

Area Management

The Weminuche Wilderness is part of the 110 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the [Wilderness Act of 1964](#). Please follow the requirements outlined below and use [Leave No Trace techniques](#) when visiting the Weminuche Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. [Contact the Forest Service office](#) or [visit the websites listed on the 'Links' tab](#) for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with areas where people and their works are dominant.

Wilderness-Specific Regulations

Wilderness managers often need to take action to limit the impacts caused by visitor activities in order to protect the natural conditions of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Managers typically implement 'indirect' types of actions such as information and education measures before selecting more restrictive measures. When regulations are necessary, they are implemented with the specific intent of balancing the need to preserve the character of the wilderness while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness.

ALL VISITORS

Group size:

-- Maximum group size is 15 people per group, with a maximum combination of people and stock not to exceed 25.

Travel and Equipment:

-- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport is not permitted. Use of motor vehicles, bicycles, wagons, hang gliders, carts, chainsaws, or other motorized equipment is not permitted.

-- To lessen erosion, shortcutting of switchbacks is prohibited.

-- Use of aircraft to land or drop people or materials is prohibited, with the exception of agency-approved administrative use or emergency search-and-rescue operations.

Camping:

-- Camping is prohibited within 100 feet of streams or lakes, except as designated or posted.

Camping is also prohibited at the following locations:

- Archuleta Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Emerald Lake: within 1/2 mile of north shore and 1/4 mile of other shores except in designated sites
- Little Emerald Lake: within 1/4 mile of lake except in designated sites
- Flint Lake: between shore and Flint and La Osa Trails; and within 200 feet of west and north shores
- Fourmile Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Twin Lakes: in Needle Creek drainage
- West Fork (Rainbow): in the hot springs area except in designated sites
- West Ute Lake: within 200 feet of lake

Campfires:

Campfires and wood stoves are prohibited at the following locations:

- Archuleta Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Emerald Lake: within 1/2 mile of north shore and 1/4 mile of other shores except in designated sites
- Little Emerald Lake: within 1/4 mile of lake except in designated sites
- Flint Lake: between shore and Flint and La Osa Trails; and within 200 feet of west and north shores
- Fourmile Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Needle Creek Drainage: including Chicago Basin
- Twin Lakes: in Needle Creek drainage
- Vestal Basin
- West Fork (Rainbow): in hot springs area
- West Ute Lake: within 200 feet of lake
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- Waste disposal:
 - Disposal of human waste and wash water is prohibited within 100 feet of any water source.

Livestock and pets:

- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.
- Pets must be under voice control or physical restraint.

STOCK USERS

Livestock:

- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.

Stock Feed:

All feed must be weed-free certified in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Wyoming, or Utah and be marked with certified twine, packing or transit certificate. Only the following are allowed:

- Weed-free baled hay
- Cubed or pelletized hay
- Steamed grain in a processor's stamped bag
- Weed-free baled mulch made from tree fibers or steamed material.

Hitching or Tethering:

-- Hitching or tethering a horse or other saddle or pack animal in violation of posted instructions is prohibited. Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of streams or lakes. Hitching or tethering a horse or other saddle or pack animal is also prohibited at the following locations:

- Archuleta Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Emerald Lake: within 1/2 mile of north shore and 1/4 mile of other shores
- Little Emerald Lake: within 1/4 mile of lake
- Flint Lake: between shore and Flint and La Osa Trails; and within 200 feet of west and north shores
- Fourmile Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- West Ute Lake: within 200 feet of lake

Grazing:

Grazing is prohibited at the following locations:

- Archuleta Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Emerald Lake: within 1/2 mile of north shore and 1/4 mile of other shores
- Little Emerald Lake: within 1/4 mile of lake
- Flint Lake: between shore and Flint and La Osa Trails; and within 200 feet of west and north shores
- Fourmile Lake: within 200 feet of lake
- Weminuche and East Fork Trails: Park at the junction
- West Fork (Rainbow): Hot springs area
- West Ute Lake: within 200 feet of lake