

Definitions of Special Management Areas for federal public lands

Many different types of land management are applied to federal lands under a variety of regulations and prescriptions.

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The following areas or categories of areas, sites, and potential systems are regional, national, and international in scope and are managed totally or in conjunction with another agency, locale, or entity by the Bureau of Land Management. Most of these categories also apply to U. S. Forest Service areas. They are not listed in any particular order or sequence. The term "special" is limited to those areas and programs identified therein and may be expanded depending upon subsequent program and organizational capabilities at the Headquarters Office. Definitions are subject to refinement and currently form their basis from a variety of sources, i.e., statutory, policy, and program guidance. Comments to improve the definitions are encouraged.



NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM:

An area designated by Congress to assure that increasing population, expanding settlement, and growing mechanization does not occupy and modify all areas of the United States. Designation ensures that certain lands are preserved and protected in their natural condition. A wilderness in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is recognized where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. It is also an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which: (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER:

Any river designated by the Congress, or in certain circumstances by the Secretary of the Interior, into the National Wild and Scenic River System. Rivers are defined as flowing bodies of water or estuary or a section, portion, or tributary thereof, including rivers, streams, creeks, runs, kills, rills, and small lakes. They also must be free-flowing and with their immediate environments possess at least one outstandingly remarkable value, e.g., scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values.

Rivers designated within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System are classified in one of three categories depending on the extent of development and accessibility along each section. Designated river segments are

classified and administered under one of the following as defined in Section 2(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

1. Wild river areas - those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted; These represent vestiges of primitive America;
2. Scenic river areas - those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundment, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads, i.e., roads may cross but generally not parallel the river;
3. Recreational river areas - those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, may have some development along their shorelines and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA:

An area designated by Congress to provide for the conservation, protection, enhancement, use, and management for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations of certain natural, recreational, cultural, wildlife, aquatic, archeological, paleontological, historical, educational, and/or scientific resources and values associated therewith.

NATIONAL SCENIC AREA:

An area designated by Congress to provide for the conservation and protection of certain scenic, recreation, or and/or pastoral values and to provide for the enhancement of those values associated therewith.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA:

An area designated by Congress in order to assure the conservation and protection of certain natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, and fish and wildlife values and to provide for the enhancement of the recreational values associated therewith.

In addition, areas should meet the following criteria:

1. Spacious areas containing outstanding natural and/or cultural features and providing significant recreational opportunities, and
2. Located and designed to withstand comparatively heavy recreation use and usually located where they can contribute significantly to the recreation needs of urban populations, and
3. Provide recreation opportunities to assure national, as well as regional visitation, and
4. The scale of investment, development, and operational responsibility should be sufficiently high to require direct Federal involvement or substantial Federal participation to assure optimum public benefit.

NATIONAL MONUMENT:

An area designated to protect objects of scientific and historic interest by public proclamation by the President (under the Antiquities Act of 1906) or by Congress for historic landmarks, historic, and prehistoric structures, or other objects of historic or scientific interest situated upon the public lands and to provide for the management of those features and/or values associated therewith.

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA:

An area either designated by Congress or administratively by an agency to preserve exceptional, rare, or unusual natural characteristics and to provide for the protection and/or enhancement of natural, educational, or scientific values. The area is protected by allowing physical and biological processes to operate, usually without direct human intervention.

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK:

A district, site, building, structure or object in public or private ownership, which the Secretary of the Interior judges to have national significance in American history, archaeology, architecture, engineering, or culture, and worthy of preservation as an illustration or commemoration of the history and prehistory of the United States. The National Park System Advisory Board assists the Secretary in evaluating properties, and the National Park Service provides staff support for the Advisory Board and the National Historic Landmark (NHL) program. Private owners may decline to have a potential NHL designated. Upon designation, NHL's are automatically included in the National Register of Historic Places; however, they are subject to a higher level of protection from potential damage or destruction by a Federal undertaking than are other (non-NHL) National Register properties.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES:

The Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, maintains and expands a list of historic and prehistoric districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been found to meet criteria of local, State, or national significance. A State Historic Preservation Officer or a Federal agency official may nominate properties to the National Register. The National Register was designed to be a planning tool, to assist Federal agencies in assessing the effects of proposed Federal undertakings on significant historic properties. National Register eligibility is evaluated without regard to ownership. Private owners may decline to have an eligible property formally included in the National Register. A property's eligibility for or inclusion in the National Register ensures that effects on the property will be considered in Federal decision making procedures, but it does not prohibit damaging or destructive effects from being authorized.

NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARK:

An area of national significance (a site which exemplifies one of a natural region's characteristic biotic or geologic features having been evaluated as one of the best examples of that known feature) located within the boundaries of the United States or on the Continental Shelf and designated by either the Secretary of the Interior or Agriculture. Area must contain an outstanding representative example(s) of the nation's natural heritage, to include terrestrial communities, aquatic communities, landforms, geological features, habitats of native plant and animal species, or fossil evidence of the development of life on earth. A national registry of natural landmarks and database is maintained by the National Park Service.

NATIONAL RECREATION TRAIL:

Established and designated by either the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture, trails may be so designated within parks, forests, recreation areas, or where lands administered by these Secretaries are involved, subject to the consent of the Federal agency, State, political subdivision, or other appropriate administering agency having jurisdiction over the lands involved, upon finding that:

(1) such trails are reasonably accessible to urban areas, and, or (2) such trails meet the criteria established in the National Trails System Act

and such supplementary criteria as they may prescribe (3) where no Federal land acquisition is involved

(4) where designated on privately owned lands, the written consent of the owner of the property involved

NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL:

Authorized and designated only by an act of Congress, extended trails which will be so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historical, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. National scenic trails may be located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation.

NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL:

Authorized and designated only by Congress, extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance. Their purpose is to identify and protect historic routes and their historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. Only those selected land and water based components of a historic trail which are on federally-owned lands and which meet all three of the following criteria (established by statute) are included as Federal protection components:

(1) Must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally accurately follow the historic route, but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variations offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site. Trail segments no longer possible to travel by trail due to subsequent development as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked onsite as segments which link to the historical trail.

(2) Must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of native Americans may be included.

(3) Must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN:

Areas unique to the Bureau of Land Management, where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to public land and/or related waters containing resources, values, systems, processes, or hazards identified, designated, and protected through the land-use planning process. Potential areas must meet the following criteria:

1. Relevance - presence of a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; fish or wildlife resource or other natural process or system; or natural hazard; and
2. Importance - the above described value, resource, process, system, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.

RESEARCH NATURAL AREA:

An area designated or set aside by Congress or a public or private agency to preserve and protect typical or unusual ecological communities, associations, phenomena, characteristic, or natural features or processes for scientific and educational purposes. They are established and managed to protect ecological processes, conserve their biological diversity, and provide opportunities for observational activities associated with research and education. Research natural areas may be designated separately or as a part of other administrative designations, e.g., Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Research proposals and activities may be allowed if they do not interfere with natural processes. Areas may consist of diverse vegetative communities, wildlife habitat, unique geological formations, cultural resource values, and other values identified by physiographic province as outlined in State or agency natural heritage planning documents.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREA:

A network of sites and areas in North America identified and protected on a biogeographic scale and site-based approach, to maintain naturally occurring bird populations, across the ranges of those species. Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are important for maintaining taxa dependent habitats and ecosystems in which they occur. Selection of IBA sites are based on bird numbers and species complements held and when taken together form a network throughout the species biogeographic distribution. These networks represent areas critical to the conservation of some bird species and may include best examples of the species' habitat or typical examples due to threat which may result in a refuge to ensure their survival.

UNITED NATIONS BIOSPHERE RESERVE:

Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, which are internationally recognized within the framework of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Program on Man and the Biosphere (MAB). Reserves are nominated by national governments and must meet criteria and conditions before admitted to the network. Each biosphere should include three types of areas:

1. Protected areas (core area) for conservation and monitoring of minimally disturbed ecosystems (preservation of genetic resources, species, and landscapes);
2. Managed use areas (buffer zones) where experimental research, educational activities, recreation, and various economic activities occur according to ecological principles (developmental function to foster sustainable economic and human development);

3. Zones of cooperation (transition area) which are open-ended areas of cooperation where managing agencies, scientists, economic interests, non-governmental organizations, cultural groups, local citizens, and other stakeholders educate one another in the process of linking conservation, economic development, and cultural values (logistical support function to support demonstration projects, environmental education and training and research and monitoring related to local, national, and global issues of conservation and sustainable development).

WORLD HERITAGE SITE:

The World Heritage Convention, supported by the United States Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) and National Park Service, have established criteria (as explained in their operational guidelines) for cultural and natural sites. Article 1 of the Convention lays out the criteria for monuments, groups of buildings, and sites and Article 2 lays out the criteria for natural heritage and properties related.