



King Range National Conservation Area

California

Stretching across 68,000 acres of Humboldt and Mendocino counties in northern California, the King Range National Conservation Area protects 35 miles of Pacific coastline approximately 200 miles north of San Francisco. This rugged terrain, where mountains rise sharply 4,000 feet from the sea, earned recognition as California's "Lost Coast" and became the nation's first National Conservation Area when Congress established the designation in 1970. The Bureau of Land Management's Arcata Field Office oversees the area, which includes the 43,000-acre King Range Wilderness established in 2006.

Recreation Opportunities

King Range visitors enjoy backpacking, wildlife viewing, sightseeing, horseback riding, mushroom collecting, mountain biking, hunting, surfing, camping, and ocean fishing.

The King Range NCA draws hunters from throughout California who come to pursue deer, black bear, turkey, and quail across the largest unbroken stretch of public land on northern California's coast. The King Range NCA also manages a popular boating access for anglers seeking steelhead on the lower Mattole River. This is an economically important species and highly popular sportfish.

Developed recreation sites throughout the NCA include:

- Approximately 83 miles of hiking trails, including 25 miles of wilderness coastal backpacking along the world famous Lost Coast Trail.
- 25 miles of singletrack mountain bike trails in the Paradise Royale and Pacific Rim trail systems.

- Four campgrounds with a total of 53 sites.
- 45 miles of unpaved roads provide access to trailhead and scenic touring.
- Four day use areas in Shelter Cove provide beach access and outstanding coastal views.
- Honeydew day use area provides access to Honeydew Creek for picknicking and swimming.

The King Range Visitor Center is open Monday through Friday year-round.



Visitation

The King Range NCA receives an average of 135,000 visits and issues about 12,000 wilderness backpacking permits annually. Overnight public visitation in the wilderness is managed through a daily quota and permit system, available through [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).

- **May 15 - September 15:** 60 persons/permits per day are available.
- **September 16 - May 14:** 30 persons/permits per day are available.



Tides, waves, and storms dramatically affect the ability to safely travel on the Lost Coast Trail. BLM staff and partners spend a considerable amount of time helping visitors plan their trips around these safety concerns. Park rangers regularly patrol the trail to help visitors navigate the tides safely and to communicate additional information regarding campfires, food storage, and backcountry sanitation.

King Range Alliance

The King Range Alliance maximizes collaboration in conservation and public education. The KRA member groups are Friends of the Lost Coast, Mattole Restoration Council, Mattole Salmon Group, and Sanctuary Forest. The alliance works on coastal prairie and native grassland restoration, estuary restoration at the mouth of the Mattole River, and streamflow enhancement.



Educational activities include field trips, hands-on workshops, lectures, classroom lessons, and more. The Mattole River watershed provides 56 miles of habitat for coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and steelhead, all listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Ongoing restoration efforts by the KRA have made substantial progress improving habitat conditions.

The Nick's Interns program provides opportunities for local high school-aged youth to work with KRA partners and the BLM each summer through paid internships. It is named in memory of former BLM intern Nick Raphael.

Tribal Partnerships

The King Range NCA is within the homeland of the Dene-speaking Mattole and Sinkiyone peoples. Tribal ceremonial use and traditional gatherings of plants for

food, regalia, and basketry regularly take place. The BLM works with Tribal partners to restore natural and cultural landscapes, and to identify, monitor, and protect cultural sites.

Lighthouses

The Punta Gorda Lighthouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, perches on an outcrop three miles south of the Mattole Campground. This is a popular hiking destination for visitors to the King Range NCA.

At the southern end of the King Range NCA, the Cape Mendocino Lighthouse resides at Mal Coombs Park in Shelter Cove. This lighthouse is considered the centerpiece of the coastal community.

Volunteers with the Cape Mendocino Lighthouse Society maintain the lighthouse and open it to the public during the summer.

Geology

The King Range NCA lies immediately southeast of one of the most geologically active areas in North America. Three large tectonic plates converge just offshore at a geologic feature known as the Mendocino Triple Junction, causing large and frequent earthquakes. These compressional forces produce one of the highest geologic uplift rates in the world, which accounts for the high elevation and steep topography of the King Range.

Forestry and Fuels

The Arcata Field Office is a highly successful recipient of Cal Fire forest health grant funding for fuel reduction treatments in the King Range NCA. From 2021-2025, approximately 800 acres were treated and efforts are ongoing.

Grazing Allotments

The King Range NCA supports agricultural activities through its grazing program, which includes five permitted allotments where local ranchers maintain cattle operations under Bureau of Land Management authorization.