

Welcome to Wilderness: Emigrant, Carson-Iceberg and Mokelumne Areas Stanislaus National Forest

ROG 16-21; 06/12



Protection of Wilderness areas will never be gained by simply issuing rules and regulations. It must come from each of us through appreciation and understanding of the land. Protection of Wilderness must be a personal ethic, deeply etched within us. Some mark is left on the Wilderness each time we visit—but we can make sure the mark is a small one and barely perceptible. Minimum impact, “leave no trace” camping is considered the rule in the backcountry.



Campsite Selection

Be sure that you select a site at least 100 feet from water and trails. (One hundred feet equals roughly 40 or 50 walking steps.) Camping on previously used sites creates far less impact than camping on pristine sites. Do not assume a site is legal just because it has a fire ring or is not posted.

Sanitation

Human feces left unburied or close to water can spread disease and contaminate water sources. Bury feces in a hole six to eight inches deep—at least 100 feet from water, trails and campsites. Pack out tampons, sanitary napkins, disposable diapers and any other refuse. Do not wash yourself, your utensils or your clothing in lakes or streams. All soap—even biodegradable—pollutes water sources. Carry a bucket of water at least 100 feet from water, campsite or trails; then, wash and dispose of the wash water in a hole. Fill the hole before breaking camp.

Campfires

The use of gas stoves is encouraged to avoid depletion of wood. If you do have a fire, use existing, legally placed fire rings. Use wood found on the ground with a diameter no greater than one to three inches. Keep fires small—fire rings should be no larger than 36” in diameter. Please do not build new fire rings; there are already too many. If your site has no ring, locate an area with no ground vegetation and dig a small, shallow pit. Build the fire in the pit without rocks.

Breaking Camp

Before breaking camp, douse the fire with water, removed unburned foil or other non-combustible trash and replace the soil into the pit. No trace of your fire will remain. Be sure to carry out all unburned material including foil, cans, plastic, glass, cigarette butts and cooking grills. Do not bury food scraps; burn them completely or pack them out. Buried garbage attracts animals and it may be harmful to them. Clean fish far from water and campsites—at least 100 feet.

Solitude

Perhaps the most important aspect of the wilderness experience is the quality of solitude—freedom from the intrusion of human sights, sounds and odors. Help to preserve this aspect for everyone who visits by observing a few considerations for your Wilderness neighbor. Travel and camp in small groups (no more than 15 per group). While hiking or camping, groups should be separated by at least one mile to minimize adverse impact on resources. Leave firearms, radios and pets at home. Avoid acting boisterous or behaving in a loud fashion. Choose equipment that is not brightly colored or highly visible.

On the Trail

Cutting across trail switchbacks causes soil erosion and damages trails. Staying on trail is safer, easier and saves trail maintenance costs. Do not leave trail markers of any kind. Always give stock the right of way by moving well off the trail on the downhill side.

Water Quality

Lakes and streams can be contaminated even though they look and taste pure. The surest method of treatment to make water safe for drinking is to boil it for five minutes. A 0.5 micron filter can remove most harmful bacteria and protozoa—including *giardia*. Other methods involve filtering or using chemical disinfectants (such as iodine or chlorine tablets or drops). Although not reliable in killing *giardia*, these products work well against most waterborne, disease-causing bacteria and viruses. For increased safety, treat filtered water with chemical disinfectants.

Planning Your Trip

Contact the ranger station for trail and feed conditions. Wet trails and meadows are easily damaged. Try to avoid backcountry travel until it dries enough to absorb the impact of you and your stock. Check the regulations for the area that you are planning to visit for closures to stock use, grazing or overnight stays. Some areas are closed to grazing until the “on dates”, dates determined by the condition of feed. During grazing closures, you will need to carry adequate feed. Use well-broken and well-shod animals.

Stock should be in good condition for mountain travel before you go and accustomed to the type of feed and method of confinement that will be used in the backcountry. Use reliable, properly fitted pack and saddle gear. Carry a first-aid kit and insect repellent for your animals. You can minimize the number of your stock by going light—using lightweight equipment and taking less.

On the Trail

In rough country, use extreme caution to avoid injury to your animals. In difficult spots, let your stock pick the way or get off and lead them through. Keep them on the trail tread, particularly on tight switchbacks. If you meet hikers who do not know that stock have the right-of-way, politely ask them to move to a safe area, usually on the downhill side of the trail. When you meet another stock group, the group with the most room should move off the trail to allow safe passage.

Care of Stock at Camp

Camp at a site where you will not disturb others and with adequate feed nearby. Do not tie stock directly to trees or within camp, except while loading or unloading. Stock can cause considerable damage to trees, ground vegetation and soil.

It is best for the animals (and less harmful to the land, vegetation and water) if they are allowed as much freedom as possible. Stock may be turned loose at night by using a few simple techniques and common sense. (Keep in mind that you want to be able to catch them in the morning!) Study the terrain to predict where your animals may go when you turn them loose.

Stock tends to leave an area by the way they entered. Feeding a bit of grain when letting them go and catching them can make them more receptive to being caught after being loose. Use bells only on lead animals. Hobbles tend to lose their ability to restrain as the animal gets used to them.

Drift fences for recreational stock have been built within the Emigrant Wilderness at Upper Buck Lake, Cow Meadow Lake, Upper Huckleberry Lake and Horse Meadow.

Restraining Stock

Methods of restraint include hitchlines, electric fencing and staking. Keep restrained stock far from camps, lakeshores, streamsides and soft meadows. Before leaving camp, scatter manure, fill holes and smooth over pawed areas. Remove and pack out picket pins, salt and feed. Whatever method you use to restrain the animals, remember to move them frequently to prevent trampling, overgrazing or damage from pawing.

The Hitchline

Using tree-saver straps, stretch rope tightly at wither height between two trees at least 8” in diameter and at least 20’ apart. Tie stock several feet from tree trunks using a quick-release knot that doesn’t slide. Stock are generally less restless if more than one animal is tied to the line. The lead rope should be just long enough for animals to touch noses to the ground but not allow stepping over the line.

If you stake an animal, use a soft 40’ rope attached to a well-anchored stake that is placed at least 100’ from water sources and preferably in sight of camp. Open, dry meadows are best for staking as they are free of obstacles that cause ropes to tangle.

“Leave No Trace” for Stock Users:

The use of stock provides the traveler with the ability to travel farther and carry more while expending less energy. It also involves a lot of responsibility, planning, effort and care. Stock has the capability of causing great damage to the fragile backcountry environment if they are not handled properly. Please see that all members of your party are familiar with the regulations on the reverse side of your Wilderness Visitor’s Permit.