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NEWS RELEASE

Fifty Years Ago, A Gift of Wild Lands Was Given for All Americans to Benefit From and Enjoy

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (August 29, 2014) – September 3 marks the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, which established the National Wilderness Preservation System and declared it a national policy “to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” By signing the Act in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson set aside 9.1 million acres as the foundation of the System. In the half-century that has followed, Congress has added more than 100 million acres to this unique land preservation system, protecting some of the most wild and stunning landscapes America has to offer.

Most of the designated wilderness areas in Alaska were added to the system under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. Managing these federally protected lands is the responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service.

In Alaska there are 48 designated wilderness areas covering more than 57 million acres, stretching from the far reaches of the Aleutian Islands to the coast of the Beaufort Sea; from the Southeast to the Northwest regions of the state. These wilderness areas encompass watersheds, mountain ranges, glaciers, wetlands, coastlines, volcanoes, and forests that support diverse wildlife populations, protect archeological sites, provide a setting for wilderness recreation, and ensure the continuation of a subsistence lifestyle.

Alaskan wilderness serves as a unique scientific laboratory; it has been the engine behind 50 years of tourism growth in Alaska; it includes landscapes that inspire countless works of art; it is a playground for hardy adventurers, a touchstone to the past, and a link to cultural identities; it conjures a sense of freedom and self-reliance that is getting harder to come by in our technology-centric world.

On September 3, and throughout the year, we will celebrate Alaska’s wilderness as a unique, irreplaceable resource and an important part of Alaska’s future. Alaska’s wilderness is a gift from the past for current and future generations to benefit from and enjoy.

To find events that commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, visit www.wilderness50th.org/.

View photos of Alaskan wilderness managed by the [U.S. Forest Service](#), [National Park Service](#), and [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) on Flickr.

Connect with others who want to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act on [Facebook](#).

Learn more about the Wilderness Act and the Wilderness Preservation System by visiting www.wilderness.net/.

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