



ARIZONA
WILDERNESS
COALITION
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What is Wilderness? *Questions & Answers*

What is Wilderness?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness 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.” The Act goes on to describe wilderness as “an area of undeveloped federal land” which “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable....” Wilderness areas are designated only by an act of Congress.

What activities are allowed in Wilderness areas?

Hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, picnicking, kayaking and canoeing, swimming, backpacking, horseback riding, rafting, skiing, snow-shoeing, bird-watching, and many other forms of recreation are allowed in wilderness areas. Any form of non-mechanized use is generally permitted, and motorized travel is allowed in cases of emergencies.

What activities aren’t allowed?

The Wilderness Act protects our wilderness areas from logging, road-building, and vehicle use, including both motor vehicles (such as snowmobiles, off-road vehicles and dirt bikes) and other mechanical vehicles including mountain bikes.

How much of our nation’s land is federally protected as Wilderness?

Approximately 107 million acres of public lands are protected as wilderness by law today – just 4.7 percent of our nation’s cherished landmass. Seven of every eight acres of qualifying public land administered on behalf of Americans by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management currently lack legal protection as wilderness.

Is a “roadless area” the same as Wilderness?

A “roadless area” is an area of unprotected wild land, and as such, is a potential wilderness area. Generally, a roadless area meets the congressional definition of wilderness, but it remains unprotected from activities such as logging, road-building, oil drilling or dirt-bike use.

What is considered a road?

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 defined a road as a route that is improved and maintained to ensure continuous use. Therefore, a route created only by continuous vehicle use (legal or illegal) is not a road. The Forest Service defines a road as a route that is passable by a standard passenger vehicle.

Is grazing of livestock allowed?

Grazing is allowed where it was established before designation as wilderness. Land management agencies may require additional environmental safeguards to protect the natural integrity of the wilderness area.

What about private or state lands?

Wilderness designation applies only to federal lands – and property owners are guaranteed access to their land. Studies have shown that property values go up in areas that are near federally protected lands.

OUR MISSION

azwild.org

The Arizona Wilderness Coalition's mission is to permanently protect and restore wilderness and other wild lands and waters in Arizona for the enjoyment of all citizens and to ensure that Arizona's native plants and animals have a lasting home in wild nature.

We do this by:

- Coordinating and conducting wilderness inventories
- Educating citizens about these lands and waters
- Enlisting community and business support
- Advocating for their lasting protection

Arizona

State Acres: 72,731,000

Acres of Wilderness: 4,528,913

Wilderness Units: 90

Defined by deserts, mountains and canyons, Arizona's wild places may offer more variety than any other state. Arizona spreads across more than 72 million acres, yet only 4.5 million acres (about 6% of the land base) have been designated as wilderness by Congress, giving permanent protection from development.

Arizona is a place of incredible natural beauty. It is home to the Grand Canyon, the Sonoran Desert, and numerous forested mountains ranges that give Arizona diversity of species and habitat, but which also creates a fragile biological hot spot that is susceptible to destruction and fragmentation.

The Arizona Wilderness Coalition has determined that nearly 7 million acres of additional federal lands qualify for wilderness, but they remain unprotected. For the next several years, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition's work will continue to focus on actively researching all of our federal public lands and waters for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River potential, prioritizing areas with tremendous biological potential, educating citizens and our elected officials about these priority lands, and involving them in our legislative advocacy work.

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