

Aspen Ranger District
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United States Department of Agriculture



HIKING

FOUR PASS LOOP– West Maroon to Buckskin

Length: 28 miles round-trip (45.1 km)

Difficulty: Difficult

Trail Use: Moderate

Beginning Elevation: 9,580 feet (2920 m)

Highest Elevation: 12,500 feet (3810 m)

USGS Map(s): Maroon Bells; Snowmass Mtn.

PERMIT INFORMATION: In order to provide quality recreation experiences and to protect the wilderness lands the Forest Service must gather data regarding visitor use and travel patterns. **Each party overnighiting** in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness is **required to self-register at the Trailhead and to carry a copy of the registration with them** during their visit. There is no fee charged and no limit to the number of permits issued.

DAY/BACKPACKING OVERVIEW: An ambitious backpacking trip located in the beautiful Maroon Bells/Snowmass Wilderness that is routed over four mountain passes (West Maroon - 12,500 ft.; Frigid Air - 12,415 ft.; Trail Rider - 12,420 ft.; Buckskin - 12,500 ft.). The variety of terrain encompasses scenic forests, mid to late summer wildflowers, challenging river crossings, and provides spectacular views of the Maroon Bells and numerous other peaks of the Elk Mountain Range. **When camping in the Wilderness, campsites must be located 100 feet from any body of water or trail or at a designated campsite. Start your hike early as thunderstorms are common on the passes in early afternoon. Wading rivers or streams in early summer can be treacherous. Sandals or boat shoes are strongly recommended. Wading barefoot can be extremely dangerous. Be sure to unbuckle your pack when navigating any stream crossing.**

ACCESS: Drive 1/2 mile west of Aspen on Highway 82 to the Roundabout . Go around the Roundabout and turn right onto Maroon Creek Road. Drive 9-1/2 miles on Maroon Creek Road to the overnight parking lot just below Maroon Lake. This is located on the left side of the road. Access to this lot after 8:30 AM requires a stop at the Forest Service Entrance Station on Maroon Creek Road for an overnight pass. If the lot is full you may drive 1/4 mile down the road to the West Maroon Portal parking lot.

NARRATIVE: Use the trail guide for West Maroon Trail to West Maroon Pass until you reach the pass. From the top of the pass a series of switchbacks descends from a steep scree field into meadows of magnificent wildflowers before the trail reaches the valley floor. A scattering of campsites can be found on shelves during this descent. A mile below the pass the trail intersects with the Frigid Air Pass Trail. Go right.

The trail continues through a valley of wildflowers and ascends steeply for about 1 mile toward a series of ridges. Frigid Air Pass can be seen through a gap just past the ridges. The trail continues straight to a broad saddle leading to Hasley Basin. After passing a small pond it turns right and ascends a steep incline. A trail sign marks this turn. The pass is reached through a series of very steep switchbacks. From the pass Fravert Basin can be seen as well as the back side of the Maroon Bells.

The descent from the pass is via a series of steep switchbacks which lead into a more gradual descent through wildflowers and alpine scrub. As the trail enters a spruce forest, it begins another steep descent toward the North Fork of the Crystal River. As the trail follows the river through the spruce forest, good campsites can be found. Remember to camp 100 feet from both the stream and the trail. About 1-1/2 miles farther the trail begins a series of steep switchbacks following the rapidly falling stream which becomes a magnificent waterfall when it enters the gorge. In another mile the trail branches just after a small clearing.

The left fork leads to camping at the Love's Cabin area. The Four Pass Loop Trail, although poorly defined, turns right and heads toward the North Fork of the Crystal River. After crossing the Fork, continue for 3/4 of a mile into a spruce forest. As you leave the woods take the right fork marked by a sign and head toward Trail Rider Pass. The trail ascends steeply through open meadows and aspen for 1-1/2 miles then reaches a stream where it forks to the right. The left fork goes to Geneva Lake. Follow the trail crossing the stream several times then ascending to the top of a ridge on the right. From here, the trail winds around a small lake and the pass is clearly visible. After reaching Trail Rider Pass, Snowmass Lake can be seen below.

The trail descends to the lake switchbacking through alpine meadows to the ridge above the lake. Follow the trail which continues to descend to the east side of the lake. At the far end of the lake a trail intersection goes left to the campsites. Continue straight and immediately cross a small stream. About 200 yards ahead is the intersection for the Maroon-Snowmass Trail. The trail heads right, toward Buckskin Pass, by descending through a forest then into a meadow where the back of the Maroon Bells can be seen. Soon the trail crosses Snowmass Creek. Stay on the main trail which bears left and steadily ascends, steeply switchbacking, up to the top of a ridge. About 1-1/2 miles after the Snowmass Creek crossing, the trail crosses two small streams at timberline. This may be a good place to camp as campsites are not available until after crossing Buckskin Pass and entering Minnehaha Gulch. Buckskin Pass can be seen on the ridge to the left of the large boulders. The trail ascends switchbacking through an alpine meadow. The final ascent to the ridge is via a very long switchback. The ridge offers spectacular views of Snowmass Mountain, Snowmass Lake, Capitol Peak and Mt. Daly. Buckskin Pass is just ahead.

