

What Is Wilderness?

Summary

Congress established The Wilderness Act of 1964 in order to preserve the nation's remaining wilderness heritage for its enduring cultural, scientific, and natural values. According to the Act, any area added to the National Wilderness Preservation System must be publicly owned, federal land "retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation...". The Act further states that "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain...". Qualifying lands are generally required to be at least 5,000 acres in size and must provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

Activities allowed in wilderness areas

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Backcountry camping
- Outfitting and guiding
- Rafting/canoeing/kayaking
- Horseback riding
- Hiking
- Scientific and nature study
- Educational Programs
- Control of fire, insects, and disease
- Livestock grazing, where previously established

Activities not allowed in wilderness areas

- Road building
- Logging and other forest removal such as "chaining"
- Mechanized transport (cars, jeeps, off-road vehicles, mountain bikes), except in emergencies, or such vehicles as wheelchairs
- Staking new mining claims or mineral leases
- New reservoirs or powerlines, except where authorized by the President as being in the national interest.

Biological and Spiritual Preserves

Wilderness areas provide long-term protection for the last of our nation's wild country—biological preserves of unimpaired ecosystems which serve as habitat to native plants and animals. But for many of us, there is also an important intangible value to wilderness. In his "Wilderness Letter" written in 1960, Pulitzer-prize winning author Wallace Stegner wrote:

We need wilderness preserved; as much of it as it still left and as many kinds, because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health, even if we never once in ten years set foot in it.

It is good for us when we are young because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there; important, that is, simply as idea.

More than nine million acres of Utah's public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) currently qualify for federal wilderness designation but remain unprotected. America's Redrock Wilderness Act would permanently preserve these lands for future generations.