

Wilderness.net's Wild Sky Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Wild Sky Wilderness in 2008 and it now has a total of 105,557 acres. All of the wilderness is in Washington and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

The Wild Sky Wilderness is the newest addition to a 2.6 million acre wilderness complex that straddles the rugged North Cascade Range from Canada to Snoqualmie Pass. The southwestern portion of the wilderness is only 25 miles from Puget Sound and adjacent to the fast growing communities of the Skykomish River Valley. The western part of the wilderness is characterized by very steep slopes and dramatic local relief. For example, from the North Fork Skykomish River near the town of Index, the terrain rises from about 600 feet above sea level to over 6,000 feet, on Gunn Peak, in less than 3 miles. Annual precipitation in this area runs between 150 to 200 inches annually, most of it coming as snow during the wet winter months. Runoff from the rain and snow feed streams that drop into the deep valleys below. This source of clean water is important to salmon which spawn in these reaches and provide exciting spring raft trips on the Skykomish River. Vegetation is dense on the valley walls, composed of Douglas fir, western red cedar and western hemlock at the lower elevations, grading to silver fir and mountain hemlock in the mid elevations to sub alpine parklands in the higher reaches. Timberline in the area is relatively low, between 4,500 and 5,000 feet. The higher peaks such as Merchant, Gunn, and Spire sport permanent ice patches on their north and east slopes. Trails in this part of the wilderness are few and cross-country travel is difficult. East of the Beckler River, and the Straight Creek Fault, the terrain changes dramatically; the local relief is less dramatic, the geology is less chaotic and precipitation less. The ridges are more uniform in elevation and gentle enough to support large meadows. This is trail country! Trails including Meadow Creek, West Cady Creek and Johnson Ridge lead through forest to these flowery meadows. Several trails are open to use by stock animals and wonderful loop trips pass through the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness to the Pacific Crest Trail, and back to Wild Sky. The Evergreen Mountain Lookout is a rental cabin that will continue to operate within the wilderness. At 5,587 feet, it provides a spectacular perch to watch the sunset over the rough peaks of Wild Sky and take in the panoramic view from Glacier Peak to Mt. Rainier. Stands of old growth forest cover portions of the area with large diameter Douglas fir, hemlock and western red cedar. The West Cady Ridge Trail leads through a prime example of these large trees which provide critical habitat for a variety of bird and animal species. Scattered around the new wilderness are forest areas previously roaded and logged. Logging began around 1920 and continued into the early 1990s. Signs of past mining exploration are also evident, particularly in the Silver Creek area. Young trees are now healing the scars of these past activities. The area holds about a dozen mountain lakes that attract anglers. Lake Isabel is the largest of these at about 1.5 miles long and 200 feet deep. The historic use of float planes is allowed to continue on the lake.

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 Sky 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 Sky 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 Sky 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 no more than 12 people per party.
- Do not shortcut switchbacks.
- Do not enter areas closed for restoration.
- Do not cut standing green trees, snags, and boughs for firewood or other purposes.
- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.

STOCK USERS

- All trails are closed to use by pack or saddle stock due to steep grades, inadequate design, lack of grazing or other factors.
- It is prohibited to possess or store hay or crop products that are not state certified weed free including any hay, hay cubes, straw, grain or other crop or mulch product. This regulation does not apply to persons possessing or storing commercially processed feed (feed pellets or steamed, rolled grains) or to persons possessing state certified weed free hay or crop products packaged as bales, containers, or sacks, when also marked using official tags, twine or other identification as required by the product's State of origin, or in possession of the original and current State documents which certify the hay or crop products meet or exceed the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) or comparable certification standard.

Fees

The following user fee system(s) have been implemented for this wilderness: TRAILHEAD PARKING. Fees are most often used to offset the operating costs of a permit system or to help fund management activities such as trail maintenance. Contact the national forest office or visit the websites listed below for more specific information on this fee system.

Contacts

Skykomish Ranger District
74920 NE STEVENS PASS HWY
PO BOX 305
SKYKOMISH, WA 98288

Phone: 360-677-2414

Links to Other Websites

[Wild Sky Wilderness Web Page](#)

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 110-229	May 8, 2008	106,577

Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 - Public law 110-229 (5/8/2008) A bill to authorize certain programs and activities in the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service, and the Department of Energy, to implement further the Act approving the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, to amend the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003, and for other purposes.

— [download 110-229](#) - Relevant legislation found on page(s): 5-7.