As the trail crosses the pass, Pyramid Peak and Maroon Bells (on the right) can be seen. The trail descends through a series of steep switchbacks to the alpine meadow below. Follow the trail through the meadows until it reaches a trail sign for the Maroon-Snowmass/Willow Lake Trail junction. Take the right fork. Continue through the meadow for about 1/2 of a mile to enter Minnehaha Gulch. Camping can be found here and is prohibited in the alpine meadow. Follow the trail which descends steeply through the gulch where it crosses a stream about 1/2 of a mile further. The trail continues to descend steeply through the gulch, enters a spruce forest and eventually a stand of aspen trees. Upon entering the aspen forest, Crater Lake will be visible to the right. Continue on the trail to where it intersects with the West Maroon Trail at a Forest Service bulletin board. Take the left fork continuing on the Maroon-Snowmass Trail for 1-3/4 miles to Maroon Lake and the end of a grand adventure.

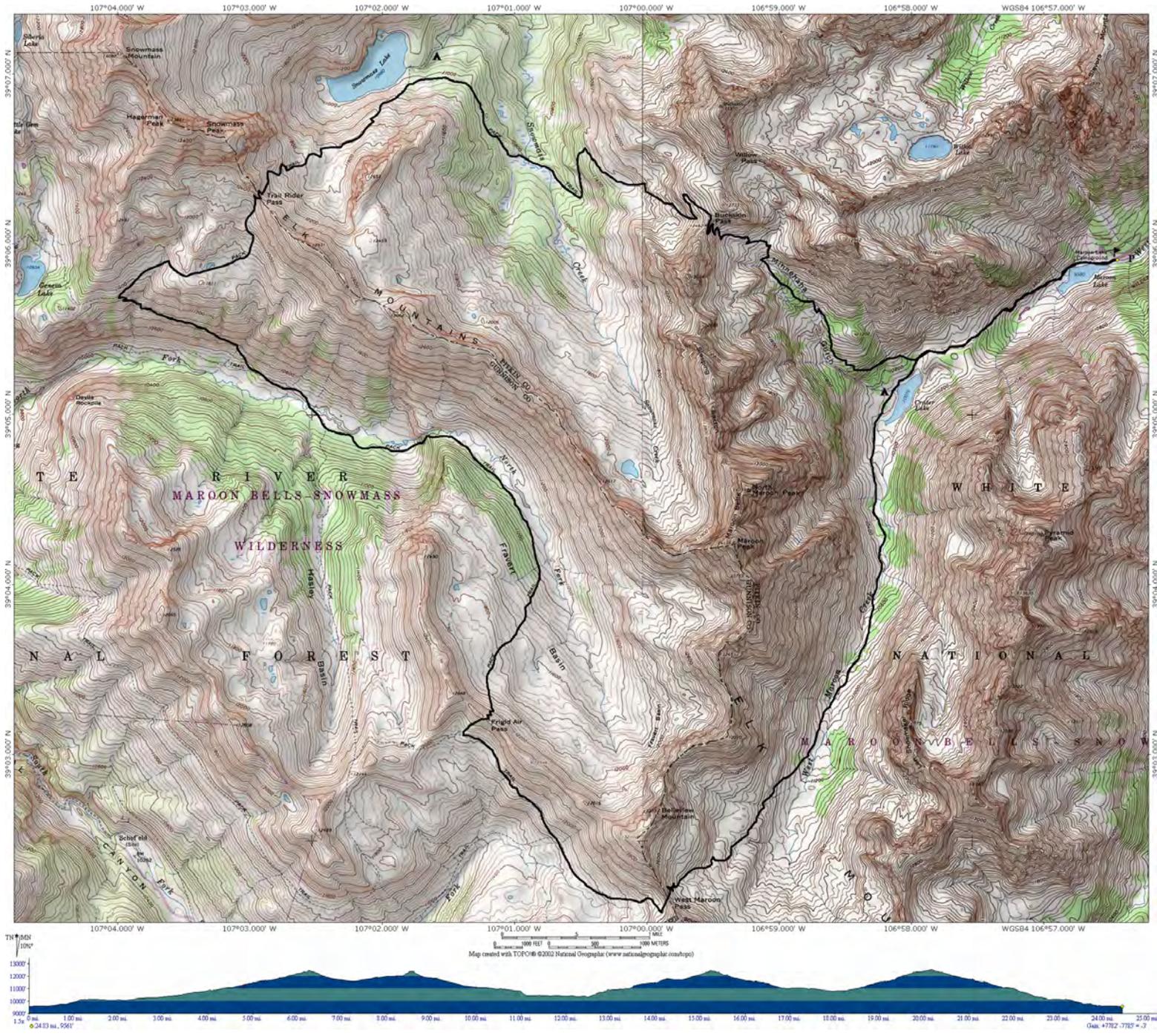
ETHICS/REGULATIONS: The Four Pass Loop is within the Maroon Bell-Snowmass Wilderness, please educate yourself about Wilderness Ethics and the following rules:

