



# Wilderness: Overview and Statistics

**Ross W. Gorte**

Specialist in Natural Resources Policy

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## Summary

Congress enacted the Wilderness Act in 1964. This act created the National Wilderness Preservation System, reserved to Congress the authority to designate wilderness areas, and directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and of the Interior to review certain lands for their wilderness potential. The act also designated 54 wilderness areas with 9 million acres of federal land. Congress began expanding the Wilderness System in 1968, and today, there are 709 wilderness areas, totaling more than 107 million acres, in 44 states. Numerous bills to designate additional areas and to expand existing ones are introduced and considered in every Congress.

The Wilderness Act defined wilderness as an area of generally undisturbed federal land, but did not establish criteria or standards to determine whether an area should be designated, because of differing perceptions of wilderness and because of the varying purposes of wilderness. In general, wilderness areas are undeveloped, and commercial activities, motorized access, and roads, structures, and facilities are generally prohibited in wilderness areas. However, in response to conflicting demands, Congress has granted both general exemptions and specific exceptions to the general standards and prohibitions.

The federal government owns about 29% of the land in the United States, although the proportion in each state varies widely. Four federal agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture—manage most of the federal lands. These agencies manage the 107 million acres of designated wilderness, as well as many other lands. They are also protecting lands as possible additions to the Wilderness System, and are reviewing the wilderness potential of additional lands.

In total, more than 17% of all federal land, and nearly 5% of all land in the United States, has been designated as wilderness. Alaska, because of its size and relatively pristine condition, dominates wilderness statistics—more than 53% of designated wilderness is in Alaska. In total, nearly 16% of all land (federal, state, private, and other) in Alaska has been designated as wilderness. In contrast, 3% of all land in the United States outside Alaska has been designated as wilderness.

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In 1964, the Wilderness Act established a national system of congressionally designated areas to be preserved in a wilderness condition. The National Wilderness Preservation System was created with 9 million acres of Forest Service lands. Congress has since expanded the Wilderness System to more than 107 million acres (see **Table 1**) among some 623 million acres of land managed by the federal land management agencies—the Forest Service (FS) in the Department of Agriculture, and the National Park Service (NPS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Department of the Interior. (See **Table 2**.) Federal agencies, Members of Congress, and interest groups have recommended more lands for inclusion in the System. Furthermore, at the direction of Congress, agencies have studied, or are studying, the wilderness potential of their lands. This report provides a brief history of wilderness, describes what wilderness is, identifies permitted and prohibited uses in wilderness areas, and provides data on wilderness designations as of February 29, 2008.

## History of Wilderness

The federal government acquired 1.8 billion acres of land through purchases, treaties, and other agreements. Initial federal policy was generally to transfer ownership to states and private ownership, but Congress has also provided for reserving certain lands for federal purposes, and over time has reserved or withdrawn increasing acreage for national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, etc.<sup>1</sup> The general policy of federal lands disposal was changed to a general policy of retaining the remaining lands in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.<sup>2</sup>

Beginning in 1897, management of the national forests emphasized conservation—protecting and developing the lands. It did not take long for some FS leaders to recognize the need to preserve some areas in a natural state. Acting at its own discretion, and at the behest of an employee named Aldo Leopold, the FS created the first wilderness area in the Gila National Forest (NM) in 1924. In the succeeding decades, the agency’s system of wilderness, wild, and primitive areas grew to 14.6 million acres. However, in the 1950s, increasing timber harvests and recreation use of the national forests led to public concerns about the permanence of this purely administrative system. The FS had relied on its administrative authority in making these designations; there was no law guaranteeing the future of wilderness.

