

## NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

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I recently spent 1 ½ weeks attending a training session in Florida and Georgia studying the National Wilderness Preservation System. The session was a combination of lectures and a 2-night pack trip into the Cumberland Island National Seashore and Wilderness Area. The overnight pack trip was designed to give participants first hand experience in dealing with Wilderness policies, rules, and regulations. We hiked 7 miles North on the island with 45 pound backpacks to a small camping area. This Wilderness Area is interesting because it is interspersed with roads (with vehicles) and private land with very large summer homes. We discussed with the Park Service folks all of the problems managing this wilderness area with the inholding activity around it. This was indeed an unusual Wilderness Area.

The National Wilderness Preservation System was established in 1964 by Congress of the United States. The purpose was to "assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas". Wilderness areas are defined as "...areas where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain". The Act in part, further describes these lands with phrases such as: preservation of their wilderness character, land retaining its primeval character and land preserved in its natural condition. The Act also states that there shall be no temporary road, no motorized vehicles, no landing of aircraft and no other form of mechanical transport including

bicycles. It also has special provisions in relation to wildfires, mineral leases and claims, water resources and grazing.

We now have over 104 million acres of Wilderness designated in the U.S. with about half of the acreage in Alaska. The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service (the 4 land management agencies) all administer Wilderness Areas for the Federal government.

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge has 3 wilderness areas (Chupadera, Indian Well and Little San Pascual) that total approximately 30,000 acres. They were established by Public Law on January 3, 1975. The Chupadera area is 5,300 acres in size and is about 6 miles long and ½ mile wide. It slopes from the 6,727 foot high Chupadera Mountain on the west to about 4,600 feet in the eastern portion. The Indian Well area is 9 miles long and 2 miles wide and 9,987 acres in size. It consists of a series of small ridges and mesas with the average elevation of 4,500 feet. The Little San Pascual area is 2 ¼ miles wide and 14 miles long and totals 22,448 acres. Most of the area is gently rolling terrain with 2 black mesas. There are 2 trails on Bosque that provide access to some of the acreage. Plan to visit the Wilderness Areas and see the Refuge from the high country.

For further information on recreational opportunities in the Wilderness Areas at Bosque Refuge, please contact our Office.