

The Weminuche Wilderness is managed by the San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests.



San Juan National Forest Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Trip Planning Information

San Juan National Forest

San Juan Public Lands Office

Durango, CO
(970) 247-4874

www.fs.fed.us/sanjuan

Pagosa Ranger District

Pagosa Springs, CO
(970) 264-2268

Rio Grande National Forest

Rio Grande National Forest

Monte Vista, CO
(719) 852-5941

www.fs.fed.us/riogrande

Conejos Peak Ranger District

La Jara, CO
(719) 274-8971

South San Juan Wilderness



Photo by Kristina Schenck

The South San Juan Wilderness encompasses 158,790 acres of some of the most remote and pristine land in Southern Colorado.

Originally designated as Wilderness by Congress in 1980, it is a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System.



National Wilderness Preservation System

Welcome to Your Wilderness!

Ages of volcanic activity followed by the carving of glaciers left the rough, imposing terrain of the remote South San Juan Wilderness, an area characterized by steep slopes above wide U-shaped valleys cut deeper by eroding streams. You'll find high peaks and cliffs, as well as jagged pinnacles and ragged ridges, making travel difficult.

Elevations rise as high as 13,300 feet.

Thirty-two lakes, most of

them formed by glacial activity, hold much of the area's moisture and drain into turbulent creeks. The Conejos, San Juan, and Blanco Rivers have their headwaters here. You'll find about 180 miles of trails, and some of the most exemplary backpacking in the state. The Continental Divide crosses the heart of the Wilderness for 42 miles.

As you visit, you will join thousands of others who travel in the South San Juan each year. You can help protect the Wilderness through your knowledge and skills, and by complying with regulations.



Photo and narrative courtesy of www.wilderness.net

General Safety Information

Navigation

Be sure to carry a current topographical map of the area. Signing is limited to junctions of Forest Service system trails and typically does not provide mileages.

Weather

Expect and be prepared for rain, hail, snow, or biting wind at any time of the year. Carry clothing and equipment which will keep you warm and dry, even when day-hiking.

Altitude

Elevations range from 7,000 to over 13,000 feet. Pace yourself, drink water, and eat snacks to help prevent altitude sickness. Symptoms include headache, loss of appetite, and weakness or drowsiness. If affected, descend quickly. If symptoms persist, seek medical aid.

High Water

During spring snow melt, expect high, fast water. Water levels may rise dangerously with warm weather or after thunderstorms. Use caution when crossing streams or delay crossing until water levels drop.

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Wilderness Regulations

The following regulations are in effect to help ensure the protection of the wilderness environment for current visitors and for future generations.

Please consider, adopt, and practice these regulations in the Wilderness.

Site Specifics Regulations

The following regulations apply to all areas of the South San Juan:

Group Size

The maximum group size allowed in the South San Juan is 15 people per group, with a maximum combination of people and stock not to exceed 25.

Camping

Camping, campfires, and restraining or grazing of recreational livestock are not permitted within 200 feet of Bear Lake, Blue Lake, Green Lake, and Red Lake.

Travel

Bikes, carts, snowmobiles, and any other motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment are not allowed in the Wilderness.

Pets

Pets must be leashed or under voice control. Do this in respect for others and for the protection of wildlife.



Livestock

Restraining recreational livestock is prohibited within 100 feet of streams and lakes or within riparian areas.

Stock Feed

All hay, cubed hay, straw, mulch, and other products in your possession on the Forest must be certified as weed free by a sanctioned certification program.

Others

Pack out and properly disposed of all trash. Do not bury or burn your trash.

Disposing of wash water and human waste is prohibited within 100 feet of any water source.

Cutting or damaging live trees is prohibited.

Caching of any type of equipment is prohibited.

Do not leave campfires unattended. Make sure your fire is out and ashes are cold.

Shortcutting of trail switchbacks is prohibited to limit erosion. Do not cut switchbacks.

General Regulations

Outfitters and Guides

Commercial guides and outfitters must hold a legal permit to operate within National Forests. Contact the Forest Service office nearest your destination for permit information or to ensure that your guide has a valid permit.

Reserved Campsites

Camping is prohibited within 300 feet of areas signed as “reserved” or “assigned” to permitted commercial outfitters.

Hunting

Hunting is permitted subject to regulations established by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.



“The wilderness that has come to us from the eternity of the past we have the boldness to project into the eternity of the future.”

- Howard Zahniser

Leave No Trace

Practicing a “Leave No Trace” ethic is very simple: make it hard for others to see or hear you and “leave no trace” of your visit. With your help, the wilderness resource can be managed to ensure that its unique character and values remain intact.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors



Sources of Related Information

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Durango Office
(970) 247-0855
<http://cpw.state.co.us/>

Leave No Trace

1-800-332-4100
www.LNT.org

Wilderness Information Network

www.wilderness.net