In response to these concerns, Congress enacted the Wilderness Act<sup>3</sup> in 1964. The act defines wilderness, and prohibits or restricts certain activities in wilderness areas, while permitting other activities to occur. The act also reserves to Congress the authority to designate areas as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The Wilderness System was initially endowed with the 9.1 million acres of national forest lands that had been identified administratively as wilderness areas or wild areas. The Wilderness Act also directed the Agriculture Secretary to review the agency’s 5.5 million acres of primitive areas, and the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate the wilderness potential of National Park System and National Wildlife Refuge System lands. The Secretaries were to report their recommendations to the President and to Congress within 10 years (i.e., by 1974). Separate recommendations were

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<sup>1</sup> See CRS Report RL34267, *Federal Land Ownership: Constitutional Authority and the History of Acquisition, Disposal, and Retention*, by Kristina Alexander and Ross W. Gorte.

<sup>2</sup> FLPMA, Act of October 21, 1976; P.L. 94-579. 43 U.S.C. §§ 1701, et seq.

<sup>3</sup> Act of September 3, 1964; P.L. 88-577. 16 U.S.C. §§ 1131-1136.

made for each area; many areas recommended for wilderness have been designated, although some of the recommendations are still pending. FLPMA directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a similar review of the public lands administered by the BLM within 15 years (i.e., by 1991). The BLM submitted its recommendations to the President, and presidential recommendations have been submitted to Congress.

The 90<sup>th</sup> Congress began expanding the Wilderness System in 1968, as shown in **Table 1**. Five laws were enacted, creating five new wilderness areas with 792,750 acres in four states. Wilderness designations generally increased in each succeeding Congress, rising to a peak of 60.8 million acres designated during the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress (1979-1980). The largest was 56.4 million acres of wilderness designated in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.<sup>4</sup>

In 1977, the FS began a review (RARE II)<sup>5</sup> of 62 million acres of national forest roadless areas, as an acceleration of part of the land management planning process mandated by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976.<sup>6</sup> The RARE II Final Environmental Statement was issued in January 1979, recommending more than 15 million acres (24.3% of the study area) for addition to the Wilderness System. In addition, nearly 11 million acres (17.4%) were to be studied further in the ongoing FS planning process under NFMA. The remaining 36 million acres (58.3% of the RARE II area) were to be available for other uses—such as logging, energy and mineral developments, and motorized recreation—which might be incompatible with preserving wilderness characteristics. In April 1979, President Jimmy Carter presented the recommendations to Congress with minor changes.

**Table 1. Additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Congress	Number of Laws <sup>a</sup>	Number of States	Number of Areas New (Additions)	Acres Designated <sup>b</sup>
88 <sup>th</sup>	1	13	54 (0)	9,125,721
89 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0 (0)	0
90 <sup>th</sup>	5	4	5 (1)	792,750
91 <sup>st</sup>	3	13	25 (0)	303,612
92 <sup>nd</sup>	9	7	8 (1)	913,337
93 <sup>rd</sup>	4	22	35 (0)	1,271,535
94 <sup>th</sup>	8	23	35 (0)	2,428,327
95 <sup>th</sup>	7	18	28 (5)	4,680,519
96 <sup>th</sup>	7	10	71 (11)	60,753,605
97 <sup>th</sup>	6	6	7 (0)	83,309
98 <sup>th</sup>	21	21	177 (49)	8,530,657

<sup>4</sup> ANILCA, Act of December 2, 1980; P.L. 96-487.

<sup>5</sup> The first Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) was begun under the agency's administrative authority in 1970, but was abandoned in 1972 because of a lawsuit asserting the review had been restricted in ways that violated the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA, Act of January 1, 1970; P.L. 91-190; 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347).

<sup>6</sup> Respectively: RPA, Act of August 17, 1974; P.L. 93-378; and NFMA, Act of October 22, 1976; P.L. 94-588. 16 U.S.C. §§ 1600-1614, et al.

