

# Wilderness.net's Aldo Leopold Wilderness Fact Sheet



## Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Aldo Leopold Wilderness in 1980 and it now has a total of 203,524 acres. All of the wilderness is in New Mexico and is managed by the Forest Service.

## Description

Named for one of history's most influential conservationists, the Aldo Leopold Wilderness protects the roughest, wildest portions of one of New Mexico's roughest, wildest corners: the Black Range. The Forest Service manages this 202,016-acre wilderness, which was established in 1980 and lies just east of Forest Service Road 150 from the even bigger Gila Wilderness.

**Terrain** The Aldo Leopold Wilderness drapes the southern spine and subsidiary ridges of the north-south-running Black Range, mostly composed of Tertiary-era volcanics. McKnight Mountain rears to 10,165 feet in the southern portion of the wilderness, marking the highest summit in the range. The topography is rugged, consisting of sharp ridges and broad benches broken by deep canyons. The Continental Divide hugs a portion of the Black Range crest to 10,015-foot Reeds Peak, where it curves southwestward out of the wilderness.

Major drainages include the Mimbres River, Diamond Creek, and the headwater streams of Seco Creek. Some springs and creeks are seasonal, while others are perennial.

**Ecology** From canyon riparian communities of willows, cottonwoods, boxelder, and Arizona sycamore, slopes in the Aldo Leopold Wilderness rise through juniper, pinyon, ponderosa pine, and oak woodlands to about the 7,000-foot level. Higher montane and subalpine forests include Engelmann and blue spruce, white and subalpine fir, and quaking aspen.

Wildlife is rich. Small creatures include numerous kinds of lizards, snakes, rodents, and bats, while medium- to large-sized mammals range from gray foxes, bobcats, and ringtails to coyotes, black bears, mountain lions, mule deer, and elk. The Wilderness also falls within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recovery area for Mexican gray wolves, first reintroduced into the region in 1998.

**Notes** The Wilderness is named for Aldo Leopold, a pioneering ecologist and conservationist best known for his seminal 1949 text on the "land ethic," *A Sand County Almanac (and Sketches Here and There)*. In his early career, Leopold worked for the Forest Service in the Southwest and was instrumental in the designation of the country's (and world's) first wilderness area, the Gila Wilderness, which adjoins the Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

A 33-mile-plus section of the Continental Divide Trail traverses the Aldo Leopold Wilderness, and there are also many miles of additional hiking trails.

## 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 Aldo Leopold 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 Aldo Leopold 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 Aldo Leopold 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 or visit the websites listed below 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 or visit the websites listed on the 'Links' tab for more specific information about the regulations listed.

#### ALL VISITORS

- Group size is limited to no more than 25 people per party.
- Overnight visitors cannot occupy a single location longer than 30 days in a 45-day period, with no more than 15 days per Ranger District.
- Storing any camping equipment, personal property, or supplies (caching) is prohibited.
- Do not shortcut switchbacks.
- As with all designated Wilderness, mechanical transportation (including wagons, game carts, and other vehicles) is prohibited.

#### STOCK USERS

- Possessing pack and saddle stock in groups larger than 35 animals is prohibited.
- Grazing by unauthorized livestock is prohibited.

### **Contacts**

**Wilderness Ranger District**  
HC 68 BOX 50  
MIMBRES, NM 88049

Phone: 575-536-2250

Phone: 575-894-6677

**Black Range Ranger District**  
1804 N DATE STREET  
TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NM 87901

### **Links to Other Websites**

[Gila National Forest Wilderness Web Site](#)

### **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)
<b>Public Law 96-550</b>	<b>December 19, 1980</b>	<b>211,300</b>
New Mexico Wilderness Act - Public law 96-550 (12/19/1980) To designate certain National Forest System lands in the state of New Mexico for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes		

— [download 96-550](#)