



# ESWA Volunteer Wilderness Ranger Training and Resource Manual



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Welcome to the 2026 ESWA Volunteer Wilderness Ranger Training Class! We are thrilled to have you join our team of VWRs committed to the conservation and protection of the Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan Peak, Holy Cross, and Flat Tops Wilderness Areas. Your willingness to volunteer your time and energy to this cause speaks volumes about your dedication to preserving these unique and precious lands.

As part of training, you will gain valuable knowledge and skills critical to fulfilling the duties of a VWR. Our comprehensive program focuses on how to engage effectively with the public about preserving our Wilderness Areas. You'll also learn how to gather critical information for ESWA and the US Forest Service, essential to sustainable resource protection and planning.

During training, you will be guided by experienced USFS Rangers and volunteers who are both knowledgeable and passionate about Wilderness protection. They will be your mentors, teachers, and supporters, ensuring you are fully prepared to take on the responsibilities of a Volunteer Wilderness Ranger. This training is an opportunity to develop your skills and also to form lasting connections with fellow volunteers who share your passion for the outdoors and environmental stewardship.

As LBJ said on signing the 1964 Wilderness Act: *"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."*

Thank you for showing up to help preserve Wilderness for present and future generations!

**Frances Hartogh, 2026 Chair**

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*For Wilderness!*

**EAGLE SUMMIT WILDERNESS ALLIANCE (ESWA)** promotes the stewardship of four federally protected Wilderness Areas (Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan Peak, Holy Cross and Flat Tops) located in the White River National Forest in Summit County and Eagle County, CO. We are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization established in 1994 as Friends of Eagles Nest Wilderness (FENW).



**ESWA's mission** is to support the Forest Service to preserve the integrity of the Summit and Eagle County Wilderness resource, both for its own sake and to sustain the character of the Wilderness experience for visitors. Our four Wildernesses comprise more than 450,000 acres and are among 43 Wilderness Areas in Colorado (more than 3.7 million acres total). We achieve our mission using trained volunteer resources to implement boots-on-the-ground field programs, and by applying privately raised funds to accomplish local Wilderness objectives. ESWA is committed to preventing environmental degradation, protecting Wilderness characteristics, promoting a land stewardship ethic, maintaining trails and bridges, mitigating noxious weeds, helping with Wilderness education and advocating for local environmental projects.

**ESWA's current programs include:**

The **Volunteer Wilderness Ranger (VWR) Program**, our first and signature program, provides education and support for trail users and backpackers in our Wilderness Areas, acting as the “eyes and the ears” and the “friendly face” of the USFS. VWRs can choose to serve as either VWR Trail Patrollers (hiking trails), or as Trailhead Hosts (staffing a table at popular trailheads), or both. In 2025, about 100 VWRs completed 452 patrols or host shifts and contacted more than 12,800 trail users, of whom about 1,200 were backpackers.

The **Sawyer Program** involves specially trained certified volunteer cross-cut sawyers, and volunteer helpers, assisting the Forest Service by cutting and clearing trees blocking trails in the Wilderness, because Wilderness regulations prohibit use of chainsaws. The Pine Beetle epidemic caused dead lodgepole pines to lean or fall across trails, impeding travel and endangering visitors. In 2023, 25 certified sawyers and helpers in ESWA vests and hardhats helped maintain 16 trails, and cleared over 659 trees from trails.

The **Trail and Campsite Program** enables volunteers to participate in trail maintenance projects in our Wildernesses, including day work-trips, and llama-supported overnight trips. A major effort of this program is clearing evidence of campfire rings and campsites, as well as identifying damaged bridges and conducting erosion control on trails. In 2025, four overnight trips removed over 150 illegal campfire rings, cleared back thousands of willows from overgrown trails, and reestablished drains to protect trails from erosion. Volunteers also helped the Forest Service complete the major reconstruction of Meadow Creek Trail and its bridge, as well as reconstruction of the Missouri Creek bridge.

The **WeedSpotter Program** works to limit the spread of non-native (noxious, invasive) plants into the Wilderness. Annual “weed pulls” educate people on the devastating effects of noxious weeds on native flora and fauna, and work to clear an infestation. VWRs also educate hikers on why and how they can help stop the spread of these weeds.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF ESWA/FENW

After decades of “Primitive Area” status, the Eagles Nest Wilderness was signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1976. Located barely an hour away from major metropolitan areas, Eagles Nest became increasingly popular with outdoor enthusiasts. In 1994, after backpacking with two Wilderness Rangers in the Eagles Nest Wilderness, M. John Fayhee, a Summit County journalist, wrote an editorial about the appalling lack of resources to maintain and protect this vulnerable area. After reading the article, Tom Jones, Jr., co-owner of Wilderness Sports, teamed with Fayhee and organized a public meeting to encourage local hikers to form a group to assist the US Forest Service Dillon Ranger District in meeting the challenges of protecting the Wilderness. This meeting gave birth to Friends of Eagles Nest Wilderness (FENW), founded in May, 1994; it received 501(c)(3) status in 1995. Its four guiding principles were and continue to be Education, Outreach, Stewardship, and Advocacy. Currie Craven became Chairman of the Board, Ed Adams President, Fayhee Secretary and Jones Treasurer. Frank Smith, Jr. and Wilderness Sports were instrumental in the group’s formation. Its initial attention was focused on the east (Summit County) side of the Wilderness.

Tight budget restrictions (which persist today) prevented the USFS from providing the level of care required for this increasingly popular Wilderness. Trail maintenance, visitor education, cleaning up unsightly hunters’ camps, and other activities taxed USFS resources, and became the focus of FENW’s efforts. In 2006, FENW expanded its mandate to include the west side of Eagles Nest Wilderness (in Eagle County). FENW also expanded its Wilderness Volunteer Program to include Holy Cross Wilderness, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness. With grant funds, FENW purchased and installed Wilderness portal signs, trail junction signs, trailhead bulletin boards and interpretive posters on official trails. FENW started a noxious weed treatment program to eradicate invasive plants in Eagles Nest Wilderness, obtaining grant funds for the USFS to hire licensed contractors. The Volunteer Wilderness Ranger program dates from 2005, with the 12 initial VWRs contacting 806 visitors in 35 days and 181 hours; 10 volunteers reported noxious weed locations and inventoried campsites in the Eagles Nest Wilderness.

As an **advocacy group**, FENW participated in the White River National Forest Plan Revision in 2002. Since 2003, FENW has been active with a coalition to promote several new Wilderness Areas in Colorado, efforts still ongoing in 2023 for the CORE act. Current advocacy projects include working with partner organizations to protect our wild areas, including: renaming of the Gore Range to Nuchu Range; preservation of habitat for bighorn sheep and other wildlife; protection of Wilderness from reservoir construction; supporting the Safe Passages initiative to build overpasses or underpasses to facilitate animal crossings.

In 2019, FENW officially changed its name to Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance (ESWA) to better reflect that its current activities assist the USFS in stewardship of three Wilderness Areas in Eagle and Summit Counties. In 2022, the portion of Flat Tops Wilderness in White River National Forest was added to ESWA’s volunteer efforts to make four areas.

A membership-based organization, ESWA sponsors a monthly e-newsletter, several social events, including an annual celebration with a photo contest. Our website [www.wild4eswa.org](http://www.wild4eswa.org) provides historical information, archival records and more details and photos of current volunteer activities.

## VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER CONTACTS

### **Dillon Ranger District (Eagles Nest & Ptarmigan Peak)**

680 Blue River Parkway  
Silverthorne, CO 80498  
970- 468-5400

Tyler Kirkpatrick, Dillon Ranger District  
Trails, Wilderness, Motorized Recreation Manager  
680 Blue River Parkway, PO BOX 620  
Silverthorne, CO 80498  
970- 376-4317 (office) 970- 376-4317 (cell)  
[tyler.kirkpatrick@usda.gov](mailto:tyler.kirkpatrick@usda.gov)

Matt Barnes, Dillon Ranger District  
Wilderness Program Lead  
680 Blue River Parkway, PO BOX 620  
Silverthorne, CO 80498  
[matthew.barnes2@usda.gov](mailto:matthew.barnes2@usda.gov)  
970-389-6797 (cell)

### **Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District (Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, Flat Tops)**

24747 U.S. Hwy 24  
Minturn CO 81645  
970- 827-5715

Mike Beach, Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District  
Recreation, Trail, Wilderness Staff Officer  
24747 Hwy 24  
Minturn, CO 81645  
970-471-3595 (cell)  
[Michael.beach@usda.gov](mailto:Michael.beach@usda.gov)

Mark Steinbrecher, Eagle-Holy Cross RD  
Lead Wilderness Ranger  
24747 Hwy 24  
Minturn, CO 81645  
970-401-1291 (cell)  
[mark.steinbrecher@usda.gov](mailto:mark.steinbrecher@usda.gov)

# **VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER PROGRAM INFORMATION**

## **Program Description**

Volunteer Wilderness Rangers (VWRs) are the signature program of ESWA's ongoing boots-on-the-ground efforts to assist the USFS. This program includes education on Leave No Trace principles, leadership training, and education about all ESWA initiatives and other volunteer opportunities.

## **Goals of the Program**

The goal of the Volunteer Wilderness Ranger (VWR) Program is to establish a friendly presence on local Wilderness trails and at campsites and trailheads, to educate Wilderness visitors about the special qualities of Wilderness, our most protected public lands. Only 2% of lands in the lower 48 states receive permanent protection as Wilderness. The 1964 Wilderness Act states: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Further, wilderness is "...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 includes "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation." VWRs help educate visitors on backcountry ethics so important in keeping Wilderness wild, to preserve and protect these natural features. VWRs also collect information on trail conditions, and collect vital information such as counts of visitors and cars at trailheads, to help the Forest Service Staff manage these Wildernesses and serve the communities of Summit and Eagle Counties.

## **The Need for the Program**

**Summit County and Eagle County need the Volunteer Wilderness Ranger Program** to educate visitors, to maintain the natural qualities of these Wilderness lands and minimize their being "loved to death." These efforts contribute to the high quality of life and stable economy of the mountain communities. Many of Summit and Eagle Counties' guests, second homeowners, and residents value the natural recreation opportunities available here. Continued enjoyment of our Wilderness Areas is critically dependent on good management of these public lands. Unfortunately, the budget of the U.S. Forest Service has steadily decreased, while the number of visitors has steadily increased, and therefore volunteers like ESWA's are crucial to continued preservation of Wilderness character. From 1980 to 2020, Summit County's population increased more than 3-fold, from 8,848 to 31,055; Eagle County's increased more than 4-fold, from 13,300 to 55,731, with corresponding increases in visitors to Wilderness Areas.

## **Benefits to Volunteer Wilderness Rangers**

- **Give back to the lands that you enjoy and make a difference in Wilderness lands**
- **Contribute to the solutions of the challenges facing the Forest Service**
- **Participate in educational experiences and training sponsored by ESWA**
- **Help Keep Wilderness Wild!**

**Two trails especially need your help**, because they are extremely popular in the summer: Booth Creek/Lake in Eagle County and Lily Pad Lake in Summit County. Please plan one of your hikes or Trailhead Host events at these trails.

# VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER RESPONSIBILITIES

Hours: between 8 am – 5 pm, 7 days a week

## **Volunteers are welcome to choose either or both of the roles described below:**

**VWRs (Trail Patrols)** provide Wilderness user education and increase awareness of the special nature of our Wilderness lands while hiking various trails. Information can include trail and camping information, Leave No Trace travel and camping techniques, explanation of Wilderness regulations, including self-registration for backpacking in Eagles Nest or Holy Cross Wilderness, natural and human history of the area. Volunteers will **not** provide regulation enforcement.