Congress	Number of Laws <sup>a</sup>	Number of States	Number of Areas New (Additions)	Acres Designated <sup>b</sup>
99 <sup>th</sup>	5	5	11 (2)	99,153
100 <sup>th</sup>	7	8	22 (4)	1,422,730
101 <sup>st</sup>	5	5	68 (3)	3,501,160
102 <sup>nd</sup>	2	2	6 (4)	426,290
103 <sup>rd</sup>	2	2	79 (14)	8,272,871
104 <sup>th</sup>	2	2	1 (2)	29,970
105 <sup>th</sup>	1	1	0 (1)	160
106 <sup>th</sup>	8	7	18 (1)	1,081,465
107 <sup>th</sup>	5	5	18 (13)	529,590
108 <sup>th</sup>	2	2	15 (0)	801,784
109 <sup>th</sup>	6	7	25 (11)	1,030,748
110 <sup>th</sup>	1	1	1 (0)	106,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>709 (122)</b>	<b>107,549,325</b>

a. Excludes laws with minor boundary and acreage adjustments (less than 10 acres of net change).

b. This total differs from the total of the column because of acreage revisions.

In 1980, the state of California successfully challenged the FS RARE II recommendations for 44 areas allocated to nonwilderness uses, with the court decision substantially upheld on appeal in 1982.<sup>7</sup> The Reagan Administration responded in 1983 by directing a re-evaluation of all RARE II recommendations, except in states with wilderness laws containing certain provisions known as *release language*.<sup>8</sup> Tensions between the Administration and Congress, and among interest groups, led to a particularly intense debate during the 98<sup>th</sup> Congress (1983-1984). A compromise version of release language, achieved in May 1984, led the 98<sup>th</sup> Congress to enact 21 wilderness laws designating 8.5 million acres of wilderness in 21 states—more laws and more acres (outside of Alaska) than any Congress since the Wilderness System was created.

Since the Wilderness Act created the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1964, Congress has enacted 115 additional laws designating new wilderness areas or adding to existing ones, as shown in **Table 1**. The Wilderness System now contains 709 wilderness areas with more than 107 million acres in 44 states, managed by the four federal land management agencies, as shown in **Table 3**. The agencies have recommended additional lands be added to the Wilderness System; these lands are generally managed to protect their wilderness character while Congress considers adding them to the Wilderness System. Additional lands are being studied by the agencies, to determine if they should be added to the System. However, data on lands recommended and being reviewed for wilderness potential are not available.

<sup>7</sup> *California v. Bergland*, 483 F. Supp. 465 (E.D.Cal. 1980), aff'd in part, rev'd in part, 690 F.2d 753 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1982).

<sup>8</sup> *Release language* provides direction on the timing of future wilderness review and of the management of areas not designated as wilderness until the next review. For a history of the debate over release language provisions, see out-of-print CRS Report 93-280 ENR, *Wilderness Legislation: History of Release Language, 1979-1992*, by Ross W. Gorte and Pamela Baldwin (available from the author).

Questions and discussions persist over the protection and management of areas that some believe should be designated as wilderness and others believe should be available for development. The Clinton Administration moved to protect many of the remaining national forest areas that could be designated as wilderness, initially in January 1998 with a temporary moratorium on road construction in roadless areas, and finally with a rule that prohibited most road construction and many other activities in *inventoried roadless areas* (i.e., the remaining undesignated RARE II areas). The Clinton rule was enjoined twice, and the Bush Administration promulgated a new rule that has also been enjoined. The status of roadless area protection rules continues to be disputed.<sup>9</sup>

Questions also persist over BLM *wilderness study areas* (WSAs). These WSAs are the areas the BLM studied as potential wilderness under § 603 of FLPMA. Under § 603(b), the BLM is required to protect the wilderness characteristics of all WSAs (including areas not recommended for wilderness) “until Congress determines otherwise.” Congress has designated some BLM WSAs as wilderness (included in **Table 3**), and generally in the same statutes, Congress has released the BLM from the requirement to protect the wilderness characteristics of certain other areas. However, release language in BLM wilderness statutes has generally been more controversial than for national forest areas.<sup>10</sup>

## What Is Wilderness?

The Wilderness Act defines wilderness as an area of generally undisturbed federal land. Specifically, §2(c) states:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean.... an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

This definition provides some general guidelines for determining which areas should, or should not, be designated wilderness, but there are no specific criteria in the law. The phrases “untrammeled by man,” “retaining its primeval character,” and “man’s work substantially unnoticeable” are far from precise. Even the numerical standard—5,000 acres—is not absolute; smaller areas can be designated, if they can be protected, and the smallest wilderness area—Wisconsin Islands Wilderness in the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge—is only 2 acres.

