

Wilderness.net's Cohutta Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Cohutta Wilderness in 1975 and it now has a total of 37,030 acres. Georgia contains approximately 35,284 acres. Tennessee contains approximately 1,746 acres. It is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Most of mountainous Cohutta, the state's second largest Wilderness, lies in Georgia and within the Cohutta Wildlife Management Area. But a small

portion runs over the border into Tennessee. Immediately northeast of Tennessee's portion, and sharing a border, lies Big Frog Wilderness. Although loggers worked their way through 70 percent of the forest between 1915 and 1930, oak and pine have all but reclaimed the forest, and a rich growth of hardwoods now fills out the lower elevations: magnolia, maple, buckeye, hornbeam, sassafras, holly, silver bell dogwood, and chestnut, to name but a few. Spring and summer bring a riot of colorful blooms to many shrubs, vines, and herbaceous plants, ranging from the brilliant orange of flame azalea to the pink and yellow of lady's slippers, the blue cohosh, and the scarlet cardinal flower. But summer also means heat and high humidity, biting insects, and foliage so dense it blocks some views that are truly spectacular in fall and spring. The Conasauga and Jacks Rivers, two of the state's most prolific trout streams, drop through rocky gorges and flash flood the Wilderness during periods of heavy rain. Anglers can try hooking trout in the many streams, too, while hunters train their sights on white-tailed deer, black bears, and wild boars. More than 100 bird species have been identified in the area (situated along the Appalachian Flyway), along with copperheads, timber rattlesnakes, and other slithering species. Popular trails follow both the Conasauga and Jacks Rivers, and at least a dozen other footpaths provide access to the Wilderness. Many of the trails require wading through waterways. The 15.7-mile Jacks River Trail, for instance, passes through water no less than 40 times.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Cohutta Wilderness.

1. [Plan Ahead and Prepare](#)
2. [Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces](#)
3. [Dispose of Waste Properly](#)
4. [Leave What You Find](#)
5. [Minimize Campfire Impacts](#)
6. [Respect Wildlife](#)

7. [Be Considerate of Other Visitors](#)

For more information on Leave No Trace, [Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.](#)

Area Management

The Cohutta Wilderness is part of the 109 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Cohutta Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. Contact the Forest Service office for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with areas where people and their works are dominant.

Wilderness-Specific Regulations

Wilderness managers often need to take action to limit the impacts caused by visitor activities in order to protect the natural conditions of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Managers typically implement 'indirect' types of actions such as information and education measures before selecting more restrictive measures. When regulations are necessary, they are implemented with the specific intent of balancing the need to preserve the character of the wilderness while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness.

The following wilderness regulations are in effect for this area. Not all regulations are in effect for every wilderness. Contact the Forest Service office for more specific information about the regulations listed.

ALL VISITORS

-- Group size is limited to no more than 12 people per party, in general, or 4 people for parties further than 300 feet from a trail, the Jacks River, or Conasauga River.

-- Campfires are prohibited if more than 300 feet from a trail, the Jacks River, or Conasauga River. Within 300 feet, it is prohibited to build or use more than one campfire per campsite.

-- Campfires and alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the Jacks River Falls area.

-- Dogs must be leashed at all times.

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

-- Camp in designated campsites if within 300 feet of a trail, the Jacks River, or Conasauga River. If more than 300 feet from the Jacks or Conasauga Rivers, campsites cannot be larger than 400 square feet.

-- Camping is prohibited within 50 feet of any river or stream and 20 feet of any trail.

-- Overnight camping is prohibited in the Jacks Falls River Area, except from November 1 through March 31.

-- Camping is prohibited in the Jacks River area, except at designated campsites in the Beech Bottom area from November 1 through March 31.

STOCK USERS

-- Groups are limited to no more than 8 head of pack or saddle stock.

-- Pack or saddle stock must remain within 300 feet of any trail.

-- Hitching, tethering, or hobbling pack or saddle stock is prohibited within 50 feet of any water source.

-- Pack or saddle stock are prohibited on developed trails which are closed to horses. This includes the Conasauga River Trail, Rough Ridge Trail, Panther Creek Trail, Sugar Cove Trail, Chestnut Lead Trail, Tear Britches Trail, Horse Shoe Trail (North 1 Mile), Jacks River-allowed only between beech bottom/penitentiary branch, Benton Mackaye-prohibited on trail except where hemptop and Benton Mackeye Trails are the same tread for a short distance.

Contacts

Conasauga Ranger District
3941 HIGHWAY 76
CHATSWORTH, GA 30705

Phone: 706-695-6736

Links on Wilderness.net

[National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations \(NGOs\)](#)

A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

[Career and Volunteer Opportunities](#)

A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

Law	Date	Acreage Change (in acres)
Public Law 93-622	January 3, 1975	34,500
(Known as the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act) - Public law 93-622 (1/3/1975) To further the purposes of the Wilderness Act by designating certain acquired lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, to provide for study of certain additional lands for such inclusion, and for other purposes		
— download 93-622		
Public Law 94-268	April 16, 1976	0
(No official title, boundary adjustment for Bristol Cliffs Wilderness) - Public law 94-268 (4/16/1976) To provide for the modification of the boundaries of the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area and for other purposes		
<i>NOTE:</i> Appears to redesignate the Cohutta Wilderness, however likely contains boundary adjustments in accompanying maps.		
— download 94-268		
Public Law 99-555	October 27, 1986	2,940
Georgia Wilderness Act of 1986 - Public law 99-555 (1/21/1986) To designate certain National Forest lands in the State of Georgia to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes		
— download 99-555		