**VWRs (Trailhead Hosts)** provide Wilderness user education and increase awareness of our Wilderness lands while hosting tables at various trailheads. Information can include trail and camping information, Leave No Trace travel and camping techniques, explanation of Wilderness regulations, plus natural and human history of the area. Volunteers will **not** provide regulation enforcement. Three-hour shifts at chosen trailheads, plus credit for one hour time to pick up/drop off trailhead hosting kit, as well as set up and take down of the table.

## **Qualifications Required:**

- VWRs must be able to perform duties involved in hiking, which may include standing, scrambling over downed trees, or navigating rough terrain at higher elevations.
- VWRs must be able to represent ESWA and the USFS: to maintain a positive, friendly, non-confrontational attitude with the community and/or visitors they contact.
- VWRs must enjoy communicating with the public, especially appreciating that many people do not know the difference between National Forest lands and Wilderness lands.

## **Volunteers Will Provide:**

- Personal transportation to and from trailheads and trainings.
- Personal gear (food, water, appropriate clothing and footwear).
- Commitment to attend training, a mentor hike or host, and complete four 4-hour shifts alone, or with a partner (who need not be a VWR) from June through mid-October.
- Note that time to drive from home to desired trail does not count towards the hours.

## **ESWA will provide:**

- Uniform shirt – official US Forest Service with additional Volunteer patch
- Official USFS Volunteer ballcap and nametag
- Informational materials and training sessions
- Loaner dog leashes, brochures, Wilderness regulation cards, and other items for visitors

## **Key Responsibilities Include:**

- Follow Program procedures, as outlined in the Training and Resource Manual.
- Attend required training(s); submit required reports online to ESWA for USFS.
- Sign up for a minimum of four (4) days annually of patrolling and/or trailhead or campsite hosting.
- Practice Leave No Trace principles while on duty; be responsible for personal safety
- Wear authorized uniform appropriately, with nametag. No drinking alcohol while in uniform.

## SOME HIKING TRAILS FOR VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGERS

For trail descriptions and directions go to COTREX <https://Trails.colorado.gov>

<b>Summit County</b>		<b>Eagle County</b>	
Trail Name	Wilderness	Trail Name	Wilderness
Acorn Creek	Ptarmigan Peak	Beaver Lake	Holy Cross
Angler Mountain	Ptarmigan Peak	Bighorn Creek	Eagles Nest
Brush Creek to Lost Lake Loop	Eagles Nest	Booth Creek/ Lake	Eagles Nest
Buffalo cabin/ Buffalo Mountain	Eagles Nest	Card Creek	Holy Cross
Eaglesmere Lake	Eagles Nest	Cross Creek	Holy Cross
Elliott Ridge	Eagles Nest	Dead Dog	Holy Cross
Gore Range	Eagles Nest	Deluge Lake	Eagles Nest
Lily Pad Lake	Eagles Nest	East Lake Creek	Holy Cross
Lower Cataract Lake	Eagles Nest	Fall Creek (to Lake Constantine)	Holy Cross
Meadow Creek to Eccles Pass	Eagles Nest	Gore Creek	Eagles Nest
Mesa Cortina to S. Willow Falls	Eagles Nest	Grouse Lake	Holy Cross
North Rock Creek to Boulder Lake	Eagles Nest	Halfmoon (Mt. Holy Cross)	Holy Cross
North Rock Creek to Boss Mine	Eagles Nest	Lake Charles	Holy Cross
North Tenmile	Eagles Nest	Martin Creek	Holy Cross
Ptarmigan Peak	Ptarmigan Peak	Missouri Lake/ Fancy Creek	Holy Cross
Slate Lakes	Eagles Nest	Notch Mountain	Holy Cross
Surprise Lake	Eagles Nest	Olsen Lake	Holy Cross
Tipperary Lake	Eagles Nest	Pitkin Creek	Eagles Nest
Upper Cataract Lake	Eagles Nest	Sopris/ Brady Lakes	Holy Cross
Ute Pass/ Ute Peak	Ptarmigan Peak	West Tennessee Lake	Holy Cross
Wheeler Lakes/ Lost Lake	Eagles Nest	Whitney Lake	Holy Cross
Willowbrook	Eagles Nest	Turquoise Lake	Holy Cross
Upper Willow/ Salmon Lakes	Eagles Nest	Upper Piney (from Piney Lake to falls)	Eagles Nest

**More trails in Eagles Nest and Holy Cross Wilderness are listed on the online sign-up form**

**VWR patrols and Trailhead hosting must occur on FS system trails leading into Wilderness:  
no off-trail hiking or scrambling up peaks**

## **SOME HIKING TRAILS/TRAILHEADS FOR VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGERS In Flat Tops Wilderness**

VWR patrols or Trailhead hosting in Flat Tops must occur on system trails leading into the Wilderness; no off-trail hiking or scrambling up peaks.

ESWA is assisting the Forest Service with patrols in a the White River National Forest portion of Flat Tops Wilderness: these patrols are accessible from the Hilltop Trailhead on Sweetwater Road. [Friends of Wilderness (FOW) based in Steamboat Springs, is assisting with patrols in the Routt National Forest portion of the Flat Tops Wilderness to the north].

### **Hilltop Trailhead parking**

This Southeastern portion of Flat Tops is most easily accessed by the Hilltop Trailhead: located north of Dotsero, 13 miles west of Eagle. Travel North for 7 miles on Colorado River Road, then turn Left on Sweetwater Creek Road and travel 11.5 miles. There will be cabins at Sweetwater Wilderness ranch, and a parking area:

The last ¼ mile to the Hilltop Trailhead requires a high-clearance 4X4 vehicle. It is recommended to park at the bottom of the hill at coordinates: 39°48'38.71"N, 107°10'58.11"W. Volunteers should then hike up the last ¼ mile to the Trailhead. This is highly encouraged when inclement weather is predicted, as the road has a sharp corner and exposure.

### **Patrol Trails accessed from Hilltop Trailhead:**

Shingle Peak #2042

Nellie's Trail #1839

Sweetwater Trail #1854

Turret Creek #1832

Rim Lake Trail #1856

Johnny Meyers #2067

Luark Trail #2043

Trappers Lake trail #1816 between Luark Trail and Turret Creek Trail

Note: These are the trails most likely to be patrolled; the first three are the ones currently on the sign-up sheet. However, other USFS trails off of these can also be patrolled.

**Map links:** **COTREX** <https://Trails.colorado.gov> and then search for desired trailhead

## **SIGN-IN FOR TRAIL/TRAILHEAD; SIGN-OUT, SUBMIT REPORT AFTER**

**We share Online sign-up calendar with members of Friends of Dillon Ranger District (FDRD).** FDRD is a volunteer group, with paid staff located in the Forest Service Office in Silverthorne; they mostly patrol hike on trails outside of Wilderness Areas, on trails all over Summit County. ESWA volunteers may also choose some of these non-Wilderness trails, but they do not count towards the annual suggestion of a minimum of 4 Wilderness trails. We do an annual joint Trailhead hosting event with FDRD rangers; they assist our sawyers and also volunteer for our llama-assisted overnight trips.

**One time**, before you begin a patrol: identify your CONTACT person, and send them the Check-in, Check-out Information page from the Resource Manual, so that they understand the procedures we will follow if you have not returned.

**Before every Ranger patrol hike**, notify your CONTACT person of 4 things: Trailhead, route you will take, estimated return time, whether your car will be at the trailhead (Trailhead hosts are also encouraged to have a contact person)

**Sign-in for your Trail or Trailhead on the ESWA website (Google calendar):**

**Both Ranger Patrol hikers and Trailhead hosts use the same online sign-up form:**

Start at ESWA website: <https://wild4ESWA.org>;

**\*\*\* From the Volunteer tab, choose VWR hike Sign-up**

Click the **Sign-up link** and a big Google Sheets chart will appear, with columns for **Trail, Ranger name, Time**.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO SIGN IN TO GOOGLE

Note that different WEEKS are shown across the bottom of the screen.

Choose your WEEK and then DAY of that week.

Using the pull-down menu for Trail, choose your desired trail.

Using the pull-down menu for Ranger, choose your name.

Using the pull-down menu for Time, choose the time of day you wish to start.

If a co-ranger is going with you, enter that information on a separate line below – trail and time as well.

There is a new column if you would like a partner to go with you, but do not have one

NOTE: you must have signed the USFS official Job Hazard Analysis form in order for your name to appear.

Exit (you do not need to click SAVE or anything)

If you change your mind about trail or day or time, just go back to your scheduled day, and click on the trail and change it to EMPTY, same for your name and time

If someone has already signed up for the Day and Trail that you want, please choose another Day and/or Trail.

And do try to visit some of the very popular trails during your summer outings.

## **Report-Out after hiking patrol or trailhead host session**

### **\*\*\*\* 2026 new RIMS (Recreation Impact Monitoring) system**

The CMC RIMS Mobile App (developed by Colorado Mountain Club) is a data collection tool that includes GPS point data, detailed surveys, photos, editing, and sharing features, and offline functionality. This is the first year ESWA is partnering with FDRD to use this App to provide data for the Forest Service.

**\*\*\*\*\*From ESWA website: under Volunteer tab choose VWR resources: watch the RIMS reporting video (Module 5);, read (and maybe print) the detailed RIMS reporting instructions.**

You will download the CMC RIMS app in the Apple App Store (iPhone) or the Google Play Store (Android), and allow RIMS to access your location from the trailhead.

We strongly recommend that you **open the app and start your Stewardship Report** at the **trailhead**. This will ensure that the coordinates of the trailhead are recorded correctly and will allow you to select the trailhead. You then save your report as a **DRAFT** and then complete or edit it later.

To start the Stewardship Report: Your email was used to sign into the app, and then you entered the trailhead name, date and start time, whether FDRD or ESWA volunteer and saved DRAFT

While you are on your patrol hike, or Trailhead host shift, you should keep track of important data that you will report after completion of your session. If two people hiked, each will enter the basic information on the first page, but only one, designated **Primary one**, needs to complete the detailed data requested after the session.

The data you are asked to track include:

- Number of miles (roundtrip) if a hike
- Number of vehicles at Trailhead on arrival -
- Number of vehicles at Trailhead on departure
- Number of trail users, and also number of groups of day users (1 is also a group)
- Number of overnight (backpackers) hikers (and also groups of overnight)
- Total number of users encountered
- Number of users you talked with (more than just hello)
- Number of fire safety conversations
- Number of dogs in Wilderness: number on-leash, number off-leash
  
- Number of trees across trail – include size estimate, location from the GPS
- Notes on trail condition or other items of interest: include in comments section
- Also upload photos of VWRs engaging with visitors

### **After returning from your hike or host shift:**

**\*\*\*\* Be sure to Notify your CONTACT person that you are safely back.**

**\*\*\*\* Finish your Stewardship Report** – remember to click SAVE when done;  
This can be done at home, and from browser rather than phone

## **.RIMS (RECREATION IMPACT MONITORING)**

The RIMS video and detailed printed instructions you viewed on the VWR Resources section of website should enable you to use the RIMS app to report after your hike. Here are some supplemental notes taken from those instructions, for your reference.

App users can report trail maintenance needs, inventory campsites, track visitor use, and more to help agencies and stewardship groups prioritize hot spots and deploy crews to work on trail issues. As this is our first year with the app, we are not asking you to do all these things.

Technology can be frustrating, but remember that the main reason ESWA wants you on the trail is for visibility and education of other hikers. Do the reporting as best you can. Also, while you can enter some of the optional reporting – it is better for now just to put any other information in the “Notes or Other comments’ at the bottom of the Stewardship Report.

The CMC RIMS app is constantly being updated, so please use ESWA instructions as a guide only, and just roll with it if you see something different in the app.

