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Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter proclaimed over 2,200,000 acres as the Misty Fiords National Monument. In 1980, this acreage got reduced to 2,142,243 acres but was now congressionally designated as Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness and still remains the largest wilderness area on the Tongass National Forest. Due to this designation, it is now strategically managed to continue the preservation of this undeveloped, enduring ecosystem for the enjoyment of present and future generations.



Wilderness Laws

The Wilderness Act, ANILCA, and the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan of 2008 (TLMP) give direction to designated wilderness areas in the Tongass National Forest. The Wilderness Act, ANILCA and/or TLMP **prohibit** the following:

- ◆ Commercial enterprise (except for outfitter and guides)
- ◆ Permanent and temporary roads
- ◆ Use of motor vehicles and motorized equipment (except snowmobiles, motorboats, and fixed wing airplanes)
- ◆ Mechanized form of transport (i.e. bicycles, wheelbarrows)
- ◆ Damaging of live trees
- ◆ Construction of structures and installations
- ◆ Landing of helicopters

Under ANILCA and TLMP temporary structures are allowed but are limited to a 14-day stay at any one location. TLMP also mandates a group size limit of no more than 12 persons for commercial or general public use within this wilderness. These regulations are established for the wilderness character to remain undeveloped, and natural for future use.

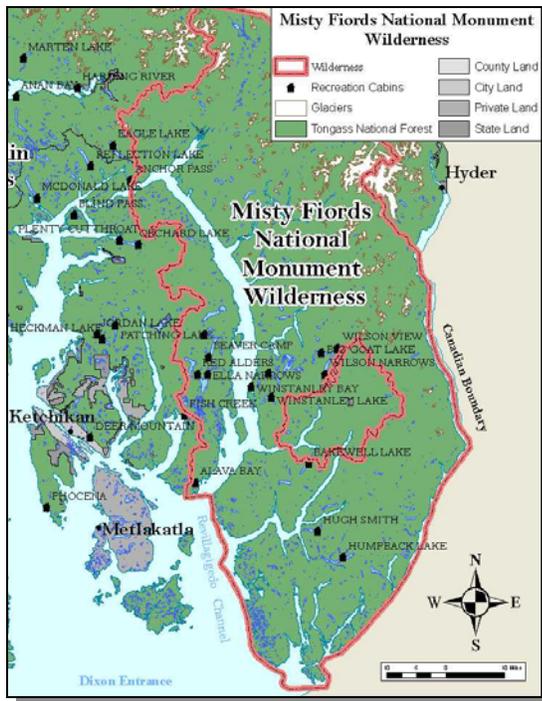
Wilderness Laws

17,000 years ago Misty Fiords National Monument would have been covered with only one thing, massive bodies of ice. As the ice disbanded, it carved away gloriously long, deep fiords with cliffs that rise for thousands of feet. They are considered the skyscrapers of this wilderness wonderland. Travel either by boat or floatplane in Behm Canal, the major waterway through the heart of the area, and sightings of killer whales, porpoises, mountain goats, and bears could be possible. Step on the edge of the wilderness boundary, walk inward, and be surrounded by Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and cedar trees. Unique geological features such as mineral springs and volcanic lava flows can be found deep within this wilderness monument. Voyage closer toward the Canadian border through the many king salmon spawning streams, or through the sky and see what remains of the ice (now only in the form of glaciers) that once created this current mystic landscape.

Facilities

There are thirteen public recreation cabins, five three-sided shelters, and ten trails that provide altogether twenty miles of hiking activity.





Threats and Benefits

While designated wilderness areas have the most protections of any other public lands, there are still threats that degrade the wilderness resource. Outfitter/guide violations, illegal commercial use, social impacts of heavy motorized traffic disturbing a visitor's solitude, disturbance to wildlife and cultural resources, illegal hunting, and resource damage by improper waste disposal, campfire scars, and damaged flora are the major human threats to this wilderness. Building awareness and a better understanding of designated wilderness areas is the key foundation to ensure that these areas stay wild.

Along with providing excellent recreational opportunities, designated wilderness areas protect natural ecosystems from being manipulated or developed. They provide us with clean air and clean water, and allow the natural processes to continue where humans remain only as visitors. As the current laws continue to give management direction, no wilderness on the Tongass will have a commercial timber harvest or construction of permanent roads. Due to the action of Congress in 1980, Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness will remain protected for future generations.

Wilderness Challenges

People are lured into Alaska for its beauty and excitement but remember it is also very unforgiving. Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness is within a temperate rainforest where the average summer temperatures are between 45-65°F. Be prepared with the appropriate clothing, safety equipment, shelter supplies, and water purifying devices for a cool and frequently overcast climate. This wilderness also contains brown and black bears so store food and trash properly. During the summer months, be especially careful around salmon spawning streams. If traveling by boat, be aware of the weather conditions around Dixon Entrance.

Leave No Trace

Tongass National Forest is the largest, intact coastal rainforest in America. Misty Fiords is a piece of this treasure and is set aside for all visitors – now and in the future. To insure that this area is left unimpaired for future use, practice the following Leave No Trace principles.

- ◆ Plan ahead and be prepared for extreme weather conditions, and emergencies.
- ◆ Travel and camp on durable surfaces like uplifted gravel or sand beaches. If forested areas need to be used, disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails and avoid places where impacts are just beginning.
- ◆ Dispose of waste properly. **Pack out** all trash, leftover food, and toilet paper. Use bathroom facilities when available. During appropriate conditions dispose of human waste in the intertidal zone. If camping in upland forests dispose of solid waste by digging a cathole 6 to 8 inches deep located at least 200 feet from water or campsite.
- ◆ Leave what you find. A few historical sites and artifacts are within this wilderness. Examine but do not touch cultural or historical structures and artifacts. Do not build structures or furniture with live trees.
- ◆ Minimize campfire impacts. Use a lightweight stove when possible. When a campfire is necessary, keep fires small. Build a fire below mean high tide, or when in a forested area, build a mound fire or use a fire pan to avoid damaging the ground vegetation. Stay away from boulders or tree bases to avoid long lasting black scars.
- ◆ Respect wildlife and other visitors in the surrounding area.

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