

# Wilderness.net's Mount Massive Wilderness Fact Sheet



## Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Mount Massive Wilderness in 1980 and it now has a total of 29,027 acres. All of the wilderness is in Colorado and is managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service.

## Description

Mount Massive (14,421 feet), Colorado's second highest peak, and other mountains of the Sawatch Range have two distinctive characteristics: great height, and a huge, sloping bulk that makes them relatively easy to climb. Nowhere along the Continental Divide does the ground rise higher than the Sawatch Range, the crest of this continent. Just south of the Wilderness stands Mount Elbert at 14,443 feet, Colorado's highest summit. The divide marks the western boundary of this area, with the Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness immediately to the other side. Dry lodgepole pine forests, typical of the eastern slopes of the divide, cover much of the lower elevations and give way to spruce and fir higher up before all trees yield to alpine tundra.

The majority of the Leadville National Fish Hatchery lies within the boundary of the Mount Massive Wilderness. The hatchery land inside the Wilderness boundary is co-managed by the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service. The Forest Service is the principal land manager, while the Fish and Wildlife Service manages the fishery and water resources to protect and perpetuate native fish species.

The Colorado Trail crosses 10 miles of the eastern region, and about 10 more miles of trails exist in the Wilderness.

## 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 Mount Massive 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](#)

## **Area Management**

The Mount Massive 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 Mount Massive Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

## **Fish and Wildlife Service Information**

Unless otherwise specified, no motorized equipment or mechanical transport, with the exception of wheelchairs, is allowed. This is generally true for all federal lands managed as designated wilderness.

## **Forest Service Information**

### **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

- Permits are not required. However, all commercial and non-profit groups are required to obtain a Special Use Permit through the local ranger district office in advance of their trip. If you are using the services of an outfitter-guide, be sure they are licensed and have a Forest Service Permit.
- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- Do not cut switchbacks. Doing so can cause severe erosion.
- Alpine tundra is very susceptible to damage. Walk on durable routes of rock or talus. In the spring, travel on snow and rocks, or plan your trip during drier conditions.
- When camping, please take time to find the most appropriate site for you and your group. Choose a site that is protected, not visible from the trail, and is at least 100 feet from trails, lakes, streams or any water source. To minimize impacts please use an existing site.
- Dogs, except working stock dogs and hunting dogs, must be leashed at all times.

## WASTE-

- Soap, even biodegradable, pollutes the water. Dispose of wash water at least 100 feet away from any water source.
- Bury human waste in a hole 6 inches deep and 200 feet away from any water source, trail, or campsite.
- Pack out toilet paper, tampons, and left over food; animals will dig it up.

## FIRES-

Campfires are a tradition, but please consider their impacts:

- Dead and downed wood is an important component of the ecosystem.
- Large hot fires or concentrations of charcoal and ash can sterilize soils, leaving them unable to sustain plant life.
- Many visitors consider fire-rings an eyesore.

If you choose to have a campfire consider the following:

- Please keep fires small in size and limited to evening and early morning hours.
- Do not build new fire-rings. Instead, build fires in existing fire-rings that are at least 100 feet from water and trails.

-- Avoid having fires within 1/4 mile of, or above treeline. Dead wood removed from Krummholz (dwarf trees near timberline) affects their survival.

## STOCK USERS

-- Groups possessing pack and saddle stock are limited to a maximum combination of 25 animals and people, with a maximum of 15 people.

-- Secure animals 100-200 feet away from lakes, streams and trails. A picket line is less damaging to trees than direct tying. Move stock often when picketing to prevent resource damage.

## Wilderness Permit System

A wilderness permit system has been implemented for this wilderness. This involves a mandatory permit, which does not limit use. Wilderness permit systems are implemented to collect information on use levels and patterns and as an education and information tool. People interested in visiting the Mount Massive Wilderness should [contact the Forest Service office](#) or [visit the websites listed on the 'Links' tab](#) for more information about this permit system, which may vary by location or time of the year.

## Contacts

**Leadville Ranger District**  
810 FRONT STREET  
LEADVILLE, CO 80461

Phone: 719-486-0749

Phone: 719-486-0189

**Leadville National Fish Hatchery**  
2844 Highway 300  
Leadville, CO 80461

## Links to Other Websites

[Pike-San Isabel National Forest, Mount Massive 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)
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**Public Law 96-560**

**December 22, 1980**

**26,000**

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

*NOTE:* Public law acreage includes FS and FWS acreage.

 [download 96-560](#)