Note that you must use the email you provided to ESWA to login to RIMS. If you used a different email, you won’t be successful. If you prefer to use a different email, please send a note to [howdy@wild4eswa.org](mailto:howdy@wild4eswa.org) with the alternate email.

If you forget to start the app at the trailhead, you’ll need to edit the coordinates, select the location on the map – as close to the trailhead as possible and then you can search for the trailhead.

When entering data on the app, you may have trouble selecting a field. If you do, put your finger on the right side of the field you are trying to select instead of the center.

If you are hiking with another VWR, one of you should be the **primary VWR** and enter all of the data. For the secondary VWR, you should also submit a report under your name, but only record the information in the ‘Patrol Details’ section (location, date, hours, miles, organization). You can save your assessment at the end of this section and you (secondary) are done! This is how we capture the fact that you patrolled as well as your hours and miles without duplicating other information that the primary VWR records during the hike.

Entering the number of people can be a bit confusing. Two key points – 1 person is a group of 1, and ‘Public Seen’ is the sum of ‘people (day use)’ plus ‘People (night use)’. So if you see 1 person for day use, a group of 2 for day use, and a group of 3 for night use, you should enter 2 groups day use, 3 people day use, 1 group night use, 3 people night use, and 6 public seen.

In addition to entering your report using the phone app, you can enter using a web browser at the following site: <https://rims.cmc.org/#/my-assessments>.

Note that any reports you save on the app can be see and edited on the broser version.

However any drafts you save on the app won’t be seen and you’ll need to save them as a completed assessment before you can see them in the web version.

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## CHECK-IN, CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

Each volunteer needs a **contact person** with whom they will check in, and check out on the days they volunteer in the Wilderness. Please leave your exact itinerary with your contact: trailhead, route, estimated return time. Account for common delays such as weather, vehicle break downs, or changes in route.

It is very important that your contact knows whether you will be driving to the trailhead, dropped off, or walking. Make sure your contact has your vehicle description and license plate information. If you know you will be late in returning to the trailhead, **PLEASE** make every attempt to call your contact.

- ❖ **Volunteers will carry a cell phone with charged batteries while in the Wilderness.**
- ❖ **Volunteers should plan to end their day in the field no later than 5:00 pm. If backpacking, try to be out of the field by 5 PM on the last day of your trip.**

### Emergency Procedures:

We do recognize that it can be difficult to estimate return times if you are unfamiliar with a trail. If your contact has not heard from you within an hour or so of your scheduled return or by 6 PM, **they should call 911 to report that you are missing.**

However, if your contact person is NOT located in the county where you are hiking (for example, you're hiking in the Holy Cross Wilderness and your contact person is in Evergreen, they should call the Sheriff's Department in the county where YOU are located rather than 911 from their location.

**Eagle County Sheriff's Department    970-328-8500**

**Summit County Sheriff's Department    970-453-2232**

**Trailhead Hosts** are also encouraged to notify their contact person before they begin a shift and indicate at which trailhead, and also notify them when they return home.

## SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

**The job of a volunteer requires only that volunteers who encounter emergency situations in visitors write down the necessary information and notify the authorities.** Your own safety and life should come first, even (or especially) in emergency situations. Please remember that if you are injured at any time during the days you are on duty, you will be unable to help others. Please exercise good judgment at all times, and always know where you are on the trail.

**If you encounter a life-threatening emergency in a visitor, stay calm, record the pertinent information on your “Co-ordinating a Rescue” card, and call 911.**

If no reporting forms are available, the Information you will need to write down includes:

1. **Location of victim.** Include a description of the landscape and indicate location on a topo map or GPS waypoint.
2. **Record the apparent condition of the patient.** Do not diagnose the problem. Describe the condition only (conscious, bleeding, sitting, etc.).
3. **Weather; Time of day**
4. **Number of companions**
5. **Type and condition of clothing, equipment, etc.**

**If you are notified of a Missing Person, stay calm, record the pertinent information on the ‘Missing Person Form’ in your VWR kit, and call 911.** In addition to the basic information above, include approximate **age of person, where and when last seen.**

If you encounter **another emergency** and decide to go for help, write down all relevant information and walk, DON'T RUN, to the trailhead. (Try to phone if in cell phone range.)

**Please notify the USFS and ESWA contacts that about the emergency as well – such as in the ‘other’ section of the report.**

**While on duty, volunteers must stay on established trails.** Please save cross-country travel and rock scrambling for times other than volunteer days. People have died from falls in the backcountry, some people who were fit and competent. Please don't put your life in jeopardy.

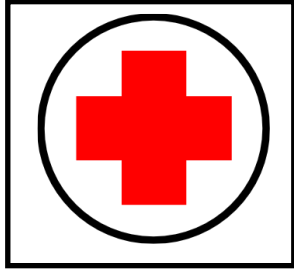
### **Weather**

If the weather is really bad, use your own judgment about how long to stay out, whether you should return to the trailhead or go out on the hike at all. Please err on the side of caution.

### **Public Contact**

Do not allow a hostile person to draw you into a confrontation. Sometimes this means just walking away. Think of these situations as “planting seeds” and don't make it a negative situation. Our first priority is to educate the visitor about the regulations and Leave No Trace information. **Make contact with people only when appropriate and safe!** Some people prefer not to carry on lengthy conversations and are looking for solitude. Use your own judgment. When you encounter a situation that merits sharing information, briefly introduce yourself as a **volunteer** and share some information in order to increase understanding and to enrich the person's visit. You can do this verbally or with a simple handout card, or both, in a gentle and friendly manner. We hope people will understand the reasons behind the Forest Service regulations and not just react because they might get caught.

***You are not in the backcountry to enforce regulations, simply to inform visitors of them.***



## Forest Service Worker's Compensation for Volunteer Injuries

### Are you covered as a Volunteer?

For the purposes of accidents and injuries, volunteers are considered employees (Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972; section 3(c)) and covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) for all reasonable and necessary medical expenses. The Federal Employees Compensation Act is administered by the **U.S. Department of Labor**, not the USDA Forest Service. The U.S. Department of Labor makes the final determination for claims on work-related injuries.

You must be operating under a **signed volunteer agreement**, attended the Volunteer Ranger Training, or follow-up refresher training, and follow the procedures in the signed **Job Hazard Analysis**.

**Step 1: If it is an emergency for you, seek medical attention immediately.** Continue with Step 2 as soon as possible, preferably while you are still at the medical treatment facility. Also, inform the clinic that your injury may be covered by federal workers' compensation.

**Step 2: Call ESWA Contact ASAP.** If it's a non-emergency but you still need medical attention, your Coordinator will get authorization from the Forest Service for medical treatment.

#### **Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance**

Eric Malmborg 303-885-4562 (cell) past-Chair

Mike Browning 303-408-0995 (cell) VWR Chair, past-Chair

Frances Hartogh (2026 Chair) 720-320-0749 (cell)

Zach Kauk (Past-Chair) 309-857-6235 (cell)

Karn Stiegelmeier (Past-Chair) 970-471-2298 (cell)

Bill Betz (Past-Chair) 303-903-7127 (cell)

If you are unable to contact an ESWA Contact, then please call:

#### **U.S. Forest Service, Dillon Ranger District or Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District**

Tyler Kirkpatrick 970-376-4317 (cell)

Matt Barnes 970-389-6797 (cell)

Mike Beach 970-471-3595 (cell)

Mark Steinbrecher 970-401-1291 (cell)

# VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER PATROL PACKING LIST

## **Safety Items (Recommended):**

Basic First Aid Kit  
Map/compass/GPS  
Warm clothing/layers  
Extra food and water  
Cell phone (turned off/Airplane Mode, unless emergency)  
Raingear  
Sunscreen  
Sunglasses  
Notepaper and pen  
Knife  
Whistle  
Coordinating a Rescue card\*  
Missing Person card\*

## **Educational Items (strongly encouraged):**

Trail information – COTREX app, and select trailhead;  
our trails are in White River National Forest  
Leave No Trace Cards\*  
Wilderness regulations cards/dog on leash cards\*  
same card for Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan, and Holy Cross; no card for Flat Tops  
Dog leashes to loan\*  
Dog poop bags\*  
WAG bags (for human waste)  
ESWA brochures\*  
ESWA business cards\*  
Backpacker self-registration permits  
Trash bag

## **Optional Safety Items:**

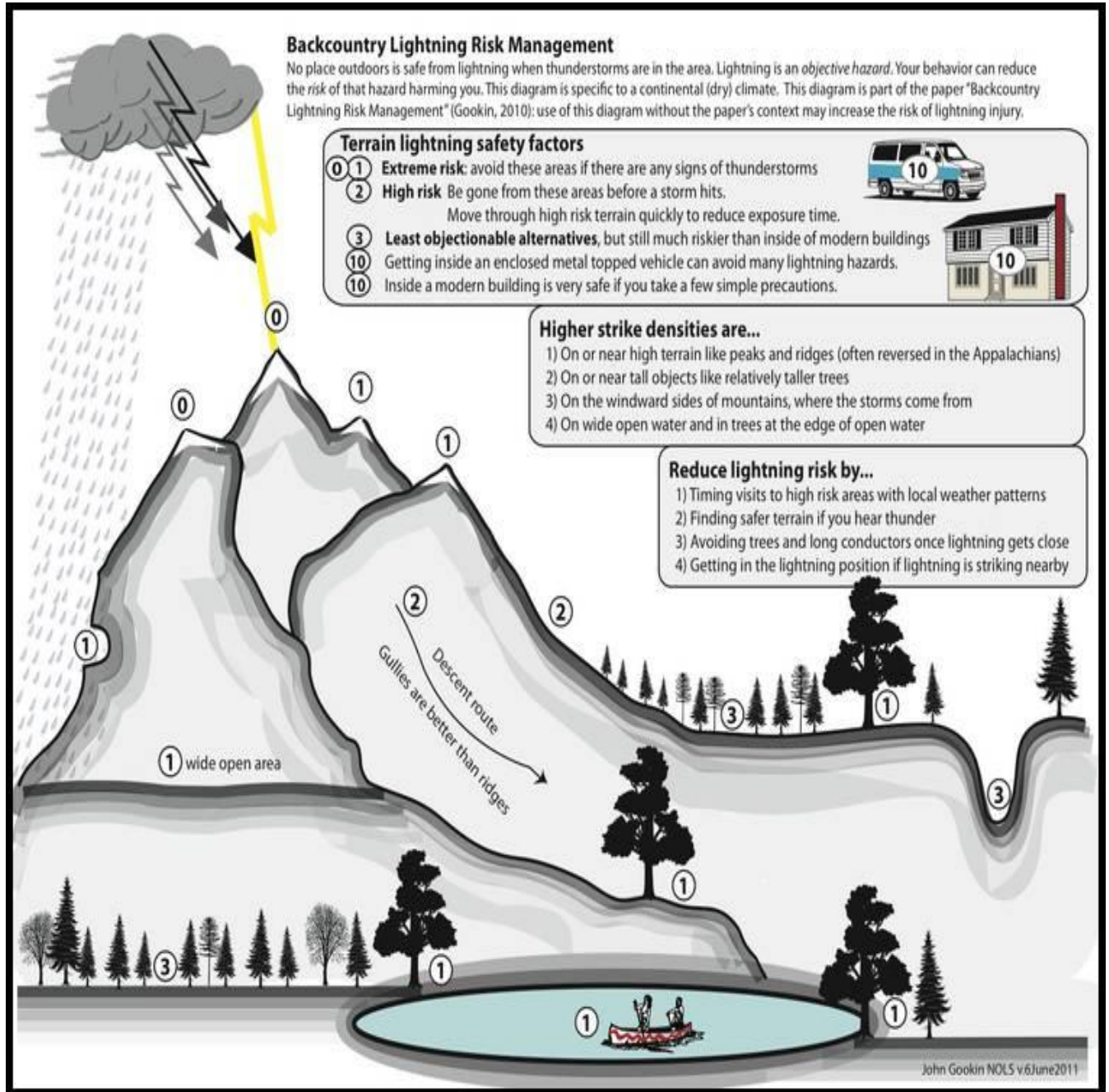
Headlamp  
Waterproof matches/fire starter  
Handwarmers  
Water treatment materials  
Insect repellent  
Emergency Blanket

## **Educational Items (also encouraged):**

Interpretive field guides  
Binoculars  
Reference guides/books/apps (scat, prints, wildflowers, trees etc.)

