with zone, elevation, or on- and off-trail use), and types of acceptable stock restraints (e.g., highline, electric fence, etc.). Address stock facilities here (the type acceptable in each zone) or in “Campsite and Day Use Site Management.”

Provide guidance for non-commercial stock grazing (e.g., specific areas open to grazing, establishment of opening dates for trail travel and meadows for grazing, etc.) If Congress has authorized commercial grazing or livestock driving in your wilderness, you may want to describe conditions and requirements under “Existing Valid Rights” rather than here.

It may be appropriate to establish thresholds for triggering management actions such as stock use limits. Trails proposed as open to stock might be better listed under “Trails and Trailhead Management.”

(3) Winter Use

This section would describe any differences in how the park would manage the wilderness/backcountry during winter as opposed to other seasons. You might address the types of travel and activities permitted during winter. For example, you might propose treating closed, snow-covered roads as trails during winter with party size and pet restrictions in place.

(4) Access for Persons with Disabilities

This section should list objectives for managing and facilitating access for persons with disabilities into the wilderness while preserving wilderness character. Parameters for wheelchair use should be outlined, including addressing requests for the use of all-terrain wheelchairs. Barrier-free trails should be discussed along with barrier-free facilities. Definitions of service animals and guidelines for their use can be described. A statement discussing availability of disability access information would also be appropriate here.

(5) Hunting and Fishing

If no hunting or fishing is allowed in the wilderness, simply state this fact if you feel it is helpful to do so. If hunting or fishing is allowed, objectives for managing this activity in a way that preserves wilderness values should be described. You may want to state if hunting camps are allowed and describe minimum requirement practices for carcass transport and storage and any facilities (e.g., tree stands, lockers) or use restrictions that are specific to hunters or hunting camps. Identify any special conditions or circumstances affecting hunting or fishing within the park wilderness.

(6) Climbing, Mountaineering, and Canyoneering

In some parks, a separate Climbing Management Plan may be needed if climbing activities are complex, substantial impacts are occurring, and/or climbing-related issues are controversial. In many parks where climbing within wilderness is a relatively minor activity, the topic may instead be addressed in the wilderness stewardship plan EIS/EA.

The purpose of this section is to provide overall guidance for the management of climbing, mountaineering, and canyoneering within the wilderness. This section might address access routes/way trails, route erosion, gardening, visual impacts, raptor closures, bivying, human waste management, conditions under which climbing activities would be permitted, permit requirements, and the types of, and conditions where, climbing equipment (fixed anchors, power drills, etc.) is acceptable (and not acceptable) within wilderness. The placement, presence, and removal of summit registers could be

addressed here. Specific actions for managing the environmental impacts from the climbing program could also be described (these actions might vary by zone).

Available access to designated climbing areas could be addressed along with seasonal and long-term closures. This section could also be used to outline the criteria the park would use to determine closures and propose specific closures.

(7) Watercraft

The purpose of this section is to describe what type of watercraft is appropriate in specific locations or zones in the park's wilderness/backcountry. The statement might describe designated shoreline access points. It may be helpful to include guidance on use of rafts and construction of rafts from native materials.

(8) Bicycles and Other Forms of Mechanical Transport

Bicycles and other forms of mechanical transport are normally prohibited within NPS wilderness areas. It might be appropriate to briefly emphasize this point. Your plan might describe any backcountry locations where this use is permitted. If there are backcountry trails open to bicycling or other forms of mechanical transport (e.g., strollers, carts, portage "trailers," in-line trail skates), it would be helpful to provide a general statement about the management of this use. You might want to outline criteria for determining what types of mechanical transport are acceptable within the backcountry (not wilderness) and list the types here. You could also refer to the criteria developed in the "Emerging Technologies/Uses" section, which may be similar if not the same. If there are backcountry trails that are being considered for new openings/closures to bicycling, you might want to consider including a list of the specific trails in the "Trails and Trailhead Management" section rather than here.

(9) Pets

Generally, pets are prohibited within NPS backcountry and wilderness areas. If this is the case in your park, a brief statement to that effect might be appropriate. If there are backcountry areas proposed to remain open to pets for the life of this plan, you may wish to list them here. A reference to the acceptable use of search dogs and service animals could be made here (although any specific guidance on service animals is more appropriate in the "Access for Persons with Disabilities" section).

