



BLM Manual 6340—Management of BLM Wilderness

1.6 Policy.

A. Congressional Direction and General Principles

2. Preserve Wilderness Character

c. As set forth in Section 2(c) (“Definition of Wilderness”) of the Wilderness Act, wilderness character is composed of four mandatory qualities and a fifth, optional, quality. These are:

ii. Natural. The Wilderness Act states that wilderness is “protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.” In short, wilderness ecological systems should be as free as possible from the effects of modern civilization. Management must foster a natural distribution of native wildlife, fish, and plants by ensuring that ecosystems and ecological processes continue to function naturally. Watersheds, water bodies, water quality, and soils are maintained in a natural condition; associated ecological processes previously altered by human influences will be allowed to return to their natural condition. Fire, insects, and diseases are allowed to play their natural role in the wilderness ecosystem except where these activities threaten human life, property, or high value resources on adjacent non-wilderness lands. Additional guidance on this is provided in section 1.6.C of this manual, which addresses the management of specific activities in wilderness. This quality may be affected by intended or unintended effects of human activities on the ecological systems inside the wilderness.