Items marked with \* may be replenished from an ESWA box at the USFS offices

# LIGHTNING SAFETY



## Lightning safety Position:

Minimize contact to the ground, try to stay on the balls of your feet.

Get rid of any metallic objects. Stand or sit on a foam pad or a soft pack of clothes, avoid backpacks with frames.



## FALLING SNAG SAFETY



- Be aware of where you stop for a break while hiking. Try not to stop under a dead tree.
- Do not set up your tent under a dead tree when camping. Give a snag lots of space (approximately twice the height of the tree) from your campsite.
- If the weather turns windy while out on patrol in an area of dead trees, you should turn around. Look up often while retreating from the area.

The **Mountain Pine Beetle** is a native beetle to the Western United States. Burrowing through the outer bark of conifers, bark beetles lay eggs which hatch into hungry beetle larvae. Larvae consume the living inner bark of trees. Growth of blue-stained fungus introduced by beetle blocks flow of water to crown of tree, and flow of pitch used to push out attacking beetle. Warmer winters and low precipitation caused conditions that favor the beetle and weaken the pine trees. This has contributed to widespread death of many of our lodgepole pine trees in the last 8-10 years, resulting in a heightened danger from falling snags.



# WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER SAFETY

## **Black Bear:**

*If you encounter a bear on the trail:*

- Look large, talk calmly and back away slowly
- Be sure the bear has an escape route.
- Never run or climb a tree.

*In the unlikely event that a bear approaches you:*

- If the bear should attack, do NOT play dead; fight back with anything you can.
- Stand your ground.
- Yell or throw rocks in the direction of the bear—not right at it.
- If you carry bear spray, you may need to use it now.



## **Moose:**

*If you are threatened by a moose:*

- Stay calm and always leave an escape route.
- Talk, make your presence known and slowly back away.
- Put an object (tree, boulder, vehicle etc.) between you and the moose.



*Signs of aggression:*

- Long hairs (hackles) will be raised on its back/shoulders
- Ears may be laid back
- Licks its snout

## **Mountain Lion:**

*If you surprise a lion on the trail:*

- Stay calm and speak to it calmly
- Back away slowly—running may stimulate the lion's instinct to chase and attack
- Do all you can to appear large—raise your arms and open your jacket



*If you are attacked by a lion:*

- Throw stones, branches or whatever you can get your hands on.
- Do NOT crouch down or turn your back and run
- FIGHT BACK however you can

## PUBLIC CONTACT

### The Encounter

While you are wearing a uniform, you are an official representative of the U.S. Forest Service and of Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance. We are called Volunteer Wilderness Rangers, and therefore we should take pride in our work as stewards of the Wilderness. A steward “takes responsibility to make decisions and takes actions today that will allow resources to be maintained in a healthy manner.”

This summer we want you to help as stewards of Summit and Eagle Counties’ resources by taking responsibility, making good decisions, and taking action. Take responsibility by practicing the Leave No Trace Principles for Responsible Recreation. Please practice Authority of the Resource technique, and let Mother Nature, not regulations, be the reason for visitor behavior change. Take action by educating Wilderness visitors to maintain our resources in a healthy manner.

### Making the Contact

After you have your uniform on and your pack has all the necessary items for a day patrolling the Wilderness, you may realize that you don’t have much experience working with visitors. However, approaching a Wilderness visitor can be quite simple, and it gets easier with more experience. The Forest Service operates under a philosophy called the Good Host, which means we try to treat each visitor as an invited and welcome guest. The following examples will help introduce you to the “Good Host” approach.

### Initiate contact with visitors by asking:

#### **“Hi, how is your hike today (or so far)?”**

This is a non-committal question. Visitors can just say “fine” and continue walking if they want to be left alone. The uniform will let them know that you are a person of authority. If they want information or want to complain (or compliment), they know that you are the one to talk to. Step off to the side of the trail to let them pass, so that they do not feel pressured to stop.

If they acknowledge you, continue talking, say, **“I am a volunteer with Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance, which is a local non-profit that works with the Forest Service. I am here to answer any questions you may have. Can I help you at all?”**

If “no,” just say **“Enjoy the rest of your hike.”**

If you sense an interest, try to answer their questions to the best of your ability. If you cannot answer their question, direct them to the appropriate Forest Service Office or offer them an ESWA business card or brochure so they can contact ESWA directly with their questions, or learn how they could get involved with us.

**The most important thing to remember when making contact with Wilderness visitors is to be polite and friendly. The visitor will let you know if they want to talk with you; if they do not, let them continue enjoying their day in the Wilderness.**

<u>DO</u>	<u>DO NOT</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Keep in mind our #1 goal is to educate</b></li> <li>▪ Remove Sunglasses</li> <li>▪ Stand shoulder to shoulder</li> <li>▪ Talk to visitors on their level</li> <li>▪ Lead up to the situation; don't be abrupt</li> <li>▪ Keep the situation on a positive note</li> <li>▪ Be a good listener</li> <li>▪ Be consistent in dealing with all people</li> <li>▪ Remember we have no policing authority</li> <li>▪ Answer all questions to the best of your ability. If you cannot answer them, please don't make things up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Get in the visitor's face or space</b></li> <li>▪ Display an overbearing attitude</li> <li>▪ Be critical, harsh, or sharp</li> <li>▪ Be abrupt, hurried, or impatient</li> <li>▪ Be self-righteous</li> <li>▪ Be an elitist</li> <li>▪ Assume a threatening or aggressive posture</li> <li>▪ Lose your cool; never respond to abusive language in anger</li> </ul>

## AUTHORITY OF THE RESOURCE

Do you have one of those friends who always gets speeding tickets but still refuses to obey the posted Speed limits? Some people just don't respond well to regulations. This is why Dr. George N. Wallace, Natural Resource Professor at Colorado State University, has created the "Authority of the Resource Technique" (ART). ART is a non-confrontational technique for approaching forest visitors.



Many people in the backcountry are not aware of the principles upon which nature operates, or they are naive to how their actions spoil an outdoor experience for others. Fortunately, most people are willing to change their behavior to protect the Wilderness if they are approached in the proper manner. Stopping people in the middle of the trail, or barging into their camp, with a codebook in one hand and spouting off line and verse of each infraction they are violating will not lead to a successful *encounter*, nor is it part of your duties. Authority of the Resource will allow the visitor to interpret nature's requirements and make their own decision, which will result in a behavioral change. When Authority of the Resource is used properly, and you show genuine interest and concern about what is happening, the visitor will be more receptive to your viewpoint. The fact that you are wearing a volunteer uniform lends credibility that your beliefs are those also held by the US Forest Service.

### **Authority of the Resource (ART) can be broken down into 4 Steps:**

**Step 1:** Approach visitors in a non-threatening way that does not startle them. Introduce yourself and initiate ice-breaking conversation.

**"These kids look like they are having a good time."**

**TIPS:**

- Be calm, friendly, and polite.
- Remove your sunglasses; remember to smile.

**Step 2:** Give an objective description of the undesirable behavior that was observed. Try to be non-judgmental with your statement.

**"I noticed that your boys have built a small campfire"**, rather than,  
**"Don't you folks know that it is illegal to have a fire within 100 ft. of a stream."**

**TIPS:**

- Avoid phrases like “you really shouldn’t...”, “Don’t you know that it is harmful to...” or “it’s against Regulation 32(a) under the...”
- Make a statement without attributing blame, even if it appears they did commit the act.
- Talk to visitors at their level by standing or sitting with them.

**Step 3:** Shift the focus to the resource. A “shoulder to shoulder” interest in some third thing breaks the tension of a face to face encounter. Reveal the implications of the undesirable behavior for the resource or the visitor experience.

**“Looks like you guys have some fishing rods with you. I bet your boys really love playing in the stream looking for critters and fishing. You know part of Leave-No-Trace ethics that the Forest Service promotes encourages campfires to be held at least 100 ft. from any stream or river to protect the fragile vegetation that the animals in the river need to survive?”**

**TIPS:**

- Listen carefully to visitors. Use cues they give you about their motivations, beliefs, and level of understanding about issues to make your description of the implications relevant.
- Questions are an indicator that the visitor is engaging the issue.
- Focus on the natural reasons behind the regulations. Let them in on nature’s show.

**Step 4:** Describe the desired behavior clearly and if needed, explain how to do it.

**“The forest service realizes it’s pretty on the banks, so they ask forest users to host campfires at least 100 ft. from a water source because we want our kid’s kids to dig for critters and have something to fish for, right? We ask anyone wishing to have an open fire near a stream or river to do so at least 100 ft. from a stream. Would you like help relocating your fire?”**

**TIPS:**

- Tell them how you feel about it.
- If the situation lends itself, model or demonstrate the desired behavior.
- If the visitor appears to be giving only half-hearted consideration to your message, it may be appropriate to refer to the regulation as well.

**“That way people can still enjoy a fire and be in compliance with the regulation that prohibits camp fires within 100 ft. of any stream or river.”**

**Other Helpful Tips:**

- Approach visitors only if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Avoid what may appear to be a dangerous situation – your safety comes first.
  1. If a conversation gets confrontational, carefully and politely walk away.
  2. Contact a USFS Officer. Document the incident on your report form.
  3. Think of these situations as “planting seeds,” perhaps next time someone will be able to get through to this person.
- Be a good listener.
- We have no policing authority, so focus on ART, not the law.
- Have Leave No Trace Materials, garbage bags, doggie bags, wag bags etc. available for handout.
- Answer all questions if possible. If you don’t know the answer, say so, but direct them towards the answer.
- **Above all, remember to enjoy yourself while doing a great job for the Wilderness.**

# A BIOLOGICAL WILDFIRE!

## Let's control noxious weeds

*Like an unwanted wildfire, noxious weeds can drastically affect wildland plant and animal communities, deprive birds and animals of food and shelter, damage watersheds, increase soil erosion, and adversely impact recreation. However, unlike the temporary negative impacts of wildfire, ecological damage from extensive noxious weed infestations is often permanent. Lands affected by wildfire are self-healing, whereas lands invaded by noxious weeds don't return naturally to their pre-invasion condition. Weeds continue to spread, and the damage worsens. When considering long-term ecological effects on the land, invasion by aggressive non-indigenous noxious weeds is far more damaging than any wildfire. – Steven A. Dewey, Utah State University*

Much of our effort at ESWA is directed at reversing the ongoing "loved to death" deterioration caused by human visitors. Unfortunately, there are visitors to the wilderness that follow rules worse than humans – Noxious Weeds. These insidious aggressors are gaining ground. They will crowd out the valuable native plant species and ruin the forage for the native fauna. We encourage VWRs to add Noxious Weed Awareness to their hike agendas. It is fun, because who doesn't like looking at flowers when they're hiking?

### **"Spread the word, not the weeds"**

Preventing the spread of weed infestations is key to slowing weed invasions. Prevention is important because control and elimination of weed infestations is expensive and virtually impossible. New infestations are most likely to occur where people have been. So, it is very important for visitors to know how to stop the spread of weeds. As an ESWA VWR you can educate the public about best practices.

