

Traditional Tools and Skills Toolbox

Forest Service Policy

The following excerpts from Forest Service Wilderness Management Policy (FSM 2320) highlight some of the most commonly used national policy for the use of Traditional Tools and Skills in wilderness on the National Forests. Portions of the policy that are especially relevant to the use of Traditional Tools and Skills are highlighted in **bold text**. For a complete text of FSM 2320 visit: [\(link to FS Policy on FS page\)](#)

Regions and forests may have supplements to FSM 2320 that further describe implementation of this policy. A list of other sub-sections within FSM 2320 that may also be relevant to certain aspects of Traditional Skill and Tool use is found at the end of this section.

2328 MANAGEMENT OF CERTAIN WILDERNESS AREAS
2328.04 Responsibilities

Wilderness is a unique and vital resource. In addition to offering primitive recreation opportunities, it is valuable for its scientific and educational uses, as a benchmark for ecological studies, and for the preservation of historical and natural features.

Manage the wilderness resource to ensure its character and values are dominant and enduring. Its management must be consistent over time and between areas to ensure its present and future availability and enjoyment as wilderness. Manage wilderness to ensure that human influence does not impede the free play of natural forces or interfere with natural successions in the ecosystems and to ensure that each wilderness offers outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Manage wilderness as one resource rather than a series of separate resources (sec. 2320.6).

2320.2 - Objectives

1. Maintain and perpetuate the enduring resource of wilderness as one of the multiple uses of National Forest System land.
2. Maintain wilderness in such a manner that ecosystems are unaffected by human manipulation and influences so that plants and animals develop and respond to natural forces.
3. **Minimize the impact of those kinds of uses and activities generally prohibited by the Wilderness Act, but specifically excepted by the Act or subsequent legislation.**

4. Protect and perpetuate wilderness character and public values including, but not limited to, opportunities for scientific study, education, solitude, physical and mental challenge and stimulation, inspiration, and primitive recreation experiences.

5. Gather information and carry out research in a manner compatible with preserving the wilderness environment to increase understanding of wilderness ecology, wilderness uses, management opportunities, and visitor behavior.

2320.3 - Policy

1. Where there are alternatives among management decisions, wilderness values shall dominate over all other considerations except where limited by the Wilderness Act, subsequent legislation, or regulations.

2. Manage the use of other resources in wilderness in a manner compatible with wilderness resource management objectives.

3. In wildernesses where the establishing legislation permits resource uses and activities that are nonconforming exceptions to the definition of wilderness as described in the Wilderness Act, **manage these nonconforming uses and activities in such a manner as to minimize their effect on the wilderness resource.**

4. Cease uses and activities and remove existing structures not essential to the administration, protection, or management of wilderness for wilderness purposes or not provided for in the establishing legislation.

7. Use interdisciplinary skills in planning for wilderness use and administration.

8. Gather necessary information and carry out research programs in a manner that is compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment.

10. Inform wilderness visitors that they face inherent risks of adverse weather conditions, isolation, physical hazards, and lack of rapid communications, and that search and rescue may not be as rapid as expected in an urban setting in all publications and personal contacts.

2320.5 - Definitions

1. Wilderness. An area of wilderness is defined in sec. 2(c) of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136). The term "wilderness" shall be applied to all National Forest System lands included in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). See 36 CFR 261 and 293.

2. Untrammeled. In the context of the Wilderness Act, an untrammeled area is where human influence does not impede the free play of natural forces or interfere with natural processes in the ecosystem.

3. **Mechanical Transport**. Any contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, or air, having moving parts, that provides a mechanical advantage to the user, and that is powered by a living or nonliving power source. This includes, but is not limited to, sailboats, hang gliders, parachutes, bicycles, game carriers, carts, and wagons. It does not include wheelchairs when used as necessary medical appliances. It also does not include skis, snowshoes, rafts, canoes, sleds, travois, or similar primitive devices without moving parts.

4. **Motorized Equipment**. Machines that use a motor, engine, or other nonliving power sources. This includes, but is not limited to, such machines as chain saws, aircraft, snowmobiles, generators, motor boats, and motor vehicles. It does not include small battery or gas powered handcarried devices such as shavers, wristwatches, flashlights, cameras, stoves, or other similar small equipment.

5. Permanent Improvement. A structural or nonstructural improvement that is to remain at a particular location for more than one field season. Permanent improvements include such items as trails, toilet buildings, cabins, fences, tent frames, fire grills, and instrumentation stations.

7. Temporary Structure. Any structure that is easy to dismantle, that could be removed completely from a site between periods of actual use, and that must be removed at the end of each season of use if the non-use period is greater than 30 days.

2320.6 - The Wilderness Management Model and the Wilderness Act

Where a choice must be made between wilderness values and visitor or any other activity, preserving the wilderness resource is the overriding value. Economy, convenience, commercial value, and comfort are not standards of management or use of wilderness. Because uses and values on each area vary, management and administration must be tailored to each area. Even so, all wilderness areas are part of one National Wilderness Preservation System and their management must be consistent with the Wilderness Act and their establishing legislation.

2326 - USE OF MOTORIZED EQUIPMENT OR MECHANICAL TRANSPORT IN WILDERNESS

2326.02 - Objectives

1. Accomplish management activities with nonmotorized equipment and nonmechanical transport of supplies and personnel.

2. Exclude the sight, sound, and other tangible evidence of motorized equipment or mechanical transport within wilderness except where they are needed and justified.

2326.03 - Policy

1. Ensure that Forest Service employees acquire and maintain necessary skills for primitive travel by foot, horse, canoe, or other nonmechanical means and the use of hand tools. For definitions see FSM 2320.5.