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<sup>9</sup> For more background information on and the current status of these rules, see CRS Report RL30647, *National Forest System Roadless Area Initiatives*, by Kristina Alexander and Ross W. Gorte.

<sup>10</sup> See CRS Report RS21917, *Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wilderness Review Issues*, by Ross W. Gorte and Pamela Baldwin.

One reason for the imprecise criteria for wilderness is differing perceptions of what constitutes *wilderness*. To some, a “wilderness” is an area where there is absolutely no sign of human presence: no traffic can be heard (including aircraft); no roads, structures, or litter can be seen. To others, sleeping in a van or camper in a 400-site campground in Yellowstone National Park is a “wilderness experience.” Complicating these differing perceptions is the wide-ranging ability to “get away from it all” in various areas; in a densely wooded area, “getting away” might be measured in yards, while in mountainous or desert terrain, human developments can sometimes be seen for miles.

In an attempt to accommodate these contrasting views of wilderness, the Wilderness Act provided certain exemptions and delayed implementation of restrictions for wilderness areas, as will be discussed below. At times, Congress has also responded to the conflicting demands of various interest groups by allowing additional exemptions for certain uses (especially for existing activities) in particular wilderness designations. Ultimately, “wilderness areas” are whatever Congress designates as wilderness, regardless of developments or activities which some might argue conflict with the definition of wilderness.

## **Prohibited and Permitted Uses**

In general, the Wilderness Act prohibits commercial activities, motorized access, and roads, structures, and facilities in wilderness areas. Specifically, §4(c) states:

Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.

This section prohibits most commercial resource exploitation (such as timber harvesting) and motorized entry (via cars, trucks, off-road vehicles, aircraft, or motorboats) except in emergencies. However, §4(d) provides numerous exceptions, including (a) possible continued use of motorboats and aircraft; (b) fire, insect, and disease control measures; (c) mineral prospecting conducted “in a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment;” (d) water projects; (e) continued livestock grazing; and (f) commercial recreation activities.

In addition to these exemptions, the Wilderness Act extended the mining and mineral leasing laws for wilderness areas in national forests for 20 years, through 1983. New mining claims and mineral leases were permitted for many wilderness areas, and exploration and development were authorized “subject, however, to such reasonable regulations governing ingress and egress as may be prescribed by the Secretary of Agriculture.”<sup>11</sup> Despite this authority, no permits for on-site

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<sup>11</sup> Most lands in the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System have been withdrawn from access under the mining and mineral leasing laws, while extensive BLM wilderness designations were apparently not contemplated until FLPMA was enacted in 1976. Thus, the Wilderness Act addressed mining and mineral leasing only in the national forests.



exploration were considered until James Watt became the Secretary of the Interior in 1981.<sup>12</sup> Litigation halted a drilling application in Montana that year, and Congress enacted a moratorium on wilderness area leasing and exploration in the Department of the Interior appropriations laws for FY1983 and FY1984 (P.L. 97-394 and P.L. 98-146, respectively). However, mineral rights existing on or before December 31, 1983 (or before the area was designated), remain valid, and can be developed if the right-holder chooses, under “reasonable regulations” determined by the Secretary of Agriculture, and some mineral exploration has occurred in designated wilderness areas under such regulations.<sup>13</sup>

The Wilderness Act also directs that the act not alter existing federal-state relationships with respect to state water laws or state fish and wildlife responsibilities. Specifically, §4(d) (as codified at 16 U.S.C. §1133) states:

(7) Nothing in this Act shall constitute an express or implied claim or denial on the part of the Federal Government as to exemption from State water laws.

(8) Nothing in this Act shall be construed as affecting the jurisdiction or responsibilities of the several States with respect to wildlife and fish in the national forests.

