

Evaluation of Indicators

By Edwin E. Krumpe and Linda Merigiano

In recent years, wilderness managers have become increasingly interested in developing monitoring programs to keep track of the condition of the natural resources. Several years ago, while working with USFS and NPS managers to integrate the "limits of acceptable change" concept into the management plan for the North, South and Middle Forks of the Flathead River, we discovered that a key element is choosing which indicators should be monitored.

This spring, the University of Idaho Wilderness Research Center began a study to identify and evaluate indicators of wilderness resource conditions. A panel of 100 physical, biological, and social scientists who have conducted wilderness research were asked to identify indicators that could be used in a monitoring program. Through an iterative process known as the Delphi technique, they narrowed their original list of over 200 indicators down to 32 which were most frequently selected. In the final stage, these scientists were asked to score whether or not each indicator meets nine specific criteria. (These criteria came from a review of the literature.) The outcome of this project will be (1) a comprehensive list of indicators, and (2) for the most frequently selected indicators, an evaluation of how well they should perform on nine criteria. This should prove useful to researchers and managers alike in a crucial step in the LAC process, choosing the best indicators to monitor wilderness resource conditions.

Krumpe is Director of the Wilderness Research Center at the University of Idaho, Moscow, ID; Merigiano is a graduate assistant.