

Wilderness.net's Wild River Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Wild River Wilderness in 2006 and it now has a total of 24,032 acres. All of the wilderness is in New Hampshire and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

The Wild River Wilderness was designated in December 2006 with the passage of the New England Wilderness Act and is now the newest Wilderness unit on the White Mountain National Forest. Approximately 23,700 acres are designated as Wilderness, all of which are managed by the US Forest Service. The majority of this acreage is in the unincorporated township known as Bean's Purchase located in the northeast corner of New Hampshire, quite close to the Maine state line. The Wild River Valley is an outstanding example of the resiliency displayed by forests of the northeastern United States. At the turn of the nineteenth century the area was covered in pristine forest with only a few inhabitants in the lower reaches of the watershed. One hundred years later the valley stood in stark contrast after being penetrated and developed by large-scale logging operations. A rail line followed the banks of the Wild River from its confluence with the Androscoggin River almost all of the way to its headwaters at Perkins Notch. Numerous logging camps were located in what is now the Wild River Wilderness and a booming village named Hastings had sprung up along the river's lower reaches. Any timber that was moderately accessible had been removed by the beginning of the twentieth century despite repeated attempts by the river to live up to its name and erase all timber-related infrastructure. Dams, bridges and railroad tracks seemed to fall prey to the river's raging storm flows on a regular basis but were always rebuilt to meet the country's growing demand for wood. In 1903 the era of logging camps and railroads came to a quick end in the upper sections of Wild River. Careless campers had left a fire unattended near the river's headwaters at No Ketchum Pond while they fished for brook trout. Fueled by a severe drought and ample dry logging slash, the fire quickly spread up both sides of the valley and consumed most of the remaining timber that had yet to be harvested. When the spring rains eventually put the fire out little evidence remained of the logging operations or any previous human presence. Though denuded and charred, the area had once again proven itself true to its name. In March of 1914 the US Forest Service purchased 41,000 acres from the Hastings Lumber Company thus beginning public ownership of the area. Management approaches to the area prior to Wilderness designation included sustainable forestry and use as a state game refuge. Today the Wild River Valley attracts visitors who want to explore an area where the forest has largely reclaimed the evidence of a short but colorful human occupation. Historical artifacts may still be found scattered around the woods but with each season these signs of civilization fade further into the natural setting. The Wild River Trail serves as the main travelway for area visitors and follows an old railroad grade along the river to its source at No Ketchum Pond. From this trunkline a number of hiking trails branch off to climb the adjacent steep mountain slopes, many following old spur lines from the railroad. Along the ridgeline to the west, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail skirts the Wilderness boundary as it climbs over the summits of the Carter-Moriah Range. From these summits

one can look east across the valley to the opposite ridgeline forming the watershed and Wilderness boundary. These mountains may not reach the heights of the Carter-Moriah Range but peaks such as North Baldface catch one's attention and are recognizable from a great distance. The fire of 1903 burned nearly all of the vegetation from Baldface's thin soils and left the granite beacon that marks the Wilderness' southeast boundary. The Wild River Campground is located at the end of a 5 ½ mile dirt road and provides the main access point to the Wilderness except for during the winter when the road is closed. This small rustic campground is situated in the mixed forest type common to the area's lower elevations where maples and oaks mix with hemlocks and pines. The lowest elevation point in the Wilderness (~1100 feet) can be found by crossing the river just downstream of the campground. Wildlife is diverse in the forest and includes such charismatic megafauna as moose, black bear and whitetail deer. As one climbs in elevation the hardwoods slowly disappear including the NH state tree, the white birch, which recolonized much of the area after the fire of 1903. Spruce and fir dominate the upper reaches of the watershed before giving way to the short and dense subalpine vegetation that reaches close to the Wilderness highpoint on Carter Dome (~4800 feet). Although the larger mammals do occasionally inhabit the forest up high, visitors are more likely to see birds and smaller mammals such as pine marten, red squirrels and snowshoe hare.

The Wild River Wilderness is a multi-faceted area that appeals to diverse interests. Whether you're interested in hiking, fishing, hunting, climbing or exploring the woods in search of clues to the area's history, the Wild River Valley is sure not to disappoint. Please remember to tread lightly and leave all cultural and historical artifacts as you found them. If you don't you just might have to deal with the ghosts of the log-drivers or the sleepy vengeance of the Wild River!

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 Wild River 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 Wild River 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 Wild River 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.
- Camping and campfires are prohibited within 200 feet of Wild River Trail from Wild River Campground to 1 mile south. The Wilderness boundary begins at the .3 mile point of this restriction.
- Camping and campfires are prohibited within 1/4 mile of any hut, shelter, cabin, picnic area, or day use site (except at designated sites).
- Overnight visitors cannot occupy any single location longer than 14 days in a 30-day period.
- 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.

Contacts

Androscoggin Ranger District

300 GLEN ROAD
GORHAM, NH 03581

Phone: 603-466-2713

Remarks: Office hours M_Fri 8-4:30 pm EST

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 109-382	December 1, 2006	23,700

New England Wilderness Act of 2006 - Public law 109-382 (12/1/2006) To designate certain land in New England as wilderness for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation system and certain land as a National Recreation Area, and for other purposes.

— [download 109-382](#)