(10) Special Events and Memorializations

Describe criteria for determining the types, terms, and conditions of special events that would be acceptable in the wilderness. You might want to take the step to list the specific types of events that are acceptable, which may vary by zone. However, since new event types are always arising, including specific criteria in the plan may prove helpful for evaluating it in the future.

Either describe the criteria for evaluating or identifying the types of memorializations that would be acceptable within the wilderness (historic and newly proposed). You may wish to address the issue of scattering human ashes from cremations.

(11) Emerging Technologies/Uses

Criteria should be established in the plan for evaluating the appropriateness and use of new technologies (e.g., cell and satellite telephones, computers, GPS systems, etc.) and new and emerging activities (e.g., sandboarding, all-terrain skating) within the wilderness. This section might also provide direction for educating the public and park staff about the effects of such technologies on wilderness character.

c) Managerial Management Actions

i. Administrative Actions

(1) Emergency Services (SAR, EMS, LE)

Describe how Section 4(c) exceptions of the Wilderness Act (including minimum requirement policies) will be applied to emergency situations, i.e., Search and Rescue (SAR), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Law Enforcement (LE). This can be done by stating what administrative actions will be considered emergencies and briefly outlining the park's emergency response approval process (e.g., case-by-case approval by Superintendent or Incident Commander). Criteria should be outlined for determining when the Section 4(c) exceptions apply (e.g., urgency and need for speed beyond that available by primitive means). The minimum tools for emergency response can be stated here, or emergency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) already developed through a minimum requirement process can be referenced in the appendix or in other documents. If you wish for the public to review the SOPs, include them here. Restoration of site impacts related to emergency services could be addressed here (or in "Rehabilitation and Revegetation" if applicable).

(2) Group Size

This section describes whether or not there is a maximum party size and if it varies by user type (day vs. overnight users, hikers, stock, commercial users). In many parks, this will vary by zone.

(3) Permit, Quota, and Reservation Systems

This section describes the purpose and objectives of any permit, quota, and reservation system. Describe how visitor use will be managed, as necessary, through restricting numbers of visitors. It might describe the type of user affected (day vs. overnight) and how the quota number would be established (e.g., by current numbers, estimated carrying capacity, by number of campsites) and administered (e.g., based on trailhead, camp area, or zone). It might also describe when and how quota numbers would be adjusted

(upward or downward). You might wish to include a general statement about how much adjustment will be made in the future within the parameters of this plan EIS/EA before another EIS/EA might be required (e.g., “upward adjustments in quotas will be in minimal increments”). Keep in mind that the more general the discussion here, the more flexibility will be available for managing quotas in the future. For example, listing effective dates for quotas in the wilderness plan (e.g., Memorial Day to Labor Day) may tie your hands in managing an unexpected increase in off-season use.

(4) Administration of Scientific Activities

The overall objective(s) for the management of scientific (natural resource, cultural resource, and social science) activities in wilderness should be presented. This should include all NPS and outside researchers' research, and inventory and monitoring activities. Describe how the research program and the inventory and monitoring program will be coordinated with the wilderness program. Explain the differences there will be in conducting resource research and inventory and monitoring in wilderness as opposed to non-wilderness, including application of the minimum requirement concept. Guidelines for incorporating wilderness management concerns (e.g., minimum requirement) in the research permit process should be provided. Criteria should be established for evaluating and determining the types and level of scientific activities (e.g., manipulative research, collection of wilderness resources, etc.), the amounts and length of disturbance allowed, and research and monitoring devices acceptable in each zone. Site restoration following scientific activities should also be addressed.

(5) Rehabilitation and Revegetation

Describe the objectives for your wilderness revegetation program if one exists or is proposed. You might want to outline what circumstances trigger rehabilitation and/or revegetation actions and the criteria for prioritizing projects. Direction might also be given for rehabilitation and revegetation actions following illegal activities (e.g., moss poaching, oversize stock group damage). Guidelines, based on the minimum requirement process and other policies, could be listed for project planning, sources of plant materials, site preparation (including soils), planting, mulching, plant aftercare, and monitoring of project “success.”

