

Wilderness.net's Pemigewasset Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Pemigewasset Wilderness in 1984 and it now has a total of 45,809 acres. All of the wilderness is in New Hampshire and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Nary a road blemishes New Hampshire's largest Wilderness, a bastion of hardwoods further insulated by a series of raggedly beautiful peaks that extend beyond the tree line and drain in-to the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River. If you make it past these welcome obstacles, prepare to enjoy New England backpacking at its best. The "Pemi" is so secluded, in fact, that I've run across many a moose, deer, even a fox and a black bear. Loggers removed almost the entire forest cover between 1890 and 1940, but 55 years of regeneration have eliminated virtually all signs of that era. The sharp, narrow Franconia Range and Twin Range form a horseshoe around the western portion of the area, with the Franconia threatening to challenge the Presidential Range for the title of Premier Peak. Mount Bond's crags and ledges demarcate the central northern boundary, and the Bondcliffs, just southwest of Mount Bond, quietly flaunt a vista across mountains and forests that show no trace of human interference. This is one of the few places in New Hampshire that can confess to boasting such a flawless view. The Wilderness flattens in the eastern portion, an area sometimes referred to as the Desolation Region for having withstood devastating logging operations. But despite the bad rap, the Desolation Region contains lovely Thoreau Falls, Ethan Pond, and Shoal Pond. The Lincoln Woods Trail leaves a parking lot on the Kancamagus Highway, then crosses the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River on a 160-foot-long suspension bridge. At that point it turns east to enter the Wilderness and become the Wilderness Trail, which continues to travel upstream for a combined total of about nine miles along the East Branch. This trail, possibly the most trekked upon in the White Mountains, follows an old railway bed. Camping is forbidden within one-quarter mile of the Wilderness Trail. At least nine well-maintained trails leave the Wilderness Trail to provide foot access to the area. The Appalachian Trail follows the northern border.

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 Pemigewasset 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 Pemigewasset 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 Pemigewasset 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 10 people per party.

-- Do not store equipment, personal property, or supplies (caching) in the Wilderness (including geocaching and letterboxing).

-- As with all designated Wilderness areas, mechanical transportation (including wagons, game carts, and other vehicles) is prohibited.

Campfires are prohibited at the following locations (except at designated sites):

1. within 200 feet of any trail
2. within 200 feet of the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River from the Wilderness boundary to its crossing with the Thoreau Falls Trails (including islands)
3. where trees are 8' tall or less (except when there is 2 or more feet of snow)
4. within 1/4 mile of Thoreau Falls
5. within 1/4 mile of any hut, shelter, cabin, picnic area, developed campsite, or developed day use site

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

-- Overnight visitors cannot occupy any single location longer than 14 days in a 30-day period.

Camping is prohibited at the following locations (except at designated sites):

1. within 200 feet of the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River from the Wilderness boundary to its crossing with the Thoreau Falls Trails (including islands)
2. where trees are 8' tall or less (except when there is 2 or more feet of snow)
3. within 1/4 mile of Thoreau Falls
4. within 1/4 mile of any hut, shelter, cabin, picnic area, or developed day use site

Contacts

Pemigewasset Ranger District
71 WHITE MOUNTAIN DRIVE
CAMPTON, NH 03223

Phone: 603-536-6100

Remarks: Office hours 8-4:30 pm EST M-Fri

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 98-323	June 19, 1984	45,000

New Hampshire Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public law 98-323 (6/19/1984) To establish wilderness areas in New Hampshire, and for other purposes

— [download 98-323](#)