



CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

The 1964 Wilderness Act

The first draft of the Wilderness Act was introduced in 1956 by Howard Zahniser, and eventually became law with a near unanimous vote after 65 new drafts. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the bill into law on September 3rd, 1964, formally designating 9.1 million acres of public land as Wilderness.

What is Wilderness?

National Parks, Forests, BLM lands, and Fish and Wildlife Service lands can all legally be designated as Wilderness. The 1964 Act defines Wilderness as:

(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act as an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions 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 five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Why Designate Wilderness?

The Wilderness Act created the National Wilderness Preservation System, "... to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

Wilderness is perhaps the strongest protection placed on public lands. Where there are protections for National Monuments, National Forests, and other federally protected lands, the 1964 Wilderness Act precludes many land uses allowed on those designations like cattle-grazing, timber and mining operations, mechanized or motorized travel (with the exception of wheelchairs) in Wilderness Areas.

Wilderness and the CWNCR

The CWNCR would add approximately 8,000 new acres of Wilderness in the tri-canyon area. It designates a new Wilderness, called the Mount Aire/Grandeur Peak Wilderness, it adds to the existing Lone Peak Wilderness, and adjusts small pieces of Wilderness areas to allow for an alignment of the Bonneville Shoreline trail as a multi-purpose trail. The CWNCR also creates a new White Pine Special Management Area.

More information on our website: cwc.utah.gov

Sources: U.S. Forest Service, The Wilderness Society

