



Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Lassen Volcanic National Park's wilderness was established by Congress on October 19, 1972. This outstanding resource marks the confluence of some of the West's most unique features. Lassen Volcanic Wilderness straddles the intersection of the southern Cascades, northern Sierra Nevada mountains, and western Great Basin; sits at the headwaters of four watersheds; and spans the space between underground hydrothermal areas and sky scraping 10,000 foot plus peaks.

Today, you play an important role in protecting this wilderness heritage. We are beginning the development of a Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan. This newsletter is intended to provide you with information about the planning effort and to invite you to participate in the planning process. By sharing your ideas and opinions about how the park's wilderness area should be managed, you can help us shape its future.

Thank you for your interest in Lassen Volcanic National Park. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darlene M. Koontz".

Darlene M. Koontz, Superintendent
Lassen Volcanic National Park

Lassen Volcanic Wilderness 79,062 acres | 74% of the park

Lassen Volcanic Wilderness was designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System on October 19, 1972. Another 13,151 acres of wilderness was proposed as an addition, but has not yet been designated by Congress. It is National Park Service policy to administer proposed wilderness as designated wilderness.

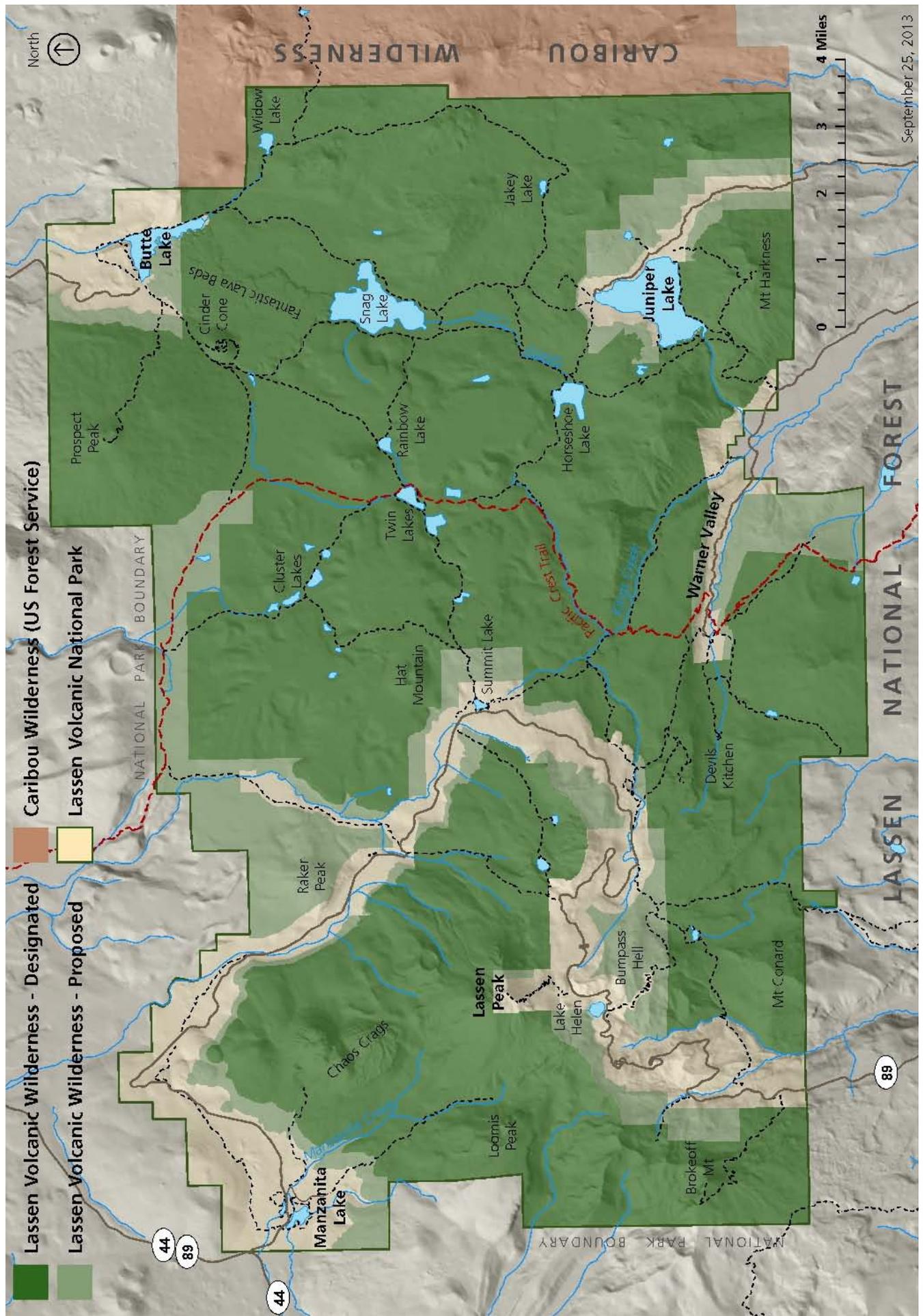
Learn More

Visit the park wilderness
planning webpage



go.nps.gov/lavo/wbsp

Legislated and Proposed Lassen Volcanic Wilderness



Purpose, Need and Goals

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the wilderness and backcountry stewardship plan is to guide the preservation of wilderness and backcountry character in Lassen Volcanic National Park.

