

# CRS Report for Congress

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## **Wilderness: Overview and Statistics**

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# Wilderness: Overview and Statistics

## 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 649 wilderness areas, totaling more than 105 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 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 106 million acres of designated wilderness, as well as many other lands. In addition, they have are protecting another 46 million acres as possible additions to the Wilderness System, and are reviewing the wilderness potential of additional lands.

In total, more than 23% of all federal land, and nearly 7% of all land in the United States, has been designated as wilderness or is being protected as possible wilderness. Alaska, because of its size and relatively pristine condition, dominates wilderness statistics — more than 54% 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, 4% of all land in the United States outside Alaska has been designated as wilderness.

This report will be updated after the end of each Congress, to include changes enacted.

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# Wilderness: Overview and Statistics

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 105 million acres (see **Table 1**) among some 620 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 and federal agency recommendations, as of December 31, 2004.

## 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, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> See CRS Report RL30126, *Federal Land Ownership: Constitutional Authority; the History of Acquisition, Disposal, and Retention; and Current Acquisition and Disposal Authorities*, by Ross W. Gorte and Pamela Baldwin (archived, available from the authors).

<sup>2</sup> FLPMA, Act of Oct. 21, 1976; P.L. 94-579, 90 Stat. 2743. 43 U.S.C. §§1701-1719, et al.

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 made for each area; many areas recommended for wilderness have been designated, although some of the recommendations are still pending (and are included in **Table 3**). 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 795,000 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. Nearly 11 million acres (17.4%) were to be studied further in the ongoing FS planning under process 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Act of Sept. 3, 1964; P.L. 88-577, 78 Stat. 890. 16 U.S.C. §§1131-1136.

<sup>4</sup> ANILCA, Act of Dec. 2, 1980; P.L. 96-487, 94 Stat. 2371.

<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 Jan. 1, 1970; P.L. 91-190, 83 Stat. 852; 42 U.S.C. §§4321-4347).

<sup>6</sup> Respectively: RPA, Act of Aug. 17, 1974; P.L. 93-378, 88 Stat. 476; and NFMA, Act of Oct. 22, 1976; P.L. 94-588, 90 Stat. 2949. 16 U.S.C. §§1600-1614, et al.

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

<u>Congress</u>	<u>Number of Laws</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>Number of States</u>	<u>Number of Areas New (Additions)</u>		<u>Acres Designated</u> <sup>b</sup>
88 <sup>th</sup>	1	13	54	(0)	9,139,721
89 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	(0)	0
90 <sup>th</sup>	5	4	5	(1)	794,550
91 <sup>st</sup>	3	12	25	(0)	305,619
92 <sup>nd</sup>	9	7	8	(1)	912,439
93 <sup>rd</sup>	5	22	35	(0)	1,264,594
94 <sup>th</sup>	6	21	35	(0)	2,142,486
95 <sup>th</sup>	7	18	28	(5)	4,555,496
96 <sup>th</sup>	6	10	70	(11)	60,799,111
97 <sup>th</sup>	5	5	7	(0)	83,261
98 <sup>th</sup>	21	21	177	(49)	8,576,450
99 <sup>th</sup>	4	4	11	(2)	97,393
100 <sup>th</sup>	7	8	22	(4)	1,988,509
101 <sup>st</sup>	5	5	68	(3)	1,759,479
102 <sup>nd</sup>	2	2	6	(4)	424,590
103 <sup>rd</sup>	2	2	79	(14)	8,272,699
104 <sup>th</sup>	1	2	1	(2)	29,420
105 <sup>th</sup>	1	1	0	(1)	160
106 <sup>th</sup>	8	6	18	(1)	1,086,490
107 <sup>th</sup>	5	5	18	(13)	441,520
108 <sup>th</sup>	1	1	14	(0)	768,294
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>(111)</b>	<b>106,255,809</b>

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

<sup>b</sup> Column total differs from this figure, 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

<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 (9th 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 CRS Report 93-280 ENR, *Wilderness Legislation: History of Release Language, 1979-1992*, by Ross W. Gorte and Pamela (continued...)

