

WILDERNESS WITH A CAPITAL “W” FACTS

The Wilderness Act

[The 1964 Wilderness Act](#) established a “National Wilderness Preservation System to be composed of federally owned areas designated by Congress as "wilderness areas", and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness”.

Definition of Wilderness According to the Wilderness Act

- In contrast with those areas where humans and their work dominate the landscape, wilderness is recognized as an area where the earth and its community are not restricted or hampered by humans.
- An area of undeveloped federally -managed public land that retains its primeval character and influence without any permanent improvements or human habitation.
- Land that is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions and that generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature without the imprint of highly noticeable human work.
- Land that has substantial opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.
- Land with either at least 5,000 acres or of sufficient size for practical preservation.
- May also contain ecological or geological features, as well as features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Management of Wilderness Areas

Wilderness areas are public lands managed and protected by the four federal land management agencies—the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management in the Department of the Interior. For more information visit each agency’s Wilderness page.

- [Forest Service Wilderness](#)
- [National Park Service Wilderness](#)
- [Fish and Wildlife Service Wilderness](#)
- [Bureau of Land Management Wilderness](#)

Current Status

The 1964 Wilderness Act placed 54 areas into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Those areas included 9.1 million acres in 13 states.

Today the National Wilderness Preservation System has grown to include:

- 806 Wilderness areas that includes Puerto Rico.
- 111,880,002 million acres of protected Wilderness (represents less than 5% of the total United States land base)
- Wilderness areas in all but six U.S states: Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, and Rhode Island

Impacts of Wilderness

The benefits of Wilderness areas include:

- Provide habitat for wildlife and havens for threatened species.
- Filter and clean the air we breathe.
- Protect watershed and provide clean drinking water to communities.
- Boost nearby economies with tourism and recreation dollars.
- Provide outstanding places to recreate and to escape the bustle of the modern world.

Want to learn more about Wilderness?

[Wilderness Connect](#) is a great resource.