- * **DOGS MUST BE LEASHED** out of consideration for both other people and wildlife.
- * Limit group sizes to 10 people and 15 stock/pack animals.
- * **SANITATION** - bury human waste 100 feet from water and 6 inches in the soil.
- * Lightweight campstoves are recommended and required above the timberline.

PACK IT IN—PACK IT OUT!! LEAVE NO TRACE!!

WILDERNESS AREAS are in a delicate state of natural balance, they are not renewable resources. Any careless act by man can upset this natural balance and result in destruction of the beauty found in the Wilderness. By following the above ethics and regulations you can help protect and preserve the natural features of the wilderness for future visits. **PLEASE RESPECT THE LAND AND RIGHTS OF OTHERS!**

ASPEN-SOPRIS RANGER DISTRICT WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST FOUR PASS LOOP

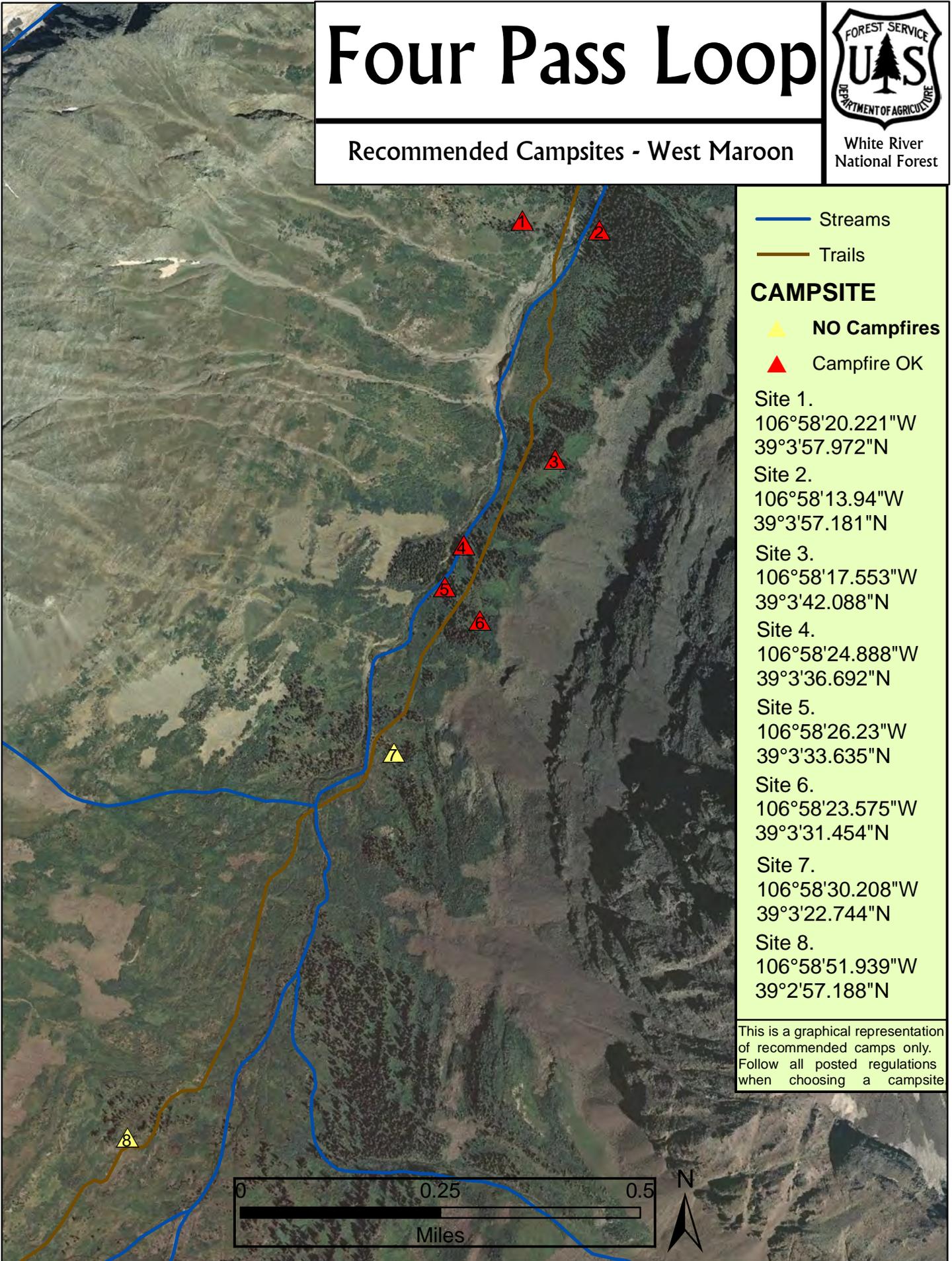


Four Pass Loop



Recommended Campsites - West Maroon

White River National Forest



— Streams

— Trails

CAMPSITE

▲ NO Campfires

▲ Campfire OK

Site 1.
106°58'20.221"W
39°3'57.972"N

Site 2.
106°58'13.94"W
39°3'57.181"N

Site 3.
106°58'17.553"W
39°3'42.088"N

Site 4.
106°58'24.888"W
39°3'36.692"N

Site 5.
106°58'26.23"W
39°3'33.635"N

Site 6.
106°58'23.575"W
39°3'31.454"N

Site 7.
106°58'30.208"W
39°3'22.744"N

Site 8.
106°58'51.939"W
39°2'57.188"N

This is a graphical representation of recommended camps only. Follow all posted regulations when choosing a campsite



FOREST ORDER

**USDA FOREST SERVICE
WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FORESTS
ASPEN RANGER DISTRICT**

EMERGENCY OCCUPANCY AND USE RESTRICTIONS

Pursuant to 16 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 551 and 36 Code of Federal Register (C.F.R.) § 261.50(a), the following acts are prohibited in the West Maroon Valley, in the Maroon Bells Snowmass Wilderness of the Aspen Ranger District of the White River National Forests in Pitkin County, State of Colorado. (the "Restricted Area",). This Order also incorporates the attached definitions in Exhibit B.

The Restricted Area is the West Maroon Valley located in the 6th Principal Meridian, T11S R83W Section 22, and Section 23.

The Restricted Area is shown on the attached map hereby incorporated into this Order as Exhibit A. The restricted area covers approximately 7,000 acres.

The purpose of this Order is to protect people and property from possible dangerous bear interactions that have increased over time.

PROHIBITION:

1. Possessing or storing any food or refuse, as specified in the order in the Restricted Area. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(cc)
2. Possessing, storing, or transporting any bird, fish, or other animal or parts thereof, as specified in the order. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(s)

EXCEPT WHEN:

1. The food or refuse is "acceptably stored" or "acceptably possessed" during daytime hours;
