

Rules and Practices for the High Peaks Wilderness Area

Group Size Limits

Day Use Group Size is 15 people.

Overnight Group Size is 8 people

Why are there group size limits? Limiting the size of groups helps to avoid excessive impacts on the natural resource, which can occur when large groups of people concentrate their use. Also, smaller groups in Wilderness settings assist in making sure each person recreating has an opportunity to have a more genuine Wilderness Experience and have solitude.

Dogs and Leashes

*Eastern High Peaks (Upper Works-Indian Pass Trail all the way to Keene) dogs **Must Be on a Leash at all times.***

Why is there a Leash Law in the Eastern High Peaks? The Eastern High Peaks is a very busy and congested area. By requiring dogs to be leashed there is less chance for negative interactions between dogs and wildlife, dogs lovers and those who don't care for dogs or between strange dogs.

Fire Ban

*Eastern High Peaks there are **NO fires allowed.** This includes along Meadows Lane.*

Why is there a ban on fires in the Eastern High Peaks? Research and past historical observations have indicated that areas where fires are allowed tend to heavily impact the vegetation and forest character around primitive campsites, especially in high use areas like the Eastern High Peaks. Prior to banning fires in the Eastern High Peaks, there were areas around popular campsites that had extensive tree cutting, partially burned trash and other visual impacts. These areas have now started to recover and don't look vastly different than the forest around them.

Bear Canisters

*Eastern High Peaks, **Bear Canisters are Required for overnight use.** All food, toiletries and trash must fit inside the bear canisters.*

Why are Bear Canisters Required in the Eastern High Peaks? The Eastern High Peaks has a concentrated number of campsites and high levels of users, with varied experience. The bears in the area became very successful at getting food from campers. Each time a bear obtained food from a camper it became smarter and bolder. Bears in the Eastern High Peaks defeated every other method of food storage was successfully conquered by bears. Bear Canisters, when properly used, have successfully kept bears from obtaining food from campers and keep them eating their natural diet. The first year after the regulation was put into effect we had only 100 complaints of campers losing their food to bears, compared to more than 400 complaints the year before. "A fed bear is a dead bear" is a saying associated with bears that get human food and escalate their attempts to get that food.

Do Not Take Rocks, Soil, Plants or Anything

It is illegal to remove anything from the Forest Preserve. Taking a souvenir rock or plant or stick home is not allowed.

Why is taking things from the Wilderness a Problem? The Wilderness is a place where man visits and not a place where humans are supposed to alter the landscape. The Wilderness is owned by the people of the State of New York. If you take something from the Wilderness then it isn't there for others to enjoy and can have negative impacts on the natural resources. If everyone took a rock home, think of how big of a pile that would make.

**For Emergencies in the Adirondacks (Region 5 and 6) call
DEC Dispatch 518-891-0235**

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Human Waste

When going pee or poop please use a privy, dig a cat hole or pack out your poop.

Issue: Human waste along the trails and near campsites is becoming a very large problem in the High Peaks as use increases. In addition to being unsightly, there are impacts to sanitation of the water.

Solution: By going to the bathroom in a privy, digging a cat hole at least 150' from water or a trail, or packing out your waste, you are helping to keep the Wilderness clean and improve the experience for all others.

Walking Thru the Mud

Walk directly through the center of trails, don't avoid mud and stay off vegetation.

Issue: Trails in the High Peaks are steep and wet. People who walk around the wet areas create impacts to the trail and surrounding forest. Each time someone walks off the center of the trail the impacts grow cumulatively. At higher elevations where soils are shallow, hikers going off the trail to climb the sides on vegetation result in large rock openings.

Solution: Wear durable, waterproof hiking boots with good tread and when there is ice present have traction devices. Walk through the mud and avoid clinging to vegetation on the sides of rock. Stay on impacted parts of the trail and don't trample vegetation. Avoid hiking during mud season or rainy weather to have the greatest impact at helping to protect the natural resource.

Be Prepared!

Whether you are going into a Wilderness Area for a few hours or a week make sure you are fully prepared.

Ahead of Time:

Learn the Rules, Follow Leave No Trace Principals, Have a Map-&-Compass and know how to use them, bring a pack and have the correct things in it, have good footwear. Learn about Wilderness and why it is important.

When you Go:

Remember a Wilderness area is not like a developed park. It is a place where the forces of nature are at work and man is supposed to be a visitor. Everyone goes to the mountains for different reasons and we all need to be respectful of these reasons and not impact other's experience and protect the natural resources of the wilderness that attracts in there in the first place.

Where can you get more information?

1. Backcountry Information for the High Peaks Region page on the NYS DEC website:
-Updated weekly on conditions and general information.
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9198.html>
2. Hiking Safety: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28708.html>
3. Primitive Camping: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/41282.html>
4. State Land Camping and Hiking Rules: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7872.html>
5. Leave No Trace website:
-Great information on how you can recreate in the Wilderness and not leave an impact:
<https://lnt.org/>
6. State Land Classification Definitions on the NYS APA website:
-Learn what the definition of Wilderness in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.
http://www.apa.ny.gov/state_land/Definitions.htm

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