Throughout this guide we use the term Wilderness with a capital W to signify lands that have been designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System whether we name them specifically or not, as opposed to land that has a wild quality but is not designated or managed as Wilderness.
# Table of Contents

The Promise of Wilderness........................................................................................................... 2  
We Are All Wilderness Partners/Protectors.............................................................................. 4  
Wilderness in our Backyard: Pacific Northwest Wilderness ................................................. 7  
Wilderness Provides.................................................................................................................. 8  
The Wilderness Experience — What’s Different? .................................................................. 9  
Wilderness Character.............................................................................................................. 11  
Keeping it Wild — Wilderness Management ...................................................................... 13  
Fish and Wildlife in Wilderness.............................................................................................. 15  
Fire and Wilderness................................................................................................................ 17  
Invasive Species and Wilderness............................................................................................ 19  
Climate Change and Wilderness............................................................................................. 20  
Resources.................................................................................................................................. 22  
Wilderness: Frequently Asked Questions .......................................................................... 24  
Pacific Northwest Forest Service Wildernesess...................................................................... 27

Glacier Peak Wilderness, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
The Promise of Wilderness

We are the first country to federally designate areas as Wilderness. They are both our treasured past and our hopeful future. How we treat them today will matter tomorrow.

The 1964 Wilderness Act established Wildernes ses as places where ecosystems are not manipulated, natural processes unfold without intervention, and humans may visit but not stay. Wilderness is the only public land, by law, where one can move about without seeing roads or structures, or hearing motors.

The promise of the Wilderness Act is that these lands will remain free and wild in perpetuity. However, designation alone does not ensure that Wilderness will stay wild forever. It is important for all of us to help keep this promise.

Menagerie Wilderness, Willamette National Forest
Self-issued Wilderness permits help us understand visitor use.

Some trips include encounters with Wilderness rangers.
We Are All Wilderness Partners/Protectors

We often assume that protecting Wilderness is the job of our agency’s Wilderness Rangers and Recreation Program Managers. However, Wilderness is a resource that crosses boundaries. Responsibility for ensuring its protection and maintaining its character lies with every Forest Service employee, including biologists, fire fighters, engineers, and the line officers that lead us. It also includes the volunteers, partners, and permittees we supervise and rely on to help us do our work.

As a Forest Service employee or partner, you may be the person a Wilderness visitor encounters on the way to the trailhead. You may be the agency representative at a meeting where a question about Wilderness arises. You may be part of a crew that is assigned to a fire in Wilderness. In these examples and more, you have the unique opportunity to help further the understanding of this unique resource and to help shape future Wilderness stewards by:

- **Learning** more about the National Wilderness Preservation System and the specific Wildernesses in your District, Forest, and Region.

- **Modeling and teaching** “Leave No Trace” ethics when traveling in the Wilderness, whether for work or play.

- **Linking to or mentioning** Wilderness-related topics and information on your program areas’ web pages.

- **Teaching** the people you supervise, including temporary staff and volunteers about Wilderness.

- **Sharing** the information in this guide.

Wilderness visits and patrols occur year-round.
If your job requires administrative work in Wilderness remember to:

- Leave noisy and disruptive electronic devices at home.
- Be considerate when Wilderness visitors are present—allowing them the opportunity to find a fishing spot, quiet campsite, or viewpoint.
- Practice techniques to Leave No Trace and use stock responsibly, and follow the specific regulations that apply to the Wilderness you are working in.

“A Wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

The Wilderness Act of 1964
Mt. Hood Wilderness, Mt. Hood National Forest

Mark O. Hatfield Wilderness, Mt. Hood National Forest
Wilderness in our Backyard: Pacific Northwest Wilderness

Pacific Northwest (PNW) Wildernesses transcend the sums of their resources and character, preserving rare wild places that remind of us of our human connections to the natural world.

You are entering a treasured and important place when you visit a PNW Wilderness. Here are a few of the ways that PNW Wildernesses matter:

- Many iconic landmarks of the Northwest are protected within Wilderness. These include Mt. Hood, Hells Canyon, and Mt. Rainier.

- Several PNW Wildernesses were designated for the exceptional biological resources they contain including the diverse plant communities of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and the old growth forests of the Opal Creek and Cummins Creek Wildernesses.

- In contrast to public lands outside of Wilderness, PNW Wildernesses are preserved and maintained so that natural processes dominate and human influences are limited and temporary.

