

What Is Wilderness?

Wilderness is publicly owned land and waters protected under the Wilderness Act and part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. This System encompasses a wide variety of ecosystems throughout the country including swamps in the Southeast, tundra in Alaska, snowcapped peaks in the Rocky Mountains, hardwoods forests in the Northeast, and deserts in the Southwest.

The Wilderness Act provides that public lands protected as wilderness shall be protected in their natural condition; that they retain their primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement or human habitation; that the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; that the land is devoted to the public purposes of recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historic use.



Designated wilderness comprises **13.3%** of the public lands outside of Alaska; Including Alaska, wilderness comprises 17% of the public lands of the United States.

Designated wilderness accounts for **2.68%** of the total land and inland water area of the 49 United States, excluding Alaska. With Alaska, wilderness accounts for **4.73%** of the total land and inland water area in America.



Wilderness is protected by law, and managed by public agencies to preserve land in its natural state, affected by the forces of nature rather than the influences of man.

Wilderness is the foundation of America. From the European immigrants' encounter with wilderness at the country's edge, to the promise of freedom in the unsettled frontier, wilderness has shaped our character as a people and a nation.

Wilderness is the home of the greatest biodiversity left in America. It is the source of clean water, and fresh air and healthy habitat. Undisturbed wild lands sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

Wilderness is our legacy, and one we can pass to future generation that they may know as we do the numbing water of a mountain stream, the glory of an alpine meadow full of wild flowers, the lush myriad greens of an Eastern forest the light at play on sandstone canyon walls, the thunder of the surf on a wild coast.

Wilderness is a place to refresh our spirits, to stretch our legs, to teach our children and ourselves about the natural world.

Wilderness harbors communities of plants and animals, some threatened and endangered.

Wilderness is a repository for cultural history. Archaeological artifacts can be preserved in wilderness.

Wilderness is a laboratory for scientific research. It offers us a “baseline” to help us understand how the planet is changing and a measure to assess human impacts in more disturbed areas.

Wilderness is a deeply held American value. Support for wilderness comes from all regions, from rural as well as urban and suburban residents, from men and women and from all ethnic groups and age groups.

Wilderness is a venue for solitude and reflection in the presence of nature.

Wilderness is a place to enjoy hiking, camping, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, paddling, photography and picnics.

Wilderness is at risk. Road building, mining, energy development, rural sprawls and motorized recreation on or next to public lands nibble away at the wilderness quality of these lands, and in some cases completely destroy the natural values found there. While a vast majority of Americans support wilderness preservation, many are not aware of current threats to wilderness quality lands that remain unprotected. As America grows more urban and multi-cultural and as people spend more time indoors and on-line, long term support for wilderness preservation will depend on finding ways to communicate the wonder and importance of wilderness to people who may never experience wild places themselves.

What say you about wilderness?

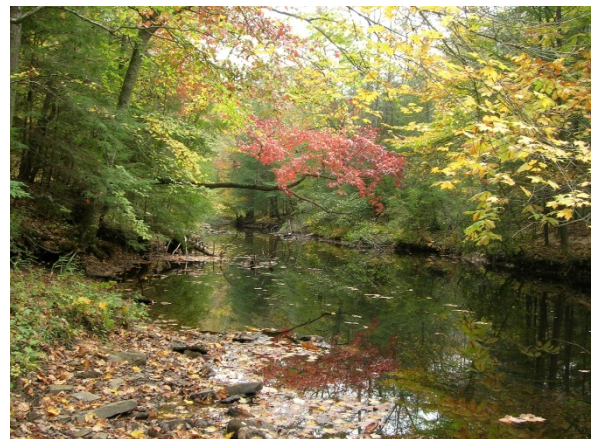
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May 28, 2014

Enchanting Wilderness

Wandering silently
though the wilderness wood ,
far and away from the potholes
of well beaten pathways
The soft breeze slowly rousing
the shadows of the moonlit night
charily past the thorny stems of time .
Wildlife footpaths , illuminated by starlight ,
adorn the alluring wooded trail
Secluded labyrinths foraged by natural instinct ,
ancestral prudence , inherent perception , intuition

Each shadow drawn willingly
into a deeper enlightening journey ,



as if synchronicity united hearts
learning to speak minds
The depths of mesmerizing transparency
rendezvous with awakening breath ,
looking back at life withdrawn in discontent ,
exhaling newly found freedom without regret
Lost in perpetual motion , found in heart .
Separate soul's singularity , moonlit ,
standing alone yearning for healing connection

Ardor of hope shines an inward light
as moonlight slumbers where passion blushes
The night has a thousand eyes
shining on practical mysticism
The laughing owls of midnight
echo illusions of crystal clear reverie
Moved by swirling tempest breezes
showering down from high endeavors
Wisps of the sleeping sky unfurl
teardrops drunk by earth's sod
Nocturnal Cricket's rhythmic acoustical wings
are very quietly chirping a bashful courting song

Laughter rings out blissfully
like the joy of a heavenly child
Nature sways with a gentle motion ,
her leafy arms groan and moan the silent toil ;
she holds up the weight of the celestial light ,
dappled moonlight rustles across the shadows
stirring love born beneath the trees .
Two juxtaposed shadows emerge as one
from the enthralling wilderness wilds
harvesting the sweet nectar of life
Reborn free as naked babes in the woods ,
enlightened by the enchanting forest ...