(6) Interpretation and Education

List the objectives for the wilderness education program and describe how the park will get there. Describe the park's key wilderness interpretive themes and education messages. Identify the target audiences for your wilderness education program. Outline the media and delivery mechanisms that would be most effective for reaching target audiences with the wilderness education message. Include personal and non-personal services. This section should include foundational guidance for wilderness-related interpretation and education that can be used in development of the park's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

(7) Existing Valid Rights

Section 1.4.5. describes the valid rights that exist within the wilderness. This section would describe how these rights might be managed to ensure the protection of both the valid rights and wilderness values. Provide a statement that clearly articulates what the legal rights are and what activities will be authorized associated with those rights. The plan should convey that the methods for exercising the established rights would effectively integrate the preservation of wilderness resources and values including the application of the minimum requirement.

Describe the conditions under which rights-of-way subject to administrative control will be administered to protect wilderness character and resources. If utility lines have been included in your wilderness, outline how their maintenance (including use of mechanized and motorized equipment) will be administered under minimum requirement procedures. If Congress has authorized commercial grazing or livestock driving in your wilderness, describe conditions and requirements here.

(8) Commercial Uses Including Commercial Photography and Filming

Many parks already have, or anticipate the development of, a Commercial Services Plan that addresses wilderness. If this is the case in your park, this section of the Wilderness Plan should provide the objectives and sideboards for commercial services within the wilderness from which the wilderness-related sections of the Commercial Services Plan would be developed.

Describe the overall objectives for commercial use in the wilderness. Criteria should be established for determining the types of commercial uses that will be authorized. An effective method for doing this is to define the meanings of “necessary” and “appropriate” as they relate to commercial use within the wilderness. Include consideration of the minimum requirement concept in the development of these definitions. It may be helpful to then work through the established criteria and state in the plan EIS/EA the specific types of commercial uses that are acceptable in your wilderness.

General requirements, terms, and conditions for commercial operations within the wilderness should be presented in the plan EIS/EA (e.g., facilities allowed, guide qualifications, Leave No Trace (LNT) training requirements, etc.). Limits on commercial operator numbers might also be addressed here. The park may wish to outline the allocation of reservations and quota space to commercial operators in this section as well.

General parameters for determining if commercial photography or filming will be allowed in the wilderness should also be described along with the general requirements for conducting these types of operations.

(9) Administration of Potential, Proposed, Recommended, and Suitable Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas

Use this section to describe in general terms how the above areas will be managed to ensure the protection and preservation of their wilderness values until Congress makes a final decision on their dispensation. A park should consider using the wilderness stewardship plan EIS/EA as the vehicle for addressing the non-conforming uses that prevent immediate designation of “potential wilderness” areas as wilderness.

(10) Interagency Coordination and Partnerships

Define objectives for interagency communication, coordination, and consistency that will enhance the protection and restoration of wilderness values. You might want to describe proposed actions for achieving these objectives here.

ii. Administrative/Management Facilities

(1) Trails and Trailhead Management

The purpose of this section is to discuss how trails and trail-related impacts will be managed within the park wilderness and/or backcountry. A number of parks have separate Trails Management Plans that provide the details for implementing their trails program. If this is the case in your park, this part of the wilderness stewardship plan should provide the foundational parameters for administering the trails program such as the overall objectives for trails management.

If a Trails Management Plan does not exist nor is anticipated, more detail should be provided here. Trail maintenance goals could be described. Trail classifications for maintained trails would be listed as well as trail clearing and brushing standards and tread width. Types of non-maintained pathways might also be defined (e.g., way trails, social trails) and clarification of which types are “legitimate” and which are targeted for removal/recovery. If there are proposals for changing a particular trail’s classification (e.g., all-purpose stock trail to foot trail closed to stock), it should be included in this section. The types of tread, water crossings, and other trail maintenance facilities (e.g., puncheon, water bars, etc.) acceptable in each zone should be stated, and any proposed standards for these. Parameters for reroute construction could be listed (e.g., lengths of reroute permitted without further compliance).

