Wilderness.net's Fossil Ridge Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Fossil Ridge Wilderness in 1993 and it now has a total of 32,062 acres. All of the wilderness is in Colorado and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Here is a small but almost perfect mountain kingdom, with raw granite towering above several beautiful shallow lakes and long valleys carved by ancient glaciers and replete with pine, spruce, fir, and aspen. The limestone ridge rises above 13,000 feet, climbing well beyond the tree line, and contains the fossilized remains of numerous prehistoric sea creatures. Above Lamphier Lake, a slim cut in the bare rock called Gunsight Pass (barely shoulder-width!) opens the ridge for foot travel from South Lottis Creek's drainage to Crystal Creek's drainage. Searching for gold, miners dug at several sites still scarred by their efforts. Square Top Mountain, approximately 12,500 feet high and about an hour's worth of climbing above Lamphier Lake, allows a virtually unparalleled view of almost half of Colorado's fourteeners. Elk and deer abound, but the truly fortunate catch glimpses of a small group of mountain goats or a larger herd of bighorn sheep. The lakes are stocked with trout. There are about 22 miles of maintained trails.

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 Fossil Ridge 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 Fossil Ridge Wilderness is part of the 111 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 Fossil Ridge 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 15 people.

-- Campfires are prohibited above treeline and within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or trail.

-- Caching equipment, personal property, or supplies for longer than 7 days is prohibited.

-- Dogs must be under control (voice control or leash) at all times.

-- Do not cut switchbacks.

**OVERNIGHT VISITORS**

--Camping is prohibited within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or trail.
STOCK USERS

-- Group size is limited to no more than 25 heartbeats, including people and pack or saddle stock, with no more than 15 people.

-- Certified weed-free forage (hay, pellets, processed grains) is required.

-- Confining stock (including picketing, corralling, and high-lining) is prohibited within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or trail.

Contacts

Gunnison Ranger District
216 N COLORADO STREET
GUNNISON, CO 81230

Phone: 970-641-0471

Links to Other Websites

Grande Mesa, Uncompagre, Gunnison National Forest, Fossil Ridge Wilderness

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Acreage Change (in acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Law 103-77</td>
<td>August 13, 1993</td>
<td>30,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Download 103-77