Wilderness.net's Ojito Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Ojito Wilderness in 2005 and it now has a total of 11,183 acres. All of the wilderness is in New Mexico and is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Description

Historically, several human cultures have tried to carve a living from Ojito's resources. Although there are several types of ruins within the area, including those of the prehistoric Puebloan, Navajo, and Hispanic cultures, few historic records exist concerning their lives here. The rugged terrain, rocky soils, and scarce water supply must have made their daily life very difficult. The ruins and artifacts left by these residents are the clues that archeologists use to tell the story of their existence here. They should be left undisturbed where you find them so future visitors can also enjoy them, and future archeologists can study them. Archeological remains are protected by the Archeological Resources Protection Act and other laws.

Fossil remains of rare dinosaurs, plants, and trees have been discovered in Ojito. They are found in the Jurassic-age Morrison Formation (about 150 million years old). The erosion process has exposed large segments of petrified trees and the bones of huge dinosaurs, including one of the largest dinosaur skeletons ever discovered – that of a Seismasaurus. Because these fossil remains of plants and animals provide important information about life during this period it is important that, like the archeological remains, they are left undisturbed until they can be collected and studied by professional paleontologists. Collection of these fossils is prohibited by law unless authorized by permit.

Three rare plant species - grama grass cactus, Knight's milkvetch, and Townsend's aster are found in Ojito. New Mexico's lowest elevation stands of Ponderosa pines are in Ojito, far below where pines usually grow. The area provides nesting habitat for birds of prey, swifts and swallows. Other wildlife species that call Ojito home include various reptiles, mule deer, elk, American antelope, and the mountain lion.

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 Ojito 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.

Location

The Ojito Wilderness is accessible from Albuquerque by traveling north on I-25 for approximately 16 miles and exiting on US 550. (From Santa Fe travel south approximately 40 miles.) Traveling northwest toward Cuba on US 550 from Bernalillo, the distance is approximately 20 miles. Before San Ysidro (about 2 miles), turn left onto Cabezon Road (County Road 26). Follow the left fork.

The south and west boundaries are accessible by dirt road. Always know where you are traveling and where you have been as it is easy to get lost in the hundreds of miles of dirt roads. Roads are passable during dry conditions but be aware they can get slippery and rutted during wet seasons, which normally are spring, late summer and winter.

Non-federal Lands: Some areas within and near the boundaries are private, state, and/or Pueblo of Zia lands. Remember to get permission before you enter or cross private lands. The State of New Mexico requires a recreation permit for access to state lands - more information may be found on their web site at www.nmstatelands.org.

Area Management

The Ojito 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 Ojito Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

Unless otherwise specified, no motorized equipment or mechanical transport, with the exception of wheelchairs, is allowed. This is generally true for all federal lands managed as designated wilderness.

Contacts

Bureau of Land Management
435 Montano NE
Albuquerque, NM 87107
Restrictions: Office hours: 7:45-4:30 Monday-Friday

Phone: 505-761-8700
Fax: 505-761-8911

Links to Other Websites

Bureau of Land Management

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 109-94	**October 26, 2005**	**11,183**

Ojito Wilderness Act - Public law 109-94 (10/26/2005) A bill to designate the Ojito Wilderness Study Area as wilderness, to take certain land into trust for the Pueblo of Zia, and for other purposes.

download 109-94 - Relevant legislation found on page(s): 2.

Public Law 109-309	**October 6, 2006**	**0**

Public law 109-309 (10/6/2006) To amend the Ojito Wilderness Act to make a technical correction. *NOTE:* Changes the map referenced in the Ojito Wilderness Act.

download 109-309 - Relevant legislation found on page(s): 1.

General Trip Planning Information

The White Mesa Bike Trails lie to the east of the Ojito Wilderness Boundary. Within this unique geological landscape are 15 miles of bike trails designed for both beginning and expert riders.

Recreational Opportunities

Hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and wildlife observation to name a few, can all be enjoyed without a permit, as well as opportunities for solitude, adventure and spiritual renewal in remote secluded areas. Primitive camping is also allowed, but permits are required for some uses (e.g., outfitting/guiding, group activities). Steep canyons and high rugged cliffs, with elevations from 5,600 to 6,200 feet, provide rewarding challenges for the back-country hiker. Deep meandering arroyos also offer miles of terrain in which to wander. Rock layers in the canyon walls and cliffs enhance sightseeing and photography, especially when exposed to the sun's direct rays at dawn and dusk. Hunting is permitted within the wilderness. Hunting and fishing regulations are written and enforced by the State. The Ojito Wilderness is located within New Mexico Big Game Management Unit 9.

Climate and Special Equipment Needs

Access roads in the area are passable during dry weather but they can get slippery and rutted during wet seasons, normally spring, late summer, and winter.

Safety and Current Conditions

The Ojito Wilderness is a roadless area that visitors must accept on its own terms. Visitors are responsible for their own safety and must be prepared to take care of themselves. Cell phones don't usually work; let someone know your plans. Water is rare in this dry land and no water is available at most times. Bring plenty of water.