

Juniper Dunes Wilderness Use Information

The Juniper Dunes Wilderness Area is a very large dune system where natural processes are intact and the overall species diversity is high. It contains some of Washington State's largest sand dunes (up to 130 feet in height and 1,200 feet in width) and largest remaining natural groves of western juniper.

The Wilderness provides habitat for some rare species including the plant Gray cryptantha, and from the animal kingdom: Sagebrush Lizard, Black-tailed Jackrabbit, Grasshopper Mouse, Ord's Kanagaroo Rat, Ferruginous Hawk and Swainson's Hawk.

A permit is required for overnight stays; permits are available on the BLM's Juniper Dunes Recreation Site webpage. A permit must be filled out and mailed to the BLM Spokane District Office prior to visiting the Wilderness.

Wilderness visitors must pack in all drinking water and be prepared for large temperature swings. Proper sun protection such as a wide-brimmed hat is recommended, even in early spring and late fall, along with sun screen lotion. There are no sources of ground water in the Wilderness.

Utilizing a GPS and compass while in the Wilderness is highly recommended, or at minimum taking along a compass to maintain your bearings. Campfires are strictly prohibited, but use of a camp stove is allowed. All motorized and mechanized equipment including game carts, mountain bikes or anything with wheels are prohibited from entering the Wilderness. Advance planning is very important to be prepared for any difficult situations and/or conditions you might encounter, especially for overnight trips.

It is also recommended to take a well-charged cell phone with you in case of serious emergency since there is cell phone reception for at least certain wireless service providers in much of the Wilderness. In the event of a serious emergency for which you need assistance, dial "911". You can try an online search for "cell phone coverage map Washington State" to hopefully verify if your wireless service provider provides cell phone service in the area.

Be aware that road access past the first "P" symbol (for "Parking") on the map when traveling northbound on Peterson Road (where Peterson Road ends and Juniper Dunes Road begins) is typically difficult due to loose sand road conditions and potentially some large roller-coaster like "whoops" in Juniper Dunes Road. Vehicle travel past this point normally requires at minimum a high clearance vehicle, preferably 4-wheel-drive.

It is recommended that visitors to the Wilderness park their vehicles no farther up Juniper Dunes Road than the upper off-highway vehicle (OHV) "Open" area parking/staging area (identified on the map with the 2nd "P" symbol and "?" symbol), which itself is loose sand, and therefore potentially a place where vehicles could get stuck.

Access to the Wilderness Gate is via the one-mile stretch of Wilderness Road where it starts ¾ mile north past the upper parking/staging area off of Juniper Dunes Road. There is a Wilderness Road sign at that intersection but it is easy to miss. Travel on Wilderness Road requires a high clearance 4-wheel drive vehicle to reach the Wilderness Gate in the

best of conditions, i.e. in late fall/ winter/early spring or soon after significant precipitation when the loose sand road has moisture and some compaction. As stated above it is recommended that people do not attempt turning off of Juniper Dunes Road onto Wilderness Road to access the Wilderness Gate, especially when sand conditions are dry. If you get seriously stuck it will be very difficult to get towed out.

Vehicles pulling trailers should never attempt driving past the upper OHV "Open" area parking/staging area. Visitors to the Wilderness can hike or ride on horseback across the OHV "Open" area from the upper parking/staging area to the Wilderness, or via Wilderness Road to access the Wilderness Gate.

Prior to departure, horseback riders should contact the Border Field Office at 509-536-1200 for instructions regarding horse access beyond the Wilderness fence. Anyone considering a visit to the Juniper Dunes Wilderness is welcome to call the same phone number for answers to any questions not addressed in this document.

To protect this fragile ecosystem and to preserve it as untrammelled by man as required in a Wilderness, PLEASE practice the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace ethics, build no structures of any kind, and BE SURE to pack out all garbage. <http://lnt.org/learn/7-principles>

Photo of Wilderness Road loose sand (with some moisture) near the Wilderness Gate



Additional Links:

BLM Visitor Safety Page:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/Recreation/trip_planning/visitor_safety.html

Conservation Strategy for Washington State Inland Sand Dunes (Juniper Dunes info on page 24):

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/documents/planning-docs/cs-blm-wa-state-inland-sand-dunes-2007-06.pdf>