### **How can you talk to the public about invasive weeds?**

Weeds may seem mundane, so you need to be both brief and creative. Depending on the group, you might try linking a discussion of noxious weeds to the more widely known issue of invasive species or begin with parallels between "Leave No Trace principles" for hiking and camping and "Leave No Trace principles" for weeds.

There will be a few obvious **opportunities to begin a discussion**:

- Someone standing in a weed patch or holding a weed.
- Finding dogs off leash who may be carrying seeds.
- Finding horses or pack animals who may not have certified weed-free feed.
- Discovering a campsite near a patch of Canadian thistle

Here are **essential points** for your discussion about invasive weeds:

- People, pets and livestock introduce and spread invasive weeds by bringing in seeds and disturbing the soil.
- Invasive and noxious weeds can spread rapidly. Eradication and control is difficult, costly and time consuming.
- Wildlife habitat and food are reduced when noxious weeds take over

**There are simple things everyone can do** to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive weeds, which you can do even if you're not good at identifying the weeds.

- Avoid weedy areas – stay on the trail. Weeds establish easily in overused areas.
- Keep pets on leash and both pets and stock out of weedy areas.
- Inspect and clean your vehicles, boots, tack and equipment. Remove seeds.
- Camp away from areas with weeds.
- Inspect, brush, and clean animals (especially hooves and legs) for weed seeds.
- If you bring a pack animal, use only weed-free feed during your trip and for 48 to 72 hours before. All feed must be certified as weed-free and marked with the approved label from the state of origin.
- Tie stock to minimize soil disturbance and loss of native plants. Choose shady areas away from water to reduce weed growth.

### **Should I pick weeds?**



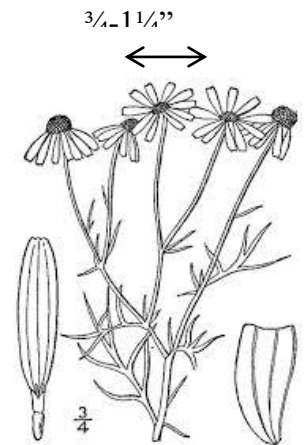
Purple flowers, Leaves extend down stalk

*Musk Thistle*

**Yes and no.** Most weeds you see should not be picked because they respond by growing back stronger. Some should not be picked because the native and invasive species are hard to tell apart. Some species can be picked because they are only spread by seed. ESWA is recommending two types of weeds should be picked –

#### **Musk Thistle and False Chamomile.**

Carry a garbage bag with you, put the weeds in it and carry them out. If the seed heads are left in the wild, they may spread the weed even more!



White petals, yellow center  
fern or feather like leaves

*False Chamomile*

# WILDERNESS

**"In wildness is the preservation of the world."** Henry David Thoreau

## **THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS**

In 1964 the Congress of the United States passed The Wilderness Act – the first law of its kind in the world. The Act recognized the intrinsic value of wild places and created a national system of Wilderness areas to protect and preserve outstanding natural landscapes and ecosystems for eternity. As stated by President Lyndon B. Johnson when signing the Act:

*"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."*

## **SELECTED SECTIONS OF THE 1964 WILDERNESS ACT:**

### **WILDERNESS SYSTEM ESTABLISHED STATEMENT OF POLICY**

**"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. For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be composed of federally owned areas designated by Congress as "wilderness areas", and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness; and no Federal lands shall be designated as "wilderness areas" except as provided for in this Act or by a subsequent Act."**

### **STATUTORY DEFINITION OF WILDERNESS**

**"Section 2. (c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled 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."**

## PROHIBITIONS OF CERTAIN USES

“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.”

## SOME INFORMATION ABOUT WILDERNESS AREAS

### How much Public Land is in Wilderness Areas?

The 1964 Act designated 9.1 million acres in 54 National Forest Wilderness Areas in 13 States. The initial Colorado Wilderness Areas were La Garita, Maroon Bells-Snowmass, Mount Zirkel, Rawah, and West Elk for a total of 700,000 acres. The Act provided that additional Wilderness Areas could be added by future Acts of Congress only and laid out “long-term study processes for additional designation.” Currently there are over 3.7 million acres in 44 Wilderness Areas in Colorado, and 112 million acres in 803 Wilderness Areas in 44 states plus Puerto Rico. Of this acreage about half is in Alaska. The total acres of designated Wilderness represents 5% of the total area of the United States, or about 2.7% of public land in the contiguous 48 states.

### What are some Benefits of Wilderness?

Wilderness Areas are the most protected public lands in North America. These lands are to be managed with restraint, both philosophically and practically. Due to their unique character, these truly wild spaces have become part of the American identity. Found in most states, but concentrated in the West, they protect lush forests, arid deserts, snow-capped peaks, dank swamps and sandy beaches. Although there's no place on Earth entirely free of human impact, in Wilderness lands, anthropogenic activities aren't the dominating forces. The characteristics of diverse, dynamic Wilderness ecosystems are esteemed by people across a broad spectrum, and the reasons Americans love Wilderness are even more diverse than the areas themselves. Some value the typically high air and water quality of Wilderness lands, while others value wild places as habitat for plants and animals scarce or absent in more human-modified geographies. Wilderness's ecological integrity—its biological and genetic diversity, the caliber of its natural resources—ranks high among the qualities of greatest interest to Americans, whether as the subject of scientific inquiry or celebrated as a fundamental intrinsic value of Wilderness.

The many and varied benefits of Wilderness reflect values of Wilderness as a specific place, an experience, a symbol, and/or a resource. Wilderness can have different values for different people, and even different values at various stages in life. Some people value hiking in a forest without encountering other people, to hear birds, see flowers and an occasional deer. Others value the challenge of finding their way in unmarked territory, or the physical challenge of summiting a peak, or discovering a hidden lake. Others value short hikes with children to introduce them to the natural world, and for education to learn about biology, ecology, or geology directly through observation of Wilderness features and systems. Still others value the knowledge that Wildernesses are our lands for perpetuity, even while never actually setting foot in these lands. One of our challenges is to communicate that love, to educate visitors to value and appreciate what is around them, and to begin to instill a concern for preservation of this precious resource.

## **What are some Threats to Wilderness?**

While Wilderness designation provides the highest level of protection available to public lands, it does not provide sanctuary from threats that diminish Wilderness character. While surveys suggest that Americans are willing to accept higher costs for electricity, gasoline, and consumer products to protect Wilderness Areas, a variety of social, political, and environmental forces, both inside and outside the Wilderness, can impair Wilderness character. The demand for economic growth and a growing population exert significant pressures on Wilderness, and likewise threaten other public lands:

### **Climate Change:**

The magnitude and complexity of human-facilitated global warming challenge the tracking of impacts on the Wildernesses. The value of Wilderness serves as a reference point. Longer stretches of higher temperatures, reduced and quicker-melting snowpacks, more extreme droughts, and other climate shifts are thought to contribute to larger, more frequent, and more intense wildfires in the West.

### **Fire Suppression:**

Wilderness managers and scientists now recognize the importance of naturally occurring fire. Fire suppression has profoundly altered plant and animal species composition, distribution, and density, most noticeably in ecosystems with high-frequency, low-intensity fire regimes. Even-aged tree stands and buildup of woody debris threaten unnatural, high-intensity fires.

### **Threat of Invasive Species**

Many of the Threatened or Endangered species are threatened by exotic/alien-invasive species: plants, animals, insects, and fungi flourishing in an ecosystem in which they did not evolve. They can wreak havoc in these lands by preying on or competing with native species: for example, noxious weeds outcompeting native plants reduce food sources for animals.

### **Threats to Wilderness from Lack of Public Awareness:**

It has been said that if something is not understood, it is not valued; if it is not valued, it is not loved; if it is not loved, it is not protected; and if it is not protected, it is lost. People who know Wilderness value it tremendously, yet almost half of Americans simply do not understand what Wilderness is, how it shaped our nation, and how they benefit from it. This leaves many, especially urban youth, disconnected from, and less likely to support and value Wilderness. Mountain bikes, ATV's and snowmobiles damage vegetation, and disturb wildlife and visitors seeking peace and solitude.

### **Cumulative Impacts to Wilderness from Overuse or Ecologically Insensitive Use:**

The Wilderness Act gave land managers a difficult and challenging mandate. Wilderness Areas are to be kept in a wild and natural state—relatively free of human control—while, at the same time, providing for human use and enjoyment. Excessive visitation to a Wilderness has the potential to degrade the landscape and ecosystems—the oft-raised concern that a place is “being loved to death”—as well as detract from the human-oriented wilderness experience and solitude. Furthermore, Wilderness Areas needn't be “overused” to suffer from visitor impacts: a small number of outdoor visitors who fail to practice Leave No Trace principles—say, by traveling and camping on vulnerable lakeshore vegetation or fragile tundra, or by trashing campsites or fouling water sources, or by letting their dogs roam unleashed—can leave quite the mark on even a lightly-visited Wilderness.

Since 1960, outdoor recreation has increased dramatically, driven primarily by the growth of the U.S. population by over 100 million in just over 40 years. Participation in day hiking and backpacking has increased nearly 4-fold since the early 1980s. Wilderness visitation has also increased, almost 6-fold, according to agency estimates, between 1965 and 1994. Colorado's rapid growth has dramatically increased the number of people using the Wilderness areas in Eagle and Summit Counties. Since 1970, the population of Summit County has increased more than 11 times, and the population of Eagle County has increased more than 7 times.

### **Insidious Degradation: Threats to Wilderness from Pollution**

Until recently, Wilderness Managers focused primarily on keeping Wilderness from being loved to death by visitors, and from improper disposal of human waste causing deterioration of water quality. Now, however, actions outside a Wilderness directly affect what happens *inside*, with pollution - of air or water or by noise - can spread into Wilderness, degrading its character.

### **A Double-Edged Sword: Threats to Wilderness from Technology**

Although motorized vehicles and equipment are prohibited, Wilderness Areas are impacted by modern technology. While technology benefits studying, monitoring, and enjoying Wilderness, it poses the threat of altering a visitor's experience, and taxing agency resources. New equipment benefits outdoor recreation, helping people spend time in Wilderness with minimal impact on the land. Modern camp stoves allow cooking without a campfire. Digital cameras allow people to take home memories instead of stones, flowers, or physical memorabilia. Informational websites and mapping resources, like Google Earth, prepare visitors before they visit a Wilderness. However, technology can perpetuate a false sense of security. *"Technology may help people feel that Wilderness is smaller, safer and easier."* Visitor reliance of advanced technology and electronic equipment for navigation or communication poses a potential threat to a Wilderness's character and user experiences, changing expectations of Wilderness, and leading to increased rescues for those relying on technology or engaging in risk-taking.

### **Who Manages Wilderness?**

Lands under the jurisdiction of U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) can be designated as federal Wilderness Areas. Wilderness, designated by Congress, is a layer of protection placed on top of original federal land designation. Wilderness can be designated in National Parks, National Forests, Wildlife Refuges, and BLM lands. Federal agencies are legally responsible for managing Wilderness, but all citizens have a responsibility: our behaviors should be Wilderness-appropriate; we should be aware of the impacts of our lifestyles on our country's wild lands.

### **Why do we have to Manage a Wilderness?**

Wilderness management is the regulation of human use and influence to preserve the quality, character and integrity of the protected lands. We all must be aware of our impacts. Individual choices and consumption of resources may degrade Wilderness values such as ecological health, and human values such as solitude and aesthetics. We are managing for future generations, committing to having places that remain undisturbed for centuries, not decades. To keep Wilderness wild, we need to ensure that our social and individual practices, both inside the Wilderness and outside, do not cause changes that will erode away the wildness.

