

REFERENCE MANUAL 41: WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP
NPS Wilderness Definitions

Recommendation and Approval for Inclusion in Reference Manual 41

Recommended by the WASO Wilderness Stewardship Division:

Signature: _____

Title: Wilderness Stewardship Division Program Manager

Approval for inclusion in Reference Manual 41 by WASO Visitor and Resource Protection:

Signature: _____

Title: Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection

-A-

Adequate Access: The combination of routes and modes of travel that the National Park Service has determined will have the least-lasting impact on the wilderness resource and character, and at the same time, will serve the reasonable purposes for which State or private entities have legal rights.

Air Quality Related Values: Air quality related values (AQRVs) have been defined as; “a scenic, cultural, physical, biological, ecological, or recreational resource which may be affected by a change in air quality as defined by the federal land managers for federal lands”. Class I areas are given additional protection for AQRVs against air pollution. Visibility is specifically identified in the CAA as an AQRV. NPS includes night sky visibility in this category.

Aircraft: Any device that is used or intended to be used for human flight in the air, including powerless flight. (See 36 CFR 1.4, Definitions).

Aircraft, Landing of: Bringing down to the surface of the earth (land, water, snow, or ice) any aircraft or anything attached to or carried by an aircraft, during or after a flight.

-B-

Backcountry: The National Park Service uses the term “backcountry” to refer to primitive, undeveloped portions of parks. Backcountry is not the same as wilderness. Rather, it refers to a general condition of land that may include wilderness. Management of the wilderness portions of the parks require different administrative practices than backcountry because the Wilderness Act and NPS Management Policies impose additional conditions and constraints.

Bicycle: Any device propelled solely by human power upon which a person or persons may ride on land, having one, two, or more wheels, except a manual wheelchair. (See 36 CFR 1.4, Definitions).

-C-

Cherry-Stemmed Route: A dead-end route where the boundary of the wilderness extends up one side of the route, around its terminus, and down the other side.

Commercial Enterprise: Any use or activity undertaken within wilderness for one or more of the following purposes:

- Sale of products or services (For example a restaurant or other vendor conducting business within wilderness);
- Extraction of resources, consumptive use of resources, or manipulation of resources for the purposes of generating funds or revenue (For example, timber harvesting, fishing, grazing, mining, or mineral exploration); or,
- An activity where an entry or participation fee is charged (For example a concert or other ticketed gathering or a paid guiding service).

The term commercial enterprise does not include commercial filming or photography.

Commercial Service: A commercial enterprise that provides a service for hire to one or more clients where the paid service occurs within wilderness. The primary purpose of a commercial service is to experience wilderness through support provided for a fee or charge and the primary effect is that the wilderness experience is guided and shaped through the use of support services. For example, a paid guiding or outfitting service may be a commercial service. Commercial filming and photography are not a commercial service.

-D-

Designated Wilderness: Federal land designated by Congress as wilderness and a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System where the NPS is required to manage according to the Wilderness Act of 1964.

-E-

Eligible Wilderness: An area that possesses the qualities and character, as identified within the Wilderness Act, which would qualify it for designation within the National Wilderness Preservation System. An area where, based upon a wilderness eligibility assessment, the Director has approved the managerial determination of eligibility for wilderness designation and has published notice of eligibility in the Federal Register.

Emergency: A situation that requires immediate action because of imminent danger to the health or safety of people.

-I-

Inholding: Land owned or managed by an entity other than the National Park Service that is within the designated, recommended, proposed, eligible wilderness boundary.

Installation: Anything made by humans that is not intended for human occupation and is left unattended or left behind when the installer leaves the wilderness.

-M-

Mechanical Transport: Any vehicle, device, or contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, snow, ice, or air that has moving parts as essential components of the transport and which apply a mechanical advantage, regardless of power source. This includes (but is not limited to) wheeled vehicles, devices, or contrivances, such as bicycles, Segways™ and other Electric Personal Assistance Mobility Devices (EPAMD), game carriers, carts, wheelbarrows, and wagons. "Mechanical transport" does not include skis, snowshoes, sleds, travois, non-motorized river craft including drift boats, rafts, or canoes, or similar primitive devices. Wheelchairs or other mobility devices that meet the definition of "wheelchair" in the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 508(c) are not prohibited in wilderness.

