

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

Area offices south of the Continental Divide:

San Juan Public Lands Office
Durango, CO
(970) 247-4874
www.fs.fed.us/sanjuan

Columbine Ranger District
Bayfield, CO
(970) 884-2512

Pagosa Ranger District
Pagosa Springs, CO
(970) 264-2268

Silverton Public Lands Office
Silverton, CO
(970) 387-5530

Areas offices north of the Continental Divide:

Rio Grande National Forest
Monte Vista, CO
(719) 852-5941
www.fs.fed.us/riogrande

Divide Ranger District West
Creede, CO
(719) 658-2556

Divide Ranger District East
Del Norte, CO
(719) 657-3321



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

Weminuche Wilderness



Photo by Mark Roper

The Weminuche Wilderness contains nearly half a million acres within the San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests and is Colorado's Largest Wilderness Area!

Originally designated as Wilderness by Congress in 1975, it is a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System.



National Wilderness Preservation System

Welcome to Your Wilderness!

The Weminuche spans the Continental Divide, North America's geological backbone, with its headwaters diverted to both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Eolus, Sunlight, and Windom peaks rise above 14,000 feet, while many others reach above 13,000 feet. With an average elevation of 10,000 feet above sea level, the Weminuche is rugged country, but its ecosystems are fragile.



Photo courtesy of www.14ers.com

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

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 14,000 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.

Hazard Trees

Much of the Weminuche Wilderness has been affected by a large outbreak of spruce beetles, which have killed the majority of mature spruce trees. Recent fires have also weakened the trees.

As a result, visitors must use extra caution when traveling and camping in the vicinity of dead or dying trees. Always be aware of your surroundings!

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.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited basis apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at (202) 720-2791. To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call 800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

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 Specific Regulations | No camping | Camping & fires in designated sites | No campfires or wood stoves | No grazing of recreational livestock | No restraint of livestock |
|---|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Archuleta Lake —within 200 feet of lake | X | | X | X | X |
| Emerald Lake —within 1/2 mile of north shore and 1/4 mile of other shores | X | | X | X | X |
| Little Emerald Lake —within 1/4 mile of lake | | | X | X | X |
| Flint Lake —Between shore & Flint & La Osa Trails & within 200 feet of west and north shores | X | | X | X | X |
| Fourmile Lake —within 200 feet | X | | X | X | X |
| Needle Creek Drainage — including Chicago Basin | | | X | | |
| Twin Lakes — In Needle Creek drainage | X | | X | | |
| Weminuche and East Fork Trails —Park at the junction | | | | | X |
| Vestal Basin | | | X | | |
| West Fork (Rainbow) — Hot springs area | | | | | X |
| West Ute Lake —within 200 feet of lake | X | | X | X | X |

Trail Closure: Beaver Creek Trail (560) is closed to through travel.

Site Specific Regulations

The following regulations apply to all areas of the Weminuche:

Group Size

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

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.

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