

The Bureau of Land Management's Role in Managing America's Wilderness

Wilderness Act of 1964

In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act, which established the National Wilderness reservation System and designated the firs vilderness areas. The purpose of the Wilderr Act is to provide long-term preservation and protection to areas on federal lands that are largely undeveloped, natural, and inconstrained by human activity and that provide outstanding opportunities for solitud

he uniquely American idea of wildernes nsures long-term protection of natural andscapes. Wilderness protects the habitat of numerous wildlife species and serves as a piodiversity bank for many species of plants and animals. Wilderness is also a source of clea water. It has long been used as a laboratory for science research and education outreac providing sites for field trips, study areas fo tudent research, and serving as a source of nstructional examples. Recreation is anoth ovious appeal of wilderness, and wilderne reas are seeing steadily increasing use froi eople who wish to experience freedom fro the nation's fast-paced, industrialized society

The BLM's Wilderness Role

Many wilderness lands are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any other federal agency. BLM public lands, known as the National System of Public Lands, are primarily located in 12 western states, including Alaska.

e BLM's multiple-use mission is to susta public lands for the use and enjoymen resent and future generations. The BLM eral development, and energy produc

Wilderness

derness Areas by the Numbers

1,396,826

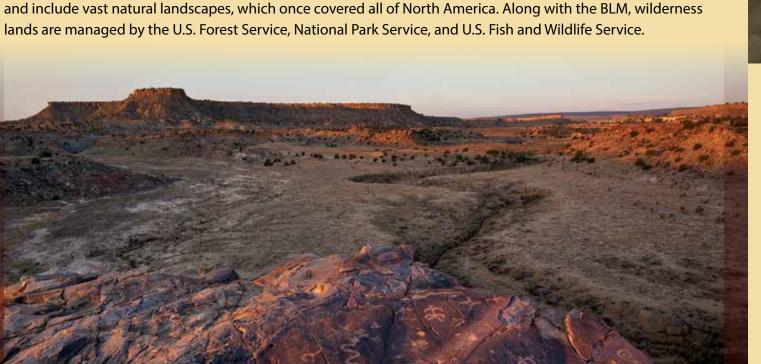
170,163

Areas

A central piece of the BLM's National System of Public Lands is the National Landscape Conservation System, otherwise known as "National Conservation Lands." These lands include approximately 8.7 million acres of wilderness areas and 12.8 million acres of wilderness study areas (WSAs), containing some of the wildest and most remote places in America.

million acres of spectacular, primarily eas, wild and scenic rivers, and national tra

Wilderness lands consist of rugged mountain ranges, broad valleys, wild rivers and streams, and desert plains



The BLM manages more than 520 WSAs located in the western states and Alaska. To be designated a

WSA, an area must have the following characteristics:

Wilderness Study Areas

Size – roadless areas of at least 5,000 acres of public lands or of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation.

Naturalness – appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.

Opportunities – provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, natural sounds, dark night skies, or primitive and unconfined recreation, such as hiking, camping, canoeing, and horseback riding. Special qualities – the areas often have ecological geological, educational, historical, scientific, and/

or scenic values.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 directed the BLM to inventory and study its roadless areas for wilderness characteristics. The study received extensive public input and participation. By November 1980, the BLM had completed field nventories and designated about 25 million acres of

WSAs. Since 1980, Congress has reviewed many of these areas and has designated some as wilderness areas and released others for nonwilderness uses. Until Congress makes a final determination on a WSA, the BLM manages these areas to preserve their suitability for designation as wilderness.

Wilderness Study Areas by the Numbers

STATE	NUMBER OF UNITS	ACREAGE
Alaska	1	260,000
Arizona	2	63,930
California	67	821,870
Colorado	54	548,209
Idaho	44	655,512
Montana	39	449,963
Nevada	62	2,542,505
New Mexico	57	960,335
Oregon	87	2,645,791
Utah	86	3,232,402
Washington	1	5,554
Wyoming	42	574,401
Total	528**	12,760,472

** Fourteen WSAs have acreage in two different states. These areas are only counted once in the total number of units.

Wilderness

Ecological

Values

onger period of time.

