Wilderness Areas On The Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests

“Wilderness is the land that was wild land beyond the frontier...land that shaped the growth of our nation and the character of its people. Wilderness is the land that is rare, wild places where one can retreat from civilization, reconnect with the Earth, and find healing, meaning and significance.” The United States was the first country to define and create designated wilderness areas. In 1964 the Wilderness Act was passed in congress. The Act describes wilderness as the following:

"...lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition..." Section 2(a)

"...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man..." Section 2(c)

"...an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement or human habitation..." Section 2(c)

"...generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable..." Section 2(c)

"...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..." Section 2(c)

"...shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historic use." Section 4(b)

Within the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest there are 9 designated wilderness areas. These areas include: Mount Naomi Wilderness, Wellsville Mountain Wilderness, Mount Olympus Wilderness, Twin Peaks Wilderness, Lone Peak Wilderness, Mount Timpanogos Wilderness, Mount Nebo Wilderness, Deseret Peak Wilderness and the High Uinta Wilderness. Each of these areas offer unique wilderness opportunities and experiences.

The **Mount Naomi Wilderness** was designated in 1984 and includes 44,523 acres. With spectacular alpine scenery, Mount Naomi Wilderness lies between the Logan River and the Utah-Idaho state line located northeast of Logan, Utah. At 9,980 feet, Naomi Peak, near the eastern boundary, is the area's highest point, although this mountainous country contains several other peaks towering above 9,000 feet. On the western side, there are many deep, scenic canyons. Wildflowers carpet the large mountain meadows during summer blooms, and several flowers are unique to this region. You'll find large populations of moose, elk, and deer, and beavers that are well established in several streams. This area offers several trailheads and 65 miles of trail.

The **Wellsville Mountain Wilderness** was designated in 1984 and includes 20,988 acres. The Wellsville Mountain Wilderness extends along the high steep north-south ridge and both sides of the Wellsville Mountains for about 14 miles. It is located in Northern Utah southwest of Logan, Utah and encompasses extremely rugged and picturesque terrain. The mountains are one of the narrowest and steepest ranges in the Rockies, averaging only about five miles wide at its base and rising to its tallest summits, the Wellsville Cone at 9,356 feet and Box Elder Peak at 9,372 feet. Canyons cut into the mountains from the east and west. The water that runs out of the Wellsville Mountains is enough to supply many small Utah communities. Once devastated by overgrazing, the wilderness is on the road to recovery and now supports populations of deer, moose, and mountain lions, not to mention the occasional bighorn sheep. Raptors use this mountain range as a major flyway and the Hawk-watch International organization comes to the range frequently to record observations. Day hikers and hunters are the primary human users. There are only a few system trails in this wilderness area and access and trailheads are limited. There are 3 system trails totaling approximately 17 miles of system trails exist in the Wellsville Mountain Wilderness.

Mount Olympus Wilderness was designated in 1984 and includes 15,300 acres adjacent to the Salt Lake Valley. Mount Olympus Wilderness consists of narrow canyons and rugged terrain. As one of three designated wildernesses that backdrops the Salt Lake Valley this area gets a large number of visitors. State Route 190 follows the scenic canyon of Big Cottonwood Creek along the southern boundary, and the canyon separates this wilderness from Twin Peaks Wilderness to the south. Mill Creek Canyon and its county road form the northern boundary. From both of these roads, you can enter the wilderness from several trailheads. The trails are often easy to follow, but several are rigorous and difficult. Crowds from the Salt Lake City area flood into here, especially on weekends. Mount Olympus Wilderness area has about 20 system trails totaling approximately 42 miles. The Big Cottonwood side of the wilderness is within the Salt Lake City Watershed and has restrictions on dogs, horses and swimming.

Twin Peaks Wilderness area was designated in 1984 and includes 11,396 acres. Twin Peaks Wilderness forms a part of the dramatic backdrop you see on the east side of the Salt Lake Valley, southeast of Salt Lake City. Originally carved by glaciation and currently remodeled by erosion, this area consists of narrow canyons and high peaks (including Twin Peaks, Superior Peak, and Dromedary Peak) that combine to form a rugged and spectacular display. Elevations range from just under 5,000 feet to 11,319 feet on Twin Peaks. Much of the higher terrain is classified as alpine and characterized by large cirque basins and exposed rocky ridges. Dense mountain brush mixed with oak/maple and grass dominates the vegetation at lower elevations. There are scattered stands of firs and aspen in the mid to higher elevations. Temperatures with a 50-degree difference between summer highs and lows can occur. Snow

can remain in some parts of the wilderness until midsummer. Twin Peaks has 5 trailheads into this area and only 10 miles of system trails. This area is very popular primarily on the weekends.

Lone Peak Wilderness was designated in 1978 and includes 30,088 acres. Twin Peaks Wilderness forms a part of the dramatic backdrop you see on the east side of the Salt Lake Valley, southeast of Salt Lake City. Originally carved by glaciation and currently remodeled by erosion, this area consists of narrow canyons and high peaks (including Twin Peaks, Superior Peak, and Dromedary Peak) that combine to form a rugged and spectacular display. Elevations range from just under 5,000 feet to 11,319 feet on Twin Peaks. Much of the higher terrain is classified as alpine and characterized by large cirque basins and exposed rocky ridges. Dense mountain brush mixed with oak/maple and grass dominates the vegetation at lower elevations. There are scattered stands of firs and aspen in the mid to higher elevations. Temperatures with a 50-degree difference between summer highs and lows can occur. Snow can remain in some parts of the wilderness until midsummer. State Highway Route 92 follows the American Fork Canyon and with the short stretch of State Highway Route 144, it forms the southern-southeastern boundary of the wilderness and provides access to trailheads and campgrounds. State Highway Route 210, along Little Cottonwood Creek Canyon, which also provides access, forms the northern boundary and separates Lone Peak Wilderness from Twin Peaks Wilderness just to the north. Several of the trails are easy to follow, but many require advanced navigation and route finding skills. Many people from the Salt Lake City area visit this wilderness area all year long. There are about 6 system trails totaling approximately 14 miles in the Lone Peak Wilderness area on the Salt Lake Ranger District side and 8 system trails totaling approximately 32 miles on the Pleasant Grove Ranger District side.

