

Wilderness Management 101

This document provides a very brief overview of Forest Service wilderness policy, found in its entirety in Forest Service Manual 2320. Wilderness is managed to perpetuate and, where needed, to restore wilderness character within legal constraints. Preserving the wilderness resource is the overriding value; economy, convenience, commercial value, and comfort are not standards of management.

Commonly understood policies of wilderness management:

- No roads or timber harvest (with rare exceptions).
- No motorized use (except for emergencies or when necessary for purposes of administering wilderness).
- No mechanized transport (mountain bikes, game carts, etc.).
- Area is managed for primitive and unconfined recreation, with outstanding opportunities for solitude.
- Area is managed for the free play of natural processes.
- Naturally occurring fire is allowed, as much as possible, to play its natural role.

Other key nuances of wilderness management:

<p>Grazing Complex congressional guidelines provide for existing levels of grazing and necessary range improvements. However, grazing can not be increased following wilderness designation.</p>	<p>Prescribed Fire Used only to meet wilderness fire management objectives rather than to benefit individual species or vegetation types, enhance forage, or provide other single resource benefits.</p>
<p>Fish and Wildlife Generally allows for natural selection and survival without human intervention. Known TES species are protected. TES habitat can be recovered; however, priority is to achieve habitat goals outside wilderness first. Do not stock exotic fish species or fishless waters (however state has control of this). Hunting and fishing allowed where permitted.</p>	<p>Cultural Resources Protected by law. Structures not eligible for National Register are removed or allowed to deteriorate naturally. Regional Forester may approve stabilization or restoration of structures, which is generally accomplished by non-motorized /mechanized means.</p>
<p>Minerals Complex guidance. Existing claims may be explored and developed in a manner compatible with wilderness character, and restored upon completion of activities. No new claims may be filed.</p>	<p>Structures In general, structures are only authorized when absolutely necessary for the purposes of wilderness administration. Structures, such as shelters, are not maintained for public occupancy.</p>
<p>Existing Snow Measurement Sites May continue, but are generally accessed by non-motorized /mechanized means.</p>	<p>Research Can be approved if compatible with wilderness values and cannot be conducted outside wilderness.</p>
<p>Watershed Improvements Can occur where needed to protect wilderness values or to prevent serious threat to life or property.</p>	<p>Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) If necessary to prevent unnatural loss of wilderness resource or to protect life and property.</p>
<p>Water development structures (i.e. dams or water lines) New structures require Presidential approval. Existing structures may continue (without modification) if in public interest or part of valid existing right.</p>	<p>Commercial Uses/Forest Products The Wilderness Act prohibits commercial uses in wilderness. The exception is allowing for outfitting and guiding where such use is necessary for realizing the purposes of wilderness (such as assisting those visitors that lack the skill or equipment to visit).</p>
<p>Insect and Disease Outbreaks Controlled if unacceptable threat to adjacent lands, or if introduced pests would cause unnatural loss to wilderness resource.</p>	<p>Recreation Management Maximizes visitor freedom. Information and education is a primary tool. Direct controls can be applied where other tactics have failed. Structures are only provided when essential for resource protection.</p>