This section may include a description of maintenance frequency. The closure of any existing trails or the construction of any new trails should also be specifically addressed. This might be done with a general statement concerning whether this could occur, or you might choose to include specific proposals for the new trail(s). The list of current park trails would be provided under Section 3.7.2., “Existing Facilities.” You might also want to describe parameters for administrative stock use here (or include it as a separate heading under “Administrative Actions”).

This section might also address guidelines for trailhead facilities (type and design). It might also be helpful to relate if trailhead development will be commensurate with trail type and use for which it provides access.

(2) Campsite and Day Use Site Management

The purpose of this section is to discuss how campsites and campsite-related impacts will be managed. The overall objectives and guidance for camp area management would be described. Types of visitor use sites could be listed (day use, hiker, group, stock, no bare ground campsites) including the number and distribution which would be acceptable in each zone. The section might also state whether visitors would be required to camp in designated sites.

Campsite maintenance standards would be described including campsite bare-ground standards (if not mentioned in “Vegetation Resources”) and delineation and hardening of sites, both of which would likely vary by zone. Placement of sites might be addressed (e.g., distance from water). The construction of new sites or the closure of existing sites should be addressed. This might be done with a general statement as to whether this could occur, or you might choose to be specific and list the proposed new sites. The types of other campsite facilities (e.g., fire rings, site markers) acceptable in each zone should be stated and any proposed standards for these (stock facilities may be here or under “Stock Use”).

The density of campsites might be described, but often the intent of this standard is to address the visitor experience (e.g., number of other sites within sight or sound) and thus might alternatively be listed in the “Solitude” section. The list of current campsites would be included under Section 3.7.2., “Existing Facilities.”

(3) Signs and Other Route Markings

The type and number of signs acceptable in each wilderness and/or backcountry zone could be listed (e.g., boundary, directional and mileage, natural feature, regulation, safety, resource management). A general objective for sign design might be placed here (e.g., rustic in design) while specifics on design (metal or wood, round vs. square post, size letters, etc.) might be better handled in a park sign standards document (e.g., Sign Plan). The park sign plan will obviously need to be coordinated with the requirements of the wilderness plan.

Permanent and temporary route markings should be addressed (e.g., when and where (by zone) and whether or not metal tree markers, cairns, wands, flagging, etc. are acceptable).

(4) Ranger Stations, Visitor Use Shelters, and Equipment Caches

NPS Management Policies require that the presence of current structures within wilderness be evaluated. A park’s wilderness plan is an appropriate place to develop the specific criteria for evaluating whether existing ranger stations and visitor use shelters

should remain. It might also be the place for some parks to list specific structures proposed for removal or rehabilitation. Historic structures would be addressed in the “Cultural Resources” section but may be discussed here as well to provide a total picture of visitor use facilities or administrative facilities.

The types (e.g. cabin, tent, etc.) and location of ranger stations appropriate in each zone could be listed here. Criteria for construction of new ranger stations should be described if any additional might be considered in the future.

The placement or prohibition of visitor, park staff, or researcher caches should also be addressed. If caches are permitted, this discussion should address the acceptable types (food, visitor gear, park tools), maximum length for caching, and permitted locations (may vary by zone).

(5) Food Protection Systems

Describe guidelines for the presence and acceptable types of food protection systems in each zone. If you choose not to list the specific types acceptable in each zone, describe the criteria for making the decision.

(6) Sanitation and Waste Management Facilities

The purpose of this section is to describe how human waste and litter will be managed within the wilderness. Criteria can be listed to help determine whether a toilet is needed and what type of toilet is appropriate. Elements described in this section might include the type of toilet systems (pack-it-out, cat hole, pit, composting, vault) and type of structures (Wallowa, full-size privy) acceptable in each management zone. Guidelines for location of toilets (distance from water, campsites, trails) might also be covered.

(7) Radio Repeaters/Communication Facilities

Describe the criteria the park will use to evaluate the presence, placement, and type of communication facilities, structures, or installations within the wilderness. Determine parameters for the support of park and outside operations (i.e., under what circumstances will internal and external communication operations that affect the wilderness be supported).