

Wilderness.net's Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness in 1964 and it now has a total of 181,976 acres. All of the wilderness is in Colorado and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Colorado's fourth largest Wilderness exemplifies Rocky Mountain splendor: 100 miles of trail lead over nine passes above 12,000 feet, vast regions lie above the tree line, and long glacial valleys point the way to glistening alpine lakes. Six peaks rising above 14,000 feet draw mountaineers to challenge themselves on the rugged terrain. These peaks are among the most difficult to scale in the state. Caution and skill are advised.

In midsummer, the wildflowers are abundant. Native Bighorn Sheep make their home in the rocky terrain. Elk and deer currently thrive in the Elk Mountains, but development threatens their habitat.

Historically what is now the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness was the territory of the Parachu and Tabeguache bands of the Ute Tribe.

The Maroon Bells Scenic Area, which lies outside of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, provides access to some of the popular Wilderness trailheads. Due to the popularity of recreation in the Maroon Bells Scenic Area, shuttle buses operate during the summer months (approximate mid-June through Labor Day, plus weekends in September) to Maroon Lake.

The Maroon-Bells Snowmass Wilderness draws over 100,000 visitors (day hikers and backpackers) each year. The Conundrum Hot Springs lie within the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness. Starting in April 2018, a permit is required for overnight stays within the Conundrum Hot Springs Zone. This zone includes all of Conundrum Creek Valley from Silver Dollar Pond to Triangle Pass, and includes the popular hot springs. This **permit must be acquired in advance at recreation.gov**. All other overnight visitors to the Maroon Bells - Snowmass Wilderness are required to self-register at trailhead registration boxes.

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 Maroon Bells-Snowmass 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 Maroon Bells-Snowmass 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 Maroon Bells-Snowmass 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 10 people with no more than 15 stock animals in one group.
- Dogs must be under a physical restraint of a leash not to exceed six feet in length (except for working stock dogs, or dogs used for legal hunting purposes). Dogs are prohibited in the Conundrum Creek Valley from Silver Dollar pond to Triangle Pass.
- Campers must camp in designated sites at Conundrum Hot Springs, Copper Lake, Crater Lake, Geneva Lake, and Capitol Lake. Everywhere else, campers must set up 100 feet from lakes, streams, and trails and use previously impacted campsites.
- Campfires are prohibited within 100 feet of lakes, streams or system trails; within 1/4 mile of Crater Lake; and above 10,800 ft. elevation (including all designated sites at Conundrum Hot Springs).
- Do not shortcut a switchback in a trail.
- Motorized and mechanized equipment is prohibited including: Bicycles, motorbikes, chainsaws, ATVs, carts, drones and hang gliders.

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

- [Overnight permits](#) are required year-round for overnight camping in the vicinity of Conundrum Hot Springs. Permit info can be found [here](#).
- For all other overnight trips to the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, registration is required at the trailhead.
- For overnight visitors, food, refuse and any scented items must be stored in an Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) approved, bear resistant container.

STOCK USERS

- Stock users must use certified weed-seed free pelletized feed or rolled grain. Possessing or transporting any unprocessed stock feed (including certified weed-free hay) is prohibited.
- Pack or saddle stock cannot be hitched or tethered within 100 feet of lakes, stream, ponds, rivers, similar bodies of water or system trails, or within 1/4 mile of Crater Lake, Conundrum Hot Springs, or Snowmass Lake.

Contacts

Aspen-Sopris Ranger District
620 MAIN STREET
CARBONDALE, CO 81623

Phone: 970-963-2266

Gunnison Ranger District
216 N COLORADO STREET
GUNNISON, CO 81230

Phone: 970-641-0471

Links to Other Websites

[White River National Forest, Hiking/Backpacking Opportunities](#)

[White River National Forest, Maroon Bells Scenic Area](#)

[White River National Forest, Maroon-Bells Snowmass 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	66,100
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 96-560	December 22, 1980	103,000
Colorado Wilderness Act - Public Law 96-560 (12/22/1980) To designate certain National Forest System lands in the States of Colorado, South Dakota, Missouri, South Carolina, and Louisiana for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System		
 download 96-560		