

Wilderness.net's Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Fact Sheet



Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness in 1987 and it now has a total of 3,271 acres. All of the wilderness is in Michigan and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Over the past 13,000 years, as the level of Lake Michigan rose and fell, winds swept the exposed sand from the lakebed into a series of rolling dunes, some reaching 140 feet in height. Most of the present dunes date back between 3,500 and 4,000 years. A wide beach lies between the waves of water and the waves of sand. Unlike the vegetation at most active sand dunes, here you'll find woody patches of juniper, stunted jack pine, some small stands of northern hardwoods, and dune marshes with wetland species such as hemlock and larch. Many of the dunes are lightly covered in dune grass. Set along approximately 7,300 feet of undeveloped shoreline, Nordhouse Dunes is the only designated Wilderness on Michigan's Lower Peninsula. A limited trail system of about 14.5 miles is minimally marked and sometimes hard to follow. The Nordhouse Dunes Trail (1.4 miles) offers the best peek at the dunes. The trails can be accessed from the nearby Lake Michigan Recreation Area on the northern boundary.

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 Nordhouse Dunes 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 Nordhouse Dunes 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 Nordhouse Dunes 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.

Fees

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

Manistee Ranger District
412 RED APPLE ROAD
MANISTEE, MI 49660

Phone: 231-723-2211

Links to Other Websites

[Huron-Manistee National Forest, Nordhouse Dunes 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 100-184	December 8, 1987	3,450
Michigan Wilderness Act of 1987 - Public law 100-184 (12/8/1987) To designate certain lands in the State of Michigan as wilderness, and for other purposes		

 [download 100-184](#)