However, the extent and nature of federal water rights that might arise from wilderness designations continue to be an important issue for Congress.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, as noted above, Congress has also enacted numerous exemptions to the Wilderness Act’s standard prohibitions on activities and developments.<sup>15</sup> These exemptions typically apply to one or a few areas and typically authorize a particular activity (that might not be permitted under the Wilderness Act’s management guidance) to be allowed to continue in the area at the level or intensity that occurred prior to the area’s designation as wilderness.

## Data on Wilderness Designations as of February 29, 2008

The following tables present data on the federal lands managed by the four principal federal land management agencies and on the acreage designated as wilderness and recommended by the agencies for wilderness. The data were gathered from several agency sources, as described below. This section describes the agency land data shown in **Table 2** and the wilderness data shown in **Table 3**.

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<sup>12</sup> Although national forests are managed by the FS in the Department of Agriculture, mining claims and mineral leases on most federal lands, including the national forests, are administered by the BLM in the Department of the Interior.

<sup>13</sup> Olen Paul Mathews, Amy Haak, and Kathryn Toffenetti, “Mining and Wilderness: Incompatible Uses or Justifiable Compromise?” *Environment*, v. 27 (April 1985): 12-17, 30-36.

<sup>14</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see out-of-print CRS Report 89-11 A, *Wilderness Areas and Federal Water Rights*, by Pamela Baldwin (available from the author of this report, Ross W. Gorte).

<sup>15</sup> See CRS Report RL33827, *Wilderness Laws: Permitted and Prohibited Uses*, by Ross W. Gorte.

## Agency Land Data

**Table 2** shows the area managed by the four major federal land management agencies.<sup>16</sup> The data are not directly comparable across agencies, however, because of differences in accounting practices. The agency data also differ from the data maintained by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA).<sup>17</sup> Differences occur in part because official ownership status often differs from managerial responsibility; for example, the FS administers 462,678 acres in Oregon that are officially BLM lands. Another complication is partial ownership, such as split estates, with the federal government owning only the surface (or the subsurface), and another owner for the subsurface (or surface) rights; similarly, some lands are managed by the federal government under easements and long-term leases, without federal ownership. Thus, the agency acreage statistics in **Table 2** may overstate actual federal land ownership.

The data in **Table 2** are from agency sources; agency data (rather than GSA data) were used because they most closely match the agency wilderness data. The acreage shown in **Table 2** is generally limited to the lands owned by the federal government (i.e., excluding easements and long-term leases) and administered by the agency or for which the agency has primary management responsibility. The following list identifies the land area data source for each of the agencies.

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Land Areas Report—as of Sept 30, 2007*, at [http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/2007/TABLE\\_4.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/2007/TABLE_4.htm).

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Park System Listing of Acreage by State as of 12/31/2007*; personal communication with Mike Walsh, NPS Land Resources Division, Washington, DC, on March 7, 2008.

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Realty, *Annual Report of Lands Under Control of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as of September 30, 2006*, Table 2—Summary by States, Associated Governments and Possessions, at [http://www.fws.gov/realty/pdf\\_files/2006LandsReport.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/realty/pdf_files/2006LandsReport.pdf).

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *Public Land Statistics 2005*, at [http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls05/pls1-4\\_05.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls05/pls1-4_05.pdf).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Other federal agencies, such as the Department of Defense, administer some federal land, but land and resource management is not their primary mission.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Governmentwide Policy, *Overview of the United States Government's Owned and Leased Real Property: Federal Real Property Profile as of September 30, 2004*, at [http://www.gsa.gov/gsa/cm\\_attachments/GSA\\_DOCUMENT/Annual%20Report%20%20FY2004%20Final\\_R2M-n11\\_0Z5RDZ-i34k-pR.pdf](http://www.gsa.gov/gsa/cm_attachments/GSA_DOCUMENT/Annual%20Report%20%20FY2004%20Final_R2M-n11_0Z5RDZ-i34k-pR.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> *Public Land Statistics 2006* is available, but BLM-administered acreage by state is rounded off to the nearest 100,000 acres.

