



CENTRAL HARDWOOD NOTES

Planning And Managing Recreational Opportunities On Large Ownerships

Properly managed, central hardwood forests can provide quality outdoor recreation experiences. If you manage a large ownership, a system known as the "Recreation Opportunity Spectrum" (ROS), used by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, can help you *define* the kinds of recreation opportunities on your land, help you collect and evaluate recreation data, and help you set management objectives so you can provide quality recreation.

The ROS provides a framework that divides recreational experience into six "settings," ranging from primitive to urban (fig. 1). For each setting there is a list of "attributes" that characterizes or helps define it. For example, attributes of the *roaded natural* setting include *user interaction-low to moderate* and *resource modification evident* (table 1). These attributes will help you zone your ownership according to the kinds of recreational opportunities a person can experience.

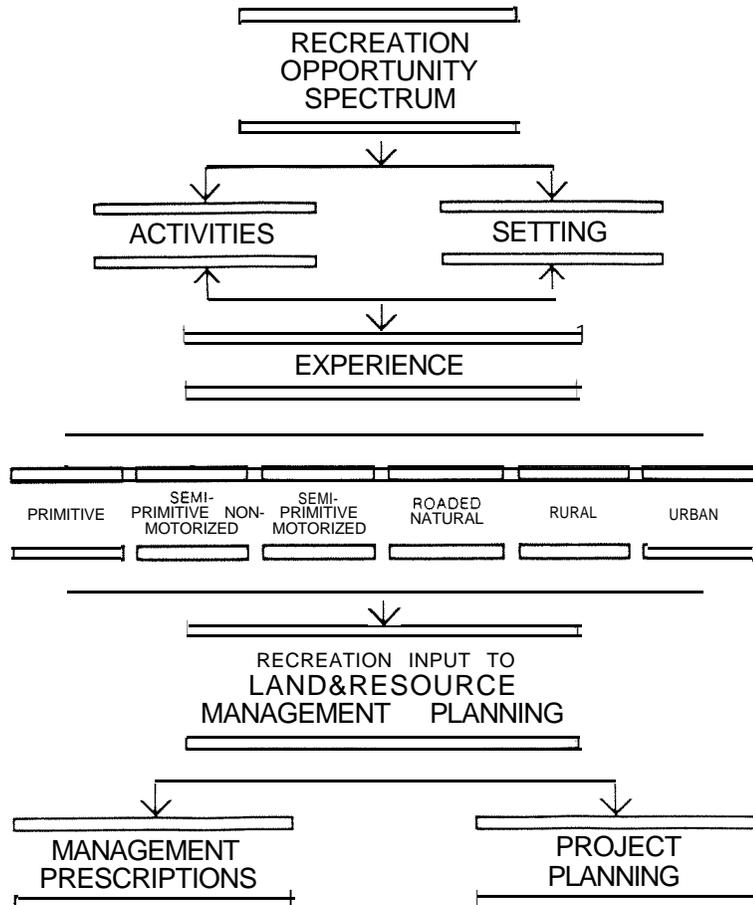


Figure 1 --The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum framework.

Table 1 .-*Recreational settings and the attributes that characterize them*

Primitive

- unmodified natural environment
- fairly large size
- user interaction very low
- very few management controls
- no motorized use

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized

- predominantly natural environment
- moderate to large size
- user interaction low
- minimum management controls
- no motorized use

Semi-Primitive Motorized

- same as "semi-primitive, non-motorized" except motorized use is permitted

Roaded Natural

- natural environment, but with sights/sounds of humans
- user interaction low to moderate
- resource modification evident
- conventional motorized use provided/designed

Rural

- substantial modified natural environment
- sights/sounds of humans readily evident
- user interaction moderate to high
- considerable facility development
- intensified motorized use and parking provided

Urban

- natural appearing, but essentially urban environment
- vegetation often exotic/manicured
- large numbers of users
- highly developed facilities
- intensive traffic/parking development