2. The food and refuse is being prepared for eating, being eaten, being transported, being prepared for acceptable storage, or is "acceptably stored" during nighttime hours.

EXEMPTIONS:

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 261.50(e), the following persons are exempt from this Order:

1. Any federal, state, or local officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force, in the performance of an official duty, or
2. Any federal, state, or local officer placing baits to capture animals for research or management purposes in the performance of an official duty, or
3. Any person with a permit issued by the Forest Service specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act.

These restrictions are in addition to the general prohibitions in 36 C.F.R. Part 261, Subpart A. This Order shall remain in effect from the date signed until November 15, 2014 or until rescinded, whichever occurs first.

Done at Glenwood Springs, Colorado this 15th day of August 2014.


SCOTT G. FITZWILLIAMS
Forest Supervisor

Violations of these prohibitions are punishable as a Class B misdemeanor by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for a corporation, or imprisonment for not more than 6 months, or both. 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 18 U.S.C. §§ 3559 and 3571

EXHIBIT B

Definitions:

1. "Food and Refuse" means any substance, solid or liquid (excluding water, baled hay, or hay cubes without additives) which is or may be eaten or otherwise taken into the body to sustain health or life, provide energy, or promote growth of any person or animal or any refuse which might attract bears. It includes items such as soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, canned foods, processed livestock feed and grains, personal hygiene products, and empty food and beverage containers and any item that may attract bears such as, but not limited to, pet foods/feeders, cooking utensils and equipment, cooking grills, personal care products, and coolers.
2. "Acceptably stored" means:
 - a. Stored in bear-resistant container certified through the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Courtesy Inspection Program. A container may be certified by the local District Ranger or their designated representative(s) if it meets the IGBC criteria, or
 - b. Stored by other methods approved in a permit issued by the Forest supervisor responsible for the area where the method is proposed for use.
 - c. Meat carcasses or game parts harvested by hunting that occurred legally under Colorado State Hunting Laws are more than 100 yards from overnight camping sites.
3. "Acceptably possessed" means:
 - a. Possessed or attended during daytime by a person(s) that is physically present within 100 feet and direct sight of the accessible food, refuse, or item.
4. "Daytime" means ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset, Mountain Time.
5. "Nighttime" means ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise, Mountain Time.