Information mostly derived from Wilderness.net (Wilderness Connect)

## Some Historical Milestones in Wilderness Preservation

- 1872 Yellowstone is established as the world's first National Park.
- 1907 Congress creates U.S. Forest Service; 1916 Congress creates National Park Service.
- 1930 Congress designates more than one million acres in northern Minnesota as Superior Primitive area, the first federal law to protect wilderness.
- 1935 The Wilderness Society is formed to promote nationwide wilderness preservation.
- 1939 The Forest Service adopts regulations to review and reclassify primitive areas on National Forests as "wilderness," "wild," or "roadless," depending on their size.
- 1950-56 Conservationists wage fight against Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument. Howard Zahniser, executive director of the Wilderness Society, calls for statutory Protection of wilderness, writes the first draft of what becomes the Wilderness Act.
- 1956 Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-MN) and Rep. John Saylor (R-PA) introduce first wilderness bill in Congress. Bill will be rewritten 65 times and have 18 public hearings.
- 1964 President Lyndon Johnson signs the Wilderness Act on Sept. 3. Colorado Wilderness Areas include La Garita, Maroon Bells-Snowmass, Mt. Zirkel, Rawah, and West Elk.
- 1965 The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act provides money to purchase private inholdings on federal lands, including designated Wilderness.
- 1971 USFS studies national forest roadless areas for wilderness suitability: roadless areas must be totally pristine, removed from the "sights and sound" of civilization to qualify. No roadless areas in the East are eligible: national forests there had been heavily logged.
- 1975 **Flat Tops Wilderness** created in White River and Routt National Forests.
- 1976 Public Law 94-352 designates **Eagles Nest Wilderness** in the Arapaho and White River National Forests. Wilderness areas are designated within Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument, Great Sand dunes N.M. and Mesa Verde National Park.
- 1978 The Endangered American Wilderness Act, designates significant wilderness acreage in the West: areas cannot simply be disqualified if cities or towns can be seen or heard.
- 1978 Congress designates first B.L.M. Wilderness Areas—Rogue River (Oregon), the Santa Lucia (California); Colorado Wildernesses include Hunter-Fryingpan and Indian Peaks.
- 1979 USFS completes 2nd system-wide study of roadless lands, a starting point for Congress designating National Forest Wilderness areas on state-by-state basis during the 1980s.
- 1980 Congress designates 14 Wilderness areas in Colorado, including **The Holy Cross**, and adds acreage to 7 existing Wildernesses. Williams Fork area is listed as a planning area.
- 1984 Congress designates 8.3 million acres National Forest Wilderness in 20 statewide bills.
- 1993 Congress approves Colorado Wilderness Bill of 1993 which included **Ptarmigan Peak** Wilderness, other Wilderness Areas, additions to Wilderness Areas, and special areas.
- 1997 Public Law 105-75 adds 160 acres of Slate Creek to Eagles Nest Wilderness.
- 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act protects 2 million acres in 8 states, including CO.
- 2020 CORE act (Colorado Outdoor Recreation Economy), a combination of 4 pieces of legislation introduced over the past decade to preserve 400,000 acres, including 73,000 new Wilderness acres, and the first National Historic Landscape at Camp Hale, home to the historic 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. was passed in the House, awaited hearing in Senate.
- 2022 Two portions of CORE act were withdrawn, and declared by President Joe Biden: "The Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument" on 225,000 acres of the Thompson Divide. The remaining portions have been resubmitted.

Abbreviated from The Wilderness Society website, [www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org) 5/01/2020, and Sen. Michael Bennet's website for CORE Act .

## COLORADO WILDERNESSES

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>YEAR</b>
Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness	NPS	15599	1976
Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness	BLM	75479	2000
Buffalo Peaks Wilderness	FS	41281	1993
Byers Peak Wilderness	FS	8801	1993
Cache La Poudre Wilderness	FS	9482	1980
Collegiate Peaks Wilderness	FS	165864	1980
Comanche Peak Wilderness	FS	68025	1980
Dominguez Canyon Wilderness	BLM	66280	2009
Eagles Nest Wilderness	FS	135114	1976
Flat Tops Wilderness	FS	235,214	1975
Fossil Ridge Wilderness	FS	32062	1993
Great Sand Dunes Wilderness	NPS	32643	1976
Greenhorn Mountain Wilderness	FS	23116	1993
Gunnison Gorge Wilderness	BLM	17784	1999
Hermosa Creek Wilderness	FS	37211	2014
Holy Cross Wilderness	FS	122446	1980
Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness	FS	82513	1978
Indian Peaks Wilderness	FS	77932	1978
Indian Peaks Wilderness	NPS	77932	1980
James Peak Wilderness	FS	17109	2002
La Garita Wilderness	FS	126480	1964
Lizard Head Wilderness	FS	41525	1980
Lost Creek Wilderness	FS	114864	1980
Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness	FS	181976	1964
Mesa Verde Wilderness	NPS	8500	1976
Mount Evans Wilderness	FS	73459	1980
Mount Massive Wilderness	FS	29027	1980
Mount Massive Wilderness	FWS	29027	1980
Mount Sneffels Wilderness	FS	16485	1980
Mount Zirkel Wilderness	FS	160309	1964
Neota Wilderness	FS	9927	1980
Never Summer Wilderness	FS	20847	1980
Platte River Wilderness	FS	23290	1984
Powderhorn Wilderness	BLM	62742	1993
Powderhorn Wilderness	FS	62742	1993
Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness	FS	12615	1993
Raggeds Wilderness	FS	64304	1980

Rawah Wilderness	FS	74408	1964
Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness	NPS	249126	2009
Sangre de Cristo Wilderness	FS	219899	1993
Sangre de Cristo Wilderness	NPS	219899	2000
Sarvis Creek Wilderness	FS	44345	1993
South San Juan Wilderness	FS	160998	1980
Spanish Peaks Wilderness	FS	19237	2000
Uncompahgre Wilderness	FS	102214	1980
Uncompahgre Wilderness	BLM	102214	1993
Vasquez Peak Wilderness	FS	13000	1993
Weminuche Wilderness	FS	497061	1975
West Elk Wilderness	FS	176431	1964

TOTAL AREAS 44

TOTAL ACRES 3,762,640

Data 5/1/2020 Wilderness.net (Wilderness Connect)

## 2024 celebrated 60 years since the Wilderness Act



## 2026 celebrates 50 years since the Eagles Nest Wilderness Establishment



## The Eagles Nest Wilderness

The United States Congress designated the Eagles Nest Wilderness in **1976** and it now has a total of **133,496 acres** in the White River National Forest. The rugged mountains of the Gore Range are at the heart of the Eagles Nest Wilderness and serve as a major contributor to the waters of the Colorado River. Melting snow in the spring plunges from the heights to create thundering creeks, verdant meadows, and spectacular wildflowers. This area is more vertical than horizontal, with jagged peaks, sharp-edged ridges, deep valleys, sparkling alpine lakes, and dense forests. The area is known for its excellent hiking and backpacking on approximately 180 miles of trails that can be accessed from the towns of Silverthorne, Frisco, and Vail. The **Gore Range Trail**, approximately 54 miles long, crosses and then traverses the east side of the Gores from Copper Mountain in the south to Mahan Lake in the north; trails branching off from it often end at alpine lakes. Two trails, at the northern and southern extremes, cross entirely from one side of the Wilderness to the other side: Upper Cataract Lake to Piney Lake across the north, a distance of 15 miles; and Gore Creek to Red Buffalo Pass to Uneva Pass across the south, a distance of about 19 miles. Off-trail hiking can be difficult, but several informal routes climb the steep passes of the area's craggy core. The highest peak is Mount Powell (13,580), which has spared Eagles Nest Wilderness from the hordes of 14er peak-baggers. Many of the high alpine lakes are **being heavily impacted** as a result of increased visitor use. Negative impacts are occurring to the natural resources including vegetation, wildlife, and water.

The Eagles Nest Wilderness got its start on June 19, **1932** when 32,400 acres in the Arapaho National Forest were designated as the Gore Range-Eagles Nest Primitive Area. In 1933, another 47,250 acres in the Holy Cross National Forest were added to the Primitive Area. The USFS built sections of the Gore Range Trail during the 1930s and early 1940s to allow access to fight fires in remote areas. In December **1941**, the Primitive Area was reduced by 18,425 acres for the construction of U.S. Highway 6 over Vail Pass. In the mid-**1960s**, Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) had proposed that I-70 would travel along South Willow Creek and Gore Creek instead of Tenmile Canyon, a route to include a two-lane tunnel under Red-Buffero Pass. Although the Wilderness Act of 1964 contained provisions to allow I-70 to use this route, after numerous public concerns, the Secretary of Agriculture used his authority to deny CDOT's request, noting that "the public benefits of preserving this priceless Wilderness area far outweigh any other considerations."

In **1971**, the USFS proposed an 87,755-acre Eagles Nest Wilderness to supersede the primitive area. The boundary was drawn west of the Gore Range Trail, and Cataract Lake was not included. Old timber cuts existed along today's Surprise Lake trail, and possible timber sales could be made. Citizens favored creation of a 125,000-acre Wilderness. Initially the USFS had not included an area in East Meadow Creek slated for timber sales, but citizens sued, and won, so Congress included the area in the final Wilderness boundaries. The **Denver Water Board** (DWB) also had some designs on lands, for water diversion projects: the 40-mile East Gore Collection System, including Cataract Creek and Slate Creek - claims that were denied in a ruling in 1976. DWB also had plans on the west side of the Gore Range with the Eagle-Piney project. After years of negotiations, Colorado Congressional Rep. Jim Johnson penned a bill for the Eagles Nest Wilderness that added acreage near Frisco and Maryland Creek to protect the Gore

Range Trail plus 3,440 acres at the mouth of Gore Creek, effectively ending the proposed Eagle-Piney project.

The Eagles Nest Wilderness was officially designated on July 12, 1976 with 82,324 acres in the Arapaho National Forest and 50,987 acres in the White River National Forest. In 1997, another 160 acres in Slate Creek area was added to the Eagles Nest Wilderness.

In 2020, among many provisions of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act is a proposal to add 9,670 acres to the Eagles Nest Wilderness (Freeman Creek and Spraddle Creek Wilderness additions). This Act was passed by the House in 2019, and awaited Senate hearings.

In 2022, two portions of the CORE act were withdrawn, and declared by President Joe Biden as the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument, which served to block mining, and oil and gas drilling on 225,000 acres of Colorado's Thompson Divide. The Camp Hale monument in Eagle County adds protections to the former Army base near Leadville.

The remaining portions have been resubmitted as CORE act.

This account was condensed in 2020 from a 2006 summary by Maryann Gaug, and updated with additions of current USFS information, as well as CORE Act details from Sen. Michael Bennet's website.

## The Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness

The United States Congress designated the Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness in **1993** and in 2019 had a total of **12,760 acres** in the White River and Routt National Forests. The Williams Fork Mountains leap up into Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness from just below the western entrance to the Eisenhower Tunnel on I-70. The Wilderness is located north of the town of Silverthorne, with its boundary on the ridgeline of the Williams Fork Mountains. The range is dominated by Ptarmigan Peak (12,458 feet) on the southern end and Ute Peak (12,297 feet) on the northern end. A typical lodgepole-pine forest rises to Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir and then on to alpine tundra at the highest elevations. The lower elevation slopes have beautiful aspen groves and open sagebrush meadows. The lack of many trails in this Wilderness provide a better opportunity for solitude. Most of the trails have spectacular views of the Gore Range which dominates the skyline on the other side of the Blue River Valley. One can connect the Ptarmigan Peak trail to the Ute Peak/Pass trail for an amazing one-way alpine ridgeline hike of 12 miles.

