

# The National Wilderness Preservation System



**Wilderness Act of 1964** "... where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."



Unconstrained. Unconfined. Untrammelled . . . Wilderness

In 1964, Congress established the National Wilderness Preservation System under the Wilderness Act. From the swamps of the southeast to the tundra in Alaska, from the hardwoods of the northeast to the deserts of the southwest, wilderness is found in all but six states. The Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, and the National Park Service are charged to preserve the natural condition of these lands and provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined wilderness experiences.



Howard Zahniser wrote the first draft of the Wilderness Act in 1956. Although he steered the draft through 65 revisions and 18 public hearings, he died in May 1964, just four months before it was signed into law.

## An Enduring Resource of Wilderness

Federal lands qualifying as wilderness must be designated by Congress through legislation. In some cases, federal agencies recommend suitable lands. In other instances, citizens put forward proposals for consideration by Congress. The process culminates when the legislation is passed by Congress and is signed by the President.

This secures "... for the American people of present and future generations an enduring resource of wilderness."

## Wilderness Benefits

Wilderness areas contribute significantly to our nation's health and well-being. The benefits these areas provide are as diverse as the areas themselves and far exceed the mere acreage protected. Yet protection does not ensure sanctuary from events that threaten wilderness character. The federal managing agencies, together with American citizens, must rise to the challenge of protecting these benefits and preserving our wilderness legacy.

### Water and Air . . .

Americans value wilderness most because these areas are sources of clean water and air. While the benefits of wilderness transcend its boundaries, they are threatened by forces outside wilderness. Pollution decreases water and air quality that people, plants and animals rely on. Preserving wilderness preserves clean water and air.

### Wildlife . . .

Americans value the wildlife that is protected in wilderness, from grizzly bears to wildflowers. Wilderness protects natural processes, including natural disturbances like fire, which give rise to rich biodiversity. Wildlife is threatened by non-native species, pollutants, and the suppression of natural processes. Preserving wilderness preserves wildlife.

### Legacy . . .

Americans from all walks of life value the wilderness legacy. This legacy is passed on from generation to generation by many who will never visit wilderness, yet value its undisturbed quality. Failure to preserve the untrammelled and natural conditions of these areas threatens this legacy. Preserving wilderness character preserves our wilderness legacy.

### Recreation . . .

Wilderness was created for the use and enjoyment of the American people. Yearly, over 12 million people visit wilderness to hike, ride horses, hunt, fish, ski, float, take pictures and stargaze, to name a few. Many people who visit wilderness are inspired and humbled by the feeling of being part of something larger than one's self. Wilderness is a haven for self-discovery and rejuvenation. Visitors must be aware that high use of sensitive areas threatens the untrammelled quality of wilderness. Preserving the integrity of wilderness preserves its unique recreational value.

### Economics . . .

Wilderness areas have a positive impact on local and regional economies. Counties with wilderness generally have higher income and employment growth rates. From sales to service, the economic benefits of wilderness influence every avenue of business that relies on this resource. Diminishing wilderness character threatens the far-reaching economic benefits of wilderness. Preserving wilderness helps to preserve a healthy economy.

All Americans can value wilderness as part of their heritage. Every citizen has a responsibility to ensure that the wilderness we have today remains wild for future generations to enjoy tomorrow.



In 1874, W. H. Holmes sketched Rock Creek Canyon, looking toward Treasury Mountains. This area later became the Raggards Wilderness in Colorado. Item No. 7444, sheet 48, U.S. Geological Survey Field Records Library, Denver, Colorado.



### Leave No Trace . . .

Seven principles for outdoor ethics:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

"It is our task in our time and in our generation, to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."

—President John F. Kennedy

## Wilderness Areas in the United States

WILDERNESS NAME	ACREAGE	YEAR	AGENCY	ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT	WILDERNESS NAME	ACREAGE	YEAR	AGENCY	ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT	WILDERNESS NAME	ACREAGE	YEAR	AGENCY	ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT
<b>ALABAMA</b>					<b>ALABAMA</b>					<b>ALABAMA</b>				
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