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 8.6 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 103 additional laws designating new wilderness areas or adding to existing ones, as shown in **Table 1**. The Wilderness System now contains 681 wilderness areas with more than 106 million acres in 44 states, managed by the four federal land management agencies, as shown in **Table 3**. In addition, the agencies have recommended another 46.5 million acres in 32 states be added to the Wilderness System, as shown in **Table 4**; 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, but comprehensive data on lands being reviewed for wilderness potential are not available.

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).<sup>9</sup> The Clinton rule was twice enjoined, and the Bush Administration has proposed a new general rule<sup>10</sup> that would allow governors to petition the FS for separate statewide rules on roadless area management.<sup>11</sup>

Questions also persist over BLM *wilderness study areas*. 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.” Some BLM WSAs have been designated as wilderness by Congress (as reflected 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>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> (...continued)

Baldwin (archived, available from the authors).

<sup>9</sup> 66 *Fed. Reg.* 3244 (Jan. 12, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> 69 *Fed. Reg.* 42636, July 16, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> For more background information on and the current status of these rules, see CRS Report RL30647, *The National Forest System Roadless Areas Initiative*, by Pamela Baldwin.

<sup>12</sup> See CRS Report RS21917, *Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wilderness Review Issues*, by Ross W. Gorte and Pamela Baldwin.

## 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 untrammelled 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 “untrammelled 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 in the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge — is only 2 acres.

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>13</sup> Despite this authority, no permits for on-site exploration were considered until James Watt became the Secretary of the Interior in 1981.<sup>14</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>15</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:

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<sup>13</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.

<sup>14</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>15</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.

- (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>16</sup>

Finally, as noted above, Congress has also enacted numerous exemptions to the Wilderness Act's standard prohibitions on activities and developments.<sup>17</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.

## **Statistics on Wilderness Designations and Recommendations, as of December 31, 2004**

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 **Tables 3, 4, and 5**.

**Agency Land Data.** **Table 2** shows the area managed by the four major federal land management agencies.<sup>18</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>19</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 technically public (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.

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<sup>16</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see CRS Report 89-11 A, *Wilderness Areas and Federal Water Rights*, by Pamela Baldwin.

<sup>17</sup> See CRS Report RS22025, *Wilderness Laws: Prohibited and Permitted Uses*, by Ross W. Gorte.

<sup>18</sup> Other federal agencies, such as the Department of Defense, control some federal land, but land and resource management is not their primary mission.

<sup>19</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, 2003*, at [[http://www.gsa.gov/gsa/cm\\_attachments/GSA\\_DOCUMENT/Annual%20Report%20%20FY2003-R4\\_R2M-n11\\_0Z5RDZ-i34-pR.pdf](http://www.gsa.gov/gsa/cm_attachments/GSA_DOCUMENT/Annual%20Report%20%20FY2003-R4_R2M-n11_0Z5RDZ-i34-pR.pdf)], visited on March 18, 2005.

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. This list identifies the land area data source for each of the agencies.

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Land Areas Report As of September 30, 2004*, at [<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/LAR04/table4.htm>], visited on March 16, 2005.

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Land Resources Division, Public Use Statistics Office, *National Park System Listing of Acreage as of: 9/30/2004*, at [<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/acrebypark04fy.pdf>], visited on March 16, 2005.

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, 2003*, Table 2, Summary by States, Associated Governments and Possessions, at [[http://www.fws.gov/realty/PDF\\_Files/2003\\_lands.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/realty/PDF_Files/2003_lands.pdf)], visited on March 16, 2005.

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *Public Land Statistics 2003*, at [[http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls03/pls1-4\\_03.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls03/pls1-4_03.pdf)], visited on March 16, 2005.

**Wilderness Statistics: Data Description and Assumptions.** The wilderness statistics presented in **Tables 3** and **4** 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. **Table 4** identifies the acreage of areas being protected by the agencies for possible addition to the Wilderness System, but which have not yet been acted upon by Congress. In addition, the agencies 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 being studied, particularly in the planning efforts, are unavailable.