Provides Vital

Although wilderness areas provide visitors

the rare opportunity to experience solitude

and recreation, wilderness areas also provide

areas, as large tracts of unmodified land, play

a major role in ecosystem response to climate

stressed and therefore more resilient. A more

such as those resulting from climate change,

and may continue to function effectively for a

Resiliency, in turn, helps protect biodiversity,

support critical ecological components and

allow more species to exist at the edge of their

processes, stabilize hydrological response,

act as refugia for displaced species. Further,

ecological connectivity. BLM wilderness lands

provide a high degree of protection and often

serve as a bridge and migration

resilient ecosystem can absorb greater impacts,

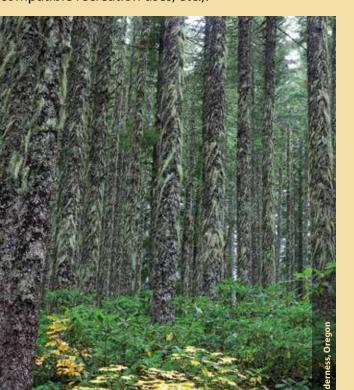
change. An unmodified ecosystem is less

significant and vital ecological values. Wilderness

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

WSAs were formally identified in 1980, and inventory and study findings were submitted to Congress as part of a one-time effort under FLPMA. However, in accordance with FLPMA, the BLM is required to maintain an inventory of all public land values, including wilderness characteristics, on an ongoing basis. Due to land exchanges and acquisitions, resource restoration projects, and other factors, BLM land conditions can change, resulting in additional BLM lands with wilderness characteristics.

Once the inventory is updated, the BLM is required to make decisions in its resource management plans as to which lands should be managed to protect wilderness characteristics and which lands should be managed for other uses. If a decision is made to "protect," the BLM uses a variety of management prescriptions to ensure that wilderness characteristics are maintained over the life of the plan (e.g., prohibit new road and facility construction, exclude new rights-of-way, provide compatible recreation uses, etc.).



Benefits of Wilderness and international audience. Local communities Wilderness is everyone's to share and enjoy:

Wilderness provides time to reflect and find solitude

and solace. Wilderness provides opportunities foi recreation, including hiking, camping, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, photography, off

trail exploration, and many Some wilderness includes sacred ancestral lands of American Indian tribes Wilderness showcases to the world some of America's most special

places and landscapesforested mountains, alpin meadows, rock peaks above timberline, tundra, lava beds, deserts, wild rivers, swamps, coastal lands, and islands.

Wilderness provides economic benefits to local communities and the nation

Protecting the environment and providing rare opportunities fo wilderness experiences interest a wide national



may benefit economically from nearby

wilderness through increased visitation and local

expenditures, as well as through the protection

and enhancement of amenities related to quality

Many local outfitters and guides specialize in

leading comfortable and exciting wilderness

Vilderness provides clean water and air, critical

allowing rare and endangered species to thrive.

Wilderness areas on BLM public lands provide

Joshua trees.

essential habitat for numerous wildlife and plant

species. Some of these include golden eagles

prairie falcons, condors, and bobcats, as

well as cacti, bristlecone pine trees, and

habitat for animals, and healthy landscapes,

adventures for individual travelers or larger

groups, including families.

BLM Wilderness Management Program

The BLM's wilderness management program focuses on the protection and conservation of wilderness by:

Monitoring and preserving wilderness characters Managing land use and encouraging appropriate wilderness uses

Monitoring and managing for noxious weed infestations, trespass activities, and recreation. Restoring impacted areas such as trampled vegetation and eroded soil.

The BLM is unique in that the vast majority of its wilderness areas and WSAs are located in a wide variety of desert environments, adding an essentia network of desert ecosystem components to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Millions of people visit these areas annually, either on their own or through the hundreds of permitted commercial outfitters that assist the public in enjoying these unique lands. Visitors provide significant social and economic benefit to local communities with nearby

wilderness and help them to sustain their unique quality of life, which is so closely linked to the history and natural heritage of the wilderness landscapes.

