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<http://leopold.wilderness.net/>

NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM DATABASE

http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/search_wild_areas_main.cfm

Keywords: wilderness public law, National Wilderness Preservation System, Wilderness Act

Background & Management Issues: In 1964, the Wilderness Act established a National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) composed of 9.1 million acres of Forest Service land in 54 wildernesses. By 1999, the NWPS is composed of over 104 million acres in 628 wildernesses distributed across 44 States and managed by four Federal agencies. With this growth in size and complexity, and the constant legislative and administrative changes to the system, there is an increasing need for a single, accurate, and up-to-date source of information about all the wildernesses in the NWPS.

Project Objectives:

- ✓ To provide a single, on-line source for consistent and accurate data on the wildernesses in the National Wilderness Preservation System in an accessible and easy-to-use format.
- ✓ To summarize general trends in the administration and distribution of wilderness from the inception of the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1964 through 1999.

Project Description:

NWPS data from government documents, wilderness legislation, agency publications, and communications with agency personnel were verified and compiled in a relational database, now available on the Internet (www.wilderness.net/nwps then click "Wilderness Area Database".) This database is updated frequently in order to provide the most current information. The following data are included for every wilderness:

- ✓ Legally correct name of the wilderness cited in the enabling public law.
- ✓ Public law that established the wilderness.
- ✓ Date the enabling law was signed by the President ~ Acreage designated in the enabling public law.
- ✓ Modifying public law or laws that affect the name, boundary, or administration.
- ✓ Current total acreage reported by the administering agency.
- ✓ Agency or agencies with administrative authority.
- ✓ Administering units within each agency.
- ✓ State or States in which the wilderness is located.

Results:

A search engine was developed to facilitate user access to the desired information. The search engine allows the user to:

- (1) obtain all of the information in the database for a specific wilderness or
- (2) compile information from the database by state, agency, acreage, or year of wilderness designation. The database was used to examine general trends from 1964 through 1999.

The following trends are summarized as figures by Landres and Meyer (2000):

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- ❖ The number of wildernesses established and acres designated by Congress each year.
- ❖ The size class distribution of all wildernesses within the NWPS.
- ❖ The number of wildernesses administered by each of the four Federal agencies.
- ❖ The percentage of each State area that is wilderness.
- ❖ The number of wilderness acres managed by each Federal agency compared to that agency's total acreage.
- ❖ In addition, Appendix A ("Public Laws and Acreages) in Landres and Meyer (2000) is a summary of all wilderness legislation in the United States, the date of its enactment and the acreage designated.

Management Implications:

The NWPS database allows users to:

- ❖ Develop an in-depth understanding of the NWPS ranging from a specific wilderness to a comprehensive view of the whole system.
- ❖ Compare data from this database with recreation use data, demographic and socio-economic data, or ecological data in order to analyze relationships between wilderness and these other attributes.
- ❖ Have a sound, accurate baseline to which information regarding changes may be added, and from which trends and patterns can be analyzed.

Publications / Products / Presentations:

- ❖ Landres, Peter; Meyer, Shannon. 2000. National wilderness preservation system database: Key attributes and trends, 1964 through 1999. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-18-revised. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 97 pp. [Read it here!](#)
- ❖ Meyer, S.; Landres, P. 2000. A National Wilderness Preservation System Database. Benefits, limitations, and future needs. *International Journal of Wilderness*. 6(1): 13-18. Leopold Publication Number 378. [Read the abstract here.](#)

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