Mount Timpanogos Wilderness was designated in 1984 and includes 10,518 acres. Part of the Wasatch Mountain Range, situated between American Fork Canyon on the north and Provo Canyon on the south, Mount Timpanogos Wilderness offers abundant rugged terrain embellished with waterfalls and summer wildflowers. You'll find forget-me-nots, alpine buttercups, bluebells, and columbine blooming in high alpine meadows. There are also outstanding glacial cirques and moraines. This area is very popular and gets a lot of use especially on weekends and holidays, parking at these trailheads fills up fast and spaces may not be available mid-July through September, planning your hikes Sunday through Friday is suggested during these times. There are about 17 miles of maintained trails accessible from two trailheads: Timpooneke and Mount Timpanogos. Both trails lead to the summit of Mount Timpanogos at 11,753 feet. The stretch between Timpooneke and Aspen Grove is 12 miles long and passes through the heart of the area. In early summer the rapidly melting snow can cause dangerous high water stream crossings. As this flowing water melts snow and ice beneath winter created avalanche piles it often

creates snow bridges. You should avoid exploring or playing on these dangerous bridges because they may suddenly collapse.

Mount Nebo Wilderness was designated by congress in 1984 and includes 28,022 acres. The centerpiece of the southern portion of this Wilderness, Mount Nebo rises to a majestic 11,928 feet the highest point in the entire Wasatch Range. The peak looms above a swatch of mountain scenery located between Interstate 15 and the Nebo Scenic Loop Byway. Wilderness elevation starts at 5,400 feet and climbs through mountain valleys and meadows broken by moderate to steep ridges. The climb will take you through great biological diversity, beginning with a sagebrush-cliffrose association, to mountain brush (oakbrush and mahogany), aspen, and white fir, then spruce and alpine fir, until you reach the timberline and an alpine zone with primrose, alpine moss, and tundra plants. Bobcats, mule deer, and elk are commonly seen here; black bears and mountain lions are more elusive. Numerous streams are rich with rainbow trout. Wildflowers abound in late spring and summer. Devil's Kitchen Geologic Site, adjacent to the eastern Wilderness boundary, will remind you of a miniature (but not as grand) Bryce Canyon. There are 4 Forest Service maintained trails, totaling approximately 21 miles in the Mount Nebo Wilderness. There are several other trails that border the Wilderness and allow access as well.

Deseret Peak Wilderness area was designated by congress in 1984 and includes 25,212 acres. Deseret Peak Wilderness is located in the Stansbury Mountains of Tooele County, near the towns of Tooele and Grantsville, not far from the Great Salt Lake. This semi-arid wilderness is part of the Great Basin ecosystem. It contains rugged terrain and high peaks that include Deseret Peak itself at 11,030 feet, and many steep-walled canyons shadowed by rocky outcroppings. Here in the Stansbury Mountains, with barren Skull Valley to the west, you'll find some springs and intermittent creeks, despite the general dryness of the area. Much of the higher country is alpine, with open basins and barren rocky ridges. Deseret Peak Wilderness has 4 system trails totaling approximately 14 miles. Other system trails access the edge of the wilderness area. Access is limited along the western side of the wilderness.

The **High Uinta Wilderness** area was designated by congress in 1984 and includes 456,705 acres. The High Uintas Wilderness envelops the wild core of this massive mountain range. Characterized by the highest peaks in Utah, countless lakes, and a unique alpine ecosystem, it is among the nation's most outstanding wilderness areas. The High Uintas Wilderness is administered jointly by the Ashley and Wasatch-Cache National Forests. The Uinta Mountains rise from 7,500 to 13,528 feet at the summit of Kings Peak, offering diverse habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna. Above treeline, tundra plant communities thrive in the harsh climate of the highest altitudes. Thick forests of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine blanket the land below treeline. These forests are interrupted by park-like meadows and lush wetlands. In the lower elevations, aspen groves and countless mixed species

offer contrast to the scene. The Uinta Mountains are home to: elk, mule deer, moose, mountain goat, coyote, black bear, bighorn sheep, ptarmigan, river otter, pine marten, cougar, and 75 percent of Utah's bird species, among many others. The High Uintas Wilderness boasts 545 miles of trail, which may be accessed from a number of trailheads surrounding the wilderness near the gateway communities of Duchesne, Roosevelt, and Kamas, UT and Evanston and Mountain View, WY. This extensive network of trails leads visitors deep into the wilderness, through thick forests, past rushing streams and placid lakes, to sweeping alpine vistas below majestic peaks. Opportunities for exploration are endless.

The wilderness areas create wonderful opportunities to challenge individuals and explore pristine areas of nature. Please as you visit these areas remember to practice Leave No Trace principles and enjoy your time exploring your wilderness areas.

*Note: www.wilderness.net was used in finding the material for this article and credit should be given to them.