- PNW Wildernesses provide a connection with our past. This includes traditional spiritual and subsistence sites for several tribes, historic mines, evidence of early ranching and homesteading sites.

- In contrast to increasing development elsewhere, PNW Wildernesses provide places of solitude, self-reflection, and challenge.

Over four million acres of the PNW is preserved as Wilderness in 65 distinct areas. In Oregon, the highest true lake (Legore Lake) and the highest point in the state (Mount Hood) are both located within Wilderness. The Pacific Crest Trail, a footpath of over 2,500 miles from the Mexican Border to the Canadian Border, passes through several PNW Wildernesses.
Wilderness Provides

Most people think of Wilderness as a place to play, but it has many benefits beyond recreation.

You may already know that many recreational activities are allowed in Wilderness: fishing, hiking, snowshoeing, and camping to name a few. But do you know the other benefits of Wilderness? Understanding that Wilderness has many dimensions and benefits opens our eyes and allows us to more fully understand the need to preserve these places.

Benefits of PNW Wilderness include:

- These Wildernesses supply rivers that provide high quality drinking and irrigation water to a significant portion of the PNW population including Portland and Puget Sound.

- These Wildernesses serve as living laboratories for nearby research institutions for the study and monitoring of climate change.

- PNW Wildernesses encompass most major Pacific Northwest ecosystems and geologic provinces, providing significant opportunities for appropriate research and monitoring related to a variety of topics including volcanism and volcanic hazards, disturbance ecology, Neotropical migrant birds, sensitive species, and temperate old growth rainforest.

Only seven percent of the land in our country is preserved as Wilderness — 2% in the continental United States. Twenty percent of this acreage is located in the PNW.
The Wilderness Experience — What’s Different?

By law, Wilderness is a place where the sights and sounds of nature prevail. The regulations that exist are important in preserving the experience and benefits that Wilderness provides.

To many of us, “wilderness” can mean many things, from a city park to an untracked forest. Often we have no idea of the differences between designated Wilderness and other lands. It is important to be aware that you are entering a special place managed to keep it wild. Instead of convenience and comfort, by design, Wilderness provides opportunities for solitude, challenge, and risk.

In Wilderness:

- Trails are narrower and maintained using only primitive tools such as cross-cut saws and shovels.
- Trail and directional signing is minimal.
- There are limits on the size of a party, including both people and stock.
- Encounters with rangers may be less frequent and emergency response may take longer.
- Generally there are no permanent structures such as toilets, tent pads, fire grills, corrals, or cell towers allowed.
- Pack animals are allowed (horses, llamas, and pack goats) but special regulations on grazing, tying or hobbling, and distances to keep them from water sources are in place.

Hells Canyon Wilderness, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Wilderness regulations prohibit the following:

- Use of mechanized transport (including bicycles and carts).
- Use of motorized equipment such as chainsaws and generators.
- Caching equipment and supplies.
- Building permanent campsites.

“If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it.”

President Lyndon Johnson, upon signing the Wilderness Act
Wilderness Character

Wilderness character has been defined as “the combination of biophysical, experiential, and symbolic ideals that distinguishes Wilderness from other lands. These ideals combine to form a complex and subtle set of relationships among the land, its management, its users, and the meanings people associate with Wilderness.”

When talking with your employees and partners about how Wilderness is different, you can reference the following four qualities of Wilderness character:

- **Natural** — Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization. This quality can be affected by invasive species, effects of climate change, disruptions to ecological processes, and air pollution.

- **Solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation** — Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. This quality speaks to the visitor’s Wilderness experience. Loss of solitude, developed recreation facilities inside Wilderness, and signs of modern civilization inside Wilderness affect this quality.

Boulder Creek Wilderness, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
- **Undeveloped** — Wilderness retains its primeval character and influence, and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation. This quality is affected by the use of motorized equipment or mechanized transport and non-recreational structures such as power lines and dams.

- **Untrammeled** — Wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from the actions of modern human control or manipulation. This quality is influenced by any activity or action that controls or manipulates the components or processes of ecological systems inside Wilderness.

The following sections of this guide show the threats to these four qualities and the actions that can be taken to preserve them.

“Except as otherwise provided in this Act, each agency administering any area designated as Wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the Wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its Wilderness character.”

The Wilderness Act of 1964
Keeping it Wild –
Wilderness Management

PNW Wildernesses are affected by events that occur well outside their boundaries. In order to ensure that Wilderness remains wild, some management actions may take place.

