



**CAMPAIGN**  
for AMERICA'S 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 by Congress.

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

Approximately 109 million acres of public lands are protected by law as wilderness – less than five 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 lack legal protection as wilderness.

## **What activities are allowed in Wilderness areas?**

Any form of non-mechanized use is generally permitted, and motorized travel is allowed in cases of emergency. That means Wilderness areas are open to hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, outfitting and guiding, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, swimming, backpacking, horseback riding, pack trips, wheelchairs (including motorized wheelchairs), skiing, snow-shoeing, bird-watching, scientific research and nature study, control of fire and insect and disease outbreaks, livestock grazing, mining on pre-existing claims, and continued use, with reasonable access, of tracts of private or state land that may be within the boundaries of some wilderness areas.

## **What activities are off-limits?**

The Wilderness Act protects our wilderness areas from road building, oil and gas drilling, logging, mechanical vehicles such as dirt bikes, off-road vehicles, mountain bikes, and snowmobiles (certain motorized wheelchairs are allowed), new mining claims, new reservoirs, power lines, pipelines

## **Is livestock grazing allowed?**

Grazing is allowed where 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. Private property owners are guaranteed access to their land. Studies have shown that property values go up in areas that are near federally protected lands.

## **What about protection from fire of forests and homes near wilderness areas?**

Using whatever means necessary, the land managing agencies may fight forest fires in wilderness. The Wilderness Act provides that, “such measures may be taken as may be necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases, subject to such conditions as the Secretary [of Agriculture] deems desirable.”

*For more information visit [www.leaveitwild.org](http://www.leaveitwild.org)*