



# WILD FOR WILDERNESS

## CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT

On September 3, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act, establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System.

It designated the first 54 wilderness areas encompassing 9.1 million acres of National Forest wildlands for the use and benefit of the American people in perpetuity or, as Congress stated,

*“for the permanent good of the whole people.”*

Citing the overwhelming House support (only one dissenting vote) President Johnson stated, “So it seems to me that this reflects a new and a strong national consensus to look ahead, and, more than that, to plan ahead; better still, to move ahead.”

This momentous day was the result of eight years of work by Howard Zahniser, a principle author and promoter, who wrote the first draft of a Wilderness Bill introduced in 1956.

With passage of the Wilderness Act, Congress designated 54 U.S. Forest Service (USFS) wilderness areas. Five of those were in Arizona, with two in

the Coronado National Forest: Chiricahua and Galiuro.

In 1970, Petrified Forest National Park became the first National Park Service (NPS) site in Arizona to include designated wilderness; Saguaro and Chiricahua National Monument wilderness areas followed in 1976.

The Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984, crafted by the late Congressman Morris K. Udall, added 30 USFS units and created the first nine Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wilderness areas.

The Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 increased to 47 the number of BLM units and created four National Wildlife Refuge wilderness areas.

2014 is truly a year to celebrate wilderness. The nation has commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary throughout the year. In the Southwest, we recognize 30 years of the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984. We also celebrate 90 years for the Gila Wilderness, our nation’s first, championed by conservationist Aldo Leopold and supported by wilderness pioneer Arthur Carhart prior to the passage of the Wilderness Act.

### ARIZONA WILDERNESS AT A GLANCE

**Wilderness Areas:** 90  
2<sup>nd</sup> highest # in U.S.

**Acres:** 4,517,618

- 15% of the federal land in Arizona
- 6% of all Arizona lands
- 4% of all U.S. wilderness

**Agency Number/Acres:**  
(one is co-managed)

47	BLM	1,418,438
36	USFS	1,339,993
4	FWS	1,343,444
4	NPS	444,055

**Key Legislation:**

- Wilderness Act – 1964
- Public Law 91-505 – 1970
- Public Law 94-56 – 1976
- Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978
- Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984
- Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990

**The Wild for Wilderness Festival at Sabino Canyon is the perfect way to join the celebration!**

While 4,517,618 acres may sound like a large area, it represents only 15% of the federally managed land in Arizona and only 6% of all Arizona lands. These scattered untamed parcels have substantial benefits.

First and foremost, they ensure that our children and grandchildren can experience a piece of American history by visiting places that remain untouched by ever-expanding development. Indigenous people respected and lived off these lands that were often considered sacred spaces. Later when early pioneers searched for a new life, wilderness became what we can now call the Original American Adventure.

We might think of wilderness as “A gift from our grandparents, a promise to our grandchildren.” With that said, it’s important to remember that wilderness is our common heritage and responsibility.

Today, this gift offers us a unique opportunity to escape the hectic rush of everyday work, traffic, noise, and pollution to find a place where the world is simple, once again. When life seems to be moving faster and faster, wilderness offers a place of refuge where you can slow down and hear yourself think. It can be a place of wonder and inspiration, where life regains perspective.

Visitors can instead hear the bugling of an elk, the rustling of leaves and the tapping of a woodpecker while taking in a spectacular sunset. Simply put, wilderness is a place to Simplify, Balance, Unplug, Awaken.

The National Wilderness Preservation System currently contains 758 wilderness areas in the U.S. comprising 109,511,038 acres. More than a dozen of these are in southern Arizona; here are some of them:

- Aravaipa Canyon (BLM)
- Baboquivari Peak (BLM)
- Cabeza Prieta (FWS)
- Chiricahua Nat. Monument (NPS)
- Chiricahua (USFS)
- Coyote Mountains (BLM)
- Dos Cabezas Mountains (BLM)
- Fishhooks (BLM)
- Galiuro (USFS)
- Miller Peak (USFS)
- Mount Wrightson (USFS)
- Needle’s Eye (BLM)
- North Santa Teresa (BLM)
- Organ Pipe Cactus (NPS)
- Pajarita (USFS)
- Peloncillo Mountains (BLM)
- Pusch Ridge (USFS)
- Redfield Canyon (BLM)
- Rincon Mountain (USFS)
- Saguaro (NPS)
- Santa Teresa (USFS)
- White Canyon (BLM)

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 Arizona Wilderness Coalition 520-326-4300  
 Friends of Sabino Canyon 520-749-1900  
 Sierra Club 602-253-8633



## ARIZONA WILDERNESS FUN FACTS

### Largest Wilderness

Cabeza Prieta  
803,418 acres

### Smallest Wilderness

Baboquivari Peak  
2,065 acres

### Wilderness Highs and Lows

Imperial 200’  
Kachina Peaks 12,643’

**Arizona** is one of only five states in which all four federal land management agencies have designated wilderness.

**Pima County** also has wilderness managed by all four agencies.

### Arizona is in the Top Five

- States with the most wilderness acres
- States with the most wilderness areas

The **Arizona National Scenic Trail** crosses eight units: Miller Peak, Mt. Wrightson, Saguaro, Rincon Mountain, Pusch Ridge, Superstition, Four Peaks, and Mazatzal.