Although Wilderness areas are primarily shaped by natural events, occasionally managers have to make important decisions regarding these events. These can result in regulations or in temporary restrictions to travel inside Wilderness. Often we don’t appreciate or understand these regulations.

Regulations like party size, campfire restrictions, and camping and travel restrictions are put into place to ensure that Wilderness stays wild. Other management actions like fire suppression and fish and wildlife re-introduction are carefully considered before they are implemented. It is important for you to understand when management actions occur and why. You can help yourself and your co-workers by:

- Finding out what research studies, fire use, and other actions are happening in the PNW Wildernesses you may work in.
- Explaining the reasons behind regulations that restrict normal work practices.

If you are working in a group, you can help keep Wilderness wild by:

- Reducing unnecessary sights and sounds by unplugging electronic gadgets.
- Ensuring everyone is physically capable of completing the activity so that rescues, with the possibility of mechanized transport, are not needed due to lack of conditioning.
- Reducing the size and weight of overnight gear to lessen the number of pack stock or to ensure that the intended campsite is reached.
- Keeping group size small and breaking groups up in popular areas.
Gearhart Wilderness, Fremont-Winema National Forests

14
Fish and Wildlife in Wilderness

In the PNW, Wilderness is particularly important for fish and wildlife habitat. Preservation of habitat not only means opportunities for hunting and fishing but also maintaining refuge for endangered, rare, and threatened species.

PNW Wildernesses are important to fish and wildlife because:

- They provide critical core habitat for a full complement of wildlife species and are part of an important biological corridor the length of the Cascade Range.

- They protect pristine stream conditions and constitute refuges for many species of rare and valued native fish. These fish refugia play a critical role in downstream watershed restoration efforts.

Threats to fish and wildlife habitat include development on adjacent lands and disruption of ecological processes from outside threats like invasive species.

Wilderness fishing is the highlight of some back country trips.
In PNW Forest Service Wildernesses, hunting and fishing are allowed, subject to state regulations.

**When hunting or fishing in Wilderness make sure you are:**

- Are respectful of other visitors.
- Are aware that gut piles or fish entrails may attract animals — dispose of these properly; especially not near a campsite.
- Resist the urge to leave permanent markers, cairns, or flagging to show the way to a downed animal or route.

*Woodland caribou, grizzly bears, wolverine, and bull trout are only a few examples of the unique species that inhabit PNW Wildernesses.*
Fire and Wilderness

Re-introduction of fire into Wilderness landscapes brings many benefits that outweigh short-term inconveniences such as changing trip plans and reducing scenic beauty.

PNW Wildernesses were shaped by fire. But in the early 20th century, fires were seen as destructive. The Forest Service adopted a “10 o’clock” rule, mandating that all fires be put out by 10:00 am the day after discovery. Now, managers are working to introduce fire back to Wilderness to correct the damage that exclusion has caused. Certain lightning-caused fires are carefully monitored and allowed to burn to certain trigger points. Fires are even set on occasion to change forest composition back to natural conditions and to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

People often do not realize that fire can benefit Wilderness. You may have to change trip plans due to fires burning in Wilderness, or you may be required to, and you may need to adjust your plans in areas that have recently burned for safety reasons.

Naturally occurring wild fires are part of Wilderness ecosystems.
Some of the ways fire and Wilderness work together are:

- Clearing out overcrowded forests, allowing the strong to survive, and ensuring diversity.

- Setting the stage for new plant growth by burning down to mineral soil.

- Cracking seedcoats of fire-adapted cones and triggering fruiting and flowering in other plants and shrubs.

- Eliminating conditions that lead to widespread disease and mortality.

Challenge yourself and your staff to think of fire differently than they may have in the past.
Invasive Species and Wilderness

In some areas of the PNW, invasive species are drastically changing the landscape and affecting natural processes in Wilderness.

These invasives have hitched rides on boots, vehicles, and boats and are carried in by wind and fire. Entire ecosystems are at risk of disappearing. It is estimated that 420,000 acres of PNW National Forests and Grasslands have been affected by invasive plants alone. It is important that both you and your employees learn to recognize, report, and prevent further spread of these invaders into Wilderness.

Some of the most invasive species are:

- Diffuse knapweed, Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry (plants)
- Gypsy moth (insect)
- White pine blister rust (disease)

Some of the ways that invasive species cause harm include:

- Aggressive shading of the sun from native plants that need it; these plants die out and are replaced by a monoculture.
- Reduction in biodiversity; animals that depend on native food sources cannot survive.
- Depletion of groundwater.
- Soil loss and erosion.
- Increased opportunity for pathogens and catastrophic fire.

