

**NWCG Data Standard**  
**SPECIAL LAND DESIGNATOR**  
**Discussion Paper**  
January 9, 2008

(updated May 28, 2008, to reflect data attribute name change)

## **Background Information**

The list of special land designations included in this data standard includes only officially designated lands and not locally or informally declared lands so that a discrete list could be created. Statistical analysis can only be done with a discrete list and not free form text entries.

Some officially designated lands are not included in this list such as national parks. The reason this was done is because no special fire management activities would be taken by the park beyond their normal business as usual. However, within a national park a research natural area (one of the special land designations) might require special management activities or limit the types of operations that would be allowed.

## **Definitions**

### ***Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)***

***Definition:*** Areas of Critical Environmental Concern designated by the BLM under the 1976 Federal Lands Policy and Management Act.

***Extended Definition:*** The Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) program is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The ACEC program was conceived in the 1976 Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), which established the first conservation mandate for the BLM. The ACEC mandate directs the BLM to protect important riparian corridors, threatened and endangered species habitat, cultural and archeological resources and unique scenic landscapes throughout the Southwest that the agency believes need special management attention. To be designated as an ACEC, an area must meet the relevance and importance criteria listed in BLM Manual 1613 (1988) and require special management to protect and prevent irreparable damage to relevant and important resource values. Specific evaluation questions for each of these three elements are listed below.

### ***Endangered Species Critical Habitat***

***Definition:*** Designated Critical Habitat as defined in section 3(5)(A) of the Endangered Species Act From the Endangered Species Act - "Critical habitat" is defined in section 3(5)(A) and includes:

- Areas within a listed species' current (at time of listing) range that contain the physical or biological features that are essential to that species' conservation or that for some reason require special management; and

- Areas outside the species' current range that the secretary determines to be essential to its conservation.

### ***Wilderness/Primitive Area***

- ***Definition (Wilderness):*** Land designated by congress as Wilderness as defined in the Wilderness act (Public Law 88-577) – 1964 or Land designated as primitive.
- ***Definition (Primitive Area):*** Those lands officially designated as primitive areas (typically this was done before the wilderness act became law)

### ***Research/Public Use Natural Area***

- Research Natural Areas are part of a nationwide network of ecological areas set aside for both research and education. The United States Forest Service establishes these areas containing pristine areas that typify certain types of important forest, shrubland, grassland, aquatic, geological, alpine or similar environments that have unique characteristics of scientific interest.
- These areas are established under the Organic Administration Act of 1897. Areas designated as Research Natural Areas are primarily located inside National Forests.

### ***Late-successional reserve***

- An Option 9 land designation (see AMA, Matrix, and Riparian Reserves). A LSR contains forests set aside from Matrix type logging, to be held in reserve for wildlife habitat. Old clear cuts as well as old-growth forests are in LSRs. Logging is allowed if it will help the LSR reach old growth characteristics faster (see Old Growth Forest).

### ***Tribal or Native Allotment (including Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands)***

The Alaska Native Allotment Act of 1906, 34 Stat. 197, enacted on May 17, 1906, permitted individual Alaska Natives to acquire title to up to 160 acres of land in a manner similar to that afforded to Native Americans in the other states and territories of the United States under the General Allotment Act of 1887 (Dawes Act). However, the General Allotment Act and the Alaska Native Allotment Act, while in some ways similar, differed considerably in their purpose and political circumstances under which they were enacted, and differed in their effects as well.

The Alaska Native Allotment Act was repealed in 1971 with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), but with a savings clause that preserved allotment applications still pending on ANCSA's effective date of December 18, 1971. As of 2001, nearly 300,000 acres (1,200 km<sup>2</sup>) were still pending determination of entitlement.

## ***Nuclear Reservation***

- officially designated as a Nuclear Reservation

## ***Roadless Area***

- ***Definition:*** Areas inventoried by the USFS as being roadless where special rules regarding development may apply.

## ***Military Operations Area***

- ***Definition:*** An area designated for Military Operation, typically training, and may contain special military related hazards.

## ***Wild and Scenic River Corridor***

- An area designated by Congress or the Secretary of Interior to protect certain wild and or scenic rivers from development.

## ***Wilderness Study Area***

- ***Definition:*** A wilderness study area (WSA) contains undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, and managed to preserve its natural conditions. WSAs are not included in the National Wilderness Preservation System until Congress passes wilderness legislation.
- On Bureau of Land Management lands, a WSA is a roadless area that has been inventoried (but not designated by Congress) and found to have wilderness characteristics as described in Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. BLM manages wilderness study areas to protect their value as wilderness until Congress decides whether or not to designate them as wilderness. Wilderness bills often include so-called "release language" that eliminates WSAs not selected for wilderness designation.
- Some WSA's are managed exactly the same as wilderness areas, and the rules for others permit activities that are generally excluded from wilderness. For example, some WSAs allow mountain bikes and off-road vehicles.

## ***Wilderness – Proposed***

- ***Definition:*** Those lands that have been officially proposed as wilderness. In some cases these lands are managed as if they were wilderness and in other cases they are not.