From the Wilderness boundary along the top of the mountain ridgeline, the terrain drops into the wet, lush, and lovely drainages of the South and Middle Forks of the Williams Fork Rivers. The Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness is just a sliver of protected area along the ridge and west side of the Williams Fork Mountains. Originally part of the Williams Fork Further Planning Area created in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1980, environmentalists had requested designation of a 74,770-acre Wilderness that started farther down on the west side and continued east into the two drainages of the South Fork and Middle Fork of the Williams Fork and to Bobtail Creek, Pettingell Peak, and Jones Pass. The area ranked as one of the highest in Colorado in the USFS' Wilderness Attribute Rating System in the 1980s.

But the Denver Water Board owned easements in the area to be able to divert water from the South and Middle Forks to their growing consumer base in the Denver area. The Federal Timber Purchasers Association also opposed Wilderness designation for the larger area. By the time everyone took a bite, the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 proposed the Farr Wilderness with 13,175 acres, later named Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness.

Among many provisions of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act is a proposal to add 6,895 acres to Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness (Straight Creek, Acorn Creek, Ptarmigan and Ute Pass additions), and to designate 3 new Wilderness Areas totaling 20,895 acres in Summit County (Tenmile, Hoosier Ridge and Williams Fork). This Act was passed by the House in 2019, and awaited Senate hearings.

In October, 2022, two portions of the CORE act were withdrawn and declared by President Joe Biden as the 'Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument', which served to block mining, and oil and gas drilling on 225,000 acres of Colorado's Thompson Divide. The Camp Hale monument in Eagle County adds protections to the former Army base near Leadville. The remaining portions have been resubmitted as CORE act.

This account was condensed in 2020 from a 2006 summary by Maryann Gaug plus current USFS information, and details of the CORE Act from Sen. Michael Bennet's website.

## The Holy Cross Wilderness

The United States Congress designated the Holy Cross Wilderness in **1980** and it now has a total of **123,409 acres**. This Wilderness is managed by the White River and Pike San Isabel National Forests. The Wilderness is characterized by rugged ridgelines and glacier-carved valleys, spruce-fir forests, cascading streams and dozens of lakes; elevations range from 8,500 feet to 14,005 feet. Holy Cross Wilderness is named after **Mount of the Holy Cross**, which became famous in 1873 when William Henry Jackson first photographed the cross of snow on the northeast face of the mountain. The area was protected as a National Monument in the early 1930's. More recently, the Wilderness has become known for its excellent hiking and backpacking on over 150 miles of trail. The ever-increasing numbers of visitors means that solitude can be difficult to find in areas such as Mount of the Holy Cross, Missouri Lakes, Fancy Lake, Beaver Lake, Cross Creek, Fall Creek and Timberline Lake.

In the 1800s, stories circulated about a mountain with a snowy cross in Colorado. In 1869, William Brewer reported seeing Mount of the Holy Cross from the summit of Grays Peak. The Hayden Survey in 1873 set a goal to find this mysterious peak; William Henry Jackson, their photographer, had also viewed the peak from the top of Grays. By August the group arrived near present-day Minturn, and struggled to find a route to their destination. Fallen trees and thick willows made the going too rough for pack animals, so they ended up carrying Jackson's 100 pounds of photographic gear on foot. Because Jackson used a wet glass plate camera, which required careful handling, and development soon after exposure, he carried a portable darkroom tent with all necessary chemicals and supplies with him. After finding an approach, the difficult hike took two days with little food and no shelter. Finally atop Notch Mountain, Jackson found the infamous cross across the valley (right). His several pictures captivated the nation: people believed the snow-filled cross to be a sign from God.



Annual pilgrimages to Mount of the Holy Cross began in 1927. The USFS issued a special use permit in 1928 to Mount of the Holy Cross Pilgrimage Association, Inc. to erect community houses and maintain a semi-public campground. President Herbert Hoover proclaimed about 1,392 acres around Mt. of the Holy Cross as a **National Monument** in **1929**. A road was completed from U.S. 24 to Tigiwon in 1932, which was improved by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933, extending it to the present trailhead. The CCC also constructed the Notch Mountain trail, the community house at Tigiwon, and a stone shelter on Notch Mountain. The present trail with its many switchbacks stands witness to the excellent work done by the CCC, a trail originally used by pack horses as well as hikers. The pilgrimages continued until about 1940. The U.S. Army controlled much of this area between 1938 and 1950, with nearby Camp Hale being a training ground for the famous 10th Mountain Division troops. Because of army use, the national monument designation was taken away.

The Holy Cross Wilderness was officially designated in **1980**. In 2004, the Wilderness Area contained 113,366 acres of the White River National Forest and 9,518 acres in the San Isabel National Forest. Sometimes referred to as a **water wilderness**, the Holy Cross contains the headwaters of the Eagle River, a tributary of the Colorado River. Streams, snowmelt, and many alpine lakes provide an abundance of water. However, because water is precious in Colorado, designation of Holy Cross Wilderness was not without conflict.

Colorado Springs and Aurora owned water rights in the newly created Wilderness. The Homestake Project, which includes a water collection system along Homestake Creek and Homestake Reservoir south of Grouse Creek, had already been built in the 1960s to divert water to these cities on the East Slope. The Wilderness Act of 1980 specifically stated “Nothing in this act shall be construed to ... interfere with the construction, maintenance, or repair of [the Homestake Water Development Project of the cities of Aurora and Colorado Springs].” Phase II of the Homestake Project planned to divert water from Cross Creek and Fall Creek. Four small dams would be built in the Wilderness along with a 13-mile underground tunnel to divert water. Concerns arose about the extensive meadows and high-altitude wetlands in the area, and the source of the water. In 1982, the Holy Cross Wilderness Defense Fund was created to fight the project; Eagle County denied permits for the project; lawsuits were filed, won, lost, and overturned for several years. In 1994, the Colorado Court of Appeals upheld Eagle County’s decision to deny construction permits for Homestake II. Both the Colorado Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case. Because the cities still own water rights in Holy Cross Wilderness, there is still a risk of water development within this Wilderness.

Among many provisions of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act is a proposal to add 3,866 acres to Holy Cross Wilderness (Megan Dickie Wilderness Addition), and to designate 28,676 acres as the Camp Hale National Historic Landscape. This Act was passed by the House in 2019, and awaited Senate hearings.

In October, 2022, two portions of the CORE act were withdrawn and declared by President Joe Biden as the ‘Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument’, which served to block mining, and oil and gas drilling on 225,000 acres of Colorado’s Thompson Divide. The Camp Hale monument adds protections to the former Army base near Leadville.

The remaining portions have been resubmitted as CORE act.

This account was condensed in 2020 from a 2006 history by Maryann Gaug, plus current USFS information, and details from the CORE Act from Sen. Michael Bennet’s website.

## The Flat Tops Wilderness “The Cradle of Wilderness”

The United States Congress designated the Flat Tops Wilderness in **1975**. It now has a total of **235,214 acres**, 83% of which are in the White River National Forest, which ESWA partners with the USFS to care for. Flat Tops is Colorado's second largest Wilderness Area, a precious expanse of open land. Friends of Wilderness (FOW), based in Steamboat, partners with the USFS to care for the Routt National Forest portion.

The White River National Forest has a longstanding tradition of promoting wilderness stewardship that started here in the Flat Tops. In 1919, Arthur Carhart, a Forest Service landscape architect, realized the uniqueness of the location when he stood on the shoreline of Trappers Lake. Carhart's task was to survey the area to build a recreational housing development of summer cottages. However, what Carhart saw and experienced at Trappers Lake compelled him to strongly recommend to his supervisors that the area remain undeveloped. As history unfolded, Flat Tops is where the idea of “wilderness” was first applied to public land. In 1932, the Forest Service officially designated 48,000 acres as Wilderness, which they later recommended increasing after passage of the Wilderness Act I 1964. This is why Flat Tops has become known as the “Cradle of Wilderness.”

It's no wonder Carhart found the area so entrancing: behind Trappers Lake loom steep volcanic cliffs and beyond them a vast subalpine terrain yields to alpine tundra. The Flat Tops are part of the White River Plateau with an average elevation of about 10,000 feet; elevations range from 7640 to 12,354. Approximately 110 lakes and ponds, often unnamed, dot the country above and below numerous flat-topped cliffs. Roughly 100 miles of fishable streams are in this Wilderness.

The valleys and relatively gentle land above the cliffs offer over 160 miles of trails. Thousands of recreationists in search of hiking, camping, horseback riding, hunting and fishing visit each year. The land is ideal for stock-users and for traveling cross-country. Elk, deer and moose visit the area in the summer.

**Sweetwater State Park.** In 2021, the Forest Service purchased 488 acres of private land that included most of Sweetwater Lake and surrounding areas. The conservation fund, Eagle Valley Land Trust and the local community were instrumental in purchasing this land for all to enjoy. This area will become Sweetwater State park, and as such will become a more significant gateway to the Wilderness. The

Forest Service, Eagle Valley Land Trust, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, along with community members are brainstorming the long-term plans for the Sweeter Lake area, and they are interested in hearing our ideas as we plan for the area's future. If you would like to know more about the area or join the conversation, please visit the Eagle Valley Land Trust website: <https://evlt.org/sweetwater>.

# Wilderness Stewardship

## What Is Wilderness Stewardship?

While Wilderness stewardship is primarily the responsibility of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Forest Service (USFS), and National Park Service (NPS), volunteers and citizens are also important participants in ensuring the protection of Wilderness Areas into the future. Stewardship by **agencies** and **volunteer groups** involves preserving wilderness character—the values for which a Wilderness is designated. For agencies, this can mean managing activities including grazing, access to private lands, mining, fish and wildlife, cultural sites, fire, insects, and disease, and impacts from Wilderness visitors. For volunteer groups, this can mean helping to keep trails clear, cleaning up campsites, or monitoring weed outbreaks. **Individual citizens** can help keep Wilderness wild by **practicing Leave No Trace** when visiting Wilderness.

## What Is the Minimum Necessary Wilderness Stewardship Philosophy?

To protect the Wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act, the managing agencies adhere closely to the "minimum requirements" concept. *Minimum* means the least possible and a *requirement* is a necessity. So, in any situation where managers are considering actions to actively manage Wilderness—a decision on whether to allow new scientific research, ignite a prescribed burn to minimize fuel buildup, or replace an aging trail bridge, for example—the minimum requirements concept is to:

- Determine if any action is necessary in Wilderness.
- Then, only if action is deemed necessary, determine how to accomplish it using the least amount (if any) of an otherwise prohibited means, such as a chainsaw or motor vehicle.

Although agencies and environmental advocacy groups can and do disagree on what constitutes good Wilderness stewardship, a rationally supported minimum requirements decision that adheres to this philosophy can minimize the chances of litigation. Agency policies require the use of traditional tools, such as crosscut saws, and that employees acquire and maintain the skills to travel and work in Wilderness. Similarly, volunteer groups who assist the agencies with trail work in Wilderness prioritize traditional skills training for their volunteers.

## What Types of Issues do Wilderness Managers Deal With?

### Land and Resource Management

- How are **wildlife and fish** managed in Wilderness?
- How is commercial **grazing** managed in Wilderness?
- Is **mining** allowed in Wilderness?
- How can **private landowners** get access to private land within Wilderness?
- How are **water** resources, such as reservoirs, managed in Wilderness?
- How is **fire** managed in Wilderness?
- How are **insects and disease** controlled in Wilderness?
- Are **tree cutting** and planting allowed in Wilderness?
- What is being done to protect **air quality** in Wilderness?
- How are **historic and archeological sites** managed in Wilderness?
- Can **scientific research** be conducted in Wilderness?