Give natives a fighting chance. Learn what invasive plants look like and point them out to your staff. If you use stock, always use certified weed-free hay. Wash your vehicle thoroughly before driving to a Wilderness trailhead.
Climate Change and Wilderness

Climate change will affect more than just temperature; it will change the way ecosystems function and the services they provide.

You may have questions about climate change, particularly in those Wildernesses that have glacial ice and where changes can be seen. Learning the importance of PNW Wildernesses and the changes that are occurring can help you think about the choices you make back home.

PNW Wilderness is important in the following ways:

- As large, undisturbed areas, Wildernesses provide scientists a baseline to measure from. For example, records in tree rings, bark, and pollen show adaptations to previous disturbances and can hold clues to the future.

- As temperatures change, animals and plants will struggle to adapt. Some may retreat to higher, cooler places to survive — most often found in Wilderness.

- Wilderness is the source of much of our water. Maintaining healthy watersheds is imperative to our health and survival.

PNW Wildernesses are already being affected by climate change. Some of the changes scientists have noticed are:

- Increased insect infestations like pine beetles.

- Changes in animal hibernation and migration patterns.

- Larger, more catastrophic fires.

- Less water available from decreased snowpack.

Opal Creek Wilderness, Mt. Hood National Forest
North Fork John Day Wilderness, Umatilla National Forest

Three Sisters Wilderness, Willamette-Deschutes National Forests
Resources
Highlights of the Wilderness Act of 1964

Section 2 (a)
In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

Section 2 (c)
A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Section 4 (b)
Except as otherwise provided in this Act, each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its wilderness character. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use.
Section 4 (c)
Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.

Section 4 (d) (1)
The use of aircraft or motorboats, where these uses have already become established, may be permitted to continue subject to such restrictions as the Secretary of Agriculture deems desirable. In addition, such measures may be taken as may be necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases, subject to such conditions as the Secretary deems desirable.

Section 4 (d) (6)
Commercial services may be performed within the wilderness areas designated by this Act to the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas.
Wilderness: Frequently Asked Questions

Here are the answers to some questions you may have about Wilderness.

**What if fires start in the Wilderness?**

All human-caused fires in Wilderness are suppressed. They are a result of carelessness. Lighting caused fires, while they can be catastrophic, are a natural process. These fires may be allowed to play their natural role when they can be monitored and carefully controlled.

**Why isn’t there cell service in the Wilderness for safety?**

While cell service may be present in some Wilderness areas, towers are considered permanent structures and are not allowed. Also, one of the benefits of visiting a Wilderness is that it provides both challenge and risk. Convenience and comfort often eliminates critical thinking and decision-making, and in Wilderness, visitors can learn and practice these important skills.

**Can I listen to music in the Wilderness?**

Listening to music is a personal choice. Many people find that unplugging and listening instead to the sounds of the rivers and birds is equally or more enjoyable. If you do choose to listen to music, please be considerate of others and use a device with headphones.

**How come there are cows grazing in this Wilderness?**

Grazing is allowed in designated Wilderness through provisions in the Wilderness Act. The framers of the Act recognized that grazing was a historic use of these areas.

**How come I can’t camp right next to the lake?**

Riparian areas next to lakes and rivers are important and sensitive ecosystems. It is better to camp away from the lake so we don’t erode the soil and impact riparian plants and water quality. If we camp farther away, other people can enjoy the view without our tents in the way.

**Why is it bad to toss my apple core? It feeds the animals!**

Animals that find our food scraps will learn to associate people with food. At best they can be annoying; at worst they can cause us real danger. Animals can become dependent on these scraps and have trouble surviving when winter comes.
Why isn’t there a bridge here?
Bridges are permanent structures and we only build them in Wilderness when fording would cause too much environmental damage or when the crossing is too hazardous for most of the main use season.

Why can’t I have a campfire here?
Sometimes campfires are restricted due to lack of wood or because fires at this particular spot (for example, a meadow) are too destructive to the soil. There may be times of fire danger when campfires are banned.

Why aren’t chainsaws used to clear Wilderness trails?
Chainsaws are motorized equipment; crews use traditional tools for trail work. Exceptions are sometimes made in emergency situations.

