

Wilderness.net's Vasquez Peak Wilderness Fact Sheet

Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Vasquez Peak Wilderness in 1993 and it now has a total of 13,000 acres. All of the wilderness is in Colorado and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Along the southern boundary of the relatively small Vasquez Peak Wilderness and over Vasquez Peak itself, you'll find that seven miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail offer two distinct and worthy opportunities. First, you'll encounter less crowded conditions than most Colorado Wildernesses, and second, you'll be blessed with extravagant views over a dramatic area, two-thirds of which lie above timberline. Below timberline sits a region of krummholz (or twisted wood), the result of icy temperatures and fierce winds that keep the spruce and fir dwarfed and confined into low-lying mats. Healthy spruce, fir, and pine cloak the lower mountainsides. Vasquez Creek flows heavily off Vasquez Peak to form the main drainage of the area. A deep indentation in the Wilderness boundary from the north maintains Vasquez Creek as non-Wilderness to allow for a collection system that sends much of the water toward Denver. With much of the 17-mile-long trail system above timberline, sudden summer thunderstorms can make exposure to lightning in the Vasquez Mountains a dangerous risk. Vasquez Pass on the Divide can be reached after three miles of hiking on the Vasquez Peak Trail off Vasquez Creek. You should plan on hiking early and dropping into the trees before afternoon storms break. In winter, avalanches are common. Vasquez lies near Byers Peak, Ptarmigan Peak, and Eagles Nest Wildernesses to form a vast, largely roadless region.

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 Vasquez Peak 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 Vasquez Peak 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 Vasquez Peak 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 a combination of 12 people and/or pack or saddle stock.
- All campfires (other than a self-contained chemical stove) are prohibited within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or trail.
- Camping is prohibited within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or trail.

-- Equipment, personal property, or supplies cannot be stored within the Wilderness for more than 14 days within a 30-day period, including time the area was used for camping.

-- Dogs or other animals must be under control at all times as to prevent harassment or disturbance of wildlife, people, or personal property.

-- Mechanical transportation (including wagons, game carts, or other vehicles) is prohibited.

STOCK USERS

--Grazing, hobbling, tethering, or picketing pack or saddle stock within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or trail is prohibited.

Contacts

Sulphur Ranger District

9 TEN MILE DRIVE

PO BOX 10

GRANBY, CO 80446

Remarks: Our office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Phone: 970-887-4100

Links to Other Websites

[Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, Vasquez Peak 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 103-77	August 13, 1993	12,300
Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 - Public Law 103-77 (8/13/1993) Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993		

 [download 103-77](#)