**Table 2. Total Area Managed by Federal Land Management Agencies**  
(in acres)

	<b>USDA Forest Service</b>	<b>National Park Service</b>	<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife Service</b>	<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	<b>4-Agency Total</b>
Alabama	668,947	16,715	31,904	111,369	828,935
Alaska	21,972,605	51,084,827	76,607,085	85,553,261	235,217,778
Arizona	11,262,527	2,618,735	1,678,394	12,229,583	27,789,239
Arkansas	2,598,417	98,404	367,151	295,185	3,359,157
California	20,802,641	7,560,432	286,772	15,208,002	43,857,847
Colorado	14,519,030	609,625	137,094	8,362,619	23,628,368
Connecticut	24	5,719	956	0	6,699
Delaware	0	0	25,220	0	25,220
Florida	1,160,324	2,436,995	277,287	26,899	3,901,505
Georgia	866,024	39,645	480,889	0	1,386,558
Hawaii	1	353,661	298,596	0	652,258
Idaho	20,466,617	507,425	48,507	11,995,125	33,017,674
Illinois	297,077	12	83,530	224	380,843
Indiana	201,467	10,516	14,045	0	226,028
Iowa	0	2,708	68,349	378	71,435
Kansas	108,175	461	29,509	0	138,145
Kentucky	814,045	94,382	10,359	0	918,786
Louisiana	604,373	14,536	550,407	321,734	1,491,050
Maine	53,042	66,768	61,166	0	180,976
Maryland	0	39,508	45,658	0	85,166
Massachusetts	0	32,946	21,829	0	54,775
Michigan	2,872,833	631,716	113,998	74,807	3,693,354
Minnesota	2,840,746	139,509	470,331	146,658	3,597,244
Mississippi	1,174,079	103,698	207,865	56,212	1,541,854
Missouri	1,491,811	54,338	59,797	2,094	1,608,040
Montana	16,962,737	1,214,184	629,725	7,959,097	26,765,743
Nebraska	352,289	5,650	173,104	6,354	537,397
Nevada	5,853,963	774,509	2,333,819	47,847,657	56,809,948
New Hampshire	734,798	8,362	21,309	0	764,469
New Jersey	0	35,216	70,207	0	105,423
New Mexico	9,413,211	376,528	326,664	13,371,737	23,488,140
New York	16,211	33,475	27,241	0	76,927
North Carolina	1,255,167	362,741	418,309	0	2,036,217
North Dakota	1,111,177	71,252	482,676	58,837	1,723,942

	<b>USDA Forest Service</b>	<b>National Park Service</b>	<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife Service</b>	<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	<b>4-Agency Total</b>
Ohio	238,984	19,403	8,483	0	266,870
Oklahoma	400,768	10,008	105,612	2,136	518,524
Oregon	15,667,657	192,015	562,923	16,135,459	32,558,054
Pennsylvania	513,428	48,427	10,026	0	571,881
Rhode Island	0	5	2,299	0	2,304
South Carolina	629,565	30,131	124,279	0	783,975
South Dakota	2,016,889	141,317	204,450	274,450	2,637,106
Tennessee	707,387	352,962	51,214	0	1,111,563
Texas	755,365	1,191,216	513,462	11,833	2,471,876
Utah	8,200,161	2,097,106	107,263	22,869,246	33,273,776
Vermont	398,529	8,830	33,233	0	440,592
Virginia	1,664,306	306,884	130,254	805	2,102,249
Washington	9,282,376	1,832,279	148,360	403,316	11,666,331
West Virginia	1,043,028	63,802	19,399	0	1,126,229
Wisconsin	1,530,686	61,742	198,257	159,982	1,950,667
Wyoming	9,241,187	2,343,697	70,674	18,362,513	30,018,071
Territories/Other	28,149	21,995	1,720,584	0	1,770,728
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>192,794,673</b>	<b>78,127,018</b>	<b>90,474,521</b>	<b>261,848,120</b>	<b>623,244,332</b>

## Wilderness Statistics

The wilderness statistics presented in **Table 3** are the current acreage estimates by the agencies. Acreages are estimates, since few (if any) of the areas have been precisely surveyed. **Table 3** is the acreage for areas that have been designated by Congress. In addition, the agencies have recommended areas for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System, and continue to review the wilderness potential of other lands under their jurisdiction, both of congressionally designated wilderness study areas and under congressionally directed land management planning efforts. However, statistics on acreage in pending recommendations and being studied, particularly in the planning efforts, are unavailable.