There are fire lookouts or trail shelters in some Wilderness areas. I thought these weren’t allowed. Are they?
Many areas have structures that existed before the area was designated as Wilderness. There are two reasons why these structures may be allowed to stay: 1) they are necessary for the administration of the area, and/or 2) they are an integral part of the history and cultural heritage of the Wilderness area. Agency professionals evaluate the need for and historic value of a structure before a management decision is made to remove or retain.

Goat Rocks Wilderness, Gifford Pinchot National Forest
I want to help restore a trail shelter. How can I do this?
If archeologists, Wilderness, and Forest leadership staff determine that a structure should be restored, we first determine the minimum necessary tools and actions to stabilize and maintain. This can be a great opportunity to teach and learn traditional building skills, and volunteers can get involved – talk to your local Forest Service office to learn about opportunities. While we may authorize work on structures to keep them functional and safe, and to preserve heritage resources, we refrain from doing “improvements”, and sometimes the correct decision is to remove the structure entirely.

I want to help out in Wilderness. What can I do?
It depends on your skills, time and interest. Some opportunities include joining a volunteer trail work party, staffing a visitor center or front desk, organizing, or participating in a Friends Group devoted to advocacy of a Wilderness, or simply teaching others about the benefits of Wilderness. Contact your local Forest Service office for opportunities.
### PNW Forest Service Wildernesses

**Washington**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wilderness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine Lakes Wilderness</td>
<td>Okanogan-Wenatchee NF</td>
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<td>Boulder River Wilderness</td>
<td>Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF</td>
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<td>Olympic NF</td>
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<td>Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF</td>
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<td>Olympic NF</td>
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<td>Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF</td>
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<td>Okanogan-Wenatchee NF</td>
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<td>Mount Adams Wilderness</td>
<td>Gifford Pinchot NF</td>
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Mount Baker Wilderness
Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF

Mount Skokomish Wilderness
Olympic NF

Nosiy-Diobsud Wilderness
Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF

Norse Peak Wilderness
Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF

Pasayten Wilderness
Okanogan-Wenatchee/Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF

Salmo-Priest Wilderness
Colville NF

Tatoosh Wilderness
Gifford Pinchot NF

The Brothers Wilderness
Olympic NF

Trapper Creek Wilderness
Gifford Pinchot NF

Wild Sky Wilderness
Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF

William O. Douglas Wilderness
Okanogan-Wenatchee/Gifford Pinchot NF

Wonder Mountain Wilderness
Olympic NF
PNW Forest Service Wildernesses

Oregon

Badger Creek Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Black Canyon Wilderness
Ochoco NF

Boulder Creek Wilderness
Umpqua NF

Bridge Creek Wilderness
Ochoco NF

Bull of the Woods Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Clackamas Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Cooper Salmon Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF

Cummins Creek Wilderness
Siuslaw NF

Diamond Peak Wilderness
Deschutes/Willamette NF

Drift Creek Wilderness
Siuslaw NF

Eagle Cap Wilderness
Wallowa-Whitman NF

Gearhart Mountain Wilderness
Fremont-Winema NF
Grassy Knob Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF

Hells Canyon Wilderness
Wallowa-Whitman NF

Kalmiopsis Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF

Lower White River Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Mark O. Hatfield Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Menagerie Wilderness
Willamette NF

Middle Santiam Wilderness
Willamette NF

Mill Creek Wilderness
Ochoco NF

Monument Rock Wilderness
Malheur NF

Mount Hood Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Mount Jefferson Wilderness
Deschutes NF

Mount Thielsen Wilderness
Fremont-Winema NF

Mount Washington Wilderness
Willamette NF

Mountain Lakes Wilderness
Fremont-Winema NF
North Fork John Day Wilderness
Umatilla NF

North Fork Umatilla Wilderness
Umatilla NF

Opal Creek Wilderness
Willamette NF

Red Buttes Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF

Roaring River Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Rock Creek Wilderness
Siuslaw NF

Salmon-Huckleberry Wilderness
Mt. Hood NF

Siskiyou Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF

Sky Lakes Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF

Strawberry Mountains Wilderness
Malheur NF

Three Sisters Wilderness
Dechutes/Willamette NF

Waldo Lake Wilderness
Willamette NF

Wenahah-Tucannon Wilderness
Umatilla NF

Wild Rogue Wilderness
Rogue River-Siskiyou NF
Bull of the Woods Wilderness, Mt. Hood National Forest
THANK YOU for being a Wilderness partner. Together we can ensure that these rare wild places that are so important to our present and our future remain wild forever.