

Wilderness.net's John Muir Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the John Muir Wilderness in 1964 and it now has a total of 652,793 acres. All of the wilderness is in California and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

In 1889 John Muir described himself as a "self-styled poetico-tramp-geologist-bot. and ornith-natural, etc.!!!". John Muir spent his life advocating for the protection of the wild parts of the Sierra Nevada. He believed that public support for the protection of these lands would come about if more of the public experienced these areas and he formed the Sierra Club for just this reason. The John Muir Wilderness encompasses many of the lands that Muir explored in the late 1800's. From east of Fresno California in the north, the John Muir Wilderness forks around Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park and extends some 100 miles to the south with its southern most boundary just west of Lone Pine, California. With an additional 70,411 acres added to the wilderness through the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, There are 650,734 acres within this wilderness. Elevations range from 4,000 feet to just below the Mt. Whitney summit at 14,497 feet. There are numerous peaks over 12,000 feet. Deep canyons, lofty peaks, meadows, lakes and expansive alpine terrain characterize this wilderness. The south and middle fork of the San Joaquin River, the North Fork of the Kings river and many creeks that flow into the Owens valley to the east originate here. The John Muir Wilderness is heavily visited and has use limits in the form of trailhead quotas on all the trailheads accessing the wilderness from both the east and west side of the Sierra Nevada. There are over 590 miles of maintained trails and the John Muir trail and Pacific Crest trail traverse portions of the wilderness. Many trails originating in this wilderness access the backcountry of Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park.

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 John Muir 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 John Muir 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 John Muir 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 per party.
- Permits are required year-round for overnight trips and for day trips in the Mount Whitney Zone.

From May 1 to November 1, there are daily entry quotas for each trailhead.

- Campfires are prohibited above 10,000 feet north of Glacier Divide, above 10,400 feet south of Glacier Divide, and in a number of site specific areas. Please visit the Inyo National Forest and Sierra National Forest Wilderness web pages for maps of these campfire restriction areas.
- Camp at least 100 feet from of any trail or water source when terrain allows. Never camp within 25 feet of any trail nor 50 feet of any water source.
- Food and refuse must be stored in bear-resistant containers or counter-balanced at least 15 feet above the ground and 10 feet away from a tree trunk.
- Food and refuse must be stored in bear-resistant containers in eight site specific areas within the Inyo National Forest. Please visit the Inyo National Forest Wilderness web pages for maps of the container-required areas.
- Do not dispose of bodily waste within 100 feet of any campsite, trail, or water source.
- Do not dispose of soap waste (including biodegradable soaps) within 100 feet of any water source.
- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.
- Storing equipment, personal property, or supplies for more than 24 hours is prohibited.
- Do not shortcut switchbacks.
- Do not discharge a firearm, except for emergencies and the taking of game as permitted by State law.

STOCK USERS

- Groups are limited to no more than 25 head of pack or saddle stock per party.
- Pack or saddle stock are prohibited on the Mount Whitney Trail.
- Do not hitch, tether, or tie-up pack or saddle stock within 100 feet of campsites, trails, or water sources, except while loading or unloading.
- Camping with pack or saddle stock is prohibited on the entire Shepherd Pass Trail.
- Grazing pack or saddle stock is prohibited on the entire Shepherd Pass Trail and at Cascade Valley.
- Grazing pack or saddle stock above 7,000 feet elevation is restricted by range readiness dates each year. Range readiness on-dates are set for four elevation bands: 7,000 to 7,999 feet; 8,000 to 8,999 feet; 9,000 to 9,999 feet; above 10,000 feet.

Wilderness Permit System

A wilderness permit system has been implemented for this wilderness. This involves a use-limiting permit system with quotas and reservations. Wilderness permit systems are implemented to collect

information on use levels and patterns and as an education and information tool. Use-limiting systems are implemented after monitoring has determined that current use levels are resulting in unacceptable impacts to the resource and/or to the wilderness recreation experience. These systems help distribute visitor use throughout the season and help minimize crowded conditions at popular areas. People interested in visiting the John Muir Wilderness should contact the national forest office or visit the websites listed below for more information about this permit system, which may vary by location or time of the year.

Fees

The following user fee system(s) have been implemented for this wilderness: RESERVATION. 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

Inyo National Forest
351 PACU LANE
SUITE 200
BISHOP, CA 93514

Phone: 760-873-2400

Phone: 559-297-0706

Sierra National Forest
1600 TOLLHOUSE ROAD
CLOVIS, CA 93611

Links to Other Websites

[Inyo National Forest 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)

Law	Date	Acreage Change (in acres)
Public Law 88-577	September 3, 1964	502,978

The Wilderness Act - Public law 88-577 (9/3/1964) To establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people, and for other purposes

 [download 88-577](#)

Public Law 98-425 **September 28, 1984** **81,000**

California Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public Law 98-425 (9/28/1984) California Wilderness Act of 1984

 [download 98-425](#) - Relevant legislation found on page(s): 2-3.

Public Law 111-11 **March 30, 2009** **70,411**

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): 63-64.