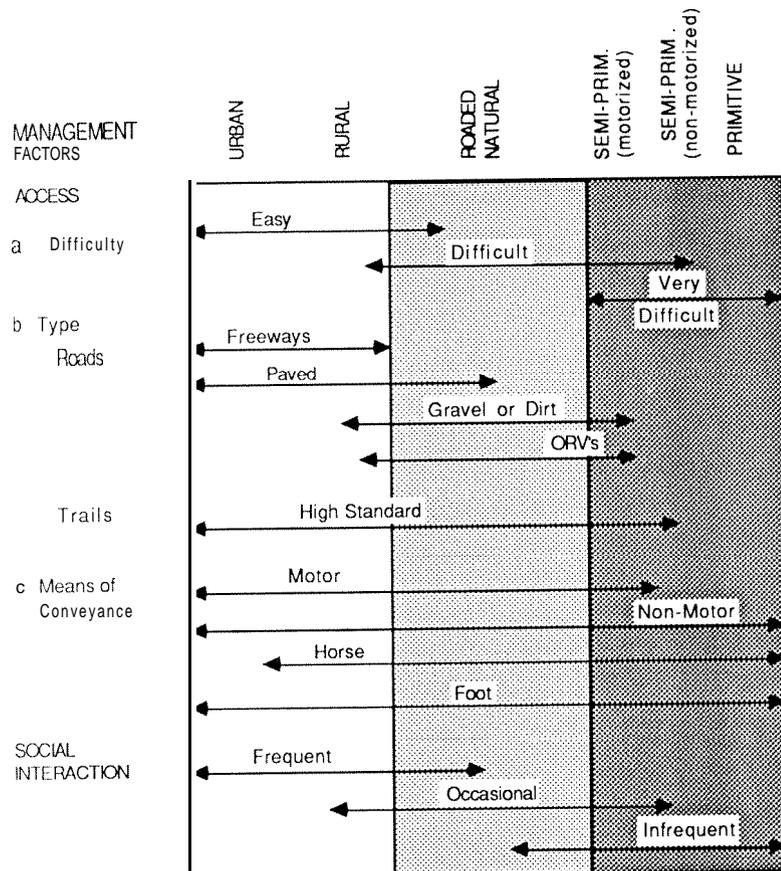


Figure 2.—Recreation Opportunity Spectrum settings.

The ROS framework also has “management factors,” which, together with the settings, form a grid (fig. 2). Only 2 of the 6 management factors are shown -- access and social interaction. (Access is subdivided into difficulty, type--roads or trails, and means of conveyance.) Figure 2 shows that access is “easy” in the urban and rural settings, “difficult” in the routed natural through semi-primitive non-motorized settings, and “very difficult” in semi-primitive motorized through primitive settings. By glancing down the routed natural column you can see the kinds of roads, trails, conveyance, and social interactions that are acceptable in a setting that is managed to be natural, but with roads.

How do you use the ROS system? First you should obtain a copy of the User’s Guide (see References). Next you would map all the cultural features (roads, trails, etc.) and then zone your land according to the settings and their attributes (table 1). (The remaining management factors are given and defined in the User’s Guide.) Then you should set your objectives for the land and develop the standards and prescriptions to maintain the kind of settings you want.

The ROS system will help you analyze how a management action such as timber harvest will alter one recreational use--say, fishing in a primitive setting--by increasing access, thereby creating use by mountain bikes or 3-wheelers, and a subsequent demand for more trails. The ROS gives you a way to portray these potential changes and evaluate whether they are desirable or inappropriate.

In summary, the ROS framework can help you:

1. Inventory, zone, and classify recreation settings, activities, and experiences.
2. Develop standards and prescriptions to maintain the kinds of recreation settings that you want.
3. Set management objectives and priorities to guide your decisionmaking.
4. Provide systematically for diverse, wide-ranging, quality recreation opportunities.

References

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 1982. ROS user's guide. Milwaukee, WI: Eastern Region, Recreation Management Staff. 38 p.
- Wenger, K.F., ed. 1984. Forestry handbook. Outdoor Recreation Management, Section 15. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons: 801-885.

William E. Hammit
Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee