

1.6 A.4. **Manage for Public Purposes**

a. Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act states that: "Except as otherwise provided in this Act, wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use." In most cases the public purposes reflect one or more qualities of wilderness character.

c.i. **Recreational:** The public purpose of recreation encompasses opportunities that allow visitors to experience wilderness. Examples of wilderness recreational use include hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The Recreational public purpose is usually reflected in the Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation quality of wilderness character, but the need to accommodate recreation use does not override the mandate to preserve the qualities of wilderness character. For example, a proposal to replace an existing trail bridge may be consistent with the public purpose of recreational use. However, as a structure, a trail bridge is a Section 4(c) prohibited use that may be allowed only if it is necessary to meet minimum requirements for administration of the area for the purpose of the Act and impairs the Undeveloped quality of wilderness character. The manager would need to determine if a bridge is the minimum necessary action needed to address visitor safety or resource protection requirements that cannot be addressed another way.

1.6 C.13. **Recreational Use**

a. **Background.** The human experience of wilderness through solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation is an intrinsic part of wilderness character. Management of recreational uses is based on three factors: maintaining solitude, maintaining a primitive setting, and keeping recreation as unconfined as possible. Though recreational uses of wilderness are important, the overall mandate of preserving wilderness character as a whole, rather than just the recreational component, must take precedence. In general, natural conditions will not be altered to make the wilderness safer for recreational users.

b. **Solitude** is the sense of being alone or remote from the sights and sounds of other people; it is the experience of a lonely, unfrequented, or secluded place.

i. Solitude is not required on every acre of a wilderness for this opportunity to be preserved. Nor is there a mandate to create opportunities for solitude which were not present at the time of designation.

ii. Activities outside of wilderness areas cannot be prohibited to maintain solitude within wilderness areas. However, if an activity on wildernessadjacent land is entirely within the BLM's purview (e.g. recreational developments) special consideration should be given to carrying out the project so as to minimize impacts to solitude. In all cases reasonable mitigation should be considered and impacts solitude should be analyzed in any applicable NEPA document. Typical mitigation includes screening, camouflaging, or

placing facilities in such a way as to decrease visibility from the wilderness, muffling ongoing sources of noise, and temporal restriction of operations.

iii. Solitude can be maintained where there is increasing use by, for example:

A. Providing educational information to wilderness visitors outside of the wilderness regarding methods to minimize impacts to other visitors.

B. Limiting entry at one or more entry points.

C. Limiting camping to designated campsites.

Note that the techniques described in B. and C. must be employed with caution since they decrease the opportunities for unconfined recreation by imposing management restrictions (see subsection 14.d, below). Management restrictions are easier to justify if also taken to protect the area's Natural quality. However, restrictions such as these may be appropriate to maintain solitude in iconic areas whose popularity dramatically increases. Techniques employed are determined by analysis of options using the MRDG.

c. **Primitive recreation** encompasses dispersed and undeveloped recreational opportunities that are appropriate in wilderness and require neither facilities nor motorized equipment.

Recreational opportunities for physical and mental challenge and self-discovery are important underlying benefits of wilderness. For BLM's policy regarding recreational activities associated with fish and wildlife, see C.21.6 c. ix.

i. *Structures and installations*, including those that predate wilderness designation, that do not meet the criteria provided in this section should be removed unless they are deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. (See sections 1.6.C.2.j and 1.6.C.5.)

A. Facilities that make recreation more convenient or safer may be provided only where they are the minimum necessary to protect the wilderness character, typically only in the following circumstances:

I. To protect the Natural quality, or other qualities of wilderness character. For example, a bridge may be placed across a stream to protect fish habitat. Regulatory signs may be placed within wilderness areas as a management tool to correct specific problems and protect Unique or Other Features such as cultural sites.

II. To address an inherently unsafe condition known to present an extraordinary hazard to recreation users. For example, a bridge may be placed across a stream that cannot be forded safely at any time of the primary use season. However, recreational use in wilderness involves certain risks to the visitor as a consequence of isolation from the conveniences of a technological world.

III. To address human-made unsafe conditions. For example, a gate may be placed at the entrance to a mine adit.

Note that these facilities make the area more developed, and wildernesses are defined as "undeveloped." Consequently, facilities should be placed with caution and all structures and installations must meet the test of being the minimum required (See Appendix B). Except as noted above, informational and regulatory signs will be located outside the wilderness boundary.

ii. *Trails and trail systems.* Existing trails must be evaluated to determine if they are the minimum necessary to preserve wilderness character. Trails may be relocated or closed and restored as a result of the evaluation. The evaluation should include closure or consideration of conversion to hiking trails of any existing motorized routes, abandoned logging roads, old firebreaks, etc.

A. New trails may be constructed only if they are needed to preserve wilderness values and resources and will not significantly impair the degree of naturalness or solitude in the area. Trails must not be constructed with treads of more than 24 inches in width except where a wider trail is justified to protect the wilderness resource. Trails should follow natural contours where possible and result in minimum disturbance to soil and ground cover. Trail location and design standards should minimize the need for trail installations such as water bars.

B. Where possible, trailhead/access points should be located well outside the wilderness boundary to reduce their impact upon the wilderness area.

C. Construction techniques should always give first consideration to using native materials found within the wilderness (e.g. logs, rocks, etc.) A minimum requirements analysis will be used to determine the necessity of using any non-natural materials for trail construction (e.g. sawn lumber, plastic pipe, landscape fabric etc.) (See Appendix B).

iii. *Signs.* Only a minimum of signs should be installed within wilderness areas. Instead, emphasis should be on making accurate maps, route descriptions, or brochures available to visitors.

A. Signs with directional arrows may be placed at trail junctions; trail signs may also be placed for marking routes where animal trails may create confusion. No signs should be used to indicate streams, lakes, mountain peaks, passes, or other points of interest. Although mileages may appear on signs, mile markers may not be used.

B. In areas without trails, signs or cairns should be placed only to indicate preferred routes of travel to prevent resource damage, and not as a convenience to the visitor.

C. Except for regulatory signs (see Unconfined Recreation, below), signs should appear to be made of native materials. Do not use paint, either on trees or rocks, to mark trails.

iv. *Campsites or camping areas* may be established if necessary for preserving wilderness character. They will be located sufficiently distant from lakes, streams, trails, and each other so as to allow for a reasonable degree of solitude without unacceptable degradation of wilderness resources.

v. *Hitch racks, corrals, or other developments to facilitate stock use* may be used as necessary to prevent damage to wilderness resources, and must be constructed of materials that appear to be native.

vi. *In dealing with human waste*, encourage proper Leave No Trace methods, which can include requiring pack-out methods where necessary to preserve wilderness character. Install pit toilets for resource protection as a last resort after other methods fail to protect wilderness character.

vii. *No shelters or lean-tos will be constructed*, and existing shelters must be removed unless eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Eligible properties will be managed primarily for their historic, rather than recreational uses. An exception to shelter removal is when removal would unduly impair wilderness character, in which case the shelter may be allowed to deteriorate naturally so long as it does not create a safety hazard

viii. "*Leave No Trace*" or similar wilderness travel ethics should be promoted.

ix. *For members of the public, no exceptions to the prohibited uses* found in Section 4 (c) of the Wilderness Act, are allowed—including creating structures or installations—without explicit, case-by-case authorization from the BLM managing office.

Unauthorized structures and installations will be dismantled or removed as soon as practicable. Authorizations may be appropriate for:

A. allowing the placement of permanent, fixed climbing anchors. The BLM will not authorize the public to install permanent, fixed anchors using motorized equipment;

B. allowing the caching of food or water for through-hiking or extended wilderness trips; and/or

C. allowing temporary structures or installations as part of a commercial service permitted under section 4(d)(6) of the Wilderness Act

d. **Unconfined recreation** is enjoyed without management restriction. This sense of freedom has long been acknowledged as an important component of the wilderness experience. Visitor education should be used to achieve management objectives where feasible, and only the minimum amount of regulation necessary to achieve desired objectives may be used. However, biophysical and social carrying capacities may vary widely within and between wilderness areas due to variations in types and amounts of uses and resource characteristics. Decisions on management restrictions should be made during the wilderness planning process.

i. Management restrictions can be applied only to protect some quality of wilderness character. Indirect methods of reducing visitors' impact, such as trail design,

information, and education are generally preferred over direct (regulatory) methods, such as requiring permits, requiring certified weedfree hay for recreational livestock, designating campsites, or limiting the number of recreationists, party size, or length of stay. Often, however, indirect methods are insufficient to adequately protect the resources at risk.

ii. It may be appropriate to issue restrictions only on selected portions of the wilderness, or to regulate only some of the wildernesses in a group in proximity with similar wilderness values. For example, campfires may be prohibited only at certain popular areas, rather than through the entire wilderness.

iii. Activities that are not wilderness-dependent may be prohibited without degrading opportunities for unconfined recreation. Non-wilderness-dependent activities may also impair aspects of wilderness character and, when this is the case, should be prohibited. Such activities may include:

A. Contests, such as physical or mental endurance of a person or animal,, foot races, canoe or boat races, competitive trail rides or other forms of competition, and survival contests;

B. military exercises; and/or

C. recreational or hobby collecting of specific types of rock or common mineral specimens (see also section 1.6.C.3 above).

e. **New activities and technologies** will be evaluated as they are developed. Neither the Wilderness Act nor this manual can anticipate all possible uses and technologies that may arise over time. When a new technology or activity is proposed for recreational use in a wilderness area, the BLM must first consider whether the technology or activity violates one of the prohibitions of Section 4(c), as defined in section 1.6.B and the Glossary. For example, geocaching with a physical cache is not permitted in wilderness since this activity violates Section 4(c) through its use of installations. If a new activity or technology does not violate one of the Section 4(c) prohibitions, the BLM may allow it as long as it does not otherwise impair wilderness character. Geocaching with virtual caches, for example, does not violate any of the 4(c) prohibitions and may be allowed at the discretion of the manager. However, if this activity impacts an area's wilderness character—by drawing visitors to sensitive wilderness resources or impacting solitude, for example—the manager may prohibit this activity.