For the FS, the same report as for general land statistics (listed above) provides designated wilderness data, at [<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/LAR04/table9.htm>], visited on March 16, 2005. FS wilderness recommendations are from the *Roadless Area Conservation FEIS*,<sup>20</sup> with updated information for the agency.<sup>21</sup> The BLM's *Public Land Statistics, 2003* also shows designated wilderness and wilderness

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<sup>20</sup> U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Roadless Area Conservation Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 1* (Washington, DC: Nov. 2000), Appendix A, pages A-5 — A-11.

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication with Gary Yeck, Office of Legislative Affairs, USDA Forest Service, Washington, DC, on Jan. 31, 2005.

study areas, at [[http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls03/pls5-4\\_03.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls03/pls5-4_03.pdf)] and [[http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls03/pls-5-5\\_03.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/natacq/pls03/pls-5-5_03.pdf)], respectively, visited on March 16, 2005.<sup>22</sup> NPS data on designated, recommended (by the Secretary or the President), and proposed (by the agency) wilderness areas are available on other NPS sites, respectively, at [<http://wilderness.nps.gov/maplocator.cfm?f=5>], [<http://wilderness.nps.gov/maplocator.cfm?f=3>], and [<http://wilderness.nps.gov/maplocator.cfm?f=4>], visited on January 6, 2005. FWS designated wilderness data are in Table 8 of the agency's general lands report, listed above. Recommended FWS wilderness are from an unpublished 2000 FWS report, adjusted to reflect subsequent congressional designations.

**Wilderness Statistics: Summary of Data.** As of December 31, 2004, Congress had designated 106.3 million acres of federal land in units of the National Wilderness Preservation System, as shown in **Table 3**. More than 54% of this land — 57.5 million acres — is in Alaska, and includes most of the wilderness areas managed by the NPS (76%) and by the FWS (90%). Nearly a third of the Wilderness System is managed by the FS, but 83% of FS wilderness area is outside Alaska.

Another 46.5 million acres are being protected by various agencies as possible additions to the Wilderness System, as shown in **Table 4**. More than half of these are pending recommendations in the National Park System, and include several large, well-known areas, such as Yellowstone, Big Bend, Glacier, and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. For the FS, Congress has not acted on RARE II recommendations for Idaho and Montana; the FS data shown in **Table 4** are largely the result of the agency's land management planning process. The BLM submitted its recommendations to the President by 1991, as required by FLPMA, and Presidents Bush and Clinton sent recommendations for BLM wilderness to Congress. The 14.6 million acres of BLM WSAs account for nearly a third of the possible wilderness.

In total, 152.8 million acres, of a total U.S. landmass of 2.27 billion acres, have been designated as wilderness or are being protected as possible wilderness. Nearly half of this — 76.0 million acres — is in Alaska, and accounts for 16% of all land in the state. The remaining 76.8 million acres are distributed among 45 other states; only Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, and Rhode Island have no federal lands designated as wilderness or protected as possible wilderness. Total land designated as or recommended for wilderness accounts for less than 7% of all land in the United States, and more than 23% of all federal land.

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<sup>22</sup> The data in **Table 4** are actually the preliminary data from *Public Land Statistics, 2004*, which is not yet published, but which corrects the 2003 data for wilderness designated in P.L. 108-424.

