

Proposed Wilderness Within the Wild Olympics Act of 2014

What is Wilderness?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as “an area of earth and its community of life untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor and does not remain.” This designation recognizes tracts of existing federal land where the work of humans is fairly unnoticeable and has been affected primarily by the forces of nature. Wilderness areas provide unique opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation including hunting and fishing and to see how undeveloped ecosystems function.

What is included in this bill?

This proposal would designate 126,000 acres of existing federal land as wilderness in the Olympic National Forest. These new designations protect primarily old growth and mature forest habitat throughout the national forest and most are already administratively protected under current Forest Service regulations. Wilderness designation would make these safeguards permanent. Proposed Wilderness areas in the bill include:

- Lost Creek Wilderness
- Rugged Ridge Wilderness
- Alckee Creek Wilderness
- Gates of the Elwha Wilderness
- Buckhorn Wilderness Additions
- Green Mountain Wilderness
- The Brothers Wilderness Additions
- Mount Skokomish Wilderness Additions
- Wonder Mountain Wilderness Additions
- Moonlight Dome Wilderness
- Colonel Bob Wilderness Additions
- South Quinault Ridge Wilderness
- Canoe Creek Wilderness
- Sams River Wilderness



*Ancient Temperate Rainforest in the South Quinault Ridge Proposed Wilderness.
(Photo Wild Olympics Campaign)*

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What is allowed in Wilderness?

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Rafting
- Kayaking
- Snowshoeing
- Skiing
- climbing
- Mushroom and berry picking
- Dog walking
- Camping

What does the designation restrict?

- Logging, mining, road construction and other development are not allowed in Wilderness.
- The Wilderness Act does allow agencies to use “any means necessary” in emergencies such as forest fires to protect private property and public safety and allows discretion for emergency use of mechanized tools in wilderness in limited cases to repair roads and trails or control forest fires and disease.
- Wilderness prohibits the use of mechanized vehicles within its boundaries. However the wilderness boundaries of this proposal were carefully drawn by input from local user groups to ensure no roads would be closed and ensure minimal impact to current mechanized and Mountain Bike use. That’s one of the reasons why the bill is endorsed by the Evergreen Mountain Biking Club and the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

How does this impact the Forest Service Roads?

- No roads will be closed or decommissioned as a result of this proposed legislation.
- All Forest Service system roads have been removed from the proposed wilderness areas so that current access will be unaffected.