For the FS, the same report as for general land statistics (listed above) provides wilderness data, at [http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/2007/TABLE\\_9.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/2007/TABLE_9.htm). The BLM's *Public Land Statistics, 2006* shows designated wilderness, at [http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Business\\_and\\_Fiscal\\_Resources/2006\\_pls.PAR.36087.File.dat/Part\\_5.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Business_and_Fiscal_Resources/2006_pls.PAR.36087.File.dat/Part_5.pdf). NPS data on designated wilderness areas are available on an NPS website, at <http://wilderness.nps.gov/maplocator.cfm>. FWS designated wilderness data are in Table 8 of the agency's general lands report, listed above. The data have been updated to reflect wilderness designations enacted since the agencies' tables or lists were prepared.

As of February 29, 2008, Congress had designated 107.4 million acres of federal land in units of the National Wilderness Preservation System, as shown in **Table 3**. Nearly 54% of this land—57.6 million acres—is in Alaska, and includes most of the wilderness areas managed by the NPS (76%) and by the FWS (90%). About a third of the Wilderness System is managed by the FS, but 84% of FS wilderness area is outside Alaska. Wilderness areas have been designated in 44 states plus Puerto Rico; only Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, and Rhode Island have no federal lands designated as wilderness.

**Table 3. Federal Designated Wilderness Acreage, by State and by Agency**

(in acres and percentage of agency/federal land)

	USDA Forest Service		National Park Service		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		Bureau of Land Management		Total Designated Area		Share of NWPS
Alabama	41,367	6.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	41,367	5.0%	0.04%
Alaska	5,789,288	26.3%	33,079,611	64.8%	18,691,495	24.4%	0	0.0%	57,560,394	24.5%	53.52%
Arizona	1,345,008	11.9%	444,055	17.0%	1,343,444	80.0%	1,396,466	11.4%	4,528,973	16.3%	4.21%
Arkansas	116,578	4.5%	34,933	35.5%	2,144	0.6%	0	0.0%	153,655	4.6%	0.14%
California	4,707,195	22.6%	5,997,045	79.3%	9,172	3.2%	3,595,250	23.6%	14,308,662	32.6%	13.30%
Colorado	3,147,420	21.7%	60,466	9.9%	2,560	1.9%	139,524	1.7%	3,349,970	14.2%	3.11%
Connecticut	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0.00%
Delaware	0	n.r.	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0.00%
Florida	74,495	6.4%	1,296,500	53.2%	51,252	18.5%	0	0.0%	1,422,247	36.5%	1.32%
Georgia	114,537	13.2%	8,840	22.3%	362,107	75.3%	0	n.r.	485,484	35.0%	0.45%
Hawaii	0	0.0%	155,509	44.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	155,509	23.8%	0.14%
Idaho	3,961,709	19.4%	43,243	8.5%	0	0.0%	802	0.01%	4,005,754	12.1%	3.72%
Illinois	28,732	9.7%	0	0.0%	4,050	4.8%	0	0.0%	32,782	8.6%	0.03%
Indiana	12,945	6.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	12,945	5.7%	0.01%
Iowa	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.00%
Kansas	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0.00%
Kentucky	18,132	2.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	18,132	2.0%	0.02%
Louisiana	8,679	1.4%	0	0.0%	8,346	1.5%	0	0.0%	17,025	1.1%	0.02%
Maine	12,000	22.6%	0	0.0%	7,392	12.1%	0	n.r.	19,392	10.7%	0.02%
Maryland	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0.00%
Massachusetts	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	3,244	14.9%	0	n.r.	3,244	5.9%	0.003%
Michigan	92,650	3.2%	132,018	20.9%	25,310	22.2%	0	0.0%	249,978	6.8%	0.23%
Minnesota	810,088	28.5%	0	0.0%	6,180	1.3%	0	0.0%	816,268	22.7%	0.76%

