



Wild Virginia Position Paper
Wilderness Areas and Mechanical Transport
3-29-2016

Wild Virginia opposes any efforts to weaken the Wilderness Act including recent efforts to amend the Wilderness Act to allow for the use of mountain bikes in designated Wilderness.

The 1964 Wilderness Act (36 U.S.C. 1131-1136) bans all types of bicycles as well as all other forms of mechanical transportation in designated Wilderness. Section 4(c) of that act states, “[T]here shall be...no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.”

Congress has expressly stated that the purpose of the Wilderness Act was, in part, was to protect these areas from “expanding settlement and growing mechanization....” (Wilderness Act, Section 2[a].)

For over a half century, the Wilderness Act has protected wilderness areas designated by Congress from mechanization and mechanical transport, even if no motors were involved with such activities.

Wild Virginia maintains that weakening *any* current protections for designated Wilderness would be contrary to the vision Congress espoused in enacting the Wilderness Act and that the American people have embraced. To chip away at those protections, as the allowance for mountain bikes or any other method of mechanical transportation would do, is to begin to destroy the “benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” Once lost those benefits cannot be recovered. (Wilderness Act, Section 2[a].)

Wild Virginia will continue to defend the Wilderness Act against efforts to weaken its integrity in protecting natural characteristics of these priceless treasures.