Wilderness.net's Shining Rock Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Shining Rock Wilderness in 1964 and it now has a total of 18,483 acres. All of the wilderness is in North Carolina and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Named for a micaceous rock outcrop, Shining Rock became one of the original components of the National Wilderness Preservation System in September 1964, a few months after garnering designation as a Wild area. It is now the largest Wilderness in North Carolina, separated by only a road from Middle Prong Wilderness to the southwest. Standing at an elevation of more than 5,000 feet and boasting five peaks exceeding 6,000 feet (three within the Wilderness boundaries), Shining Rock Ledge forms the backbone of this area.

Here in this series of high ridges on the north slopes of Pisgah Ridge, you'll find extremely steep and rugged terrain ranging in elevation from 3,200 feet on the banks of the West Fork of Pigeon River, a major tributary of the Tennessee River, to 6,030 feet on Cold Mountain. Streams abound, cutting narrow passages through the mountains on their way to either the East or West Forks of the Pigeon River. Loggers cut down the forest between 1906 and 1926 and fires raged through the area in 1925 and 1942. These two factors account for Shining Rock's grassy "balds" and unique vegetation.

Almost all the trails in the area rate as difficult, and they can be hard to follow. Nevertheless, this Wilderness is one of the most trampled in the state, especially along the trails of Art Loeb (11.6 miles), Ivester Gap (1.6 miles), and Shining Creek (3.4 miles). The entry at the Big East Fork Trailhead also sees heavy use. Off-trail you will see few other humans. No campfires are permitted, and group size is limited to 10.

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 Shining Rock 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 Shining Rock 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 Shining Rock 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 10 people

Dogs must be on leash or under control

Campfires prohibited

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

Campsites must be at least 100 feet from streams

Proper food storage required due to bears

Maximum length of stay is 14 continuous days

STOCK USERS

Stock animals cannot be tethered within 50 feet of streams

Stock animals allowed on designated horse trails only

Contacts

Pisgah Ranger District
1600 PISGAH HIGHWAY
PISGAH FOREST, NC 28768

Phone: 828-877-3265

Links to Other Websites

Air Resource Management Data for the Shining Rock Wilderness

National Forests in North Carolina

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 88-577	**September 3, 1964**	**13,400**

The Wilderness Act - Public law 88-577 (9/3/1964) To establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people, and for other purposes

download 88-577

Public Law 98-324 June 19, 1984 5,100

North Carolina Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public law 98-324 (6/19/1984) To designate certain public lands in North Carolina as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System

download 98-324