Food Storage and Sanitation Order

White River National Forest

Your safety is important

This food storage order was created to help keep you and other forest visitors safe by avoiding encounters with bears and preventing bears from being attracted to camping areas frequented by people.

All food and other items that might attract bears must be stored where bears can't access them at night and during the daytime when they are unattended. Attended means that a person is physically present within 100 feet and in direct sight of items that must be stored in a bear-resistant manner.



These items must be properly stored

- 1) Human food including fresh and canned food, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, cooking supplies
- 2) This also includes garbage, food scraps, and empty food and beverage containers.
- 3) Attractants including pet food, cooking equipment, and edible hygiene items such as soap, toothpaste and deodorants.

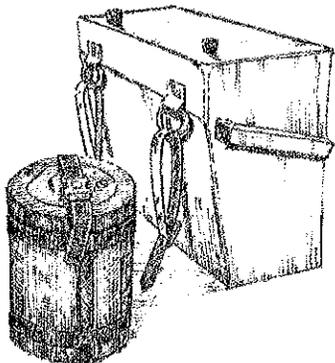
Proper storage methods

Proper storage methods include placing food and other items in bear resistant containers. Legally harvested meat carcasses or game parts must be stored more than 100 yards from overnight camping sites unless acceptably possessed.

Bear resistant containers

Approved bear resistant containers are horse panniers and backpackers' containers that are certified through the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Courtesy Inspection Program.

NOTE: Plastic or metal food coolers, backpacks and leather or canvas horse panniers are NOT bear resistant.



How to Use a Bear Canister

The most important part of using a bear canister is what goes inside it. Make sure all food, all trash, all toiletries and all other scented items are inside the bear canister. This includes but is not limited to all sealed or packaged food, sunscreen, soap, mosquito repellent, lip balm, deodorant, medications, and feminine products.

The bear canister only works if it is closed and locked. Be sure to keep it closed and locked even while you are around your campsite. Place the canister on the ground in a flat, level area 100 feet or more from your campsite and cooking area. Take care not to place it near a cliff of any water source as a bear may knock the canister around or roll it down a hill. Do not hang or attach anything to the canister (ropes attached to the canister enable a bear to carry it away). You can place pots and pans on top of the canister as a bear alarm if you like.



US Forest Service
White River National Forest
Aspen-Sopris Ranger District

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White River National Forest
Aspen-Sopris Ranger District

Bear-Resistant Food Canisters



What's for Dinner?!

Why Bear Canisters?

The most effective method of food storage for backpackers is a hard-sided bear-resistant canister. For stock users, the most effective method is bear-resistant panniers or steel drums. It is extremely difficult for bears to open any of these containers, because they cannot gain a hold with their claws.

Bear canisters are now required in the White River National Forest on the Aspen-Sopris Ranger District in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Areas, particularly on the West Maroon & Maroon Snowmass areas.



By using a bear canister, this gives the black bears the best chance to exist in a natural environment, undisturbed by human influences.

When Bears gain access to improperly stored food they become habituated and food conditioned (less likely to forage for their natural food sources). When black bears lose their fear of humans, they may become more aggressive toward visitors as a strategy in obtaining human food. To protect humans and bear, please do your part to ensure your food is stored properly.

Types of Canisters



Bear canisters are hard-sided portable containers intended to fit within a backpack and capable of storing several days' worth of food. You may use any allowed canister. See the following for a list of allowed canisters: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3813048.pdf

Food Storage while Backpacking

Food items such as soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, canned foods, personal hygiene products, and empty food and beverage containers and any item that may attract bears such as, but not limited to, pet foods, cooking utensils and equipment, cooking grills, personal care products, coolers and outer clothing that may have absorbed cooking odors unless it is within arm's reach (so don't go

for a swim or take a nap while leaving food out).

Hanging your food does not comply with the current Special Order in West Maroon Valley.

Think of your food, tent, and cooking area in a triangle, with at least 100 feet between each.

Camp Area

