

Wilderness.net's Gee Creek Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Gee Creek Wilderness in 1975 and it now has a total of 2,559 acres. All of the wilderness is in Tennessee and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

To the early settlers in South Carolina, the Cherokee Indians lived "over the hills" in eastern Tennessee. People today refer to the region, which includes the southern portion of Cherokee National Forest, as Tennessee Overhill Country. Small Gee Creek Wilderness marks the forest's western border, with the long rise of Starr Mountain to the west and north and Chestnut Mountain to the south. South-flowing Poplar Springs Branch and Gee Creek drain the Wilderness. From a distance, the two waterways appear to cut a V in the otherwise continuous face of the mountains where the drainage lies. Peaceful trails follow Poplar Springs Branch and Gee Creek through hollows dense with hemlock, buckeye, white pine, beech, and rhododendron. Both creeks teem with native trout, and the fishing can be excellent. Loggers once devastated the forest, but that was 80 years ago. Lush trees have long since returned, even though some have had to contend with old mining sites (one of which you can still see on Gee Creek) and other abandoned relics of the past. The semiprimitive Gee Creek Trail starts at a parking lot outside the southwestern corner and follows an old forest road about one-half mile before entering the Wilderness to trace the creek for a total of approximately two miles to a dead end. This is a place where you'll feel isolated from the rest of the world and as immersed in wildness as you can get in Tennessee. The trail branches at the confluence of Poplar Springs Branch to go a short distance up Gee Creek and a long distance up the branch. The terrain steepens in the northern section. The Chestnut Mountain Trail follows the slopes of Chestnut Mountain in the south and east for 5.6 miles and is used primarily by horseback riders. The total trail equals about eight miles.

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 Gee Creek 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 Gee Creek 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 Gee Creek 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.

Contacts

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BENTON, TN 37370

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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	2,570

(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](#)