National Park Service policy directs wilderness stewardship plans to include “desired future conditions, as well as establish indicators, standards, conditions, and thresholds beyond which management actions will be taken to reduce human impacts to wilderness resources.” Lassen’s first wilderness and backcountry stewardship plan will provide guidance on a variety of issues including, but not limited to:

- Visitor Use
- Stock Use
- Wilderness/
Backcountry Permits
- Trail System
- Climbing
- Commercial Services

Goals

The goals of the wilderness and backcountry stewardship plan are to:

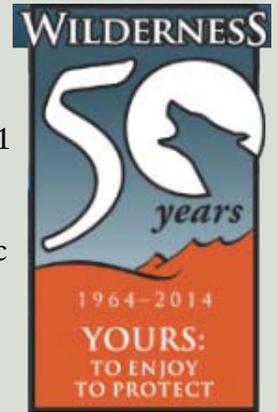
- restore, protect, and enhance wilderness character in wilderness;
- provide and manage visitor opportunities while protecting resources in wilderness and backcountry areas;
- enhance public understanding of the relevance of wilderness values and stewardship of the wilderness and backcountry;
- coordinate with adjacent land management agencies to provide continuity in managing wilderness and backcountry resources; and
- integrate stewardship into all park activities in wilderness.

Wilderness Act

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law [PL] 88-577, 16 United States Code [USC] 1131 et seq.) establishes a policy for the enduring protection of wilderness resources for public use and enjoyment. The act defines wilderness as,

a tract of undeveloped federal land of primeval character without permanent improvements or human habitation; an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain; where the forces of nature predominate and the imprint of man’s work is substantially unnoticeable; which provides outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

This act established the National Wilderness Preservation System, and set forth management directives that specify the preservation of wilderness character. Section 4 of the act identifies appropriate uses and prohibited uses in wilderness areas.



Decision to be Made

When finished, the wilderness stewardship and backcountry plan will establish a vision for Lassen Volcanic National Park and guide long-term management and decision-making based on that vision.



Wilderness and Backcountry

How Are They Different?

Lassen Volcanic National Park manages 106,448 acres of land including 79,062 acres of designated wilderness and 13,151 acres of proposed wilderness. The majority of the park is managed as either wilderness or backcountry, with very few front country (developed) areas. Although wilderness and backcountry areas may look similar, they may accommodate different types of recreational use, and by law, are administered differently.

Wilderness

In response to quickly “expanding settlement and growing mechanization” in the U.S., Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964, creating the National Wilderness Preservation System and presenting guidelines for the administration of these “wilderness areas.” With this, Congress ensured that lands were set aside for the preservation and protection in their natural condition for the American people. Lassen Volcanic Wilderness was designated by Congress in 1972.

By definition, wilderness is, “An area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or habitation, and which:

1. generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable;
2. has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;
3. has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation; and
4. may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value.”

These criteria must be met in order to designate an area as “wilderness” under the Wilderness Act. One main difference between backcountry and wilderness is that motorized equipment and mechanized transport are generally prohibited in wilderness. In contrast, motorized uses and mechanized transport may be present in the backcountry if uses are deemed necessary and appropriate. Another difference is the presence of development. Shelters and other development such as cabins for purposes of public safety and resource protection may be allowed in backcountry areas, whereas structures and installations are only present in wilderness in circumstances necessary to administer the area. The Wilderness Act specifically prohibits commercial enterprises and permanent roads in wilderness.

Backcountry

Backcountry as defined by the NPS refers generically to “primitive and undeveloped portions of parks” (Management Policies 8.2.2.4). Developments within backcountry areas are generally limited to trails, unpaved roads, and administrative facilities. Recreational use is the most prevalent human use in backcountry areas, although research activities and other administrative activities may also occur. All wilderness within the park is considered backcountry, however not all backcountry areas are congressionally designated wilderness.



Wilderness Character

What is Wilderness Character?

Wilderness areas are administered to preserve wilderness character, as mandated by the Wilderness Act. But what is wilderness character? The Wilderness Act defines “wilderness character” as being made up of the five qualities examined more closely below. The park strives to protect wilderness values and “preserve wilderness character” by maintaining these qualities.

Untrammeled

“An area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man,” and “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.” In short, wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation. This quality is degraded by modern human activities or actions that control or manipulate the components or processes of ecological systems inside the wilderness.

Undeveloped

The area retains its primeval character and influence, and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation. “. . .man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” This quality is degraded by the presence of structures, installations, habitations, and by the use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or mechanical transport that increases people’s ability to occupy or modify the environment.

Natural

Ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization; the area is “protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.” In short, wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization. This quality is degraded by impacts to natural resources, such as the presence of nonnative species or unnatural forest fuel conditions.

Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The area has “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” This quality is about the opportunity for people to experience wilderness; it is not directly about visitor experiences per se. This quality is degraded by settings that reduce these opportunities, such as encounters with people, signs of modern civilization, recreation facilities, and management restrictions on visitor behavior.

Other Features of Value

The area “may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.” In Lassen Volcanic Wilderness, these features include scenic values of the broad volcanic landscape, cultural resources, and other scientific and educational values.



Issues and Opportunities

Questions to Consider

Below are questions regarding specific wilderness and backcountry topics on which the park would like your input. These questions are only meant to help you frame your response and not to limit your comments. We welcome your feedback on the questions outlined and anything else about the wilderness and backcountry.

What are the most important issues facing Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry?

Which areas within the wilderness and backcountry do you believe are most important?

What do you love about Lassen Volcanic Wilderness?

What about Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry do you think could be improved?

Visitor Use

Lassen Volcanic National Park accommodates about 400,000 visitors each year. Camping, hiking, and horseback riding are some examples of activities permitted in the wilderness and backcountry. To ensure public safety and protect sensitive resources, some of these activities have been limited. See the park website for more information about current regulations and recommendations. www.nps.gov/lavo/planyourvisit/things2do.htm.

Does Lassen Volcanic Wilderness offer sufficient “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?”

What do you think about limitations on visitor use in Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry areas in order to protect wilderness character and park resources? (*e.g. Required use of designated camping areas instead of dispersed camping or limitations on group sizes of hikers or overnight camping to prevent damage to resources*)

Trails

Trails provide access to wilderness and backcountry areas for enjoyment. Trails help ensure that opportunities for wilderness and backcountry experiences are preserved while adverse impacts to resources such as soils, streams, and cultural resources are minimized. Lassen Volcanic National Park offers more than 150 miles of hiking trails, most of which occur in the wilderness and backcountry areas of the park. Both the Pacific Crest Trail and the Nobles Emigrant Trail (part of the California National Historic Trail) pass through Lassen Volcanic Wilderness.

What level of trail development is appropriate in Lassen Volcanic Wilderness? (*e.g. level of trail maintenance, presence of bridges, fences, railing, or signs.*)

Is the extent of the trail system in the backcountry and Lassen Volcanic Wilderness adequate? (*too few, too many, just right*)

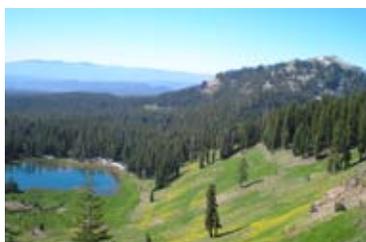
How do you feel about the level of encounters with people when using trails within Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry?

How do you feel about the presence of signs in the backcountry and wilderness? Do you believe the number of signs is adequate? Do the existing signs present the proper information?

Permits

Backcountry use permits are required for any overnight camping in the wilderness or backcountry at Lassen. Currently, they can be completed and e-mailed or faxed to the park prior to your arrival, or obtained in person at several locations within the park.

Do you think the existing backcountry/wilderness permitting system is adequate, and if not, how can it be improved?



Climbing

Rock and ice climbing is allowed within Lassen Volcanic Wilderness, however, the possession or use of power drills within wilderness and backcountry is prohibited.

How do you feel about climbing in Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and Lassen's backcountry areas?

How do you think climbing should be managed in Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry?

Stock Use

Over 100 miles of trails are currently open for stock use (horses, mules, burros, and llamas) within the park. Some of these trails pass through designated and proposed wilderness, although overnight stays are not permitted. A permit is required for all stock use. Additional information about stock use within the park can be found at nps.gov/lavo/planyourvisit/stock-use.htm.

Do you think stock use management in the park is adequate, and if not, how can it be improved?

Commercial Services

Some level of commercial use may be appropriate in wilderness. The stewardship plan will allow the park to determine what commercial services are appropriate and may be permitted in park wilderness. Examples may include guided photography, backpacking, ski, or mountaineering trips, horserides, or hikes.

Do you think there are adequate commercial services in the park? Why or why not?

What types of commercial services, if any, would you like to see available in wilderness?



Share Your Thoughts

Public Scoping

The public scoping process gives you an opportunity to provide input that will help guide the park in developing management decisions. We invite you to provide your input on management of the Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry areas. Using the provided questions as a guide, please provide any comments you have on the outlined issues below, and/or about any aspect of the Lassen Volcanic Wilderness and backcountry that is important to you.

More information related to the public scoping process will be distributed through mailings, the park website, social media, and through open house events throughout 2013. Please check the park website (nps.gov/lavo) for more information on the development of the wilderness and backcountry stewardship plan.

Information on wilderness administered by the National Park Service can be found at wilderness.nps.gov.

Online

go.nps.gov/lavo/wbsp or
go.nps.gov/LAVOWSB_planning

Mail

Lassen Volcanic National Park
Attn: Wilderness Planning
PO Box 100
Mineral, CA 96063

E-mail

lavo_information@nps.gov,
Subject: "Wilderness Comments"

Personal Information

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be publicly available.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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