The BLM wilderness management program frequently addresses challenges associated with unauthorized uses, such as illegal off-highway vehicle use, which are increasingly resulting in the further degradation of wilderness character. Managing wilderness resources requires collaboratively managing them as part of the large landscape. After a wilderness area is designated, the BLM typically spends the first 3 years marking and mapping the boundary and providing visitor services, such as maps and other public information. Subsequent management includes acquiring inholdings from willing sellers, restoring wilderness character where needed, engaging in land use planning and monitoring, implementing wilderness management plans, and continuing to provide

ENGAGING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES Developing partnerships in wilderness stewardship is an important aspect of the BLM's management of wilderness lands. BLM wilderness resources benefit greatly from volunteers who provide thousands of hours of monitoring, as well as material and transportation for specific projects. Nearly 100 formal and informal partnerships have been developed to facilitate wilderness stewardship activities on BLM land. Typical examples of work performed by partners in wilderness areas and WSAs include trail construction and maintenance, invasive species eradication and monitoring, interim management monitoring of WSAs, and reclamation and restoration activities to create more natural environments. The BLM has developed a memorandum of understanding with the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, a national organization that is coordinating the establishment of partners and friends groups to assist in wilderness stewardship in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

BLM Wilderness Management Program Emphasis Areas

PRESERVING WILDERNESS CHARACTER

Preserving wilderness character is at the heart of the BLM's responsibility to ensure its wilderness areas are protected for future generations. In 2008, the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Geological Service developed "Keeping It Wild: An Interagency Strategy to Monitor Trends in Wilderness Character Acros the National Wilderness Preservation System." The strategy outlines a unified approach to identifying trends in wilderness character quality and provides a standardized method to assess broad-scale performance in preserving wilderness character to be used by all

In 2009, the BLM implemented this strategy with a goal of completing baseline monitoring for 20 percent of BLM wilderness areas each year. The protocol developed to monito and describe trends in the quality of wilderness character will enable the BLM to establish a meaningful measure with verified baseline data for use in the future. Once this baseline monitoring is complete, and for the first time since the Wilderness Act was passed, the BLM will be able to track trends in wilderness character for all of its wilderness areas.

wilderness-managing agencies.

ENHANCING SCIENTIFIC

KNOWLEDGE The BLM's wilderness areas play an increasingly critical role in expanding our scientific knowledge about a wide array of challenging management issues facing the BLM and other wildland manager The BLM emphasizes the role of science partnerships in managing wilderness and increasingly collaborates with partners to help manage BLM wilderness areas as a part of larger landscapes. Scientific research continues to increase as new opportunities are identified, including research directed at the effects of landscape stressors on species habitat and migration corridors. New, improved, higher resolution satellite imagery and aerial photography further aid in the monitoring of wilderness areas and WSAs. This magery is less expensive than

complete reliance on ground patrols, adds an additional level of diagnostics to make further analyses, and can help maximize the effectiveness of appropriated funds used to manage these areas.

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS AND

Working collaboratively with several BLM programs and other agencies better allows the BLM to manage the wilderness areas under its jurisdiction as a part of larger landscapes, which clearly benefits BLM wilderness resources. For example, programs that manage wildlife (e.g., desert bighorn sheep, sagegrouse, etc.), fire, weeds, and rangeland resources routinely fund projects that also benefit wilderness resources. By establishing connections across boundaries with other jurisdictions, management of

CONNECTING LANDSCAPES BY

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

wilderness areas complements conservation areas within the respective jurisdictions of the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, tribes, state and local governments, private conservation lands, and other BLM land managed for resource protection.

Wilderness Management Program Priorities //

and beyond include:

The BLM wilderness management program's six overarching priorities to guide its work from 2014

I. Ensure the protection of wilderness character. The Wilderness Act states that administering agencies are "responsible for preserving the wilderness character." The BLM will ensure that managers and staff adhere to this core direction of the act in development and implementation of all management decisions within designated wilderness. The BLM will provide tools and training to employees while ensuring accountability in meeting this core legal mandate

2. Improve connection with partners. Internal and external cooperative work with partners will continue to build capacity and increase the understanding of the relevancy of wilderness resources. The BLM will continue to foster wilderness stewardship by better connecting the broader wilderness network, both

and associated agency policies.

domestic and international.