## Recreational Use of Wilderness

- What **types of recreational opportunities** does Wilderness offer?
- What are **motorized equipment and mechanical transport** and why are they prohibited in Wilderness?
- Why are some non-motorized devices such as hang **gliders, parasails, pedal kayaks and bicycles** not allowed in Wilderness?
- Why are **drones** prohibited in Wilderness?
- What is "**Leave No Trace**" camping?
- What are managing agencies doing about **Wilderness education**?
- What **restrictions** are there on visiting Wilderness?
- Are **cabins and lookouts** allowed in Wilderness?
- Are **trails, bridges, and signs** used in Wilderness?
- Are **outfitters and guides** allowed in Wilderness?
- Is **recreational livestock** grazing allowed in Wilderness?
- What about **geocaching**?
- What are the most **common violations of the law** in Wilderness?
- What is the policy on **aircraft flights over Wilderness**?
- What is the policy on staging **competitive events** in Wilderness?

## Planning & Administration

- What is the **minimum necessary philosophy** that guides Wilderness management?
- Are there **differences in how agencies manage Wilderness**?
- How do Wilderness managers use **science**?
- What **future changes** might affect Wilderness management?

## **Who Manages Wilderness?**

Four land management agencies, under two departments—the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture—have been given the responsibility of managing the diverse National Wilderness Preservation System to preserve the quality, character and integrity of these protected lands. While the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Forest Service (USFS), and National Park Service (NPS) each maintain their own specific management mission, all have been successful in finding ways to mesh their independent missions with Wilderness management goals and objectives. Common to all Wilderness-managing agencies is the guidance and direction provided by the **Wilderness Act**. Although other Wilderness laws are followed when applicable, and each agency has its own Wilderness policy, the Wilderness Act bonds these agencies together in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of America's Wilderness system.

Information from the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center. For more details, visit <http://www.wilderness.net>. The Wilderness.net website was founded in 1996, in partnership with Wilderness Institute, University of Montana, Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. In 2017 Wilderness.net became Wilderness Connect, and provides links to many national Wilderness organizations.

# General Forest Rules / Regulations



## CAMPING

- Permitted unless otherwise posted.
- Occupying a campsite is limited to 14 days. No camping on the White River National Forest for more than 28 days in a 60 day period.
- Campsites must be located at least 100 feet from water and trails.



## CAMPFIRES

- Do not leave campfires unattended.
- Campfires must be completely extinguished and cold to the touch before leaving.
- Observe fire restrictions that may be in effect during extreme fire danger.



## MOTORIZED VEHICLES

- Permitted on designated or numbered Forest roads open to motor vehicles.
- Stay on roads and trails to reduce impacts to soil and vegetation.



## BIKES/WHEELS

- Permitted on designated Forest roads and trails unless otherwise posted.
- Bicycles are prohibited in the Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.
- 



## PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT

- Possessing or leaving garbage in an exposed or unsanitary condition or failing to remove trash is prohibited.



## DOGS

- Permitted on trails unless otherwise posted.
- To reduce conflicts with visitors and wildlife, dogs must be under voice control.
- Dogs must be leashed in developed campsites, picnic sites, parking areas, and Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.



## SHOOTING

- Discharging a firearm within 150 yards of a building, campsite or occupied area is prohibited.
- Discharging a firearm on or across a Forest road, trail, lake or stream is prohibited.
- Damaging natural features (including trees) is prohibited.



## LIVESTOCK

- Saddle, pack, and draft animals are permitted unless posted otherwise.
- Only certified weed-free feed may be used on the White River National Forest.
- Minimum-impact techniques are recommended with stock:
  - ✓ Stock should not be secured to live trees.
  - ✓ Stock should not be secured within 100 feet of any water body or trail.
  - ✓ The use of hobble or portable fencing is recommended for grazing.



## NATURAL HERITAGE

- Removing any prehistoric, historic, or archaeological resource, structure, site, artifact or property is prohibited.

*White River National Forest – Dillon Ranger District*

For Information Contact (970) 468-5400

[www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver) or [www.dillonrangerdistrict.com](http://www.dillonrangerdistrict.com)



## **WILDERNESS REGULATIONS and EXPLANATIONS FOR EAGLES NEST, PTARMIGAN PEAK and HOLY CROSS AREAS**

To prevent impacts to the environment, and to maintain quality recreation experiences, the following acts are **PROHIBITED** in Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan Peak and Holy Cross Wildernesses:

***Entering or being in the area with more than 15 people per group with a maximum combination of 25 people and pack or saddle animals in any one group.***

Reasons:

- Maximum legal group size helps prevent environmental damage from many feet/hooves in one area. Large groups tend to disrupt wildlife and Wilderness solitude.
- LNT (Leave No Trace) principles recommend no more than 6 people per group to minimize impacts on other users, campsites, trails, and wildlife.

***Camping within 100 feet of all lakes, streams, and trails, and any “No Camping” or “Wilderness Restoration Site” signs. Use previously impacted sites. (In Holy Cross’s E. Cross Creek Valley and Notch Mountain shelter, camp only in designated sites).***

***For Eagles Nest and Holy Cross, self-registration is required for Wilderness Use (Permit obtained at trailhead).***

Reasons:

- To avoid contamination and impact on other users and to allow wildlife access to water.
- LNT principles recommend camping at least 200 feet from lakes, streams, and trails to avoid disturbing other visitors and allowing wildlife plenty of room.
- Human waste should be buried in a cathole dug 6-8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails and properly covered and disguised; preferably, use WAG bags and carry out.
- Registration helps USFS to monitor the number of visitors and impacts in various areas.

***Building, maintaining, attending, or using a campfire:***

- ***within 100 feet of all streams and Forest Development Trails***
- ***above 11,000 feet, and within ¼ mile of all lakes.***
- ***In Holy Cross, NO campfires in Missouri Lakes, Fancy Creek, or E. Cross Creek drainages***

Reasons:

- With many people camping close to lakes, little firewood is available, and people strip wood from both dead and live trees. Birds and other animals depend on dead limbs/trees for shelter.
- Fire bans shall be obeyed to prevent wildfires.
- LNT principles recommend campfires be built at least 200 feet away from all lakes, streams, and trails. LNT principles further recommend using only existing fire rings.
- Campfires leave a trace in fire rings or scorched rocks. The ground beneath a fire ring can be sterilized from the heat and does not easily recover. Better yet, bring a stove, avoid building a campfire, and enjoy the stars!

Where fires are permitted, keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Burn wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely; scatter cool ashes.

***Storing, or leaving, equipment, personal property or supplies for longer than 72 hours.***

***Reasons:***

- Wilderness is a place where humans visit and do not remain — leaving human “stuff” is a way of remaining. This regulation applies to geocaching as well.

***Hitching or tethering a pack or saddle animal within 100 feet of all lakes, streams, and trails.***

***Reasons:***

- To avoid contamination and impact to other users and wildlife.

***Possessing a dog unless under physical restraint of a hand-held leash, not to exceed 6 feet.***

***Reasons:***

- To protect wildlife from being harassed by dogs. It also protects the dog from being chased or hurt by wildlife, and minimizes impacts to other users, dogs, and pack/ saddle animals.
- In heavily used Wilderness areas such as the Eagles Nest Wilderness, conflicts between dogs and humans, dog fights, and dog/wildlife conflicts have been increasing.
- Dogs have been injured while off-leash, brought angry moose and bears back to owners.
- Off-trail dogs (poop not picked up and carried out) can spread noxious weeds and pollute streams and lakes.

***Possessing, storing, or transporting any plant material, such as hay or straw. Pelletized feed and rolled grains are allowed.***

***Reasons:***

- To prevent the introduction of noxious weeds. Noxious weeds overtake native vegetation and in turn impact native birds and animals that cannot gain nutrition by eating noxious weeds.
- Noxious Weeds are a growing problem and can be introduced by hikers, too. Clean your boots, hiking poles, tents, etc. between traveling, camping, and hiking in different areas so as not to bring in seeds from another area.

***Possessing or using a motor vehicle, motorboat, motorized equipment or mechanized modes of transport.***

***Reasons:*** some quotes from the Wilderness Act of 1964:

- “Wilderness has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.”
- “An area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation...”
- “Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.”

***Possessing or using a bicycle or hang glider or other mechanical device, including a DRONE, wagon, wheelbarrow, or game cart.***

***Shortcutting a switchback in a trail.***

## WILDERNESS REGULATIONS FOR FLAT TOPS

The Flat Tops Wilderness has a somewhat different user type from our other Wilderness Areas. Equestrian users, backpackers, and hunters are more common. Many regulations are the same. There are grazing permits in this Wilderness. You may encounter livestock-protection dogs: If so, alter your path to avoid direct contact. If approached, remove your hat and sunglasses and firmly talk to the dog saying, "Go back to your sheep," backing away slowly. Repeat until the dogs leave you alone. Do not run or appear as a predator. Avoid sheep herds if possible.

### **The following acts are similarly PROHIBITED in Flat Tops Wilderness:**

***Entering or being in the restricted area with more than 15 people per group; maximum combination of 25 people and pack or saddle animals in any one group.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.58(f).

***Camping: within 100 feet of any lake, stream, National Forest System Trail, or any "No Camping" or "Wilderness Restoration Site" sign, or; within ¼ mile of Trappers, Hooper, Keener or Smith lakes.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.58(e).

***Building, maintaining, attending, or using a campfire within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or National Forest System Trail.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.52(a);

***Storing equipment, personal property, or supplies within the wilderness area for more than 10 days.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.57(f).

***Possessing (except for watering or through travel), hitching, tethering, grazing, loose herding, picketing or hobbling any pack, saddle, or draft animal:*** within 100 feet of any lake, stream, or National Forest System Trail, or within ¼ mile of Trappers Lake. 36 C.F.R. §261.58(aa).

***Possessing a dog or other animal that is uncontrolled, harassing wildlife or people, or damaging property.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.58(s). NOTE: slight difference from other Wildernesses.

***Possessing, storing, or transporting any plant material, such as hay or straw.*** NOTE: Exceptions are allowed for livestock feed that has been processed through chemical or mechanical means in a manner that will destroy viable seeds. Examples of allowed material include: pelletized feed and rolled grains. 36 C.F.R. §261.58(t).

***Possessing or using a motor vehicle, motorboat, motorized equipment or mechanized mode of transport.***

***Possessing or using a bicycle, wagon, cart, or other vehicle including a wheelbarrow or game cart.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.57(h).

***Shortcutting a switchback in a trail.*** 36 C.F.R. §261.55(e).

# Leave No Trace Principles ([www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org))

Leave No Trace principles of outdoor ethics form the framework of Leave No Trace's message:

- 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**

## Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into groups of 4-6.
- Repackage food in advance to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns, or flagging.

## Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails, campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

## Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Better yet, carry out human and pet poop in a WAG bag.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products – don't burn these.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amount of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

## Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

## Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.

**Respect Wildlife**

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

**Be Considerate of Other Visitors**

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.



# The 7 LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES IN 7 "F" WORDS

**1. FUTURE: Plan Ahead and Prepare.** Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit. Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies. Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use. Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups. Repackage food to minimize waste. Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.



**2. FOOTING: Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.** Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow. Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams. Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary. In popular areas: Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites; walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy; keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent. In pristine areas: Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails; avoid places where impacts are just beginning.



**3. FIRE: Minimize Campfire Impacts.** Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light. Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires. Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes .



**4. FILTH: Dispose of Waste Properly.** Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter. Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products. To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.



**5. FLORA: Leave What You Find.** Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them. Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species. Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.



**6. FAUNA: Respect Wildlife.** Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them. Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers. Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely. Control pets at all times, or leave them at home. Avoid wildlife, especially during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.



**7. FRIENDS: Be Considerate of Other Visitors.** Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail. Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock. Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors. Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

