

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 202,016 acres. All of the wilderness is in New Mexico and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

This Wilderness, which straddles the crest of the Black Range and contains the most rugged and wild portion of these mountains, pays tribute to one of the greatest pioneers of Wilderness preservation. Only Forest Service Road 150 separates it from the even larger Gila Wilderness, recognized on June 3, 1924, as the world's first designated Wilderness area, a direct result of Leopold's efforts.

The Black Range shoots out in a network of deep canyons and precipitous timbered ridges, rincons, and forested benches—a land of superlative beauty and unbroken serenity. Juniper, piñon pine, and oak dominate up to about 7,000 feet, at which point other pines, fir, spruce, and aspen take over the woodland.

Vista points here sometimes drop off as much as 1,000 feet to rivers and streams verdantly outlined by cottonwoods, willows, and elders. And while some springs flow throughout the year, other springs and streams dry up at times.

One thing that never dwindles is the wealth of critters, from bats to bears, coyotes, foxes, skunks, raccoons, ringtail cats, bobcats, mountain lions, squirrels, rats, mice, and voles, along with a multitude of songbirds, plus frogs, lizards, and snakes.

The Continental Divide cuts across the center ridgeline of the Wilderness, and a 33-mile-plus section (with many miles of trails) of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) forms a portion of the southern boundary. Consider devoting a large chunk of time to exploring this area. When you discover the bounty that awaits you, you won't regret it.

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 110 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

Storing any camping equipment, personal property or supplies when leaving the area is prohibited.

Maximum group size is 25 persons.

Camping for a period longer than 30 days in a 45 day period is prohibited on the Gila N.F., with no more than 15 days per Ranger District.

Possessing pack and saddle stock in groups larger than 35 animals is prohibited.

Possessing or using a wagon, cart or other vehicle is prohibited.

Grazing by unauthorized livestock is prohibited.

Shortcutting a switchback 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)
Public Law 96-550	December 19, 1980	211,300

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](#)