

SUMMARY ON THE MISUSE OF WILDERNESS FUNDS  
(Based on findings by the U.S. General Accounting Office  
and by the Forest Service)

1. From Fiscal Year 1988 through Fiscal Year 1991, Congress increased the appropriation for Forest Service wilderness management from \$12.6 million to \$22.6 million, approximately an 80% increase. However, during this same period the Forest Service reduced wilderness funding for approximately 100 ranger districts administering wilderness areas in all regions of the Forest Service. In Fiscal Year 1989, for example, the Forest Service reduced its total wilderness management budget by 4% even though the Congressional appropriation was a 20% increase.
2. The U.S. General Accounting Office has determined that between Fiscal Year 1988 and 1990, the Forest Service misused 37% of the wilderness funds that Congress appropriated (approximately \$17 million) by spending them on programs unrelated to wilderness.
3. The Forest Service has admitted that funds earmarked by Congress for wilderness were spent on non-wilderness projects such as campgrounds, picnic areas, boat ramps, support for timber sales, law enforcement for rainbow family gatherings, inventories of cultural resource sites, administration of special use permits, maintenance of facilities, and other programs. However, they cannot specifically account for how millions of the reprogrammed dollars were actually spent.
4. The GAO further reports that because of dollars spent at higher organizational levels, only 40% of the wilderness funds appropriated by Congress actually reached the ranger districts which administer the wilderness areas.
5. The Forest Service manages 33 million acres of national forest wilderness. Wilderness dollars are needed to enforce the regulations that protect wilderness areas, to rehabilitate damaged and polluted sites, to educate wilderness visitors and to monitor the condition of the wilderness resource. A 1989 GAO study as well as a 1988 Congressional oversight hearing determined that many wilderness areas are deteriorating under Forest Service management. This deterioration includes erosion, damaged vegetation, polluted lakes and streams, invasion of non-native plants, trail gullying and a proliferation of manmade structures and facilities. The Forest Service's explanation to Congress has been that it lacks adequate wilderness management funding. Congress gave the Forest Service substantial increases for wilderness management for 4 consecutive years to address these problems. It is now evident that despite the urgent needs of the wilderness system the Forest Service misused much of these funds and spent them on programs totally unrelated to wilderness.

EXAMPLES OF MISUSE OF WILDERNESS FUNDS

1. Shasta-Trinity National Forest - California

Made the decision to reallocate wilderness funds to developed recreation because the Forest had decided that was a higher priority. ✓

2. Eldorado National Forest - California

Reallocated wilderness funds to summer home administration and ran the wilderness program with volunteers. ✓

3. Hiawatha National Forest - Michigan

Decided not to make wilderness a priority or emphasis program. Spent the dollars on developed recreation which ✓ the Forest considers to be higher priority.

4. Wasatch-Cache National Forest - Utah

✓ Decided to replace paid wilderness rangers with volunteers.

5. Eastern Region of the Forest Service (Region 8)

Used wilderness dollars to repair a water system at a developed recreation site.