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

	USDA Forest Service	National Park Service	Fish & Wildlife Service	Bureau of Land Management
Alabama	667,314	16,715	30,042	111,369
Alaska	21,973,662	51,078,663	76,567,246	85,652,163
Arizona	11,262,527	2,602,990	1,677,951	12,228,398
Arkansas	2,593,028	98,374	360,803	295,185
California	20,769,716	7,554,824	281,258	15,198,670
Colorado	14,498,801	604,333	70,042	8,368,106
Connecticut	24	5,719	899	0
Delaware	0	0	25,173	0
Florida	1,156,827	2,435,335	288,996	26,899
Georgia	865,205	39,575	473,318	0
Hawaii	1	353,405	298,374	0
Idaho	20,715,568	96,268	48,563	11,993,499
Illinois	293,101	12	82,407	224
Indiana	200,935	10,379	13,693	0
Iowa	0	2,708	65,202	378
Kansas	108,175	461	29,447	0
Kentucky	811,042	94,033	9,526	0
Louisiana	604,373	14,540	535,882	321,734
Maine	53,040	66,706	61,054	0
Maryland	0	39,848	45,448	0
Massachusetts	0	32,947	16,893	0
Michigan	2,868,468	631,590	113,282	74,807
Minnesota	2,840,385	139,508	460,867	146,658
Mississippi	1,171,158	103,155	208,833	56,212
Missouri	1,489,327	54,173	58,804	2,094
Montana	16,923,859	1,214,234	627,548	7,964,028
Nebraska	352,252	5,434	172,333	6,354
Nevada	5,836,348	774,509	2,333,538	47,860,756
New Hampshire	732,413	8,072	18,832	0
New Jersey	0	35,216	69,068	0
New Mexico	9,419,498	376,527	326,664	13,371,431
New York	16,211	33,130	27,134	0
North Carolina	1,254,876	362,592	435,782	0
North Dakota	1,105,977	71,241	480,264	59,482
Ohio	236,638	19,238	8,277	0
Oklahoma	400,172	9,998	105,036	2,136
Oregon	15,667,116	190,955	557,686	16,135,906
Pennsylvania	513,427	48,411	10,003	0
Rhode Island	0	5	2,210	0
South Carolina	623,724	27,687	121,732	0
South Dakota	2,014,005	141,317	203,444	274,450
Tennessee	700,974	351,108	48,850	0
Texas	755,389	1,183,236	493,941	11,833
Utah	8,193,568	2,094,161	107,227	22,867,662
Vermont	393,868	8,830	33,144	0
Virginia	1,664,071	305,448	129,080	805
Washington	9,276,203	1,832,050	146,771	403,316
West Virginia	1,041,094	62,537	18,572	0
Wisconsin	1,527,336	61,731	196,940	159,982
Wyoming	9,238,063	2,343,693	70,674	18,355,293
Territories	28,149	21,764	1,720,487	0
U.S. Total	192,857,908	77,659,476	90,269,238	261,950,378

**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	3.4%	0.04%
Alaska	5,753,448	26.2%	33,079,611	64.8%	18,689,349	24.4%	0	0.0%	57,522,408	23.6%	54.14%
Arizona	1,345,008	11.9%	444,055	17.1%	1,343,444	80.1%	1,396,466	11.4%	4,528,973	12.4%	4.26%
Arkansas	116,578	4.5%	34,933	35.5%	2,144	0.6%	0	0.0%	153,655	3.9%	0.14%
California	4,430,849	21.3%	5,997,045	79.4%	9,172	3.3%	3,621,312	23.8%	14,058,378	29.9%	13.23%
Colorado	3,146,150	21.7%	60,466	10.0%	2,560	3.7%	139,524	1.7%	3,348,700	14.5%	3.15%
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	17.7%	0	0.0%	1,422,247	30.9%	1.34%
Georgia	114,537	13.2%	8,840	22.3%	362,107	76.5%	0	n.r	485,484	21.0%	0.46%
Hawaii	0	0.0%	155,509	44.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	155,509	23.2%	0.15%
Idaho	3,961,667	19.1%	43,243	44.9%	0	0.0%	802	0.01%	4,005,712	11.4%	3.77%
Illinois	28,732	9.8%	0	0.0%	4,050	4.9%	0	0.0%	32,782	5.0%	0.03%
Indiana	12,945	6.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	12,945	2.4%	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	18,097	2.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	18,097	1.1%	0.02%
Louisiana	8,679	1.4%	0	0.0%	8,346	1.6%	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	11.8%	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%	2,420	14.3%	0	n.r	2,420	2.3%	0.00%
Michigan	91,891	3.2%	132,018	20.9%	25,310	22.3%	0	0.0%	249,219	6.8%	0.23%
Minnesota	809,772	28.5%	0	0.0%	6,180	1.3%	0	0.0%	815,952	23.1%	0.77%
Mississippi	6,046	0.5%	4,080	4.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10,126	0.5%	0.01%
Missouri	63,383	4.3%	0	0.0%	7,730	13.1%	0	0.0%	71,113	3.2%	0.07%
Montana	3,372,503	19.9%	0	0.0%	64,535	10.3%	6,000	0.1%	3,443,038	11.8%	3.24%

