

Wilderness.net's Big Draft Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Big Draft Wilderness in 2009 and it now has a total of 5,147 acres. All of the wilderness is in West Virginia and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

The 5,144 acre Big Draft Wilderness is located on the southern tip of the Forest, just south of Blue Bend Recreation Area and about five miles north of White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Slopes within the area range from 10 to 60% and are typically long ridges with narrow summits and mountain slopes. The primary vegetative type is oak and hickory, with pockets of hemlock and white pine. The understory consists of rhododendron, mixed shrubs, grasses and ferns. The elevations range from 1,800 feet to over 3,100 feet. This is a popular area for a variety of recreation opportunities. Use within the area is considered moderate to high most of the year and is used primarily by hikers, hunters, paddlers and anglers. The 14-mile trail system is open to hikers and equestrians with the exception of the Blue Bend Loop trail in which no stock use is permitted. The area provides numerous scenic views.

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 Big Draft 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 Big Draft 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 Big Draft 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

No permits or fees are required to enter or camp within the Big Draft Wilderness.

Group size is limited to ten (10) users in any group/party at the same time within all designated wilderness areas on the Monongahela National Forest.

Mountain bikes and mechanized devices such as carts are not allowed within the wilderness.

Follow Leave No Trace ethics and camp at least 200 feet from streams and trails.

Horses and other stock are permitted with the exception of the Blue Bend Loop trail, however, due to the nature of the area, many of the trails are steep and rocky and not conducive to stock use.

No camping at trailheads.

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

A food storage order is in effect to reduce human and black bear encounters. The following activities are prohibited.

1. Possessing, storing, or leaving any food, refuse, lawfully taken fish, wildlife and/or parts thereof, camping equipment used for transporting and/or preparing food, i.e. coolers, cook stoves, pots and/or pans or cooking utensils or bear attractant unless it is:
 - a. Properly stored in a bear resistant container;
 - b. Suspended at least 10 feet clear of the ground at all points, suspended at least four feet horizontally from the supporting tree or pole; and suspended at least four feet from any other tree or pole adjacent to the supporting tree or pole adjacent to the supporting tree or pole;
 - c. Stored in a closed, motor vehicle with a solid top; or
 - d. Being eaten, being prepared for eating or being transported.
2. Discarding or abandoning any food, refuse, or bear attractant unless it is:
 - a. Disposed in a trash receptacle which has been provided by the Forest Service for that purpose.
3. Burning or burying any food, refuse, or bear attractant.

STOCK USERS

Stock use is prohibited on the Blue Bend Loop trail to due to the steep nature of the trail.

1. Possessing, riding, or using saddle, stock, or draft animal is prohibited on the entire Blue Bend Loop trail.

Contacts

White Sulphur Ranger District

410 E MAIN STREET

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WV 24986

Remarks: Monday - Friday 8:00 - 4:30

Phone: 304-536-2144

Phone: 304-636-1800

Monongahela National Forest

200 SYCAMORE STREET

ELKINS, WV 26241

Remarks: Monday-Friday 8:00-4:30

Links to Other Websites

[Big Draft Wilderness Web Site](#)

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 111-11	March 30, 2009	5,144
Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 - Public law 111-11 (3/30/2009) An act to designate certain land as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System, to authorize certain programs and activities in the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.		

— [download 111-11](#) - Relevant legislation found on page(s): 10.