

GUIDELINES FOR SCIENTISTS CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN WILDERNESS

The following guidelines are written for scientists who want to conduct scientific activities in wilderness. These are only brief guidelines intended to help scientists understand and communicate with local managers, thereby expediting the process of evaluating a proposal for scientific activities.

Education

Assure that you understand the special requirements for working in wilderness and why they exist:

1. Understand the legal requirements of the Wilderness Act and agency policy for conducting science activities inside wilderness. This includes understanding that the primary management responsibility is to preserve wilderness character. This information is available on <http://www.wilderness.net>.
2. Understand the legal prohibitions against using motorized equipment (such as drills), mechanical transport (such as game carts or any wheeled vehicles), landing of aircraft, and installations (such as data loggers or plot markers), and under what conditions exceptions may be allowed.
3. Identify which local agency office(s) administer the portion(s) of the wilderness you want to work in. Be aware that some wildernesses are administered by more than one federal agency.
4. Understand agency and local administrative procedures for evaluating your proposal and permit requirements for working in wilderness. Different local offices may have different requirements, and the four federal agencies that administer wilderness have different policies for permitting scientific activities.
5. Ask yourself how your science will benefit the wilderness you would like to work in.

Communication

Communicate as early as possible with the local managers about what you want to do.

1. Make initial contact with the managers in *all* of the local offices that administer the portion(s) of the wilderness that you are interested in working in. Do not assume that different offices communicate with one another or use the same procedures for evaluating a proposal for science activities.
2. Discuss your research interests and sampling design with the local managers *before* you write a proposal and consult with them often as you develop your proposal.
3. Ask if there any potential problems with any aspect of the research, including location, timing, access, number of people, type of equipment, type of work, monumentation, or purpose of the research. This discussion should center on how to minimize the impacts to wilderness character while still accomplishing your research objectives.
4. Ask if the local managers have any research or other needs that you could help with while you're in the backcountry. For example, a manager might ask you to report if you see a certain rare species, or to remove unwanted debris from an area when your research crews come out of the wilderness.
5. Ask about local administrative and permitting requirements, and if needed get a wilderness use and research permit. Try to establish contact with local managers before applying for funding. Do not assume that a permit will be given just because you already

have funding, even from the National Science Foundation or another prestigious funding source.

6. Ask the local managers if they would like you to prepare a small poster about your work that can be placed on the trailhead bulletin board to let wilderness visitors know what you are doing, as well as the general location and when you will be there so others may avoid this area if they want to.
7. Ask the local managers how they would like you to let them know when you are entering the wilderness, where you will be camped, and when you leave the wilderness.
8. Ask whether there are opportunities to present or share any aspect of your research with agency staff or visitors.

In the Field

You're working in a unique place that requires special skills, attitudes, and being considerate of other wilderness visitors.

1. Make sure that you and your crews have the gear and experience (or training) to work and live in wilderness.
2. Learn and practice Leave No Trace skills. Be aware that wilderness character is reduced by both ecological and social impacts. You can minimize these impacts by using equipment that is not brightly colored, avoiding areas that are frequently used by wilderness visitors, camping in areas that are remote or hidden, and generally being considerate of others who are there to enjoy solitude and primitive recreation.
3. Clean up and remove all evidence of your camping to meet local requirements (such as fire rings and wood piled for fires) and your research (such as flagging, stakes, trash, and tags) unless specifically permitted to leave certain items.
4. Be ready and willing to answer questions from any wilderness visitors you may encounter.