

# Area Offices

San Juan National Forest Headquarters  
Durango, Colorado  
(970) 247-4874

Columbine Ranger District  
Bayfield, CO  
(970) 884-2512

Dolores Public Lands Office  
Dolores, CO  
(970) 882-7296

Pagosa Springs Ranger District  
Pagosa Springs, CO  
(970) 264-2268

Online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/SanJuan/>  
or  
[www.facebook.com/sanjuannationalforest](http://www.facebook.com/sanjuannationalforest)

North and eastern areas of the Weminuche Wilderness are managed by the Rio Grande National Forest.  
Divide Ranger District  
Del Norte, CO  
719-657-3321

Northern areas of the Lizard Head Wilderness are managed by the Uncompahgre National Forest.  
Montrose, CO  
970-240-5300



## San Juan National Forest WILDERNESS AREAS



### Hiking & Backpacking in the HERMOSA LIZARD HEAD SOUTH SAN JUAN & WEMINUCHE



May 2024

# Welcome to Wilderness

In 1964 The Wilderness Act preserved 54 pristine areas for future generations to experience and protect with little human impact.

Today official Wilderness Areas cover about 5% of the United States, setting aside areas untrammled by people, where we visit without leaving a trace.

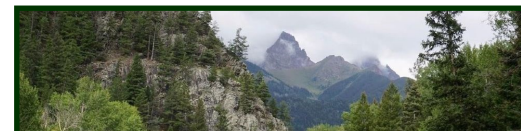
Hiking and backpacking in Wilderness rewards us while also challenging us. Please plan accordingly and follow these safety guidelines.

- **Navigation**

Carry a current topographic map of the area. Signing is limited in Wilderness, and junctions may not have mileages. GPS and smart phone apps can be good additions to map and compass.

- **Weather**

Expect and be prepared for rain, hail, snow, and biting wind at any time of year. Carry quick-drying layers and a rain shell that will keep you warm and dry, even when day hiking.



- **Altitude**

Elevations range from 7,000 to 14,000 feet. Altitude sickness can cause headache, nausea, weakness or drowsiness. If you are affected, descend quickly. If symptoms persist, seek medical aid.

- **Hazard Trees**

The Weminuche Wilderness was impacted by a spruce beetle outbreak, killing many mature spruce trees. In all Wilderness areas naturally dying standing trees pose a hazard to hikers and campers. Avoid camping under unstable, dead or weak trees.

- **High Water**

During spring snow melt, expect high, fast moving water. Water levels may rise quickly during warm afternoons and thunderstorms. Use extra caution when crossing or delay crossing until water levels drop.

*"I believe we have a profound fundamental need for areas of the earth where we stand without our mechanisms that make us immediate masters over our environment."*

Bob Marshall  
1901-1939

# SAN JUAN WILDERNESS AREAS

## HERMOSA CREEK

Established in 2014, our newest Wilderness is remote and rugged, protecting the Hermosa Creek watershed. Two system trails connect Hermosa Creek to the Colorado Trail ridgeline. Access along the ridge requires 4WD. The 416 fire swept through the southernmost area in 2018, so use caution in the Clear Creek drainage.

## LIZARD HEAD

Named for Lizard Head Peak, this high elevation Wilderness borders the Uncompahgre National Forest to the north. Highway 145 passes near the eastern border at tree line, providing access to challenging and scenic day hikes. High country backpacking routes skirt 14,000 foot peaks in the Wilderness interior.

## SOUTH SAN JUAN

Located east of Pagosa Springs, this Wilderness area protects some of southern Colorado's most remote terrain while offering backpackers over 100 miles of trails. Jagged ridges and pinnacles make for difficult hiking. The Continental Divide cuts through the heart of the Wilderness and the Rio Grande NF manages eastern lands.

## WEMINUICHE

The San Juan's most popular Wilderness is also the largest in Colorado. At almost 500,000 acres the Weminuche spans the Columbine and Pagosa Ranger Districts of the San Juan NF, and the Divide Ranger District of the Rio Grande NF.

Two well known trails pass through this Wilderness: the Colorado Trail and the Continental Divide Trail. Books and social media sites exist for through-hikers planning a trip.

**Chicago Basin** is the most heavily visited area of the Weminuche, with backpacking access to popular fourteeners. The San Juan Mountains Association website offers a trip planner for Chicago Basin. Leave No Trace principles are especially needed in this popular destination.



Access to the Weminuche varies. You can encounter 4WD roads, 2WD parking areas near campgrounds and 2 train drop-offs along the historic Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. Train drop-offs are limited, and reservations are needed.

# Wilderness and Forest Regulations

Please follow Site Specific Regulations for camping, camp fires and livestock.



## Group Size

The maximum group size allowed in Wilderness areas is 15 people. The maximum combination of people and stock allowed is 25.

## Travel and Mechanization

Bikes, carts, snowmobiles, drones and any other mechanized or motorized equipment are not allowed in Wilderness areas.

## Pets

Pets must be leashed or under voice control. Respect others and protect wildlife by keeping pets close to you.

## Livestock

Restraining recreational livestock is prohibited within 100 feet of streams and lakes or within riparian areas.

## Stock Feed

All hay, cubed hay, straw, mulch and other products in your possession on the Forest must be certified as weed free by a sanctioned certification program.

## Outfitters and Guides

Commercial guides and outfitters must hold a permit to operate within national forests. Contact the district administrator to ensure your guide has a valid permit.

## Outfitter reserved camp sites

Camping is prohibited within 300 feet of areas signed as 'reserved' or 'assigned' to permitted commercial outfitters.

## Hunting

Hunting is permitted in Wilderness, subject to Wilderness regulations and Colorado Parks and Wildlife regulations.

- Pack out all trash. Do not bury or burn your trash.
- Follow current local fire restrictions. Do not leave campfires unattended. Make sure your fire is out and ashes are cool to the touch.
- Bury human waste six inches deep in a cathole at least 100' from camp, trails, and water. Pack out toilet paper. Do not bury or burn it.
- Camp at least 100 feet from water.
- Do not cut or damage live trees.
- Caching gear is prohibited.