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Wilderness Act 50th Celebration Countdown Begins
Hundreds of activities planned as lead-up to September 2014 Anniversary

(SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – Sept. 4, 2013) This week marks the start of a year-long countdown to the 50th anniversary of America's Wilderness Act, signed into law on Sept. 3, 1964. To showcase the diverse ways Americans value wilderness, *Wilderness50*, a coalition of agencies, organizations and universities, is coordinating a multitude of local and national events, including "Wilderness Forever," a photography exhibition at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C., and the National Wilderness Conference in Albuquerque, N.M.

"A uniquely American cultural achievement, wilderness represents our nation's decision to forego development in certain special places and preserve permanently, by law, wild places where nature can continue to dominate," said Vicky Hoover, *Wilderness50* co-chair and longtime wilderness advocate. "This year-long anniversary celebration is a way to remind Americans of our nation's historical close connections to nature and the importance of preserving these special wild lands for generations to come."

Wilderness Act-related activities and events in celebration of the 50th anniversary include:

The "**Wilderness Forever**" **National Photography Contest**, which began earlier this year, will conclude on Sept. 17, 2013. Enter images online at <http://www.naturesbestphotography.com/wilderness>. The winning images will be displayed during the September 2014 opening of the "**Wilderness Forever**" **National Photography Exhibition** at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. That exhibition will be followed by the 2014 mid-September **D.C. Wilderness Week** celebration.

From **400-500 local wilderness education and awareness events** such as Walk for Wilderness marches; outings and service trips; museum, airport and visitor center exhibits; speakers; interpretive programs; trainings and workshops; photography and writing contests; art shows; music and dance programs; book and poetry readings; and stewardship projects will be held in communities across America. For an online calendar and map of local events, visit <http://www.wilderness50th.org/events.php>, which will be updated as additional events are planned for 2014.

The National Wilderness Conference will occur Oct. 15-19, 2014, in Albuquerque, N.M. This event will be *Wilderness50's* premier forum for discussing the growing challenges of perpetuating the values of

wilderness in a time of unprecedented environmental and social change, as well as charting a course for the next 50 years of wilderness. Learn more about attending the conference at <http://www.wilderness50th.org/conference.php>.

Join *Wilderness50* in counting down to “50 Years of American Wilderness” by visiting <http://www.wilderness50th.org>. It’s not too late to get involved in local and national planning efforts or to plan to attend local events in your community. Enter your email address on the home page to sign up for monthly 50th anniversary updates and follow *Wilderness50* on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/50thAnniversaryOfTheWildernessAct> and Twitter at <http://twitter.com/wild50th>.

About the Wilderness Act

Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on Sept. 3, 1964, the historic Wilderness Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and set aside an initial 9.1 million acres of wildlands for the use and benefit of the American people. Over the past 50 years, and as a result of America's support for wilderness, Congress has added more than 100 million acres to this unique land preservation system. The 1964 Wilderness Act defines "Wilderness" as areas where the earth and its communities of life are left unchanged by people, where the primary forces of nature are in control, and where people themselves are visitors who do not remain.

The NWPS was established for the use and enjoyment of the American people and provides many direct and in-direct benefits, such as those relating to ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, spiritual, economic, recreational, historical, and cultural uses and activities. The 757 wilderness areas within the NWPS are managed by all four federal land managing agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, and National Park Service. To learn more about the Wilderness Act and the NWPS, visit <http://www.wilderness.net>, the official wilderness information website providing both general information about wilderness and specific information about each of the 757 wilderness areas.

About Wilderness50

Wilderness50 is a coalition of nearly 30 non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies that is planning and implementing local, regional, and national events and projects. This coalition is charged with raising public awareness of wilderness and engaging youth during 2014, the 50th anniversary year. For more information about *Wilderness50*, visit <http://www.wilderness50th.org>.

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