

Hunting & Fishing Designated Wilderness

Hunters and anglers share a deep and abiding connection to the land. For more than 100 years they have been a leading part of the movement to conserve wildlife and wildlands. Aldo Leopold, the author of *A Sand County Almanac*, America's first full-time professor of wildlife management, and a founder of The Wilderness Society, came to see the value of protecting Wilderness through his experiences as a hunter. Leopold recognized that good hunting depended on preserving large tracts of Wilderness. Today we use the Wilderness Act of 1964 to protect some of America's best remaining wildlife habitat and fishing streams. If they were alive today, Aldo Leopold and Teddy Roosevelt would wholeheartedly argue that hunters, anglers, and conservation groups must work together to preserve America's natural heritage.

Wilderness in America

The Wilderness Society, in the tradition of the early hunter-conservationists, helped lead the effort to win passage of the Wilderness Act in Congress in 1964. The National Wilderness Preservation System adds a layer of protection to parts of national forests, national parks, national wildlife refuges, and other public lands that remain untrammelled and unspoiled, in the Boundary Waters, the Appalachians, the Northern Rockies, Alaska, and elsewhere. Today, more than 114 million acres of our public lands are part of the Wilderness System. Wilderness designation for an area prevents development, road-building, and motorized vehicles, but maintains access for recreation.

Hunting and Fishing: At Home in Wilderness

Hunting and fishing have always been among the most popular forms of recreation in Wilderness. Except for Wilderness Areas inside national parks, which generally prohibit hunting already, Wilderness designation itself places no new restrictions or quotas on hunting or fishing, and these activities remain under the oversight of state fish and wildlife agencies.



Wilderness: Prime Habitat for Fish and Wildlife

Wilderness Areas provide some of the best habitat in America for fish and game, safeguarding coldwater fisheries and intact ecosystems, including important seasonal habitat for wildlife and migratory birds. Intact habitat in Wilderness Areas means healthy populations of fish and wildlife for hunters and anglers, both in Wilderness Areas and in nearby and downstream non-wilderness areas. For example:

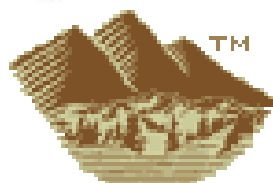
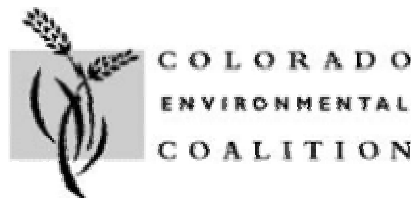
- Across the country, road building in remote areas and the activities it facilitates decrease big game habitat. Wilderness Areas, in contrast, preserve large, contiguous tracts of land that support healthy numbers of big game, including elk, deer, and antelope. This maintains healthy wildlife populations that inhabit Wilderness Areas and also migrate seasonally to other areas.
- Roadless areas, including Wilderness Areas, are home to many blue-ribbon trout streams that provide critical habitat for sensitive and listed species such as westslope, greenback, and Colorado River cutthroat. Wilderness designation prevents logging and road building that fill streams with silt and destroy native fish habitat.
- Wilderness also can help maintain the health of a species. In the Rocky Mountains, for example, the worm that hosts the trout-killing whirling disease parasite is often found in degraded waters — but is almost never found in Wilderness streams.
- Though most of our nation's Wilderness is in the West, popular eastern game species also benefit from Wilderness. For instance, the ruffed grouse thrives in the Wilderness Areas of the national forests in North Carolina, Tennessee, and elsewhere in the Southern Appalachians.

Wilderness provides benefits for all Americans, whether they hunt, fish, camp, study birds, hike, boat, take photographs — or simply benefit from the clean air and water produced Wilderness Areas. Hunters, anglers, and other conservationists should work together to protect our wildlife, wildlands, and common heritage.

www.WhiteRiverWild.org



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