

Wilderness.net's Kalmiopsis Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Kalmiopsis Wilderness in 1964 and it now has a total of 179,550 acres. All of the wilderness is in Oregon and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

This nearly 180,000 acre Wilderness includes the headwater basin of the Chetco and North Fork Smith Rivers and a portion of the Illinois River canyon. This is a harsh, rugged area with a unique character. Elevations range from 500 to 5,098 feet (Pearsoll Peak). The area is characterized by deep, rough canyons, sharp rock ridges and clear rushing mountain streams and rivers. Diversity of topography and geology provide excellent habitat for a wide variety of botanical species. The Kalmiopsis Wilderness is well known for its diversity of plant life. Much of this diversity results from plant species adapting to life in harsh soils derived from peridotite and serpentinite rocks. Both are rich in heavy metals such as magnesium, iron, chromium and nickel, which in high amounts, can be toxic to most plants. The diversity of plant habitat has been the result of a combination of geologic forces (uplift, folding and faulting), erosional and depositional forces (glaciation, weather, climate and the action of rivers), and periodic fires. The Kalmiopsis leachiana plant was discovered in 1930 by Lilla Leech in the Gold Basin area. The plant is a relic of the pre-ice age and the oldest member of the Heath (Ericaceae) Family. The Kalmiopsis Wilderness was named after this unique endemic shrub. Besides being a place of great botanical interest, the Kalmiopsis Wilderness is also one of the most unusual and complex geological areas of our country. The Kalmiopsis is part of the Klamath Mountain geologic province of northwestern California and southwestern Oregon. The eastern half is part of the Josephine "ultramafic" sheet. Ultramafic denotes being very high in iron and magnesium. The western half is underlain by the contorted sedimentary rocks of the Dothan formation and by the igneous intrusive rocks of the Big Craggies. Most of the rocks in this province were formerly parts of the oceanic crust and included serpentine, submarine volcanic flow rocks, intrusive granite-like rocks, and sedimentary rocks such as shale and sandstone. The Wild segments of the Illinois, Chetco and North Fork Smith Rivers flow through the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, providing clear water, fish habitat and water-based recreation in a remote and primitive setting. Lake environments are limited, primarily to Babyfoot Lake on the eastern boundary and Vulcan Lake on the west. Since these areas are readily accessible from nearby trailheads, they do receive a greater amount of day-use visitation. The nearly 500,000 acre Biscuit Fire of 2002 included the entire wilderness area. The environment has changed dramatically and provides a unique opportunity to observe a natural response to fire disturbance through plant succession, erosional and depositional occurrences and changed habitat for flora and fauna. While the lightning caused fire was a natural event for the wilderness it did provide damage to the nearly 160 miles of trails and trailhead facilities. Large areas of high fire severity occurred, killing much of the overstory trees in these areas, which will result in continued damaged to the trail system over time. The trails have always been challenging due to their steepness and narrow rocky surface. The impact from the fire includes added challenges, such as large numbers of downed trees,

missing trail signs, holes and loose rock on the tread etc. For now and in the foreseeable future, wilderness users should recognize the need for increased safety awareness when traveling and camping.

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 Kalmiopsis 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 Kalmiopsis 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 Kalmiopsis 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

- Overnight group size is limited to no more than 12 people and/or 9 pack or saddle stock per party.
- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.
- Caching or storing equipment, personal property, or supplies is prohibited.
- As with all designated Wilderness areas, mechanical transportation (including wagons, game carts, and other vehicles) is prohibited.

Contacts

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29279 ELLENSBURG AVE.
GOLD BEACH, OR 97444

Phone: 541-247-3600

Wild Rivers Ranger District
26568 REDWOOD HWY
CAVE JUNCTION, OR 97523

Phone: 541-592-4000

Links to Other Websites

[Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Kalmiopsis 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	78,850
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 95-237	February 24, 1978	92,000
Endangered American Wilderness Act - Public law 95-237 (2/24/1978) To designate certain endangered public lands for preservation as wilderness, and for other purposes		
 download 95-237		