2. Do not approve the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport unless justified as described in 2326.1. For procedures and examples see FSH 2309.19. For definitions see FSM 2320.5.

3. Discourage flights over wilderness within 2,000 feet of the ground surface, except in emergencies or for essential military missions. (The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has agreed to and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has posted, for the FAA, a 2,000 foot over terrain flight advisory on appropriate aeronautical charts. Specific legislative provisions regarding overflight pertain to certain wildernesses.) Cooperate with the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, military authorities, and with local pilots to promote compliance with the 2,000 foot limit, to keep aeronautical charts current, and to reduce low level flight.

2326.04 - Responsibility

2326.04a - Chief. The Chief is responsible for approving any use of motor vehicles and motorized equipment, except where the authority has been delegated to the Regional Forester (FSM 2326.04b) and the Forest Supervisor (FSM 2326.04c).

2326.04b - Regional Forester. The Regional Forester is responsible for approving:

1. Transport and supply by aircraft, air drop, motor boat, or mechanical transport for situations that meet the conditions under items 2, 4, or 5, in FSM 2326.1.
2. Hand-portable motorized equipment for needs that meet conditions listed under item 5 of FSM 2326.1.
3. Motorized ground equipment not designed for personnel transport and of a type or size that is controlled from a position afoot.
4. Use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, and mechanical transport for situations involving established livestock grazing operations (FSM 2204 and 2323.2), and transport of wildlife or fish when nonmotorized means are not feasible (FSM 2323.3).
5. Use of motorized equipment specifically allowed by individual wilderness acts subsequent to the Wilderness Act.

2326.04c - Forest Supervisor. The Forest Supervisor approves the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport under conditions described in section 2326.1, item 1 or 3. However, the Regional Forester shall approve the use of tractors for fire suppression.

2326.1 - Conditions Under Which Use May Be Approved. Allow the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport only for:

1. Emergencies where the situation involves an inescapable urgency and temporary need for speed beyond that available by primitive means. Categories include fire suppression, health and safety, law enforcement involving serious crime or fugitive pursuit, removal of deceased persons, and aircraft accident investigations.
2. Aircraft or motor boat use established before the area was designated as wilderness by the Act of 1964 or subsequent wilderness legislation.
3. Exploration and development of valid existing mineral rights (FSM 2323.7).
4. Access to surrounded State and private lands and valid occupancies (FSM 2326.13).

5. To meet minimum needs for protection and administration of the area as wilderness, only as follows:

- a. A delivery or application problem necessary to meet wilderness objectives cannot be resolved within reason through the use of nonmotorized methods.
- b. An essential activity is impossible to accomplish by nonmotorized means because of such factors as time or season limitations, safety, or other material restrictions.
- c. A necessary and continuing program was established around the use of motorized equipment before the unit became a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and the continued use of motorized equipment is essential to continuation of the program.
- d. Removal of aircraft wreckage when nonmotorized methods are unsuitable.

Specify, for each wilderness, the places and circumstances in which motorized equipment, mechanical transport, or aircraft are necessary for protection and administration of the wilderness and its resources in the forest plan.

The Line Officer approving the use of motorized equipment, aircraft, or mechanical transport shall specify what uses of that equipment are suitable and will have the least lasting impact to the wilderness resource. Schedule use of this equipment to minimize impact on wilderness visitors.

2326.11 - Use of Motorized Equipment by Other Government Agencies. Approve the use of motorized equipment, aircraft, or mechanical transport by other government agencies in National Forest wilderness in the same manner and under the same conditions stipulated for Forest Service use (sec. 2326.1). Special provision is given for access to existing snow measurement sites (sec. 2323.44).

2326.12 - Use of Motorized Equipment by Valid Occupants of National Forest Land. Approve the use of motorized equipment and/or mechanical transport by valid occupants of National Forest System lands in wilderness using criteria in section 2326.1.

2326.13 - Access to Surrounded State and Private Land, Valid Mining Claims, or Other Valid Occupancies

1. Surrounded State and Private Land. Ensure adequate access to States or persons, and their successors in interest, who own land completely surrounded by wilderness. Adequate access is defined in 36 CFR 293.12 and section 2320.5.

Prevent unauthorized road construction or motorized transport across wilderness. The Regional Forester may provide these landowners with written permission to use wilderness routes or motorized modes of travel not available to the general public. When the exercise of these rights of access to surrounded land would be detrimental to wilderness values, attempt to acquire the land by purchase or exchange or donation before granting access.

2. Valid Mining Claims or Other Valid Occupancies. Permit access to valid occupancies according to the direction in 36 CFR 293.13. Include proposals for access within the boundaries of the claim area in the operating plan. Authorize access off the claim area by special use permit if there is approval for other than primitive access (FSM 2710).

Wilderness Management Policy for Other Activities in Wilderness

2323 – Management of Other Resources in Wilderness

2323.1 - Management of Recreation

2323.13 - Improvements and Nonconforming Facilities and Activities

2323.13f - Transportation System

2323.2 – Management of Range

2323.3 - Management of Wildlife and Fish

2323.4 – Management of the Soil and Water Resources

2323.5 – Management of Forest Cover

2323.6 – Management of Air Resource

2323.7 – Management of Minerals and Mineral Materials

2323.8 – Management of the Historic and Cultural Resources

2324 - Management of Support Activities in Wilderness

2324.1 – Management of Insects and Diseases

2324.2 – Management of Fire

2324.3 – Management of Structures and Improvements

2324.4 - Research in Wilderness

2325 – Private Lands within Wilderness