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

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

(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
Nebraska	7,794	2.2%	0	0.0%	4,635	2.7%	0	0.0%	12,429	0.9%	0.01%
Nevada	870,567	14.9%	125,000	16.1%	0	0.0%	1,758,613	3.7%	2,754,180	4.3%	2.59%
New Hampshire	102,932	14.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	102,932	12.4%	0.10%
New Jersey	0	n.r	0	0.0%	10,341	15.0%	0	n.r	10,341	5.7%	0.01%
New Mexico	1,388,262	14.7%	56,392	15.0%	39,908	12.2%	139,281	1.0%	1,623,843	6.1%	1.53%
New York	0	0.0%	1,363	4.1%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	1,363	0.6%	0.00%
North Carolina	102,634	8.2%	0	0.0%	8,785	2.0%	0	n.r	111,419	3.1%	0.10%
North Dakota	0	0.0%	29,920	42.0%	9,732	2.0%	0	0.0%	39,652	3.0%	0.04%
Ohio	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	77	0.9%	0	n.r	77	0.02%	0.00%
Oklahoma	14,543	3.6%	0	0.0%	8,570	8.2%	0	0.0%	23,113	1.7%	0.02%
Oregon	2,086,504	13.3%	0	0.0%	940	0.2%	186,723	1.2%	2,274,167	7.4%	2.14%
Pennsylvania	9,031	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	9,031	1.2%	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	2.7%	15,010	54.2%	29,000	23.8%	0	n.r	60,681	4.9%	0.06%
South Dakota	13,426	0.7%	64,144	45.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	77,570	3.4%	0.07%
Tennessee	66,349	9.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	66,349	3.3%	0.06%
Texas	38,483	5.1%	46,850	4.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	85,333	2.7%	0.08%
Utah	772,894	9.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	27,720	0.1%	800,614	2.3%	0.75%
Vermont	59,421	15.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	59,421	13.2%	0.06%
Virginia	97,635	5.9%	79,579	26.1%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	177,214	6.8%	0.17%
Washington	2,569,391	27.7%	1,739,763	95.0%	839	0.6%	7,140	1.8%	4,317,133	32.6%	4.06%
West Virginia	80,852	7.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	80,852	6.4%	0.08%
Wisconsin	42,294	2.8%	0	0.0%	29	0.01%	0	0.0%	42,323	2.1%	0.04%
Wyoming	3,111,232	33.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3,111,232	9.9%	2.93%
Territories	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.00%
U.S. Total	34,859,062	17.9%	43,414,321	55.9%	20,698,845	22.9%	7,283,581	2.8%	106,255,809	15.8%	100.0%
Share of NWPS		32.8%		40.9%		19.5%		6.9%		100.0%	

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

**Table 4. Additional Acreage Protected as Potential Wilderness, by State and by Agency**  
(in acres and percentage of agency/federal land)

