

Frequently Asked Questions

- Do I need a **Wilderness Permit** for entry into the Trinity Alps Wilderness? – Permits are needed for overnight stays in the Wilderness but not for day-hikes. Our Permits do not cost you anything, but they allow us to keep track of Wilderness usage which, in turn, helps us make informed management decisions. The Permit process also gives us an opportunity to offer a short 'Leave No Trace' message and to inform you of any current issues within the specific watershed you have chosen for your trip (i.e. downed trees, slides, snow conditions, etc).
- Is there a **Party Size Limit** for entry into the Alps? –There is a 10-person party size limit for both day-hikers and overnight Wilderness users. We can often make exceptions to this Forest Order with a site-specific itinerary for groups of up to 15 persons, but you must interface *in advance* (not at the Ranger District on the day of your trip) with our Front Desk (623-2121) to obtain this Special Use Authorization.
- Are **Campfires** allowed in the Wilderness? – Campfires are allowed everywhere in the Wilderness with the exception of the lakes in the Canyon Creek and Stuart Fork watersheds (there is just no usable firewood left at these lakes). However, the excessive fuels build up over the last 100 years (because of the total fire suppression policy since 1900) has created a dangerous catastrophic fire potential everywhere in the Wilderness (as well as everywhere on the West Coast!). Consequently, we are asking you to use only pre-existing fire rings and be vigilant in your fire usage. Keep fires small and never leave a fire unattended for prolonged periods. And, of course, the appropriate method to put campfires out is to pour on copious amounts of water while stirring with a stick. Please do not attempt to put out a campfire by covering it with dirt. The coals can actually remain active for days with this method, and cleaning a fire ring left in this condition becomes arduous and problematic.
- Are there **Designated Campsites** within the Wilderness? – The Trinity Alps Wilderness does not have designated campsites. You are free to camp anywhere within the Wilderness. There are approximately 700 established campsites within the Alps however, and we encourage you to use them whenever possible (especially around high use lakeshores). Campsite *multiplication* in high use areas is one of the principal sources of resource deterioration. Consequently, in order to preserve overall Wilderness character, our Wilderness Patrol Staff works ceaselessly to keep the number of campsites to a minimum to and maintain these established sites in a manner that invites usage. If you come upon a spot that cries out to you to set up camp, the chances are that general area has appealed to many other parties before yours. In this situation it is a beneficial policy to survey the general area because, more than likely, you will find a permanently established campsite that maximizes what ever it is

about that area that appeals to you. You will then end up with the most desirable camping spot, and avoid beginning the establishment of yet *another* new campsite.

If you do end up camping on 'Virgin' ground however, we ask you not to have a *campfire* (along with the establishment of its necessary fire ring). It is the remaining fire ring that will give the next party the impression that the new site is an 'established' campsite.

Are **Bear Canisters** required for food storage? – Thankfully we do not have many 'Bad' bears in the Trinity Alps Wilderness. Consequently bear canisters are not yet required, and we would like it to remain this way! Please do your part toward this goal by always hanging your food in an appropriate manner whenever you leave camp for any prolonged period (hang on a limb at least 12' up, 6' from the trunk with the tie rope secured to an *adjoining* tree). The same is true of left-overs and dirty dishes. You don't want to unnecessarily attract a bear to your campsite. He may well decide to check out the contents of your tent while stopping by... And, as a rule of thumb, it is a good idea *not* to bring excessively smelly foods with you on your trip, and to use plenty of ziplock bags to capture what food smells you do generate. In the end, the best way to deal with left-overs is not to cook more than you can eat. This also simplifies cleanup procedures.

- Is the **Water Safe** to drink in the Alps? – The water in the Alps is simply freshly melted snow. However this does not mean that the water is necessarily free of bacteria and protozoans picked up as the water rushes along on the surface. You should always filter or boil your drinking water.
- Is there a **Leash Law** in effect within the Wilderness? – There is no leash law in the Trinity Alps Wilderness. Wilderness users are expected to have their pets under control however, and pet owners should carry a leash with them in the Wilderness.
- Are there **Rattlesnakes** in the Wilderness? – Yes, there are Rattlesnakes in the Wilderness. Thankfully, they are not at all interested in human beings. They rattle to alert you that they are present and to warn you not to fool with them. Consequently, hikers should never attempt to handle or in a way interact with Rattlesnakes.
- Are there **Mountain Lions** in the Wilderness? – Yes there is a healthy population of Mountain Lions in the Wilderness. Mountain Lions have a high need for Vitamin A (Deer). We are relatively low in Vitamin A so thankfully we don't taste very good to them and they don't pay much attention to us. They are secretive and solitary so they are rarely seen in the Wilderness. On the outside chance that you should happen to come upon or startle a Mountain Lion, back away cautiously while appearing large and unafraid. Typically it is not wise to run from a Mountain Lion.
- What is the most appropriate way to **Cross Streams** with high water flows?
-Know the true depth of the creek, stream, or river.

- Gauge the swiftness of the water to determine if you can make the crossing without being swept away...
- Keep boots on for better traction, balance, and to avoid stubbed toes.
- Undue chest and sternum buckles, so if you fall in, you won't be bouncing along on the bottom trying to unfasten straps...
- Use a sturdy stick on the down-stream side to help maintain balance.
- Remember that creeks will increase in size as the day progresses. In the early season, on a hot day, the snow melt can swell creek depths several feet by mid-afternoon.
- If you deem it safe enough, consider having the most sure-footed member of your group cross the creek without a pack on to fasten a rope to a tree on both sides of the creek. This rope can then be used as a steadying handrail for all members of the party subsequently crossing with their packs on. In setting up the rope, be sure to secure the rope to a tree on the near bank before the initial crossing to set up the handrail. That way, by keeping tension on the tied-off rope the person initially crossing the creek can use the tension of that rope to help him/her with their footing during that initial crossing.