



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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To: Management Team **OCTOBER 4, 1995**
From: District Manager, California Desert
Subject: Wheelchair Use in Wilderness

The only amendment in thirty years to the Wilderness Act is Section 507(c) of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (hereafter ADA). It applies to all components of the National Wilderness Preservation System, irrespective of managing agency or the date of designation as wilderness. As quoted in full below, that portion of the ADA allows for specified use of wheelchairs in designated wilderness:

(1) In General - Congress reaffirms that nothing in the Wilderness Act is to be construed as prohibiting the use of a wheelchair in a wilderness area by an individual whose disability requires the use of a wheelchair, and consistent with the Wilderness Act no agency is required to provide any form of special treatment or accommodation, or to construct any facilities or modify any conditions of lands within a Wilderness area to facilitate such use, outside current existing laws pertaining to disability access to Federal Agency facilities, programs, and activities.

(2) Definition - For the purpose of paragraph (1), the term wheelchair means a device designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area. (emphasis added)

Motorized wheelchairs are not precluded by the definition. Note that the 43 CFR 8560 (wilderness regulations) and associated Bureau Manual predate and do not reflect the ADA.

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