



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY AND WILDERNESS FACT SHEET

The Wilderness Society

- The Wilderness Society was founded in 1935 to preserve our national public lands – National Forests, National Parks, Wildlife Refuges and Wilderness areas.
- The goal of The Wilderness Society is to ensure that future generations will enjoy, as we do today, the clean air, water, wildlife, beauty, and opportunities for recreation and renewal that pristine forest, rivers, deserts and mountains provide.
- The Wilderness Society helped shape the legislation that became the Wilderness Act of 1964. Since its passage, more than 105 million acres of public lands have been designated as Wilderness, about 4.4 percent of the United States.
- The Wilderness Society is headquartered in Washington DC, with regional offices located across the country. They have an extensive public policy staff as well as ecologists, professional foresters, resource managers, economists, writers, media specialists and others who help carry out programs. In addition, GIS capabilities are offered through its Center for Landscape Analysis.

About Designated Wilderness

- Designated by Congress, Wilderness is the highest form of protection for federal public lands.
- Designated Wilderness areas offer some of the best opportunities for recreation such as hiking, camping, fishing, snowshoeing, skiing, kayaking and more. You even can bring a dog on leash.
- In Washington state, there are approximately 4.3 million acres of federally designated and protected Wilderness including popular and well known areas in the North Cascades such as the North Cascades National Park, Alpine Lakes, Glacier Peak, and the Henry M. Jackson.

The Importance and Benefits of Designated Wilderness

- Wilderness offers people a place to get away for solitude, inspiration, and natural quiet.
- Wilderness offers numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, canoeing, camping, and many other activities.
- At the same time, designated Wilderness protects biodiversity and ecological values vital to all of us including:
 - **Watershed Protection:** Wilderness areas protect watersheds that provide drinking water to many cities and rural communities.
 - **Wildlife Habitat:** Wilderness serves as critical habitat for fish and wildlife.
 - **Air Quality:** Wilderness helps filter and improve the quality of our air.
 - **Biodiversity:** Wilderness areas maintain gene pools that help protect biodiversity – the "web of life," and can provide natural laboratories for research.
 - **Serenity and Solitude:** Wilderness is a haven, providing quiet places to escape and relax.