

# Wilderness.net's Sipsey Wilderness Fact Sheet



## Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Sipsey Wilderness in 1975 and it now has a total of 25,770 acres. All of the wilderness is in Alabama and is managed by the Forest Service.

## Description

Wild-flowing creeks in northwestern Alabama converge to become the Sipsey River, 61 miles of which has been designated Wild and Scenic. Running below sandstone bluffs that rise 30 to 100 feet above the water, through a forest of often imposing second-growth trees and occasional small stands of virgin timber (some of the last virgin timber in the state), the Sipsey and its tributaries slice neatly through the Wilderness. Sinkholes, small caves, and scenic overlooks are plentiful. Less plentiful is the rare flattened musk turtle, an inhabitant of the Sipsey. Twelve established trails, all rated easy to moderate, crisscross the area. Several depart from the Sipsey River Recreation Area on the southern boundary, which has sanitary facilities, no developed campsites and a \$3.00 recreation use fee. From here, Trail 209 follows the river north and joins Trail 206 after about eight miles, ending after about 2.5 more miles at a parking lot on the northern boundary. Trail 200 runs north along Borden Creek to meet an old road that gives access to the heart of Sipsey Wilderness; it, too, ends at a parking lot on the northern boundary. A 13-mile loop is possible by taking Trail 204 from the old road and following Trail 209 for the return to the recreation site. Sipsey trails receive moderate to heavy human use year-round. Wilderness camping, building campfires, hunting, and fishing are permitted. Horsepackers are allowed on designated trails.

## 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 Sipsey 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 Sipsey Wilderness is part of the 111 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 Sipsey 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 10 people per party.
- Overnight visitors cannot occupy any single location longer than 7 days.
- Storing equipment, personal property, or supplies (caching) is prohibited.

- Pack out all debris, garbage, or other waste.
- Fireworks are prohibited.
- Do not enter caves designated as closed for the protection of endangered, threatened, or rare species of animals.
- Entering or being in the area for the purpose of collecting animals or plants for educational studies is prohibited.

## STOCK USERS

- Camping with pack and saddle stock at designated campsites.
- Riding, hitching, tethering, or hobbling pack or saddle stock is prohibited except on trails or areas, which are designated and signed open to equestrian use.

## 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

**Bankhead Ranger District**  
PO BOX 278  
HWY 33 N  
DOUBLE SPRINGS, AL 35553

Phone: 205-489-5111

## Links to Other Websites

[Bankhead National Forest](#)

## 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)
<b>Public Law 93-622</b>	<b>January 3, 1975</b>	<b>12,000</b>

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(Known as the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act) - Public law 93-622 (1/3/1975) To further the purposes of the Wilderness Act by designating certain acquired lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, to provide for study of certain additional lands for such inclusion, and for other purposes

 [download 93-622](#)

<b>Public Law 100-547</b>	<b>October 28, 1988</b>	<b>13,260</b>
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Sipsey Wild and Scenic River and Alabama Addition Act of 1988 - Public law 100-547 (10/28/1988) To designate the Sipsey River as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and to designate certain areas as additions to the Sipsey Wilderness, and for other purposes

 [download 100-547](#)