

Executive Summary

Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS)

Diversity is an asset in America. From our work forces and financial portfolios to our natural resources and recreation opportunities, there is strength in conserving diversity.

Half a century ago, when people said they were going camping, fishing, or boating, it was clear what they intended. Today, due to many factors such as new technology and equipment, more facilities, and diverse public tastes and preferences, there are many types of camping, fishing, and boating. The outdoor recreation industry and profession has become much more complex and sophisticated.

Research has shown that recreationists not only seek recreation *activities* to participate in, but also specific recreation *settings* in order to enjoy a special kind of recreation *experience* and subsequent *benefits*. These four components (i.e., activities, settings, experience, benefits) constitute a *recreation opportunity*; that is, the *opportunity for a person to participate in a particular recreation activity (ies) in a specific setting in order to enjoy a particular recreation experience and the benefits this affords*. For example, one family might desire camping in a modern, full-service campground on a lake in order to spend quality time with the family, for rest and relaxation, and to see nature's beauty. Another family might desire camping in a rural location where they can test their fishing skills, enjoy solitude, and see nature's beauty. Both families want to go camping, but in very different settings leading to different kinds of experiences and benefits; that is, they are seeking different kinds of recreation opportunities.

The insert below depicts the linkage of the four components that define a recreation opportunity. It also conveys that a manager manages recreation activities and settings, while a recreationist consumes a recreation experience, and society benefits from an active outdoor public.

<u>A Recreation Opportunity</u>						
<i>Recreation Activity</i>	+	<i>Setting</i>	=	<i>Experience</i>	>>>	<i>Benefits</i>
many activities		physical attributes managerial attributes social attributes		many dimensions multiple senses		individual community economic environmental
<i>Managers Manage</i>				<i>Recreationists Consume</i>		<i>Society Gains</i>

The Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS) is a tool to understand the type and location of six types of water-related recreation opportunities, otherwise known as WROS classes. The six WROS classes range across a spectrum of urban, suburban, rural developed, rural natural, semi primitive, and primitive. Each WROS class is defined by a particular “package” of activities, setting attributes, experiences, and benefits.

The Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Urban <> Suburban <> Rural <> Rural <> Semi <> Primitive
Developed Natural Primitive

WROS enables the six recreation opportunity classes to be inventoried and mapped by using expert opinion and an inventory protocol that assesses the physical, managerial, and social attributes of the setting. The attributes that differentiate the WROS classes include:

Physical attributes	Managerial attributes	Social attributes
Degree of development	Degree of management presence	Degree of visitor presence
Sense of closeness to urban setting	Degree of public access facilities	Degree of non-recreational use
Degree of resource modification	Degree of developed recreation facilities	Degree of visitor concentration
Distance to development on or adjacent to a water resource	Degree of visitor services and conveniences	Degree of diverse recreation activities
Degree of natural ambiance		Degree of visitor comforts
		Degree of solitude/remoteness

WROS is also adaptive and flexible. For example, WROS allows for special local attributes to be considered in the inventory stage or for a manager to divide the WROS classes into subclasses or units.

The overarching goal of WROS *is to provide planners and managers with a framework and procedure for making better decisions for conserving a spectrum of high quality and diverse water recreation opportunities*. WROS improves our understanding of the complexity of outdoor recreation management, strengthens sound professional judgment, and enables a manager to make better and more defensible decisions.

WROS is an indispensable tool for inventorying, planning, and managing water resources where recreation is an important public use and benefits the local communities. More specifically, WROS is valuable for:

- Inventorying and mapping the current available recreation opportunities
- Helping tourists and recreationists choose where to recreate
- Assessing the effects of proposed land use and water management changes
- Improving public input and communication with stakeholders
- Improving management efficiency and effectiveness
- Improving regional interagency collaboration
- Improving the defensibility of management decisions

This Users' Guidebook provides the operational details for applying WROS. It is divided into four chapters. "Chapter 1: *Introduction*" provides a foundation and overview of WROS and discusses the important standards for WROS decision making. "Chapter 2: *WROS Inventory*" presents the steps and information needed to inventory a water resource and map the type and location of current WROS classes. "Chapter 3: *WROS Planning*" explains how to integrate WROS into any public resource planning process by using Reclamation's resource management planning process to illustrate. "Chapter 4: *WROS Management*" provides a set of guidelines and standards for each of the six WROS classes across more than 115 setting attributes.