	USDA Forest Service <sup>a</sup>		National Park Service		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		Bureau of Land Management		Total Recommended Area		Share of Recom.
Alabama	1,000	0.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,000	0.1%	0.00%
Alaska	1,412,000	6.4%	16,143,800	31.6%	0	0.0%	784,238	0.9%	18,430,038	7.8%	39.66%
Arizona	61,000	0.5%	1,973,716	75.8%	0	0.0%	63,930	0.5%	2,098,646	7.6%	4.52%
Arkansas	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	975	0.3%	0	0.0%	975	0.03%	0.00%
California	164,000	0.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	974,769	6.4%	1,138,769	2.6%	2.45%
Colorado	93,000	0.6%	414,545	68.6%	0	0.0%	621,737	7.4%	1,129,282	4.8%	2.43%
Connecticut	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
Delaware	0	n.r	0	n.r	2,000	8.0%	0	n.r	2,000	8.0%	0.00%
Florida	6,000	0.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6,000	0.2%	0.01%
Georgia	8,000	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	8,000	0.6%	0.02%
Hawaii	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,742	0.6%	0	n.r	1,742	0.3%	0.00%
Idaho	1,406,000	6.8%	<sup>b</sup> 9,400	9.8%	0	0.0%	1,341,709	11.2%	2,757,109	8.4%	5.93%
Illinois	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Indiana	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
Iowa	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Kansas	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Kentucky	0	0.0%	7,398	7.9%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	7,398	0.8%	0.02%
Louisiana	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Maine	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
Maryland	0	n.r	440	1.1%	418	0.9%	0	n.r	858	1.0%	0.00%
Massachusetts	0	n.r	0	0.0%	3,110	21.9%	0	n.r	3,110	6.2%	0.01%
Michigan	0	0.0%	7,128	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7,128	0.2%	0.02%
Minnesota	0	0.0%	127,436	91.3%	1,406	0.3%	0	0.0%	128,842	3.6%	0.28%
Mississippi	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,200	0.6%	0	0.0%	1,200	0.1%	0.00%
Missouri	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%

<sup>a</sup> FS data are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres.

<sup>b</sup> This excludes 396,696 acres of recommended wilderness within Craters of the Moon National Monument, that are administered by the BLM, and are included in the BLM's recommended wilderness in Idaho.

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



**Table 4. Additional Acreage Protected as Potential Wilderness, by State and by Agency  
(continued)**

(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 Recommended Area		Share of Recom.
Montana	812,000	4.8%	1,090,208	89.8%	161,580	25.98%	450,823	5.7%	2,514,611	9.4%	5.41%
Nebraska	39,000	11.1%	0	0.0%	40,819	23.8%	0	0.0%	79,819	14.9%	0.17%
Nevada	0	0.0%	659,950	85.2%	1,675,148	72.7%	2,877,917	6.0%	5,213,015	9.2%	11.22%
New Hampshire	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
New Jersey	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
New Mexico	66,000	0.7%	97,428	25.9%	0	0.0%	970,532	7.3%	1,133,960	4.8%	2.44%
New York	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
North Carolina	15,000	1.2%	219,100	60.4%	950	0.2%	0	n.r	235,050	11.4%	0.51%
North Dakota	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Ohio	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
Oklahoma	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Oregon	0	0.0%	127,058	66.5%	50,390	9.1%	2,701,190	16.7%	2,878,638	8.8%	6.19%
Pennsylvania	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
Rhode Island	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
South Carolina	2,000	0.3%	0	0.0%	163	0.2%	0	n.r	2,163	0.3%	0.00%
South Dakota	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Tennessee	20,000	2.9%	199,800	56.9%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	219,800	20.0%	0.47%
Texas	0	0.0%	538,250	45.5%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	538,250	22.0%	1.16%
Utah	83,000	1.0%	1,852,852	88.5%	0	0.0%	3,255,490	14.2%	5,191,342	15.6%	11.17%
Vermont	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	620	1.9%	0	n.r	620	0.1%	0.00%
Virginia	37,000	2.2%	0	0.0%	3,047	2.4%	0	n.r	40,047	1.9%	0.09%
Washington	15,000	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5,518	1.4%	20,518	0.2%	0.04%
West Virginia	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	0	0.0%	0.0%
Wisconsin	16,000	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	16,000	0.8%	0.03%
Wyoming	45,000	0.5%	2,080,088	88.8%	0	0.0%	575,841	3.1%	2,700,929	0.9%	5.81%
Territories	10,000	35.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	n.r	10,000	0.6%	0.02%
U.S. Total	4,312,000	2.2%	25,593,588	33.0%	1,944,008	2.2%	14,623,694	5.6%	46,473,290	7.5 %	100.0%
Share of Recommended		9.3%		55.1%		4.2%		31.5%		100.0%	

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