	USDA Forest Service		National Park Service		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		Bureau of Land Management		Total Designated Area		Share of NWPS
Mississippi	6,046	0.5%	4,080	4.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10,126	0.7%	0.01%
Missouri	63,423	4.3%	0	0.0%	7,730	12.9%	0	0.0%	71,153	4.4%	0.07%
Montana	3,372,503	19.9%	0	0.0%	64,535	10.2%	6,000	0.1%	3,443,038	12.9%	3.20%
Nebraska	7,794	2.2%	0	0.0%	4,635	2.7%	0	0.0%	12,429	2.3%	0.01%
Nevada	1,105,124	18.9%	309,539	40.0%	0	0.0%	2,036,779	4.3%	3,451,442	6.1%	3.21%
New Hampshire	137,432	18.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	137,432	18.0%	0.13%
New Jersey	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	10,341	14.7%	0	n.r.	10,341	9.8%	0.01%
New Mexico	1,388,262	14.7%	56,392	15.0%	39,908	12.2%	150,579	1.1%	1,635,141	7.0%	1.52%
New York	0	0.0%	1,363	4.1%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	1,363	1.8%	0.001%
North Carolina	102,634	8.2%	0	0.0%	8,785	2.1%	0	n.r.	111,419	5.5%	0.10%
North Dakota	0	0.0%	29,920	42.0%	9,732	2.0%	0	0.0%	39,652	2.3%	0.04%
Ohio	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	77	0.9%	0	n.r.	77	0.03%	0.0001%
Oklahoma	14,543	3.6%	0	0.0%	8,570	8.1%	0	0.0%	23,113	4.5%	0.02%
Oregon	2,086,504	13.3%	0	0.0%	940	0.2%	186,723	1.2%	2,274,167	7.0%	2.11%
Pennsylvania	9,031	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	9,031	1.6%	0.01%
Rhode Island	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	0	0.0%	0.00%
South Carolina	16,671	2.6%	15,010	49.5%	29,000	23.3%	0	n.r.	60,681	7.7%	0.06%
South Dakota	13,426	0.7%	64,144	45.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	77,570	2.9%	0.07%
Tennessee	66,349	9.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	66,349	6.0%	0.06%
Texas	38,483	5.1%	46,850	3.9%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	85,333	3.5%	0.08%
Utah	772,894	9.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	129,120	0.6%	902,014	2.7%	0.84%
Vermont	101,073	25.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	101,073	22.9%	0.09%
Virginia	97,635	5.9%	79,579	25.9%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	177,214	8.4%	0.16%

	USDA Forest Service		National Park Service		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		Bureau of Land Management		Total Designated Area		Share of NWPS
Washington	2,675,391	28.8%	1,739,763	95.0%	839	0.6%	7,140	1.8%	4,423,133	37.9%	4.11%
West Virginia	80,852	7.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	80,852	7.2%	0.08%
Wisconsin	44,108	2.9%	33,500	54.3%	29	0.01%	0	0.0%	77,637	4.0%	0.07%
Wyoming	3,111,232	33.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3,111,232	10.4%	2.89%
Territories	10,000	35.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r.	10,000	0.6%	0.01%
U.S. Total	35,566,766	18.4%	43,632,360	55.8%	20,701,816	22.9%	7,648,383	2.9%	107,549,325	17.2%	100.0%
Share of NWPS		33.1%		40.6%		19.2%		7.1%			100.0%

**Notes:** n.r. = not relevant; the agency owns no land within the state.



## **Author Contact Information**

Ross W. Gorte  
Specialist in Natural Resources Policy  
rgorte@crs.loc.gov, 7-7266