



## GAME AND FISH NEWS

### **Tonto National Forest releases draft wilderness evaluation map for public review and comments. Comments requested by February 12.**



**January 19 news release from the Tonto NF**

PHOENIX — A [draft evaluation map](#) that shows ranked parcels of Tonto National Forest lands based on their level of wilderness characteristics is available for public review and comments.

Comments on the draft evaluation map will be most useful if received by Feb. 12, 2018. The public can submit comments in one of two ways:

- By using the [Wilderness Story Map](#)
- By using the [Draft Evaluation Comment Form](#)

The Forest Service welcomes additional public comments on the wilderness characteristic rankings given to each area identified. The [evaluation criteria](#) should be

used to provide feedback on the draft evaluation map and ranking determinations. Notes on these determinations can be found in the [draft evaluation determination rationale](#).

For additional questions on submitting a comment, contact the Planning Team at [tontoplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:tontoplan@fs.fed.us), or call [\(602\) 225-5200](tel:(602)225-5200) and ask for the Assistant Forest Planner.

Tonto National Forest officials developed the [draft evaluation map](#) as part of the ongoing [Wilderness Recommendation Process](#). This process involves four steps that help officials identify, evaluate, analyze and recommend lands that may be suitable for inclusion as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The draft evaluation map is part of Step 2, Evaluation. In this second step, officials evaluate the wilderness characteristics of all Forest Service lands included in the [inventory](#) that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System using a given set of criteria.

According to Neil Bosworth, forest supervisor for the Tonto National Forest, each area on the forest was evaluated for five characteristics: size, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, unique and outstanding qualities, and manageability.

“We expanded the evaluation criteria to help determine a ranking of wilderness characteristics for each area based on the evaluation criteria developed by public engagement and Tonto National Forest resource specialists,” Bosworth said. “It demonstrates the importance of public feedback as the Forest Service advances to the third and fourth steps in the Wilderness Recommendation Process.”

Visit the Tonto National Forest’s Wilderness Recommendation Page at <http://www.tontoplan.org/public-involvement/wilderness-inventory> to learn more about the Wilderness Recommendation Process and how to get involved in forest plan revision.

### ***Did you know?***

The Arizona Game and Fish Department receives NO Arizona general fund tax dollars? We hold the state’s wildlife in trust for the public without a dime from Arizona taxpayers.