3. Raise awareness of the BLM's wilderness lands. Raise awareness of BLM wilderness lands so more people understand and appreciate wilderness, its alues, and its benefits. Continue in-reach and outreach efforts to convey the importance of wilderness areas to our publics' quality of life, and further promote consistent cooperative messaging.

for the Future 4. Engage youth and underserved communities

Work to engage youth in the stewardship of wilderness lands to nurture the next generation of wilderness managers and specialists. Reach out to Americans living in communities traditionally underserved in regards to their access to knowledge of the value of protecting wilderness lands. Work with local partners to explore ways to increase physical access and exposure to local wilderness resources for underserved communities

5. Train the next generation of wilderness

Continuing the legacy of sound wilderness management will require the BLM to expend time and energy training the next generation of wilderness managers and specialists. The BLM wil increase efforts to train managers and specialists at all levels of the organization in how to properly steward our wilderness heritage, including designated wilderness, WSAs, and lands with wilderness characteristics.

6. Increase the role of science in wilderness management

Sound management decisions rely on sound science. Wilderness stewardship requires objective, scientific knowledge as an established baseline that can be repeated over time to establish and monitor trend. This will, in turn, help shape future management actions. The BLM will continue to monitor wilderness character using the "Keeping It Wild" strategy.



Help Protect Wilderness You can help protect wilderness by learning more (www.wilderness.net) and being a responsible visitor (www.LNT.org). You can help the BLM in its

wilderness stewardship efforts by joining a local wilderness friends group (www.wildernessalliance.org), joining the Society for

or volunteering at a nearby BLM field office

natural range, improve native species' resistance to invasive species, and create more areas that wilderness areas help improve landscapes' strong

NATIONAL CONSERVATION Milderness Resources on BLM Lands Yours Tolking 39 Panoche Hills North 107 San Luis Hills 116 West Cold Spring 128 Box Creek Wilderness Areas Wilderness Study Areas BLM Public Lands Urban Areas Production services provided by the Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Information and Publishing Services Section. otos by Bob Wick, unless stated otherwise.

Wilderness Study Areas

422 Deep Creek Mount 427 Escalante Canyon Trac 430 Fifty Mile Mounta 434 Flume Canyor 436 French Spring-Happy 437 Grand Gulch 438 Horseshoe Canvon (North

448 Mexican Mountain

389 South Fork Donner Und Blit

451 Mount Ellen-Blue Hills 453 Mount Pennell 454 Mud Spring Canyon 456 Mule Canyon 457 Negro Bill Canvon

458 North Escalante Canvons 459 North Fork Virgin River 313 San Antonio

314 Sierra de las Canas (tilde o 475 Spring Creek Canyon

499 Dubois Badlands 502 Fortification Creek

511 North Fork Powder Rive

in two different states. Each the state in which the greater percentage of WSA acreage is located. These WSAs are only

Fourteen WSAs have acreage

Note: Some WSAs share the same name but are completely

Wilderness Areas

Major Milestones of the BLM's Wilderness Management Program

2009 Passage of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act, which created the National Landscape Conservation System and added 30 new wilderness areas to the system.

2006 Passage of the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, which created or expanded 7 BLM wilderness areas in northern California, and passage of Public Law 109-432, which created 7 wilderness areas in Nevada.

2004 Passage of the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act, which created 14 wilderness areas in Nevada.

2002 Passage of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act, which created 13 wilderness areas in Nevada.

2000 Passage of Public Law 106-554 (Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2001), which created 10 wilderness areas in Nevada

1994 Passage of the California Desert Protection Act, which created 69 wilderness areas in California.

1990 Passage of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act, which created 38 wilderness areas in Arizona.

1984 Passage of the Arizona Wilderness Act and the Utah Wilderness Act, which created 9 wilderness areas in Arizona and Utah

1983 Passage of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and Management Act. Added the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness unit first wilderness managed by the BLM—of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in Montana.

1980 The BLM completed field inventories of roadless areas and designated about 25 million acres of wilderness study areas.

1978 Passage of the Endangered American Wilderness Act. The first BLM lands were designated wilderness in Wilderness in California. Authority for management was given to the U.S. Forest Service.

1976 Passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which directed the BLM to inventory and study its roadless areas for wilderness characteristics.

1964 Passage of the Wilderness Act.