Minimum Requirements Analysis: A two-step process, based on Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act, that documents 1) the determination as to whether or not a proposed management action is necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness and does not have a significant impact to the wilderness resources and character; and, 2) the determination of the management activity (method or tool) that causes the least amount of impact to the wilderness resources and character.

Minimum Activity: The least intrusive method, tool, equipment, device, force, regulation or practice that will achieve the wilderness management objective. It is commonly referred to as “minimum tool”.

Motorboat: Any type or description of craft, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water that is powered by a motor, engine, or other non-living power source. This includes, but is not limited to, airboats and personal watercraft.

Motor Vehicle: Any vehicle that is self-propelled, including any vehicle that is propelled by electric power but not operated on rails or upon water. This includes, but is not limited to cars, trucks, all-terrain vehicles (ATV) and motorcycles. (See 36 CFR 1.4, Definitions).

Motorized Equipment: Any machine that applies force by transferring energy from a motor, engine, or other non-living power source. This includes, but is not limited to, such machines as aircraft, drones, snowmobiles, motorboats, chainsaws, weed whackers, power drills, power saws, generators, compressors, windmills or turbines, and snow or leaf blowers. "Motorized equipment" does not include shavers, wrist watches, clocks, flashlights, cameras, camping stoves, solar panels, batteries, explosives, Geiger counters, cellular telephones, portable electronic media devices, radio receivers or transmitters, GPS units, or other similar small, battery-powered, hand-carried personal camping equipment.

-N-

Natural: Ecological systems which are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.

-O-

Other Features of Value: Attributes not required of or found in every wilderness that reflect the wilderness character of a specific wilderness. Based on the last clause of Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act which states that a wilderness “may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.” It captures important elements of the wilderness that are not covered in the other four qualities of wilderness character, such as cultural or paleontological resources.

-P-

Potential Wilderness: Lands which possess wilderness characteristics which would normally qualify them for designation within the National Wilderness Preservation System but contain temporary non-conforming or incompatible conditions (such as structures or roads) or uses (such as in-holdings, valid mining claims or operations) which prevent their being immediately designated as wilderness. These lands may be identified as “potential wilderness” in NPS wilderness proposals, wilderness recommendations, and by Congress in legislation designating other portions of a park as wilderness. Designated potential wilderness should be converted to designated wilderness once the non-conforming uses have been extinguished by publishing a notice in the Federal Register.

Proposed Wilderness: The findings and conclusions of a formal wilderness study that have been submitted as the NPS proposal by the Director to the Department of the Interior, but has not been approved by the Secretary.

-R-

Recommended Wilderness: An eligible wilderness area that has been studied and proposed by the NPS, recommended for wilderness designation by the Secretary to the President, and then transmitted by the President as his recommendation for wilderness designation to Congress.

Road, Permanent: A route constructed, maintained or used by motor vehicles or mechanical transport for an indefinite period of time.

Road, Temporary: A route constructed, maintained or used by motor vehicles or mechanical transport for a finite period of time.

-S-

Solitude: The state of being alone or remote from habitations or the sights and sounds of other people; the experience of being in an unfrequented or secluded place.

Structure: Anything made by humans that is intended for human occupation, or their possessions, and is left behind when the builder leaves the wilderness.

-U-

Undeveloped: Retaining its primeval character and influence, and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation.

Untrammeled: Essentially unhindered and free from the intentional actions of modern human control or manipulation.

-V-

Valid Existing Rights: Those property rights in existence on the date of wilderness designation or on such date as provided for in the particular Act that designated an area as wilderness; that were created by a legally binding conveyance, lease, deed, contract, or other document; or as otherwise provided by Federal law.

-W-

Wheelchair: A device designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area (Section 508(c)(2) of the Americans with Disabilities Act).

Wilderness: For the purpose of applying NPS policies, wilderness includes the categories of eligible, proposed, recommended, and designated wilderness. Potential wilderness may be a subset of any of these categories.

Wilderness Character: The combination of biophysical, experiential, and symbolic ideals that distinguishes wilderness from other lands. The five qualities of wilderness character are Untrammeled, Undeveloped, Natural, Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation, and Other Features of Value.

Wilderness Study: A formal study that evaluates the acreage that has been determined to be eligible for wilderness designation through the completion of a wilderness eligibility assessment. The purpose of the wilderness study is to provide a detailed review necessary to develop official proposals and recommendations for wilderness designation to the Director, the Department, the President, and Congress.

----End of Guidance----